



BARRABA COMMUNITY NEWS

COMMUNITY OWNED AND EDITED

FREE LOCAL NEWSPAPER

Wednesday 12th November 2025



BARRABA RSL & RECREATIONAL CLUB LTD

Phone 67821379

For the information of members and guests.

THIS WEEK

FRIDAY 14th NOVEMBER

Meat Raffles. Tickets on sale from 6pm.
Membership Draw \$1400

SATURDAY 15th NOVEMBER

BINGO STARTS AT 12.30PM

SUNDAY 16th NOVEMBER

Angler Club Raffles on sale from 12md.

Drawn at 1.30pm.

Membership Draw \$2000

Happening Soon

Friday 12th December Ham Raffles

**Bistro will be closed for lunch on Thursday
13th Nov. Re-open for dinner.**

BISTRO HOURS

Phone 0427330808

DINE IN OR TAKEAWAY

DAILY BLACKBOARD SPECIALS AVAILABLE

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Monday/Tuesday/Wednesday—**Closed**

Thurs/Fri/Sat **Lunch 12-2pm Dinner 6pm**

Sunday **12-2pm**

Shop Win Sip



Please join us for

girl's night out

Friday 14th November

*Discount shopping

*Prizes to be won

*Fun for all

BARRABA MEDICAL CENTRE

The surgery will be closed from 12pm Friday 14th November 2025 until Friday 21st November 2025.

Reopening on Monday 24th November at 11.00am

If you require scripts before the closure, please call the surgery to make an appointment.

If you require medical attention, please present to the Barraba Hospital or in an emergency call 000.



Hello,

This year we're hosting a Christmas Market for our aged care residents in Barraba, giving them the opportunity to do their Christmas shopping right here at the facility.

We're reaching out to see if you would be interested in having a small stall with gifts available for residents to purchase. As many of our residents find it difficult to leave the facility, this event is a wonderful way to bring the joy of Christmas shopping to them.

You're very welcome to attend on the day to sell your own items and join us for morning tea, or if you prefer, a staff member can sell on your behalf.

If you're able to assist or would like more details, please contact me on 0400 119 424 or email leah.hyles@health.nsw.gov.au - My usual work days are Tuesday and Wednesday

Warm regards,
Leah Hyles
Aged Care Coordinator
Barraba MPS



BARRABA POTTERS & CRAFT GUILD ACTIVITIES: CROFTERS TARTAN WEAVING MILL TRIP:

A great day trip to Spring Ridge - Crofters Tartan Weaving Mill - on the 8TH November. The Mill is owned and operated by siblings, Marie and Fred Lawson. They have developed and registered many tartans (approved by the Scottish Register of Tartan's) including the Koala, Galah, Rosella, Black Swan and the Clydesdale, just to name a few.

Lunch at the Royal Hotel, Spring Ridge was very enjoyable and our tour of Breeza Station was very interesting and informative about the intensive cropping practices at Breeza Station, thank you to James Pursehouse. Thankfully we managed to miss the wild storms that were in the area....

Welcome to Barraba, Karen and Rod Cupitt, great to meet you both. Winner of the trivia questions was Chris Bennett. Thank you to everyone who made the trip a huge success.

Patti Crowley Publicity Officer



Gerda Gamper & Marie Lawson

Back to the Bush 2025 done for another year!

The Aircooled Assembly Inc held our Annual Auto Festival on the 18th October at the RSL grounds. A great number of car entries, markets and spectators attended. The grounds looked amazing as the festival spread over the entire space. The quality of vehicles was incredible this year, making it very hard to judge. We feel the TV advert (funded by Tamworth Regional Council) made a great difference to the number of attendees. The Observation Run had a number of entries and it will be back next year. We hope interest in the addition of this activity grows as it's great for solo and groups to do in their car after the Show and Shine completes and the evening entertainment begins.

The evening saw Kyle Cartner once more on stage, and was again a crowd pleaser. This year's headline was Chicken Liquor, their first time at Back to the Bush, and they did not disappoint. Crowds of people come to enjoy the classic rock music, kids playing happily and the adults enjoyed catching up with family and friends. Chicken Liquor had people up dancing and really enjoying themselves before and after the fireworks display. The fireworks were spectacular as promised, and somehow, each year, Inland Fireworks managed to outdo the amazement of the year before. We still get comments from people each year. "This year was the first time I was able to make it to the music and fireworks - they are the best I've ever seen! I won't be missing them next year!"

Aircooled Assembly Inc would like to thank the sponsors that made Back to the Bush 2025 another great free community event this year. Along with the support of the Barraba community and surrounding areas, the raffle on the day, merchandise sales and the support of our monthly raffles held the 1st Sunday of each month at the RSL, this event has grown and is being enjoyed by more and more each year.

Next up for the Aircooled Assembly Inc will be our annual lolly run and Christmas Light Competition. The lolly run and Christmas Light winner announcement is scheduled to happen the evening of Saturday 20th December.

Save the Date: Muddy MAYhem 2026 will be held on Friday 1st - Saturday 2nd May. Two days of mudrun track action with mega raffles and live music by Chicken Liquor both nights. More details as it gets closer.

(AutoFest photo credit to Speed and Chrome Photography)



Golf Notes

Stacey Sedgwick came in for her first run and won the chook with 22 points. Well done Stace! Balls

went to Luke Smith (again) with 21, Sam Faint, Tim Crowley, and Ally Smith 20 and Chris and Kieren Darlington and Adam Scanlon all with 19. Heartfelt condolences to Daniel Anderson and all family members.



History Notes

The Historical Society had a very busy week to mark the beginning of November – three different groups of visitors and then the markets on Saturday. The markets were quieter than usual, but the next one should be busier – the last one before Christmas and the holidays. I noticed someone buying a useful Christmas present on Saturday and there will be more opportunities in December including calendars and local history books as well as pot plants – some tomato plants went home this week.

During a bit of a clean-up this week, I came across one of the old undertaker's books. A very interesting book considering that it was also used for building jobs in the 1920's.

However, before going any further I checked the funeral records to make sure they were included in our printed books. Denis Behan's last Will on a piece of paper, witnessed by a couple of witnesses, and then two years later on 8th January 1897 it was noted that his son received the Estate two years later after the testator had died.

Exploring further into this album I found the plans for the "Presbytery" at Barraba – actually it is the additions for the Church of England Vicarage in 1921, when the side veranda and a new kitchen were added.

Lots of vacant pages up to the last few pages of this 570-page tome. Two Bingara funerals in the 1960's is listed – both are in the Bingara Cemetery Book – followed by another page of brick making for John Crowley – it included 81,000 bricks made possibly for John or was it for Albert Tufrey who owned the land.

Reading on another page we find a sulky hired at Cobbadah and Albert was to make a brick mould. There are a lot more comments re supply of equipment etc and Albert Thorpe paid the bill which points to the fact that "Carisbrooke" was built first as the works were on his ground and then Cobbadah Station was built on the other side of Cobbadah Creek.

Albert Thorpe moved his family across Oakey Creek and when Roy Crowley bought Carisbrooke in later years, it was the Crowley family who moved two rooms and a bathroom over to the brick home before demolishing what else remained of the old Carisbrooke.

Finally, on the last page is a note that Mrs B.J. Spence of Horton River ordered a water closet, a tank stand and a complete seat for a contract price of 285 pounds in 1908. I suspect that this was to be fitted at the Spence home on the bank of the Horton River.

FUND TO IMPROVE LOCAL FACILITIES OPENS

Your nearest park, showground or community hall could be upgraded soon with funds from the Crown Reserves Improvement Fund.

Member for Tamworth Kevin Anderson said the Tamworth electorate was dotted with crown land areas that have been cared for and treasured by local communities for generations. "Our region is full of parks, showgrounds, recreation areas, halls, shelters, clubs and grounds that are important parts of community living and connection," Mr Anderson said.

"These areas are often on crown land and are maintained by hardworking volunteers with a passion for providing a great space for their community. Their work is invaluable, which is why I do everything I can to support them by pushing for more and more funding for crown lands."

The NSW Government's Crown Reserves Improvement Fund is open now and Mr Anderson is inviting local Crown Land managers to get their applications in. "This fund is about giving crown land managers the tools they need to do their job," Mr Anderson added. "That means granting funds for building repairs, accessibility upgrades, fencing, weed control, equipment, or anything else they need to tackle the odd jobs around the facility. My message to local groups is to pick a project that needs doing and get their application in as soon as possible."

The 2025-26 Crown Land Improvement Fund round has \$13.5 million available for grants of between \$50,000 and \$1 million. Grant applications are open now until 5:00pm on 5 December 2025.

For more information, visit

<https://www.crownland.nsw.gov.au/reserve-manager/finance/crown-reserves-improvement-fund>

CATHOLIC CHURCH TIMES

Barraba 1st Sunday of the month, Saturday evening
Mass 6pm. All other Sundays 9am

BARRABA UNITING CHURCH NOTICES

Sunday 16th November
Service time 8:45am Please note new time.
All Welcome

ANGLICAN CHURCH TIMES

St Laurence's Barraba
Sunday service at 10.00am
No Woodsreef service in November

It's not too late to book in. Do it now.



BARRABA CREATIVE EXCHANGE

Modernism, Ceramics, En Plein Air
Kate Hofman and Michelle Hungerford

To celebrate Grace & Grace exhibition - Tamworth Regional Gallery and Barraba Craft and Potters Guild have prepared a weekend of creative exploration in Barraba - the birth place of Grace Crowley. We take inspiration from Grace and her good friend Anne Dangar - a ceramicist. They discovered modernism, and both were transformed by this new approach to artistic practise.

As such, we invite you, to bring a friend, and join us for a weekend of creative exchange. Come to one event or book all three.

Modernism Lecture Michelle Hungerford FREE Clay Pan Gallery	Ceramics Class Kate Hofman \$75 inclusive Clay Pan Gallery	Plein-air Painting Workshop Michelle Hungerford \$75 / \$95 with all materials 'Tycolah' Barraba
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All the details and bookings
www.tamworthregionalgallery.com.au



Senior Citizens' News

Hello everyone.

There is not a lot of news for this week, however we do have a date for the diary

- Saturday 29th November.

This is Market Day, held at the Seniors Hall, starting at 9am. Intending stall holders – please get your booking in quick smart. Charges this year are \$5 per stand for each stall. Let's hope that the weather is a bit kinder this time. Stallholders my number is 0429821158.

Christmas lunch for Housie players, your date to remember is 12th December. This is to be a BBQ style. Who is to bring what, will soon be sorted out.

Christmas lunch for those people who would be on their own, is once again to be held on Christmas Day. If you are one of these folks, please give me a call on 0429821158, so that those catering will have numbers sorted.

This is all for now. To those folks who are celebrating a birthday, I hope that all of your wishes come true. To those on the sick list, a speedy recovery wish to you, everyone else take care.

Cheers Judy Brady. Hon Secretary

Nathan Bell - Rely-Ability

Nathan Bell is an author and artist with Schizophrenia. He has appeared on radio stations, in newspapers and in magazines all over Australia including on the ABC three times. Nathan was born in Wollongong in 1986 then moved and grew up around the Hunter Valley.

Nathan is fortunate to be a client of the creative arts focused NDIS service Rely-Ability. Rely-Ability pairs NDIS participants with creative industry professionals who support them with their projects. With support from Rely-Ability Nathan has self-published six books and sold over 3000 copies. All his stories are set in Australia and his dream is to help Aussie cinema by having them all produced as movies filmed here.

Several times a week Nathan attends Rely-Ability's creative arts center in Newcastle which they call the hub. The hub is fully equipped with leading production software and hardware, musical instruments and art supplies. At the hub Rely-Ability's expert staff assist him with all of his creative activities.

Next year staff from Rely-Ability will be supporting Nathan and several other clients to attend the Tamworth country music festival and busk on the street. Support workers will be taking the clients camping and helping them throughout the days of street performing. Nathan will be setting up in the street to sell books and art created by himself and other clients during the festival.

If you want to know more about the work Rely-Ability does you can check out their website <https://rely-ability.com.au> or contact owner Michael Macokatic on 0432044410





National Recycling Week kicks off this month, 10–16 November, and it's a great time to brush up on what goes where and make sure we're all doing our bit to reduce waste and recycle right. Why not take some time to check in on your recycling habits at home, work or school and start to make small changes that lead to big environmental wins? Every item counts and it can make a big difference when it comes to keeping bins free from contamination.

By keeping waste like soft plastics, food scraps and nappies out of your yellow bin, and only including items that are clean, dry and loose, you'll not only be recycling right but helping to save resources, energy and landfill space.

Recycling has many real benefits for our community including:

- ♻️ Conserving natural resources by reducing the need to extract and process new raw materials like timber, water and minerals,
- ♻️ Saving energy by decreasing the need for new products to be made from scratch,
- ♻️ Reducing pollution and lowering greenhouse gases through reduced extraction and manufacturing processes,
- ♻️ Minimising recyclable waste going to landfill,
- ♻️ Supporting creative and innovative ways to re-use waste items, from making furniture and play equipment, to clothes and art works.

By being a great recycler, you're also helping to create jobs and lower disposal costs in our community.

If you have more questions about recycling or what to do with something a little tricky at your place, visit our website for more information www.tamworth.nsw.gov.au/tricky-waste-items



Tamworth Brewfest

29 November @ 5:00 pm - 10:30 pm AEDT

Mark your calendars – the ultimate celebration of craft beer, live music, and local flavour is back!

Join us at Tamworth Brewfest for a day of:

- 30+ craft breweries
- Live bands all day
- Delicious local eats
- Games, contests & more

Bring your friends and family, raise a glass, and discover your new favourite brew in Tamworth!

All Ages Event – Under 18yrs free entry with a responsible adult.

Tamworth CBD Parking Update



We've had a huge response to parking meters in our CBD, so it's time for a quick update. The cost is \$1.20/hour, and you can choose to pay per 15min at the meter or per minute using the EasyPark app. This means you only pay for how long you stay.

A reminder - valid Mobility parking scheme permit holders DO NOT need to pay.

6,500 vehicles per day travel down Peel Street vying for just 120 parking spaces between White St and Bourke St, and initial data is showing similar occupancy of parks but an improvement in the turnover of spaces which is great for our CBD.

Find out more about the meters and get your questions answered by visiting trcnews.au/parking.



Skywalk reaches construction milestone

The Tamworth Skywalk project has reached an exciting new milestone, with contractor FORGE commencing installation of the elevated boardwalk structure this week. This stage marks a significant step forward in transforming the vision for the Skywalk project into a reality. Soon to be an iconic visitor attraction, Skywalk will showcase the natural beauty and sweeping views of the Tamworth region while also protecting the safety of local recreational walkers.

Tamworth Region Mayor, Russell Webb, said the start of boardwalk installation is an exciting achievement and demonstrates Council's commitment to delivering high-quality infrastructure that enhances both liveability and tourism appeal.

"Seeing the Skywalk structure start to take shape is a proud moment for our community," Cr Webb said. "It's fantastic to see this landmark project coming to life. It's an investment in our future and one that will attract visitors, boost our economy, and give residents another reason to be proud of where they live," he said.

The Skywalk Project is made possible thanks to \$14.3M in funding from the NSW Government and \$3.7M from Council's Regional Development Fund. Construction will continue over the coming months, with completion of the path, main boardwalk structure, rest areas and viewing platforms expected in mid-2026, alongside the Endeavour Dr carpark construction and landscaping works.

FORGE Head of Construction, Robert Antonios, said that FORGE is proud to play a pivotal role in this iconic community project in Tamworth. "Reaffirming our Grassroots™ commitment to supporting and empowering local communities, we are thrilled to announce a \$10,000 donation to Can Assist, a wonderful not for profit organisation assisting those in need, specifically cancer sufferers," Mr Antonis said. "FORGE has also prioritised the engagement of local contractors through its procurement strategy, ensuring the project delivers both economic and social benefits to the region."

Once complete, the attraction will feature a path and elevated walking platform between Endeavour Drive and Oxley Scenic Lookout that is largely accessible to wheelchairs, prams and those who are less mobile.



Rod Bonner

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

Cnr. Alice and Fitzroy St Barraba

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



Only 6 weeks to Christmas, that means only 5 weeks to the last edition of Barraba Community News for 2025. That's right, our last BCN for 2025 will be 17th December.

So, if you would like to send your customers, members or clients a 'Christmas/ New Year/holiday closure dates' message please contact us as soon as possible to book your space.

Cost will be as follows;

4cm x 8cm = \$20.00

6cm x 8cm = \$25.00

8cm x 8cm = \$35.00

Bigger is always better and we're happy to provide you with a quote for your preferred size.

Contact news@barrabacommunitynews.org.au

Message from the Editor

At *Barraba Community News* we welcome local news and stories from our community members about activities, events and news of interest to the Barraba community.

Share your news, views and what you or your local organisation is doing.

Advertise in *News* at a competitive cost and reach 750 households in our area who receive a free copy each week.

Contact news@barrabacommunitynews.org.au or drop into the Community College on the corner of Alice and Fitzroy Sts.

Local Land Services



Fishing the Namoi



Date

Thursday 27 November 2025

Time

5:30 pm - 8 pm

Location

Narrabri Fish Farm
261 Tuppiari Rd, Narrabri,
NSW 2390

Catering

Dinner provided

RSVP

[Register](#) to secure your seat at this event



For more information contact,
Craig Pullman, Senior
Landscape Extension Officer

E: craig.pullman@lls.nsw.gov.au
M: 0428 432 784

Keen on fishing? Just want to know what is going on in the Namoi? Join OzFish and North West Local Land Services for a laid-back evening with short talks from experts who know their stuff about fish and the river.

We will hear from:

- Narrabri Fish Farm, tour and talk
- Sean Graham, OzFish
- Fish screens for pumps, Anthony Moore, NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development Fisheries
- Recreational fishers
- Annabelle Guest, Murray Darling Basin Authority

This event is a chance to pick up some handy info, meet other people interested in healthy fish stocks and have a yarn over dinner. Grab your spot now - numbers are limited!



Sick TV. The final 'In The Raw' production is here! Sick TV will wrap up the 2025 season for Tamworth's You'll Miss The Tide Productions. The ratings for Five Network News are unhealthy. Audience numbers are dropping and the tension in the studio is rising. What will it take to get people to tune in once more? Veteran news anchor Jack Newman believes the answer is simple. Return to the good old days of having just one presenter – him – and get rid of his co-anchor, the former lingerie model Dayni Hart. More information here [Sick TV](#)

RECENT ANNIVERSARIES

- the publication of the classic novel Gulliver's Travels by Jonathan Swift (1726)
- the release of the first ballpoint pen in New York City, manufactured by Biro (1945)
- 77yo astronaut John Glenn becoming the oldest person to go into space, on board the Space Shuttle Discovery (1998)
- China announcing the end of the one-child policy after 35 years (2015)
- the English parliament passing the Act of Supremacy, which saw Henry VIII and subsequent monarchs become Head of the Church of England (1534)
- the patenting of the first modern elastic bra by New York socialite Mary Phelps Jacob (1913)
- Clarence Birdseye selling the first frozen peas (1952)
- the Soviet Union launching Sputnik 2 with space dog Laika aboard, the first animal in space (1957)
- Michelle Payne becoming the first female jockey to win the Melbourne Cup (2015)
- the cavalry charge by the 4th Australian Light Horse during the Battle of Beersheba in World War I (1917)
- the first performance of William Shakespeare's play Othello at Whitehall Palace for King James I (1604)
- the start of The Great Emu War, when Aussie soldiers were engaged to cull crop-destroying emus in WA (1932)
- James Ritty patenting the first cash register to combat stealing by bartenders in his saloon in Dayton, Ohio (1879)
- archaeologist Howard Carter discovering the tomb of Tutankhamun in Egypt (1922)
- the premiere of the film Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (2001)
- Australia voting against a proposal to become a republic (1999)
- the launch of the Monopoly board game by the Parker Brothers (1935)
- the birthdays of Vlad the Impaler, who inspired Bram Stoker's Dracula (1431), as well as Bram Stoker himself (1847), and Gone with the Wind author Margaret Mitchell (1900)
- the fall of the Berlin Wall, allowing East Berliners to walk freely into West Berlin (1989)
- the birthday of theologian Martin Luther (1483)
- the Dutch formally ceding New Netherlands (New York) to the English (1674)
- German engineer Gottlieb Daimler unveiling the world's first motorcycle (1885)

From The Conversation

You can train your nose – and 4 other surprising facts about your sense of smell

Lynn Nazareth, Research Scientist in Olfactory Biology, CSIRO

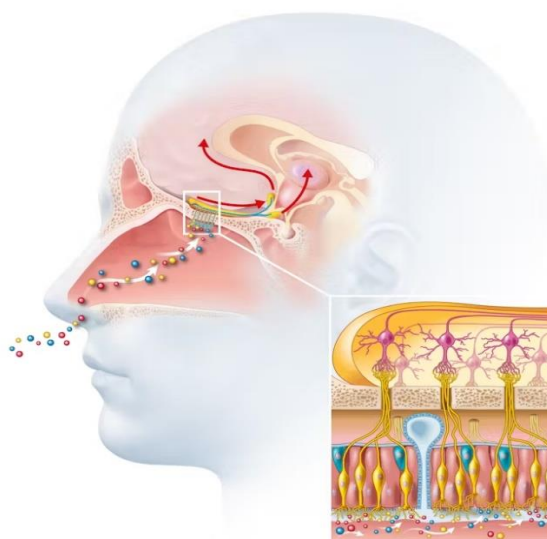
Would you give up your sense of smell to keep your hair? What about your phone? A 2022 US study compared smell to other senses (sight and hearing) and personally prized commodities (including money, a pet or hair) to see what people valued more.

The researchers found smell was viewed as much less important than sight and hearing, and valued less than many commodities. For example, half the women surveyed said they'd choose to keep their hair over sense of smell. Smell often goes under the radar as one of the least valued senses. But it is one of the first sensory systems vertebrates developed and is linked to your mental health, memory and more. Here are five fascinating facts about your olfactory system.

1. Smell is linked to memory and emotion

Why can the waft of fresh baking trigger joyful childhood memories? And why might a certain perfume jolt you back to a painful breakup? Smell is directly linked to both your memory and emotions. This connection was first established by American psychologist Donald Laird in 1935 (although French novelist Marcel Proust had already made it famous in his reverie about the scent of madeleines baking.)

Odours are first captured by special olfactory nerve cells inside your nose. These cells extend upwards from the roof of your nose towards the smell-processing centre of your brain, called the olfactory bulb.



Smells are first detected by nerve cells in the nose.

Axel_Kock/Shutterstock

From the olfactory bulb they form direct connection with the brain's limbic system. This includes the amygdala, where emotions are generated, and the hippocampus, where memories are created.

Other senses – such as sight and hearing – aren't directly connected to the limbic system. One 2004 study used functional magnetic resonance imaging to demonstrate odours trigger a much stronger emotional and memory response in the brain than a visual cue.

2. Your sense of smell constantly regenerates

You can lose your ability to smell due to injury or infection – for example during and after a COVID infection. This is known as olfactory dysfunction. In most cases it's temporary, returning to normal within a few weeks. This is because every few months your olfactory nerve cells die and are replaced by new cells.

We're not entirely sure how this occurs, but it likely involves your nose's stem cells, the olfactory bulb and other cells in the olfactory nerves. Other areas of your nervous system – including your brain and spinal cord – cannot regenerate and repair after an injury.

Constant regeneration may be a protective mechanism, as the olfactory nerves are vulnerable to damage caused by the external environment, including toxins (such as cigarette smoke), chemicals and pathogens (such as the flu virus). But following a COVID infection some people might continue to experience a loss of smell. Studies suggest the virus and a long-term immune response damages the cells that allow the olfactory system to regenerate.

3. Smell is linked to mental health



Losing your sense of smell can have a major impact on mental health. Halfpoint/Shutterstock

Around 5% of the global population suffer from anosmia – total loss of smell. An estimated 15-20% suffer partial loss, known as hyposmia. Given smell loss is often a primary and

long-term symptom of COVID, these numbers are likely to be higher since the pandemic. Yet in Australia, the prevalence of olfactory dysfunction remains surprisingly understudied.

Losing your sense of smell is shown to impact your personal and social relationships. For example, it can mean you miss out on shared eating experiences, or cause changes in sexual desire and behaviour. In older people, declining ability to smell is associated with a higher risk of depression and even death, although we still don't know why.

4. Loss of smell can help identify neurodegenerative diseases

Partial or full loss of smell is often an early indicator for a range of neurodegenerative diseases, including Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases. Patients frequently report losing their sense of smell years before any symptoms show in body or brain function. However, many people are not aware they are losing their sense of smell.

There are ways you can determine if you have smell loss and to what extent. You may be able to visit a formal smell testing centre or do a self-test at home, which assesses your ability to identify household items like coffee, wine or soap.

5. You can train your nose back into smelling

"Smell training" is emerging as a promising experimental treatment option for olfactory dysfunction. For people experiencing smell loss after COVID, it's been shown to improve the ability to detect and differentiate odours.

Smell training (or "olfactory training") was first tested in 2009 in a German psychology study. It involves sniffing robust odours – such as floral, citrus, aromatic or fruity scents – at least twice a day for 10–20 seconds at a time, usually over a 3–6 month period. Participants are asked to focus on the memory of the smell while sniffing and recall information about the odour and its intensity. This is believed to help reorganise the nerve connections in the brain, although the exact mechanism behind it is unclear.

Some studies recommend using a single set of scents, while others recommend switching to a new set of odours after a certain amount of time. However, both methods show significant improvement in smelling. This training has also been shown to alleviate depressive symptoms and improve cognitive decline both in older adults and those suffering from dementia.

Just like physiotherapy after a physical injury, olfactory training is thought to act like rehabilitation for your sense of smell. It retrains the nerves in your nose and the connections it forms within the brain, allowing you to correctly detect, process and interpret odours.



Alexis Bergantz, Lecturer, RMIT University

The Dismissal still looms as Australia's greatest political crisis, 50 years on. The familiar story centres on four figures. Governor general Sir John Kerr – who, on November 11 1975, sacked prime minister Gough Whitlam. Malcolm Fraser, the opposition leader who blocked the budget to force the election he would soon win. And the queen.

But Whitlam, Nobel Prize winning Australian novelist Patrick White and others suspected a quieter influence behind the scenes: Kerr's wife, Anne.

Whitlam likened her to a king's mistress who conspired with allies to bring down a rival and called her "the Lady Macbeth of Yarralumla". White wrote Anne had "probably been half the trouble". And Labor powerbroker Clyde Cameron called her "the one who was wearing the trousers". Both Kerrs denied accusations of her involvement.

A gifted linguist, Anne built a notable career across the Asia-Pacific, interpreting for leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of independent India, and Ben Chifley. In 1975, she gave it up to marry John Kerr, just months before he dismissed the Labor government. A talented interpreter, her life and career were shaped by the gender order of postwar Australia.

So, who was Anne Kerr – and did she really play a role in Whitlam's downfall?

Anne and John Kerr: 'plebian elites'

Anne Kerr was born into a middle-class family as Annie Dorothy Taggart on August 21 1914 in Eastwood, Sydney. Known to her friends as Nancy, she was among the few women to attend the University of Sydney in the 1930s, and spent two years at the Sorbonne in Paris on a prestigious scholarship.

She first met John Kerr in the 1940s through her first husband, Hugh Robson, later QC and judge. Like Kerr, he worked at the New South Wales Bar. In her 1988 memoir, *Lanterns Over Pinchgut*, Anne recalls she and Kerr had shared a "strong sense of affinity" since those early days.

When Kerr became principal of the Australian School of Pacific Administration in Mosman, he offered her a position as a teacher and researcher.

It was then, in 1947, that Anne gained her first professional experience as an interpreter at the South Seas Regional Conference, an international event that established the South Pacific Commission (now the Pacific Community), an intergovernmental development organisation for which John Kerr was interim secretary.

Their professional lives continued to overlap over the following decades. In 1966, for example, Anne worked as an interpreter for the Law Association for Asia and the Western Pacific where Kerr, by then a federal judge, was founding president.

Beyond their professional entanglements, the Kerrs seem to have shared similar outlooks on life. Both shifted from being on the left in their youth to far more conservative and traditional positions later on. Former Whitlam minister "Diamond" Jim McClelland saw in John Kerr a kind of "plebeian elitism" – a lust for prestige and to be accepted by the Establishment.

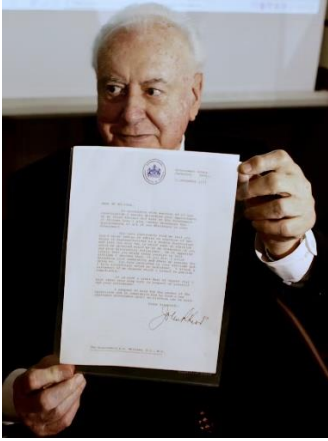
Anne seemed to share something of that impulse. On the strength of her own intellectual achievements, she described herself as "élitiste".



Sir John Kerr and Lady Kerr at Government House, Sydney, 1977. National Archives of Australia, CC BY

As the second Lady Kerr, she reportedly reinstated the tradition requiring women to curtsy to her at Government functions. And, at Yarralumla, in what could be seen as an emulation of British aristocratic traditions, she reportedly took to having breakfast served in bed.

In a country increasingly asserting its own independent nationalism in the wake of empire, the Kerrs appear to have inhabited a world of their own, increasingly out of step with the times.



Gough Whitlam (in 2005) with an original copy of his Dismissal letter. Mark Baker/AAP

Misogyny or truth?

In his account of the Dismissal, Gough Whitlam likened Anne to Madame du Barry, the official mistress of King Louis XV. It was a clever but cutting double barb: Du Barry had conspired with allies to bring down her rival, the Duc de Choiseul, in order to consolidate her own power at court. So, Whitlam was not only implying impropriety, but suggesting Anne had played a political role in the Dismissal itself. Patrick White, who despised both Kerrs, agreed.

To back up his theory, Whitlam cited a reported conversation between the Kerrs and poet James McAuley and his wife. Kerr allegedly said Anne had warned him not to consult Whitlam about his plan to dismiss the government – Whitlam might first have him sacked. Kerr also reportedly said Anne had talked him out of resigning after Malcolm Fraser's election victory.

But all these depictions of Anne come almost entirely from men writing after 1975. They are irredeemably steeped in misogyny and contempt, bred by her association with Kerr. (In private, Whitlam and White called her "Fancy Nancy".)

Many thought the idea Anne controlled John Kerr was an exaggeration. Richard Hall, Whitlam's former press secretary, pointed to the couple's heated arguments witnessed by staff as "evidence against petticoat domination". Conservative columnist David McNicoll described Anne as "a most forceful personality," but thought her influence was milder. He thought it was her love of all things French that had led to Kerr's appointment at UNESCO in Paris.

We know Kerr confided in Anne in the days leading up to the Dismissal: he showed her the documents he had prepared to dismiss Whitlam, and even incorporated one of her suggestions into the draft. She was clearly not a passive observer, but that doesn't make her a manipulative puppet master either. Even so, her involvement, however limited, sheds light on the broader story of the Dismissal.

The heart of the matter

My recent research also shows Kerr likely used his influence to expedite Anne's divorce from her first husband so they could marry quickly, less than a year after Kerr's first wife Alison, the first Lady Kerr, died. This shows how closely intimacy and power can be intertwined.

Anne also faced misogyny for pursuing professional interests outside the home and beyond the traditional roles of wife and mother. Her first marriage in 1940 (to solicitor Hugh Robson) gave her the financial means to hire a nanny so she could build a part-time career in interpreting. She still had to face accusations she was neglecting her children. In 1953, she described herself in the *Australian Women's Weekly* as "a housewife," but added that it "did not mean she spent all her time in the kitchen wearing an apron". The remark neatly captured 1950s debates about women's work and the limits of domesticity in bringing fulfilment.

In 1954, at the outset of the Vietnam War, she was called on as an expert to speak about French Indochina, including on ABC Radio. Listeners praised the rare on-air presence of a "quiet yet forceful-voiced woman" discussing international affairs. By the mid-1960s, she was consulting on interpreting services. In 1966, she became the first Australian elected to the International Association of Conference Interpreters.

Over the following decade, she worked across the Asia-Pacific with organisations including WHO, UNESCO, the Colombo Plan and the South Pacific Commission. Her career traces the expanding map of post-war Australian internationalism and the limits placed on women within it.

Fifty years on, there is renewed interest in what shaped John Kerr's decision on November 11 1975. But to understand him fully, we must also reckon with Anne, her intellect and her ambitions. This expands our view of the Dismissal beyond politics, to the realm of the personal.

After all, the dominant symbol atop John Kerr's elaborate vice-regal coat of arms is a gold heart: a pun on the Australian pronunciation of "Kerr", echoing the French "cœur" (heart). It was one of Lady Anne Kerr's suggestions.

Note from the Editor – This bought back memories for me. Mrs Robson (later Lady Anne Kerr) was my French teacher at North Sydney Girls High School. On reading this article I phoned a school friend and we reminisced about, not only learning French (she was a very good teacher) but also learning 'how to sit properly' which was practiced at the beginning of every French lesson. The "Fancy Nancy" tag summed up our perceptions of Mrs Robson too. We had a good laugh about this and other school experiences.