



U3A ... Learn, Laugh, Live Mallacoota & District Newsletter

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Presidents Desk

Hi everyone

Only a few weeks ago we were swimming in the inlet to cool off in the heat.

Now the mornings and evenings are becoming crisp.

Daylight saving is coming to an end on Sunday April 7

I hope you are enjoying the changing of the seasons. Another beautiful Easter has passed along with chocolate eggs and the Hot Cross buns, kids on school holidays, still autumn days and those later, brighter flowers.

Here is a little light reading for evenings and some events for your diary.

Best wishes

Fiona Raitt



Community Emergency Management Plans

Sergeant Andrew Scott began the February 2024 Community Clubrooms presentation with a summary of his career with Victoria Police. Based at Mallacoota since 2006, his work included the development/implementation of the **Community Emergency Management Plan**.

The latter period included working with Forest Fire Management. He noted "East Gippsland generally has a high level of natural disasters and Mallacoota has had a range of incidents requiring action," not only the fires of 1983 and 2019-20, including storms, noting how one isolated Mallacoota for 5 days because the Princes Highway was blocked by fallen trees.

The aim of the Management Plans is to ensure that the community members know *what to do* in an Emergency and that the Managers of the event know *what the community will do*.

Historically the Police managed all emergency events. However, following the Black Saturday fires of 2009 a review, led by a former Police Commissioner, recommended the establishment of a stand-alone Emergency Services Commissioner and the Police now only have leadership in terrorism events. Health Victoria managed the pandemic, and other events are managed by various services such as SES and Fire Services. Agencies' responsibilities are established under the Emergency Management Act

A further key point in that, and other reviews, has been the strong desire of the communities to have their voices heard and their experience and expertise utilised.

There are **3 stages** to the process: **Readiness/Response/Recovery**.

Readiness is the planning so that people know what to do.

Response is what happens when an incident occurs. The plan includes details of what members of the community can expect: Where to go to meet authorities. How to gain information about progress.

Recovery can last a number of years. The doctrine underlying this is owned by Australasian Inter-service Incident Management Systems (AIIMS) which ensures processes in all States and Territories are on the same basis, similar to military command structures.

A crucial aspect of current strategy is saving life. Protection of assets and extinguishing flame are secondary objectives.



When setting up the Mallacoota Plan it became known as the Local Incident Management Plan (LIMP) to stand out from other Emergency documentation. A similar plan developed by Woods Point in recent times (see image) formed a community incident management model based on the initial Mallacoota model.

An initial focus in Mallacoota was on the Community Hall as the Assembly Point. The Assembly Point is where agencies will set up and to which community members should report: as the Hall is currently under repair the Community Clubrooms have been designated as the Assembly Point in the current version of the Plan. The current version of the Plan – a copy is elsewhere in this edition of the Mouth – is very similar in content to the earlier versions. A copy will be made available to every household in Mallacoota, mainly through the postal system. It is planned for the system to be reviewed every 2 years.

The operation of the Plan supports any incident controller, and is a useful tool where the incident lasts several days.

Part of the planning is to have a list of people at risk who need special attention. The criteria for inclusion on this list, set by Health Victoria, are very tight and focus on people with limited or no personal support available. To protect privacy the local list will only be given to the Police who will make the required arrangements.

The actual implementation has two trigger points, depending on lead times. If more than 12 hours notice then the Incident Controller issues an Emergency Alert and advises other key entities. Unless the situation is one of terrorism (in which case the Police would be the lead agency) the Police assume the role of Emergency Response Coordinator and are responsible for managing evacuation. If considering evacuation there has to be a safe route and there has to be a safe place to go. In 2019-20 the road towards Cann River was closed and there was nowhere to the North for evacuees to go. The evacuation was thus from the hinterland into the town. It was noted that the Police cannot compel people to evacuate.

It is important that the Plan includes both the knowledge of local people and technical experts. The plan has a key objective of informing people at all levels (for example the Incident Controller may not know the area). The Plan must also be flexible to allow for the unexpected.

As well as the agencies drafting the Plan, many of the Committee members who drafted the Plan

bought specialist knowledge and were often employees of State Government. It incorporated advice from Local Government who control many resources (for example the Community Hall). Exercising the LIMP has also involved NSW agencies since the incident may not obey State borders, and resources may be needed from across the border.

All Community Emergency Management Plans are reviewed by the Inspector-General for Emergency Management, to ensure they are consistent, but may include aspects 'special' to the location covered by the plan. Some agencies have additional plans which fit within the overall Plan (for example the main campground has its own set of policies and plans).

At the conclusion of the presentation questions from the floor included:

- Can people from Karbeethong gather at the Jetty? Yes, but the agencies etc will be at the Clubrooms;
- Who is responsible for the siren? It is a CFA responsibility.
- What is the role of volunteers? Volunteers are key workers. Support roles tend to be filled by paid staff.
- How are messages spread by radio stations? 3MGB is not an emergency broadcaster but is prepared to broadcast in an emergency, and has approached the ABC to see if they would broadcast over 3MGB's frequencies if required (discussions in progress). [Ed note: update provided by 3MGB]
- What is happening about the Main Hall? The Shire is refurbishing the building so at present it isn't suitable and the Clubrooms are the focus. However, when the work on the Hall is complete that is planned to resume the foal role. Note that the Plan is reviewed every two years.

Martin Butterfield





Mallacoota's Endemic Garden

the most easterly botanic garden in Victoria

Bryce Watts-Parker presented to our U3A about the Mallacoota Endemic Garden. It is officially recognised by the Botanic Gardens of Australia and New Zealand (BGANZ).

East Gippsland has many different habitats from the coast to the rocky mountaintops. Its sparsely inhabited wild places and National Parks are home to rich flora and fauna: over 100 rare and endangered plants in the region.

Two of the stand-out species are Shipwreck Banksia (*Banksia Croajingolensis*) and Betka Bottlebrush (*Callistemon Kenmorrissonii*).



Mallacoota Endemic Garden was conceived after seeing the devastated landscapes of the 2019/20 fires. An Endemic Garden is a refuge for rare and endangered local plants. It is insurance against future fire events causing extinction. The plants in the garden have been grown from seeds collected from the wild. The plants were scientifically tested and carefully selected to provide genetic diversity for future health and viability.

Many hurdles from the first vision to accomplishment of the current garden and the idea might have withered many times but for the enthusiasm and efforts of many organisations and people who shared the vision.

The project was led by Friends of Mallacoota group (FOM). The first hurdle was finding a suitable site within the relative safety of the township. National Parks Vic were supportive of the use of part of their property on the corner next to the Bakery. Of course it took some time to negotiate.

The next hurdle was discovering old building waste at the site. This was overcome by covering areas with geotextiles and white gravel that serves as a barrier and warning not to disturb the potential hazard below. It meant the garden beds and paths had to be built up. The garden beds were built up from a special brew of native soil trucked in from the Royal Botanic Gardens. Of course funding had to be found for all the materials, earthworks and plants. Volunteers contributed many hours of labour.

The local garden showcases endemic (local) plants so we, the public, are aware of their existence, learning to value them. Friends of Mallacoota Nursery grows some of these plants for sale (see the stall at the Salt shop). You are encouraged to plant these in your garden.

Why are local plant species so important?

Plants endemic to the area have evolved in local conditions. They should grow well in your garden without too much help. They are part of local ecosystems providing food, and habitat for local birds, animals and insects which the plants in turn rely on for pollination and seed distribution.

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The garden was officially opened in November 2023. Seven beds showcase different habitats around Mallacoota – lowland forest, warm temperate rainforest, coastal scrub, granite rocky outcrops, granite rivers, heathland and Gabo Island. The signage is excellent.

If you haven't seen the Endemic garden yet a quiet wander (next to the Bakery) will delight you. If you have, then visiting it again is a dynamic experience and you will enjoy the new growth and seasonal changes.



Confirmed Presentations Program 2024

Community Club Rooms
2:20pm for a cuppa & chat

3 May Caroline Jones: **Animals of Southern Africa**

7 June Steve Millard **Kimberly Travels—Part 4**

2 August Larry Gray **Kayaking near Greenland**

6 September Bob Fisher **Travels in SW Tasmania**

1 November, 6 December To be confirmed

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Current Affairs

weekly discussion group

Wednesdays during school term, 3pm – 4:15pm **Church meeting room**

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Other Events

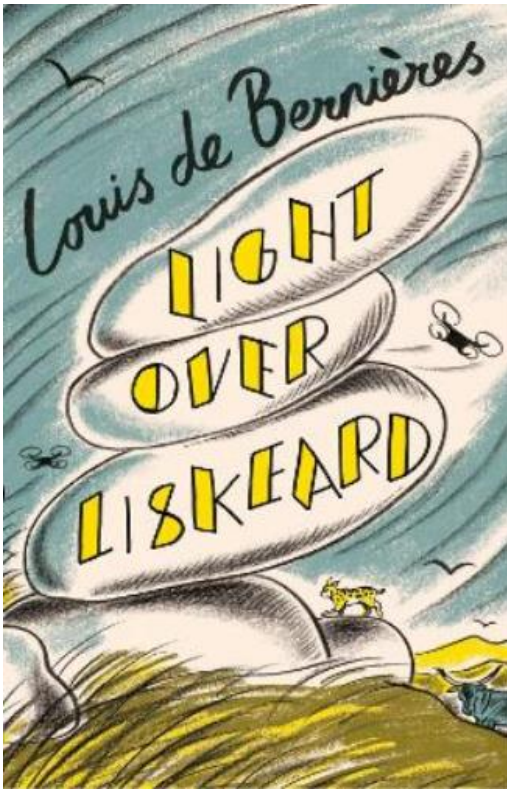
watch our Facebook page for details

- Pickle ball, in conjunction with Mallacoota Youth & Sports Club (by arrangement)
- Star gazing evenings (weather permitting)
- Plant walks will resume in Spring (Term 3)



LIGHT OVER LISKEARD

LOUIS DE BERNIERES



Can you remember having to write book reports at school? I always found it very difficult to convey the right amount of the story and characters' descriptions. Too much and then why read the book? Too little and it won't pique any interest. I read a lot of books mainly fiction from all genres and love a good read, feel sad when I finish one, and am always on the lookout for the next one.

The other book by this author I've read was *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* (1994). After enjoying it (except maybe the ending irritated me a bit) I thought I would try his most recent book *Light over Liskeard* (2023). I am glad I did because I have been thinking about it a lot ever since. I believe a good story should do that. Let me share some quotes and ideas from the book that have stayed with me.

"If you are a great reader of books, you will have lived hundreds of lives before you die. A dream is a kind of book, is it not? And a

What a lovely idea and a great argument for reading fiction! When I am enjoying a book, I feel I am in another world. It can be very difficult to put down the book, return to the present and make dinner. Maybe its fiction, science fiction, travel writing or a biography. It all broadens the mind.

Also, I found that my response to a book has been profoundly affected by my own life experiences. Personally, I think that is why there is usually such a diverse range of opinions about a book in a book-club, and why you would probably highlight different quotes to me.

George and I have become grandparents only in the last 2 years and the new babes have reignited that overwhelming love and wonder that I admit may have faded a little over the years. These next quotes may bring a tear to your eye.

"If you have children, it is as if your heart has been removed from the safety of your body and sent outside into the world." and

"That those who know no love may have too much choice. But those who love have all their choice removed." Chapter 8 Houses

The central character of the book, self - named Q, is a quantum computer cryptographer whose world's

work and production is performed by quantum computers and robots. A universal wage prevails so people don't have to work. However, these folk still seek meaning in their lives. This leads to some very bizarre behaviours.

Q's job is to keep the quantum computer systems running by defeating the endless stream of hackers trying to bring it down. He is constantly warning the government about the vulnerability of the systems and making personal plans for a looming doomsday. Over the course of the book he develops from a flabby nerd into a strong more practical nerd surrounded by many interesting and entertaining characters.

I grew up in a house with an open fire. After a bath we would be wrapped in a warm towel from the fireside. Dad was always on call for work but chopping and collecting the firewood was one weekend activity Mum and Dad always did together.

My mum used to say the fire warms you twice - first getting the firewood and then when it is burning. I still love a fire in the hearth though now I watch the flames through the glass door of the wood heater. Here are Q's reflections on the fireplace in his farmhouse bolthole.

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Q sat down in his armchair and watched the fascinating dance of the flames, the crackle and flicker of them, the yellows and oranges, the small flashes of green and blue. It suddenly occurred to him that before screens became ubiquitous, watching a fire must have been what everybody did. 'When the screens go blank,' he thought to himself, 'I shall watch flames, and I believe I will be more contented. I hope I will be more contented.' “

The quantum computers that run government and business in the future world of the book are known as the Machine. The Machine has collected every bit of data about everything because it can. In fact, there is so much data nobody can make sense of it so they don't look at it at all.

“We've got an electronic encyclopaedia of infinite information, a vast invisible cloud, but it's too much to deal with, so nobody looks at all. It might as well not be there. The Machine's defining characteristic is obsessive data collection combined with apathy.

That's why everything is slowly falling to pieces. We are so bogged down in detail that we can't function. You apply for a licence or a permission and nothing comes back. You're sending messages into a void. We are being thrown back on our own resources.”
Chapter 35 The UTRs

I think this gives you a sense of where the story is heading. It is a peculiar future world in the book. Could it be our future? Today we rely on computers for so much of our daily life. We are swamped with emails and overwhelmed with logins and passwords for every business and institution with which we have to interact. Data hacks steal our personal information, scams steal our money, and disinformation is widely circulated on the internet. Will it become unworkable one day, I wonder?

I found *Light over Liskeard* a very thought provoking story with lots of quirkiness to entertain the reader. I hope some of you will read it and tell me your thoughts.

Fiona Raitt



Caroline Jones

Friday 3 May 2024 , 2pm for a cuppa, 2:20pm start

Community Clubrooms

\$3 for U3A members, \$5 other

Caroline will present on a “wildlife watching tour” she undertook in southern Africa last year. Starting in Cape Town, she travelled over 5700 km overland through northwest South Africa, Namibia and Botswana before concluding at Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe.

The tour took in many of southern Africa's wildlife hotspots, such as the arid Kgalagadi and Etosha National Parks, and the wetlands of the Okavango Delta and Chobe National Park, and provided opportunities to see a wide array of birds, mammals and reptiles.



STAR GAZING 2024

We have been working with Destination Gippsland Ltd, a not-for-profit group promoting East Gippsland and Wellington Shires, on an astrotourism project since they won a bushfire recovery grant in 2021.

The project connects 11 East Gippsland and Wellington towns, including Mallacoota and Buchan, that provide exceptional observational sites for the night sky, due to their low light pollution. The project includes insights into Aboriginal interpretation and story-telling of land and skies.

Fiona and George recently attended a star gazing event at Buchan run by the Victorian Astronomical Society and regional astronomical societies from Mornington Peninsula and the La Trobe Valley.

Our U3A's role in the project has been to raise community awareness regarding amateur astronomy. To this end, we have run star gazing events with our own equipment (supplemented with a grant from the east Gippsland Community Foundation which enabled us to acquire a smart telescope), and in conjunction with the school and Karbeethong Lodge.

We have now received some more telescope and related equipment funded by Destination Gippsland. Pictured is the Celestron Nexstar Evolution Edge smart telescope.



The equipment package will enable us, for example, to run guided star walks with binoculars and red torches, pointing out features of the night sky from the walking track along Lakeside Drive between Stingray Point and Karbeethong. The Lions Club walking track around the perimeter of the golf course would be another suitable night walk when completed.



Caroline Jones has run some introductory sessions on night sky photography for those with DSLR cameras. We also now have some photography equipment which can be used by people who do not have DSLR cameras, including adapters to attach smart phones to the telescope lens and the Dwarf II smart telescope



(essentially a camera) which is operated via an iPhone app.

The following photo of the moon last week was taken with our new Dwarf II.

With this additional equipment we can begin a program to train people in the use of our telescopes so that some of our manual telescopes can be loaned to members and made available for



community use. We would like to develop a 'user group' which would include U3A members and volunteers, as well as younger community members who may be interested to develop knowledge and skills about astronomy, telescopes and night sky photography. So please get involved, and contact George on george42raitt@gmail.com – if it is not quite your cup of tea, think about involving your children and grandchildren, who tend to be more digitally literate with modern devices!