

# HISTORIC

## NEW ITALY

SUMMER 2021

# IL GIORNALE

WISHING ALL A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS & A HAPPY HEALTHY 2022!  
 AUGURO A TUTTO UN BUON NATALE E UN FELICE SANO 2022!

## MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

What a challenging time we have been having at Historic New Italy! **The Tastes of New Italy Café** went from reduced hours to reduced days - only opening around the weekend! Due to low visitor numbers we closed the whole site for three days at a time. I am glad to report we are back to being open 7 days a week but at reduced hours. Hopefully that as holidays approach and with the border reopening, it will be business as usual.

On site, we noted that there weren't many places to sit at outside the Café area. John Barnes has commissioned the **Alstonville Men's Shed** to make two beautiful wooden benches (see one below) which will be installed soon.

Our kangaroos are back to grazing contently in **New Italy's Park of Peace**. The trees and grounds look lush after the recent rain and soil improvement.

On your next visit, you may notice the absence of five tall Slash Pine trees from the edge of the back car park. They were skilfully removed recently to make way for native shade trees (see below). Unfortunately the Slash Pines (*Pinus elliottii*) are from USA, not native to Australia. They grow quickly and are classified as an environmental weed. We have experienced their spread into our roof gutters and the bushland surrounding the Complex. Our landscaping plans include planting replacement trees now and gradually removing the remaining Slash Pines from the parkland over the next 10 years. Meanwhile volunteers Peter, Adrian and Lee are removing smaller renegade trees from the surrounding bushland to keep the spread under control.

Recently we have received some grant funding thanks to efforts by Peter and Leonie. These included a **grant from the NSW State Government under the Community Building Partnership arrangements** for \$19,910 towards the cost of repainting the front of the Museum, the ex-Driver Reviver and the Glass Art buildings, after repairs to the render (total cost est. \$23,320). This painting project will be undertaken in late March 2022 by a local painting contractor and is part of major improvements to the "front of house" at Historic

New Italy. They will be painted to match the rest of the site, giving the Pacific Highway carpark entrance a fresh and welcoming look.

We were successful in our application to **Richmond Valley Council Community Financial Assistance Program 2021\_2022** for \$4,509 for signs to welcome visitors to our site. The new signage will Acknowledge Country and Welcome visitors to our site in the three languages of the people who have walked this land – Bandjalang, Italian and English. These signs will be placed at our entrances to create an important first impression to remind all about the layered nature of 'place' within Australia.

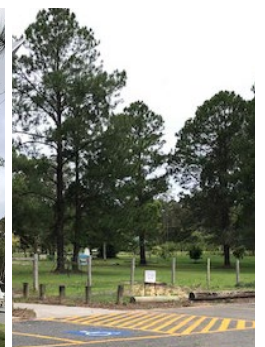
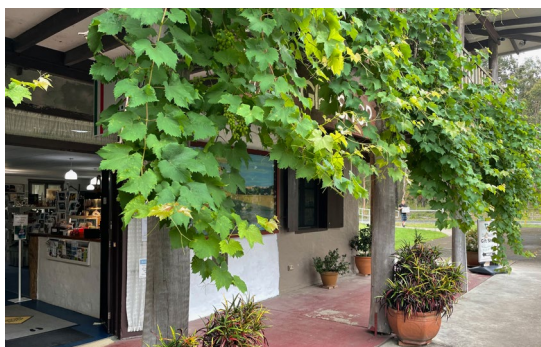
We have also received \$13,200 grant from the **Federal Government under the Powering Communities Program** towards the cost of a 12.8KW solar PV system (total cost est. \$17,500, system to be supplied and installed in early 2022 by a local company). This new solar system will substantially reduce NIMI's electricity costs at New Italy. The panels are to be installed on the museum roof, invisible from the piazza area maintaining the heritage ambiance of the site.

We are making a **third attempt under the ClubGrants Infrastructure program** to secure grant funding towards the cost of constructing a new covered walkway across the front of the Museum building. This project is estimated to cost approx \$100,000 and adds significantly to the improvements to the "front of house" at Historic New Italy.

Meanwhile at **Casa Serena** we are waiting for builders' quotes for repairs to damages. Certain trees have been removed or pruned to enable builders to properly assess the damages. Meanwhile we welcome two new tenants, new neighbours for our existing ones.

**On behalf of the New Italy Museum Inc. committee, we wish you all a very Merry Christmas! Let's hope 2022 brings health and happiness to all - you, your loved ones, our community, Australia and beyond!**

Gail Williams





## A NOT-SO-SWEET STORY

The Marquis de Rays' deceptive colonisation scheme was made possible because the chosen area of the south-west Pacific had never been claimed by any colonising power. Until this happened in the late 1880s, the area was without any form of jurisdiction.

This allowed certain companies and individuals in Australia - as early as the 1840s - an opportunity to obtain cheap and plentiful labour. At this time this shortage of labour was further exacerbated by the cessation of convict transportation from England to the East Coast of Australia in the early 1850s.

Fuelled by these circumstances, privateers and companies like CSR, with sponsored vessels ventured to the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Eastern New Guinea Islands and elsewhere to deceive, capture, entice and recruit able-bodied young men and women for three years of indentured work in the Queensland and Northern NSW sugar fields. Tropical farm work was at the time considered to be unsuited to Europeans. The women were employed as domestics.

This practice, known as blackbirding, was responsible for the movement of some 55,000 men and 5,000 women from the Pacific Islands to Australia from 1862 to about 1900. Such was the scale of this operation that some native villages lost some 50% of their male population.

Conditions of employment, housing and welfare for these people were at best basic particularly in the early years. Illnesses were common and the death rate was unusually high. Although some legal protection for these people was provided by Acts of Parliament in 1868 and 1880, enforcement was poor and so exploitation was rife. Some 25% of these labourers died in Australia. Many were

however eventually returned to their home islands.

There was opposition to the scheme from the Churches on moral grounds and from the Trade Unions on job erosion grounds.

The passage of the White Australia legislation in 1901 spelt the official end of the practice. It was decided to repatriate the 10,000 labourers who were still in Australia. However, in response to strong protests some 3,000 persons were allowed to remain in Australia or else be hidden from authorities. Some of this latter group served in Australian forces in WWI. It is estimated that there are some 25,000 descendants of these people in Australia today and they have been officially recognised as a distinct racial group and were granted full citizenship in 1967. A monument in Childers, (Qld) commemorates their contribution to Australian agriculture, mining and fishing. Notable descendants include Mal Meninga, Sam Bacco, Gordon Tallis, Wendell Sailor, Faith Bandler and Bonita Mabo (widow of Eddie Mabo).

Why this story? I find it ironic that as the French-based Marquis de Rays was devising his deceptive sugar-based colonisation of the SW Pacific islands, there were systems operating where recruited labour from the same islands to work on sugar plantations in Australia. Both schemes have had long endings.

As the survivors of the Marquis de Rays expedition settled at what became New Italy and started work in the sugar industry at nearby Broadwater and Woodburn, they encountered South Pacific Islanders who had origins in the same island locations which they had unsuccessfully tried to settle (and even grow sugar) several years earlier.



P.S. The Tweed River and Byron areas of Northern NSW are today home to many descendants of the South Sea Islanders. Well-known families include the Wategos (after whom Wategos Beach is named) and the Togo's. Members of the Togo family have been in continuous employment with a local waste and recycling company for some 70 years. Such was the company's esteem for one particular deceased member that a meeting room in the head office has been named after him. (*see photos above*)

In the redevelopment of New Italy's Italian Pavilion, a display relating to sugarcane cutters will pay homage to the sugar labourers from the South Pacific Islands. Surely they deserve it.

**John Barnes**

## BUSHFIRE RECOVERY GRANT INSTALLATION



We are pleased to announce that Richmond Valley Council will soon be installing the pump and the waterpipe from the dam to a point at the western side of the back car park as a part of the Bushfire Recovery Grant.

Remembering the 2019 bushfire emergency, when wildlife like these kangaroos sought refuge in the grounds of Historic New Italy, it will be wonderful to have these in place. Photo by Adrian Murgu

## APPRECIATING STEVE CAPELIN'S 'PARADISO'

*"THANK YOU FROM ME, and so many others that I have contacted re your wonderful book that just happens to be on my lineage! My dad was Spencer Spinaze of Lismore, and my relatives are the Sommerlads, Hankinsons. Yours is the first of the many books my parents left with me that I can actually read, knowing that here at last is a story I can relate properly to, and it brings my ancestors alive, so thank you very much for that. However, if you have the energy, and obviously you have the talent, could you perhaps continue the story? I realise that it is a mammoth task to ask of you!! Hope your wonderful story continues to sell well as it's fame spreads."*

Jenny Magner, daughter of Spencer Spinaze.



## UPDATE ON PROPOSED SERVICE STATION AT NEW ITALY



The Development Application remains under consideration by the Richmond Valley Council (RVC). While this scenario may seem as if little has changed since our last edition, we understand that there has been considerable activity in the supply of additional information by the developer in response to requests from the RVC. Your association is not directly involved in these interactions and we anxiously await a conclusion to the process.

## THE PROPOSED LEASH-FREE DOG PARK



As noted in the last *'Il Giornale'* our landscaping plan includes the provision for a leash-free dog park behind the back carpark. Recently, we have noticed an increase of travellers accompanied by much-loved canines like this beautiful Maremma. Like all travellers they need rest and exercise. A sturdy fence with gates is required to secure the allocated space. Funds are needed to make this a possibility. We are looking to sell small and large advertising space on the proposed fence to pet food companies/pet shops/local pet kennels and vets. If you know anyone who maybe interested in supporting this venture, please contact us: [info@newitaly.org.au](mailto:info@newitaly.org.au)

Photo by Leonie Lane

## UPCOMING EVENTS

# NIMI AGM

NEW ITALY COMMUNITY HALL

## 11AM SUNDAY

## 6 FEBRUARY 2022

Please find attached to this newsletter:

- A letter to the Membership advising of the AGM
- Minutes of the last AGM
- Agenda for the AGM 6/2/2022 - with nomination and proxy forms
- A Membership form

### NEW ITALY & SURROUNDS COMMUNITY NETWORKING MORNING TEA

PARK OF PEACE  
& NEW ITALY  
COMMUNITY HALL

**DEC 18TH  
10.30AM**

TEA & COFFEE & CAKE PROVIDED

BRING A PLATE OR JUST YOURSELF AND SHARE  
IDEAS ON POSSIBLE COMMUNITY FOCUSED  
NETWORKING INITIATIVES LIKE

Share, Swap or Barter Produce, Plants, Seeds,  
Clothing, Goods & Services

Supporting Local Small Businesses

Improving Self Sufficiency & Food Security

Community Support, Education, Activities & More

To help us plan text your interest to 0438896511 or just turn up on the day... Everyone Welcome!

**Communities Working Together**

CELEBRATING 140 YEARS OF NEW ITALY SETTLEMENT

# ANNIVERSARY DAY

## SUNDAY 10 APRIL 2022

## HISTORIC NEW ITALY

PACIFIC HIGHWAY, SOUTH OF WOODBURN

FREE ENTRY

THE GIFT SHOP HAS REOPENED!

## MEMBERSHIP SUNDAYS

(2ND SUNDAY EVERY MONTH)

ALL MEMBERS WILL RECEIVE 10% DISCOUNT FROM BOTH  
CASA VECCHIA GIFT SHOP & THE TASTES OF NEW ITALY CAFÉ

LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING YOU!

# Li's Amore!

SAVE THE DATE **SUNDAY 5 JUNE 2022**  
... BENVENUTI A TUTTI!



## WHAT'S HAPPENING AT NEW ITALY...

### THE CASA VECCHIA GIFT SHOP



It is so good to be open again! We opened at the beginning of November, not in October as planned. To protect ourselves and our customers we waited until we were all fully immunised. Now the Christmas decorations are up and we are feeling festive! We would love to see you - old and new customers alike. Drop in, say hello and do a little bit of Christmas shopping!

**The shop volunteers would like to wish you all**

**BUON NATALE**

**and a happy, healthy Covid-free 2022!**

Follow us on Instagram #casavecchiagiftshop

Gail Williams • giftshop@newitaly.org.au



### ITALIAN PAVILION



How many of our readers visited Expo88? Do you have photos of the Italian Pavilion at Expo88 to share? If so, we would love to include them in a new display in the Italian Pavilion upgrade. As you will be aware some of the internal displays - the archways and the alcoves - the restored Da Vinci 'Car', the plaster opera figures in the hall plus building material were donated by the Italian Government to New Italy Museum Complex in 1989 and are a part of the heritage listing of the Pavilion. The Italian Pavilion upgrade

will incorporate these features. It has been a very busy grant writing time for many aspects of Historic New Italy especially for the Italian Pavilion upgrade. Fingers crossed for successful outcomes in 2022! It will be a big year - if you feel like volunteering on the Italian Pavilion upgrade you would be most welcome! Seasons Greetings to all!

Leonie Lane • museums@newitaly.org.au

### NEW ITALY MUSEUM



New Italy Museum volunteers, Lester Cooke, Leone Stibbard and Cynthia McKeough enjoying Joan Kelly's paper about Volunteer Museum Residencies.



Our Museum days have been reduced to one day a month since May 2021 while there has been COVID uncertainty. These days are generally taken up with maintenance, cleaning, the preparation for new displays and catching up with each other over lunch and a coffee.

Our last Museum day coincided with the annual Powerhouse Museum's Regional Stakeholder Forum. *Connection* was the 2021 theme focussing on how cultural organisations from Western Sydney and across regional NSW connected with their communities and audiences. We were able to view sessions as a free online forum for museum volunteers and professionals from the comfort of the New Italy Community Hall. We really enjoyed what we saw. It included Joan Kelly,

Project Officer with Arts Northern Rivers talk about Volunteer Museum - Residencies. This involved Yaegl artists, Frances Belle Parker and Blake Rhodes engaging with the Maclean and Yamba Museums to imagine new works to engage creatively with visitors. Each work incorporated neglected voices and perspectives into existing narratives. This Arts Northern Rivers residency project is an outcome of the VAMP program initiated by Orana Arts that seeks to strengthen connections between museums, their community and visitors. Wonderful possibilities for all local volunteer museums!

Leonie Lane • museums@newitaly.org.au

**DONATIONS** [newitaly.org.au](http://newitaly.org.au) > Donation page

NIMI is registered with ATO ~ Deductible Gift Recipient

**JOIN or RENEW NIMI MEMBERSHIP** [www.newitaly.org.au/about-us/membership](http://www.newitaly.org.au/about-us/membership)

**'IL GIORNALE'** Autumn 2022: content due 14/2/2022 [museums@newitaly.org.au](mailto:museums@newitaly.org.au)

**BECOME A VOLUNTEER** Contact [info@newitaly.org.au](mailto:info@newitaly.org.au)

**STAY IN TOUCH** [newitaly.org.au](http://newitaly.org.au) • PO Box 5139 East Lismore, NSW 2480

Facebook: New Italy / Historic New Italy

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