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Village Eco News

A publication of Bangalow Land and Rivercare.

The Importance of a Healthy Richmond River

The Richmond River catchment is the sixth largest in New South Wales and covers an area of nearly 7,000 square kilometres. It was once a thriving, heavily timbered forest, but since European settlement it has changed dramatically and the banks of the river are now home to intensive agriculture, grazing, and urban development.

Why should we be concerned?

The Richmond River estuary and wetlands provide a diversity of habitats for a range of terrestrial and aquatic species. Estuarine wetlands including mangroves, saltmarsh and seagrass areas provide an important role in healthy ecosystem function and supports a number of rare and threatened communities. The River estuary is also recognised as one of the two most important locations for shorebird habitat in Northern NSW. The Clarence River estuary is the other important site.

The riparian zone (the interface between land and waterways) bordering the Richmond River estuary and tributaries is generally devoid of vegetation for much of the area. Where riparian vegetation is present it is generally degraded, with only a few examples of intact riparian vegetation in good condition.

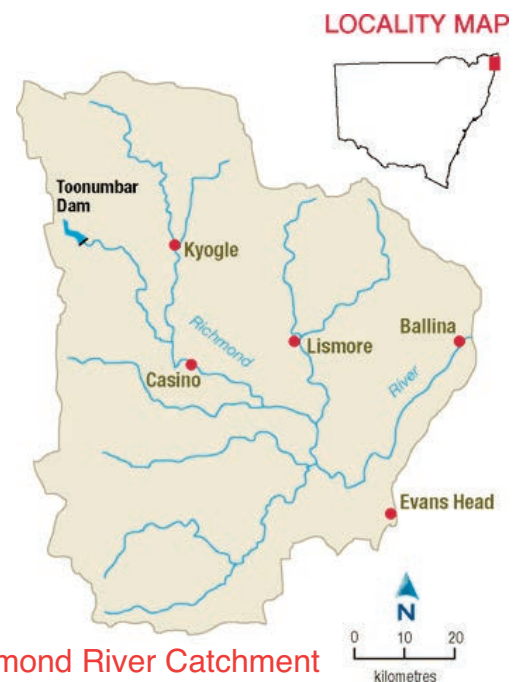
The issues associated with the poor condition or lack of a vegetated riparian zone are associated with the loss of the functions and values of this important zone. Riparian zone functions include fisheries habitat, terrestrial habitat, bank stability and maintenance of soil structural integrity, land use buffering, water

quality filtering, lowering water temperature and reducing aquatic weeds as well as providing scenic amenity.

Local communities, Landcare groups, Rous Water, print media and the ABC are calling for immediate action with 'The Greens' providing the state government with a comprehensive management plan for the River's future.

Water is our most precious resource and will become even more valuable with the changes to the climate. When you look at the Richmond River's catchment area, identified below, it's not "just a river near Ballina" but effects a large part of our region and we all need to be actively involved in seeking a solution.

Sources: websites of those groups mentioned above, Rous County Council and Nth Coast Local Land Services



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Landcare Working Bee

Our team of friendly volunteers work every Saturday morning, weather permitting from 8.30am to 10.30am rotating through the various sites around Bangalow. All welcome. **Raffle winner for October/November: Jo from Possum Creek**



How water-wise is your diet?

By **B. Ridoutt, Principal Research Scientist, CSIRO** and **D. Baird, Research Dietitian**

Our diets can have a big environmental impact but have you ever thought about the water-scarcity impacts of producing your favorite foods? The answers may surprise you.

We looked at the water scarcity footprints of the diets of 9,341 adult Australians, involving more than 5,000 foods.

The food system accounts for around 70% of global freshwater use. This means a concerted effort to minimise the water used to produce our food - while ensuring our diets remained healthy - would have a big impact in Australia, the driest inhabited continent on Earth.

Foods with some of the highest water-scarcity footprints were almonds (3,448 litres/kg), dried apricots (3,363 litres/kg) and breakfast cereal made from puffed rice (1,464 litres/kg). In contrast, foods with some of the smallest water-scarcity footprint included wholemeal bread (11.3 litres/kg), oats (23.4 litres/kg), and soaked chickpeas (5.9 litres/kg).

It may surprise you that of the 9,000 diets studied, 25% of the water scarcity footprint came from discretionary foods and beverages such as cakes, biscuits, sugar-sweetened drinks and alcohol. They included a glass of wine (41 litres), a single serve of potato crisps (23 litres), and a small bar of milk chocolate (21 litres).

These foods don't only add to our waistlines, but also our water-scarcity footprint.

Previous studies have also shown these foods contribute around 30% of dietary greenhouse gas emissions in Australia.

The second highest food group in terms of contributing to water-scarcity was fruit, at 19%. This includes whole fruit and fresh (not sugar-sweetened) juices. It should be remembered that fruit is an essential part of a healthy diet, and generally Australians need to consume more fruit to meet recommendations.

Dairy products and alternatives (including non-dairy beverages made from soy, rice and nuts) came in third and bread and cereals ranked fourth. The consumption of red meat - beef and lamb - contributed only 3.7% of the total dietary water-scarcity footprint. These results suggest that eating fresh meat is less important to water scarcity than most other food groups.

Not surprisingly, cutting out discretionary foods would be number one priority if you wanted to lower the water footprint of the food you eat, as well as the greenhouse gas emissions of production. Over-consumption of discretionary foods is also linked to weight gain and obesity.

Eating a variety of healthy foods, according to energy needs, is a helpful motto. Water scarcity is just one important environmental aspects of food production and consumption. While we don't suggest that dietary guidelines be amended based on water scarcity footprints, we hope this research will support more food sustainable production and consumption.



Jimmy Halfcut

by Liz Gander

I first met James at the Scrubbers Ball back in 2016, a very passionate and intelligent young teacher keen to save the rainforests. It was a very inspiring evening with Bob Brown as the special guest who spoke to us as only Bob does with love and inspiration. It was wonderful to meet Jimmy and feel his energy for raising money to restore rainforests.

I have followed his progress since then and am so happy to see it was not a flash in the pan, the movement is still going strong and is worthy of support. How does it work? Basically heroes get sponsored to shave half their beard or for wearing half a head of braids or any other quirky 'half' style to represent the loss of half of the world's forests. Wearing a Halfcut then raises the conversation about conservation.

The HalfCut Story

HalfCut was created by founders James Stanton-Cooke and Jessica Clarke who have a shared passion for the protection of the natural environment and wildlife. James and Jess set off on travels in 2011 volunteering in conservation work in South America Amazon Basin Bolivia, Serene Reserve. Seeing the continued destruction to the environment, wildlife and the communities being affected by illegal logging they decided to raise awareness and funds to support conservation efforts by using facial and head hair as a talking point.

By this stage, James had grown a large beard that drew attention from tourists visiting the Serene Reserve, who would comment "Nice beard!" Jessica came up with the idea to say it was for conservation, from that point onwards they have worked voluntarily to create campaigns to protect the last remaining rainforests.

HalfCut was launched to signify over 50% of the world's forests gone. It created the perfect opportunity for people to ask "Why" to start a conversation about conservation. *HalfCut* empowers people to take action on global deforestation by protecting the last remaining tropical rainforests with partners Rainforest Trust.

98.8% of the raised money is donated directly to The Rainforest Trust 'Saving Indigenous Land in the Amazon' campaign, which focuses on western part of the Amazon basin (also known as Andes-Amazonia). The other 1.2% goes to Stripe for credit card fees. All donations made to Rainforest Trust are matched \$1 for \$1 by the 'friends of Rainforest Trust' philanthropist group. That means when you give \$2.50, actually \$5 is spent protecting rainforest.

Land purchases are highly strategic, often land parcels are protected by purchasing just the perimeter of land around an at-risk rainforest. This land is then gifted to local indigenous and/or environmental groups. As the land is now privately owned by these groups, they can deny logging companies access to their land and in turn, this means the centre is land-locked and no machinery can gain access to it. Also, these rainforests are often in developing countries, meaning our stronger currency goes further.

Rainforest trust also works with these local groups offering consultation on sustained protection and development of new industries, typically eco-tourism. The 2019 wrap-up sees \$219,682 raised from 106 *Halfcut* heroes protecting 87,873 acres of rainforest protected for life. If you would like to support Jimmy go to halfcut.org, no need to shave half your beard but you can if you like and start the conversation in your locality.





‘Confused and Wary’ our View of Electric Cars.

By Neilsens Media Research

Australians are confused and wary of the range and cost of electric cars. Research called ‘*Caught in the Slow Lane*’ by Neilsens exposed our reluctance to switch from petrol driven cars.

While most people drive less than 80 kilometres the fear of running out of charge was the major deterrent.

47% of the 1000 surveyed were concerned that electric vehicles could only travel between 100 to 300 kilometres before recharging.

77% said the lack of public infrastructure in charging points was also a deterrent.

4 out of 5 said price was a major factor. The lowest current price is a Hyundai at \$45 000.

50% claimed that they had no intension of buying an electric car.

50% said they would buy an electric car but would only pay between \$20 000 and \$30 000

16% said they were adequately informed about electric vehicles.

12% did not know electric cars were available in Australia.

Neilsen’s Automotive head, Michael Brown said “Australians rate the environment as a more important social issue than mental health, education, the aging population, interest rates and obesity. While there is a strong desire among Australians to do their part to improve the environment their willingness to change habits and buy electric cars is stalled”.

In the last 3 years fewer than 2 000 electric cars were sold nationally compared with 1.2 million in China, 360 000 in the United States and 3 682 in New Zealand.

The Federal government is developing a national electric vehicle strategy to be finalised mid next year to address the barriers to uptake.



Village Eco News

Our aim is to inform, interest, amuse and educate our readers on all things environmental. We welcome you to submit your contributions or to subscribe to this free Newsletter send your name and email address to:

bangalowlandcare@gmail.com

Please pass this publication on to your family and friends. Receiving our Newsletter online will help to save the environment we work to preserve.

editor, design and layout, Dawn Lotty



Contact Details:

President: Noelene Plummer 6685 4470

Secretary: Liz Gander 6687 1309

Email: bangalowlandcare@gmail.com

www.bangalowlandcare.org.au

