

Echo

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Cafes step up for Homelessness Week



Next week is Homelessness Week 2021, and local cafes, Allpress Espresso Byron Bay and Three Blue Ducks, are taking part in CafeSmart (2-8 August) to help raise funds for their local homeless charities. To support the cause, simply purchase a coffee at your local CafeSmart cafe on Friday August 6, or donate the cost of a coffee online. For more info, visit www.streetsmartaustralia.org/cafesmart. Pictured is Stephanie Brodeur from Three Blue Ducks. Photo Jeff 'Triple Shot Since 1986' Dawson

Markets could return to Butler Street Reserve

Paul Bibby

Byron's weekly farmers' market may return to its traditional home in Butler Street Reserve after detailed soil testing found that the park was less contaminated than was feared.

After months of discussion and debate over the future of the site following the discovery of acid sulphate soils, consultants hired by Council have found that it is, in fact, suitable for certain community uses.

'No polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) of public open space health-based criteria were reported in all the samples collected from the former site surface and/or landfill material,' the consultants, Cavanbah Consulting, said in their report.

'The site is considered suitable for the proposed community use for open space, market place and car parking.' These findings have been forwarded to the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) for a final review.

However, in the meantime, Council staff are developing a proposal for the staged return of community uses to the reserve, including the weekly farmers' market.

Stage One of this proposal would

see a return of the weekly farmers' market to a small grassed section of the reserve. Stage Two would see a return of the entire reserve to community use for a 'mix of markets, parking and green recreation space, factoring in any constraints or exclusion zones required by the EPA'.

In a press release issued last week, interim Byron Mayor, Michael Lyon, described the latest consultant's report as 'positive news'.

Cr Lyon had previously described suggestions that any market could return to Butler Street as an 'incorrect assertion', on the basis that the site is too contaminated.

Meanwhile, Council staff are preparing a development application (DA) for the monthly Community Market to be relocated to Railway Park in the centre of town.

This market is currently located in the park next to Byron's Main Beach. The Community Market was only meant to remain in this temporary home until October.

However, Council staff have now indicated that 90 days is needed to assess the DA, meaning that the relocation will be delayed until at least December 2021.

NSW Parliament off for a month, with full pay

With COVID-19 cases surging across Sydney and defence forces being deployed in the city, NSW Parliament put out a brief statement last week saying MPs will not sit in the month of August 'owing to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in NSW'.

It reads, 'The Presiding Officers are mindful of the public interest and the safety and health of all people who attend Parliament House'.

The Echo asked local NSW MP Tamara Smith (Greens) why Zoom, or other options weren't explored instead, given it is now 18 months into the pandemic; and whether MPs were still on full pay while not sitting in August?

Ms Smith told The Echo, 'It is

unacceptable that in this day and age, the parliament is unable to resume in a virtual capacity during the greater Sydney lockdown'.

'The Federal Parliament was able to offer hybrid parliamentary sittings since the middle of last year, yet the NSW Parliament are saying that it would take a further 12 more months from now for the kinds of back end changes needed to support virtual parliamentary sittings'.

Virtual Budget estimates

She says the Greens have made a 'number of submissions to the LNP on how to hold virtual Budget estimates scheduled for next week, but they have not been taken up'.

'Given the unprecedented police, budgetary and emergency powers of the LNP during lockdowns, I think we should be very concerned that there is no democratic oversight for at least another four weeks.'

'The time to start preparing for virtual parliament was nearly 18 months ago and the LNP in NSW have done nothing towards that end'.

When asked to clarify that MPs were still to be paid in full while not sitting in August, Ms Smith replied, 'Yes, although for lower house MPs, we all continue to run our offices and staff in our electorates'.

For COVID-19 grants, loans and financial assistance, visit www.service.nsw.gov.au.



Will the farmers' market return to Butler Street? Photo supplied

Economic loss from cancelled 2021 Buesfest \$225.4M: report ► p8

Local Labor MP explains backflip on neg gearing, more tax cuts for wealthy ► p8

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