

Helping children gain access to books, [click here](#).

MYALL HIGH NEWS

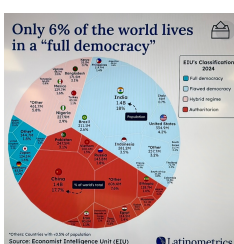
Live, laugh and learn

The recent Friday Presentation, given by Dr Paul Hardisty, an environmental scientist and freelance journalist, as well as a prolific and best-selling author of both fiction and non-fiction, was as challenging as it was informative. It was fascinating to hear what he considers to be the most important issues facing us in our time.

After four decades spent working in some of the world's most dangerous and environmentally damaged places, Paul has come to the conclusion that literacy and democracy are among the most critical foundations for ensuring a future filled with hope. While I was shocked by the slide he presented showing that only 6% of the world's population live in a 'full democracy' (image below), it was his insistence on the importance of literacy that particularly resonated with me. As a voracious reader and keen writer, I have always appreciated the power of words, books and the ability to communicate.

When we think of literacy, we generally equate it with the ability to read and write. But literacy is much more than that. It is the ability to understand, interpret, question and effectively communicate information. In an increasingly complex world, the ability to distinguish between fact and fiction, truth and misinformation, becomes every bit as important as the ability to read the words on a page. Those of us from the older generation need little convincing of the pleasure a good novel, biography or thought-provoking article can provide. A book can transport us to another world, introduce us to people and perspectives very different from our own, broaden our understanding and, perhaps most importantly, keep our imagination alive. Reading requires us to slow down, concentrate and allow ideas to develop in our minds rather than simply presenting us with instant answers.

Paul argues that the enormous amount of information now available at the push of a button, while still requiring us to be able to read, can have a very different effect. The dopamine hit that comes with instant gratification, combined with the time we can waste scrolling through endless streams of often insignificant content, encourages us to consume rather than think. It can shorten our attention spans and, perhaps most worryingly, diminish our ability to think critically. It is therefore gratifying to see the recent turnaround. Scandinavian countries now require schools to place greater emphasis on the fundamental skills of reading books and writing by hand - helping little hands to form letters on paper, just as we did some decades ago.



Democracy Chart



Paul in Ukraine



Authors Paul & Ray

Perhaps this is a small but significant step in the right direction. Technology is undoubtedly an extraordinary tool, and there is no turning back the clock. But perhaps the challenge is to ensure that technology remains our servant rather than becoming our master.

In addition of talking about the above topics, Paul also spoke engagingly about his most recent visit to the Ukraine. All in all Paul gave us a terrific Friday Presentation and I look forward to welcoming him again in the future. To learn more about Dr Paul Hardisty, [click here](#).

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN U3A:

EXCURSION:

It is not too late to book your ticket for the excursion on the original Tea Gardens Ferry on Friday, September 4th. Details can be found in the orange panel.

ART SHOW:

Our popular annual Art Show will take place on the October long weekend (Saturday 3rd and Sunday 4th of October). Our Art Group members, who are busy preparing for this, look forward to welcoming you there.

GARDEN GROUP:

Members of our very popular Garden Group enjoy frequent excursion, the most recent being a visit to 'The Dirty Gardener', located at Woodville near Maitland. By all accounts members had a terrific time listening to the owner Tracey chatting about the nursery whilst enjoying morning tea.



DID YOU KNOW that:

- Following research from the Karolinska Institute showing that digital tools impair learning, countries Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland have made the decision to ditch digital-first classrooms for younger students, swapping student laptops and tablets for physical textbooks for physical notebooks, paper and pencil. Whilst Scandinavian countries are at the forefront of creating these changes 114 additional countries have decided to restrict or completely ban mobile devices in schools. For more information, [click here](#).
- Dolly Parton's** recent passing reminds me that, in an effort to ignite the love of reading in children around the globe, she gifted 2 million books through the past 12 years to children of reading age in Australia. For more information on this program, [click here](#).

LOCAL LEGENDS & LOST STORIES CRUISE TEA GARDENS 4TH SEPTEMBER



Join local storyteller and historian **John 'Stinker' Clarke** for a fascinating two-and-a-half-hour cruise exploring the colourful characters, forgotten tales and rich maritime history of Port Stephens and the Myall Coast. Enjoy a delicious brunch on board as 'Stinker' brings local history to life with his unique blend of knowledge, humour and storytelling.

Departing Tea Gardens Wharf, 93 Marine Drive at **10 am.**

Returning 12-12:30 pm.

All Myall U3A members are invited. Partners, families and friends are welcome to join us.

Cost: \$69 per person

For more info and to book, please call Felicity a.s.a.p. on 0409395808

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