



Alstonville RSL Sub-Branch

Standfast 2025

Issue 267

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FOR YOUR DIARY:

SATURDAY 10th May
Committee Meeting at 0930 10 May
Social Lunch on Sat @ 1100

Next sub-Branch meeting
Saturday 14 June @ 1100 hr.
Committee Meeting @ 0930

Alstonville RSL Sub-Branch Office Bearers

President	John Porter	0477 773 140
Vice President	Robert Wilson JP	0414 708 662
Vice President	Phil Skinner	0427 291 292
Secretary	John Gordon	0437 509 790
Treasurer	Garry Henderson-Smith	0400 474 413

All emails to:

AlstonvilleSB@rslnsw.org.au

Dear Members,

April is one of our busiest months of the year because of ANZAC Day Commemorations.

I'd like to thank all our members who make our ANZAC Day possible. It was a resounding success due to excellent planning by Secretary John Gordon and other Committee members.

Special thanks to Bobby Wilson for organising parade vehicles and fund raising.

Others who need mentioning are Grahame Gooding; Brownny our flag bearer; Tony Tyler our parade commander; Hyphen our temporary cook; and many more.

Our tireless worker award goes John Gordon, well done.

John G. and I both attended ANZAC Day memorials at the Alstonville High School, Tibouchina RSL Day Club and I did the Seventh Day Adventist aged care and the opening of the ANZAC DAY Rodeo.

I apologise for not attending the last Committee/Members meeting due to my exams and for the next luncheon in May due to holidays in Bali with family.



From the President

Observation

ANZAC Day seems to bring out the best and worst in people's opinion. My observation is that it's getting stronger each year. The fellowship, pride, mate-ship, and honour to serve, reigns supreme.

Kindest regards and God Bless



John Porter
President

Secretary's Musings!!!!

This issue I would like to thank everyone who participated in the preparation for ANZAC Day, the badge sellers, particularly the Laurel Club ladies in the plaza, the High school students who helped out at the breakfast, Hyphen (Garry) for running the breaky, Steve Bryce and Grahame Gooding for setting up EAB Park after breaky & getting very wet as well!!

And Steve Bryce and Tony Tyler for helping with the pack-up.

A Special mention to Lt-Col Daniel Healy CO of 41 Btn and to Bombardier Hayden Smith for being with us, and to the wreath-layers on behalf of the sub-Branch.

It all takes teamwork, and while I may stand out the front, it is the members attending who make it the memorable day it is. Thank you all!

I also congratulated the Kiwi who gave us the Haka at the end of the Dawn Service, someone (?) brought him back to the hall for breaky! Well done!

On a lighter note

I think it would be a good idea to make the Rodeo at the showground an annual event! I was there working in the Ag Society BBQ and the crowd was pretty good, and the Ode went over very well

.....

We got a very good write up in the Ballina News Daily web-page
[\(https://ballinanewsdaily.com.au/2025/04/25/we-will-remember-them-anzac-day-in-ballina-shire/\)](https://ballinanewsdaily.com.au/2025/04/25/we-will-remember-them-anzac-day-in-ballina-shire/)
 click the link to see the article.

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Recruiting new members!

Believe it or not, the best recruiting tool is YOU! Invite relatives or friends with or without a service background to come along to lunch or a meeting so they can see that there is a community connection. A non-service person can join the Auxiliary and contribute as well! None of us are getting any younger and we need an injection of new blood to carry on!

.....

I'd like to issue a games day challenge with Bangalow sub-Branch, please let me know if you would be interested! What would be the best day to do it? A Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday or Sunday afternoon? What games? Darts, quoits, euchre, cribbage, bowls.

With a BBQ lunch? Just sausages, or with steak sangers & salad as well?

PLEASE let me know your ideas & availability!

Also, a volunteer to act as Social Secretary!!!!!!!

John Gordon - secretary

An interesting Gallipoli Story!

Lieutenant Commander Henry Hugh Gordon Dacre STOKER DSC MiD



Just before the ANZACs landed at Gallipoli on the morning of 25 April 1915 an Australian submarine, the HMAS *AE2* set out on an historic journey. Its mission was to force a passage up the treacherous Dardanelles Strait into the Sea of Marmara, and then, in the words of the Chief of Staff, '*Generally run amok.*' Such an extraordinary order required an extraordinary Captain and luckily the *AE2* had such a Captain, Lieutenant Commander Henry Hugh Gordon Dacre Stoker -- an Irishman.

Henry Stoker, the second son of a physician, was born in Dublin on 2 February 1885. At the age of 12 he went to England to enter a school which specialised in training boys to pass the entrance examination for the Royal Navy, which he eventually joined at 15.

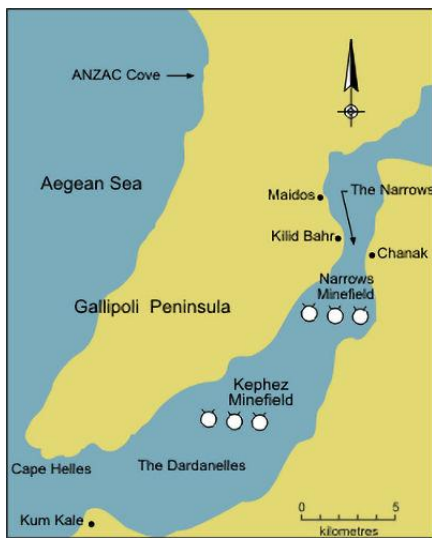
His initial service was in the training ship HMS *Britannia*, moored in the river near Dartmouth. While an average student, he did excel at sport, particularly rugby and tennis, and he continued to play the latter well into his seventies. He was promoted to Midshipman on 30 May 1901 and posted briefly to the battleship HMS *Jupiter*, part of the Channel Fleet, before joining the battleship HMS *Implacable* which served in the Mediterranean.

Stoker was promoted to Sub Lieutenant on 30 July 1904, and left *Implacable* to undertake courses and examinations at the Naval College at Greenwich. After completing his training at Greenwich he was sent to the armoured cruiser HMS *Drake* which was operating in the western Atlantic, off the coast of Canada and the United States. Stoker became interested in the submarine service and applied to join this relatively new branch of the Navy. In October 1906, after a year's service in *Drake*, he was selected for submarine training and dispatched to the submarine depot ship HMS *Thames* at Portsmouth. He was promoted to Lieutenant on 31 December 1906.

Stoker was very much a free spirit and revelled in the freedom that the submarine service offered. He completed his submarine training in October 1907 and in January 1909 was given command of the submarine HMS *A10*. On 19 December 1908, at Exeter, Stoker married Olive Joan Violet Gwendoline Leacock, daughter of Colonel Schuler Leacock of the Bengal Cavalry.

In January 1910 he took command of the submarine HMS *B8* which, in August 1911, became part of a flotilla of three submarines based in Gibraltar; these were the first RN submarines to serve outside of Britain. In 1913 Stoker volunteered to serve on loan with the RAN as Commanding Officer of one of the fledgling navy's new submarines. He was selected, and on 7 November 1913 was loaned to the RAN as the Commanding Officer of the new submarine HMAS *AE2*, one of the two new submarines built at Barrow-in-Furness for the Australian Navy.

The psychological advantage of entering the Sea of Marmara and thereby threatening Constantinople from the sea would be enormous.



However, the difficulties were tremendous. The Strait was thirty-five miles long with a continuous current running at five knots back into the Mediterranean. The whole area was heavily mined, and although a submarine could dive under the mines with its periscope submerged it had to remain at periscope depth in order to navigate the narrow Strait. If it cleared the minefield, the submarine would be in narrow waters, completely controlled by the Turkish Navy.

Despite the fact that the British submarine, the *E15*, had just been lost attempting to force the Strait, Stoker badgered the Admiralty with letters requesting an opportunity to make an attempt. Finally Stoker was received by the Chief of Staff, Commodore Roger Keyes and told he would be permitted to try. Admiral Sir John De Robeck, the Vice-Admiral of the Mediterranean Fleet told Stoker that...

... 'if you succeed there is no calculating the result it will cause, and it may well be that you have done more to finish the war than any other act accomplished'.

As Michael White remarked in his book, "Australian Submarines"...

... 'these were heady words for any man to have addressed to him, let alone one such as Stoker who had already shown outstanding qualities of enterprise and daring'.

At 2.30 am on the morning of 25 April 1915, Stoker weighed anchor and set out on the attempt to run the Dardanelles Strait, which would forever assure him of a place in Australian naval history. His plan was basically simple -- travel as far as possible on the surface to conserve his limited battery power, and dive at daylight or when he reached the minefields.

The night of 25 April was a beautiful dark and calm night and the *AE2* proceeded along at seven knots in the centre of the Strait. Suddenly they were spotted by the searchlight at Kephez and shells began to rain down. Stoker quickly submerged and passed a harrowing hour slowly creeping under the minefield. He could hear the mooring wires of the mines scraping the sides of *AE2*...

... 'Choose a wrong moment to rise for observation through the periscope and you choose a moment to hit a mine -- so choose as few of these moments as possible', Stoker dryly observed in "Straws in the Wind".'

Rising twice in the minefield, Stoker realised he was travelling faster than he had anticipated. When he rose for the third time, he was pleased to find himself through the minefield and only three hundred yards below the famous Narrows.

The Turks were now well aware of the *AE2*'s presence and soon a small Cruiser and a number of Destroyers were attacking the Submarine. Stoker fired a torpedo which missed the Cruiser but it struck and damaged

one of the Destroyers. Submerged and trying to escape the Destroyers' attempts to ram him, Stoker hit the bottom hard and slid up to a depth of 10 feet, right under the guns of a shore-based fort. The position was perilous. *AE2* was fast aground with almost half of its structure out of the water. Stoker described it...

... 'as unpleasant as it well could be'.

Luckily, they were so close to the fort that the guns could not be depressed enough to hit the Submarine and after a short time the efforts of the crew to refloat *AE2* were successful. One of the crew recorded in his diary...

... During all this the Captain remained extremely cool, for all depended on him at this stage. It is due to his coolness that I am now writing this account. Nobody knows what a terrible strain it is on the nerves to undergo anything like this, especially the Captain, as all depends on him.

Stoker and his crew resumed their journey pursued by dozens of Turkish warships. Anti-submarine warfare was in its infancy and the only way the Turks could attack the *AE2* was by trying to ram her. As long as *AE2* could stay submerged, it was relatively safe. However, navigating the narrow strait was impossible without frequently coming up to periscope depth to take a sighting. Whenever they lifted the periscope, the Turkish ships attempted to ram. Stoker decided to run the *AE2* on to an underwater bank and sit on the bottom until dark.

For sixteen hours the dauntless Stoker and his crew sat in darkness and silence at a depth of 80 feet. When they finally rose to the surface, they found themselves about half a mile from the shore in a bay above Nagara Point -- the worst of their journey was now behind them. Stoker sent a radio message back to the fleet but never received an answer and consequently was unsure if the message had been received. He was to learn much later that the message was indeed received, and that his message was to change the course of history.

The Allied landings on the Gallipoli peninsular had been met with fierce resistance. From their position on the beach General Bridges and his staff were alarmed at the ANZACs position and requested that they be withdrawn back to the fleet. Just as Stoker's message was received, a midnight conference was being held on the flagship *HMS Queen Elizabeth* to decide whether to withdraw the troops off the peninsular.

A friend of Stoker's, Lieutenant Commander C G Brodie, ignored requests to keep quiet and read to the conference Stoker's message heralding *AE2*'s success.

'The psychological impact at that precise time was momentous', Michael White said in *Australian Submarines*.

It will never be known if they were actually going to pull the troops off Gallipoli, but after Stoker's message was read Hamilton sent his famous 'dig, dig, dig' message to the Australians:

Your news is indeed serious. But there is nothing for it but to dig yourselves right in and stick it out. It would take at least two days to re-embark you, as Admiral Thursby will explain to you. Meanwhile the Australian submarine has got up through the Narrows and has torpedoed a gunboat at Chanak.

P.S... You have got through the difficult business. Now you have only to dig, dig, dig, until you are safe.

The news of the *AE2*'s achievement spread to the Diggers clinging to the Gallipoli cliffs and lifted their morale. A notice was stuck on a shell-shattered stump on the hillside:

'Australian sub AE2 just through the Dardanelles. Advance Australia'.

Meanwhile Stoker was pressing on in *AE2* towards the Sea of Marmara. He encountered two Turkish warships and fired a torpedo at the largest but was unsuccessful. After spending the night of 25-26 April on the surface, *AE2* finally entered the Sea of Marmara early in the morning of 26 April. Their mission now was to prevent Turkish ships transporting troops across the Marmara to Gallipoli.

Spotting a likely target Stoker fired one of his precious torpedoes but again missed. He spent the remainder of the day on the surface sailing among fishing boats and doing all he could to broadcast the arrival of an allied submarine in the Marmara. After dark, Stoker again attempted to contact the fleet by wireless but was forced to dive constantly to escape Turkish patrol vessels.

At dawn Stoker resumed the offensive and fired a torpedo at a ship which was accompanied by two destroyers. The torpedo's engine failed to start and Stoker just managed to avoid being rammed by one of the destroyers. No other ships were sighted for the rest of the day which shows that the *AE2*'s presence was curtailing Turkish ship movements.

By the morning of the 29th, Stoker was still sailing in the Sea of Marmara and harassing any Turkish ship he could find. However, he was now down to one torpedo which he decided to keep in reserve. His plan was to sail around, be as provocative as possible, and try to fool the Turks into believing that more than one submarine had made it to the Sea.

Early on the evening of the 29th, while sailing towards Marmara Island, the crew of *AE2* was surprised to encounter another submarine. It was the British submarine *E14* under the command of Captain Boyle, which had been dispatched after the Admiralty heard of Stoker's successful passage up the Strait. Boyle asked Stoker what he planned to do the next day. It had been Stoker's intention to sail to Constantinople but Boyle, being the senior officer, overruled that plan and arranged to rendezvous with Stoker the next morning. This decision would seal the fate of *AE2* and her gallant crew.

When Stoker surfaced at the rendezvous at 10am, he observed a torpedo boat and immediately dived. For some unaccountable reason the *AE2* suddenly went out of control and began rapidly to rise. The submarine shot to the surface about 100 yards from the torpedo boat which opened fire. Stoker again attempted to dive but the *AE2* was out of control and began to plunge into the depths.

Stoker took the prescribed emergency action and arrested the descent, but now *AE2* rushed back towards the surface where it was hit by shells from the attacking boat and was holed in several places. *AE2* was doomed. Stoker ordered the submarine scuttled and concentrated on saving the lives of his men.

All the crew survived and were taken prisoner, and together with Stoker spent the next three-and-a-half years as 'guests' of the Turks. Stoker escaped twice but was recaptured and endured numerous hardships in Turkish prisons.

After repatriation he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (London Gazette, 22 April 1919)

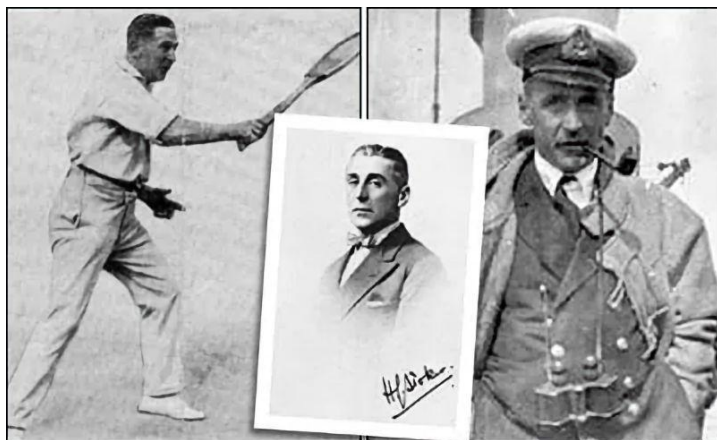
'In recognition of his gallantry in making the passage of the Dardanelles in command of HM Australian Submarine AE2 on 25 April 1915'.

Six months later he was mentioned in dispatches (London Gazette, 17 October 1919)

'For valuable services in HM Australian Submarine AE2 in the prosecution of the war'.

He was offered the command of a Cruiser but chose to leave the Navy for a career on the stage. He was also having serious problems in his personal life and divorced his wife in early 1919 and lost contact with his two daughters. He appeared in a number of plays, films and television dramas. His contemporaries included Sir Laurence Olivier and Sir John Mills.

When the Second World War began, Stoker was recalled to duty, commanded a naval base, worked in public relations, and was involved in the planning for D-Day.



Man for all seasons: Henry Stoker commanded the AE2, played at Wimbledon and acted in the West End

In 1948 he enjoyed what he described as “one of the most pleasant days I ever spent in my life” as a guest of King George VI. While playing cricket he was in at bat and facing the King’s bowling. He said, “Sir, please remember that I was a shipmate with your grandfather”, raising a laugh all round.

The larger-than-life Stoker died on his 81st birthday, the 2nd February 1966.

While Australia takes justifiable pride in the heroism of the ANZACs, and Simpson and his donkey are part of the nation's folklore, little is known of the dauntless Henry Hugh Gordon Dacre Stoker. Yet this man sailed a submarine around the world and pulled off one of the most daring exploits in naval history. His achievements deserve to be placed firmly in history; he caused the Turks to abandon attempts to reinforce Gallipoli by sea and forced them to use a much more hazardous land route. His success changed the whole course of the Gallipoli Campaign. As searchers have now successfully located the sunken hull of AE2, it's time that the intrepid Stoker and his crew were awarded their place in Australian history.



Lieutenant Commander Stoker's medal group, now on display in the Naval Heritage Collection in Sydney

Notice – no comment about the election!!!!<grin>

The letter below was received by the Corps of Signals for achieving their Century of service



BUCKINGHAM PALACE

It is with great pride as your Colonel in Chief that I extend my heartfelt thanks and respects to the serving and retired members of The Royal Australian Corps of Signals and their families on ANZAC Day.

This year ANZAC Day holds a particular significance as we reflect on the Centenary of The Royal Australian Corps of Signals. From the earliest days of using Morse code, telegraph wires and radio at Gallipoli and on the Western Front to the employment of advanced satellite, cyber and electronic warfare capabilities in Afghanistan and the Middle East, the Corps and its predecessors have been instrumental in connecting the Australian Army and Australian Defence Force. The Golden Thread connecting these hundred years of service has been the adaptability, technical expertise, dedication and professionalism of our signallers which continues to shine through.

I take this moment to commemorate the men and women of the Corps who have served with distinction. Through the darkest days of conflict, their resilience, courage and determination ensured that lines of communication remained open. Their contributions have often been unsung but undoubtedly underpinned the success of operations. We particularly honour those who have made the ultimate sacrifice and their families, ensuring that their legacy of service is never forgotten. We also recognise those who were wounded and permanently scarred by their service and the resilience, and strength, of their families who supported them in times of conflict and on their return.

In this Centenary year, the significance of ANZAC Day is magnified by the enduring connections between past and present generations of signallers. The qualities of endurance, courage, ingenuity, good humour and friendship are the foundation of the ANZAC legacy, and they continue to resonate through the Corps, whose members today stand ready to meet the evolving challenges of modern warfare with the same steadfast dedication. As we gather to commemorate this 110th ANZAC Day, whether through marches, ceremonies, or quiet reflection, I encourage all those connected with the Corps to take pride in its remarkable legacy. Let us honour the Corps and the broader Australian and New Zealand forces, as we reflect on the sacrifices that have secured our freedoms and way of life.

From Transport NSW website

<https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/projects/current-projects/bruxner-highway-and-ballina-road-intersection-improvements-alstonville>.

Bruxner Highway and Ballina Rd intersection improvements.

Project proposal and benefits

The proposed design improves safety at the Ballina Road intersection, by:

- Improving right and left turn lanes from the highway onto Ballina Road and permanently removing the critical right turn out of Ballina Road onto the highway
- Providing a new westbound on-ramp at Ellis Road onto the Bruxner Highway, utilising the existing overbridge at Wardell Road for motorists travelling towards Lismore.

Benefits of the proposal:

- Permanently removes the right turn out and betters left turn in to improve safety
- Minimal noise and environmental impacts, including no impacts to nearby waterways
 - No travel time impacts to vehicles using the highway
 - Fits with longer term highway planning
 - No property acquisition
 - Minimal impacts to town centre traffic.

Secretary's observations

It seems that Transport for NSW, in their wisdom, have only half solved the problem with the eastern Ballina Rd/Bruxner Highway (Bypass) intersection. They are removing the Right turn from Ballina Rd onto the Bypass but they're leaving the Right Turn from the Bypass into Ballina Rd, you'll still have the setting sun glare! **There is no change to the Left Turn towards Ballina**

To enter the Bypass to head towards Lismore will be done at Ellis Rd, off Wardell Rd. This will put some extra traffic (maybe???) onto Wardell Rd (hence the new roundabout at the Wardell Rd/ Daley St intersection) but only travelling to the overpass bridge.

There are **NO CHANGES** to the way you would head to Ballina, only if you want to head to Lismore, and no change if you're coming from Ballina, you would still turn Right into Ballina Rd.

I don't know about you, but if I'm heading towards Lismore these days, I duck over to the Industrial Estate and use the entry ramp there! A lot easier than from Ballina Rd!

This proposal will give me an extra option that may or may not be quicker???

About Heart Week

[Heart Week](#) (5-11 May 2025) is Australia's national heart health awareness week held in May each year. It provides an opportunity for all Australians to start a conversation about heart health with their loved ones and take positive steps to reduce their heart disease risk.

The funny side of life:

Baby Boomers will get this 🤔😄
Too Funny!!



I just turned off the news and put on a serial killer documentary to relax.

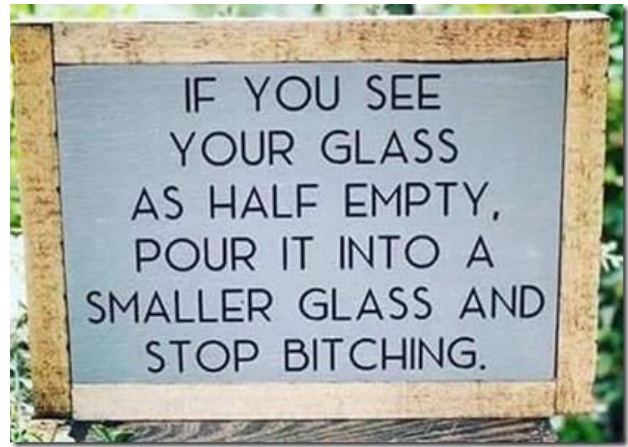
YEAH, I'VE GOT
O.C.D
OLD CRANKY AND DANGEROUS



Procrastination is totally a good thing. You always have something to do tomorrow, plus you have nothing to do today.

HAPPY STAR WARS DAY MAY THE FOURTH BE WITH YOU

One big difference between men and women is that if a woman says "Smell this", it usually smells nice.



Sometimes the thoughts in my head get bored and stroll out through my mouth. This is never a good thing.

Oldtimers



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Colin Biddle	03 Apr	Brian Snart	18 May
Brian Partridge	5 Apr	Vic Anderson	19 May
Christine Wood	25 Apr	Jamie Walton	23 May
		Keith Row	27 May
		Graham Hellyar	30 May

Information:

DVA – Lismore VAN Office:
 Suite 8 Level 1 17 Conway Street
 Lismore (next to Australian Hearing)
 Email: NSWVANLismore@dva.gov.au
 Ph 1300 838 372
 DVA
 GPO Box 9998
 Brisbane QLD 4001

DVA Gold Card – Many Vietnam and other Returned from Active Service Veterans are not aware of their entitlement to a DVA Gold Card which is not means or asset tested.

To check for your entitlement complete the DVA form D3057 “Application for a Gold Card for Veterans of Australia’s Defence Force”. Those under 70 and not in receipt of any DVA payment can complete DVA form D0506 “Claim to determine Qualifying service by current or ex-member of the ADF”.

SPONSORS – THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR SUPPORT

- Alstonville Plaza Meats & Deli
- Alstonville Quality Meats
- Alstonville Cellars
- Village Fresh Fruit and Vegetables, Alstonville
- Federal Hotel, Alstonville
- Melanie Stewart Real Estate, Alstonville
- Coles Supermarket, Alstonville
- Parkview Funeral Home, Ballina
- Guardian Funerals – Alstonville, Ballina, Lismore
- McGraths Real Estate, Alstonville

RSL Tibouchina Day Club

When: Wednesdays @ 10:00am

Where: Rous Mill Hall

What: Enjoy good company, live entertainment, light exercise (suitable for the elderly). Mental stimulation activities, morning tea, lunch
 A bus will pick you up and return you to your home within the Alstonville / Wollongbar villages for a \$10:00 contribution.

Who: For members of our community who are looking for social interaction in a friendly welcoming environment.

Contact Murette for more details: **0421 272 643**