



THE NIMBIN GOODTIMES

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Bunya
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Eye in the sky

Is this the end of Nimbin as we know it?



Brave new world. Sergeant Garry Acton (left) and Inspector Dave Larkin on the beat, providing much-needed information about the cameras. At right, the TV channel spoof, and (below) how our cartoonist sees things...

The installation of the overhead surveillance cameras in Nimbin village in the last week of July, has brought forth a range of highly visible protest action at street level.

Within hours of the cameras being installed, but not yet transmitting, a length of shade cloth was stapled onto a telegraph pole and the commemorative carved pole, across the entrance to Rainbow Lane.

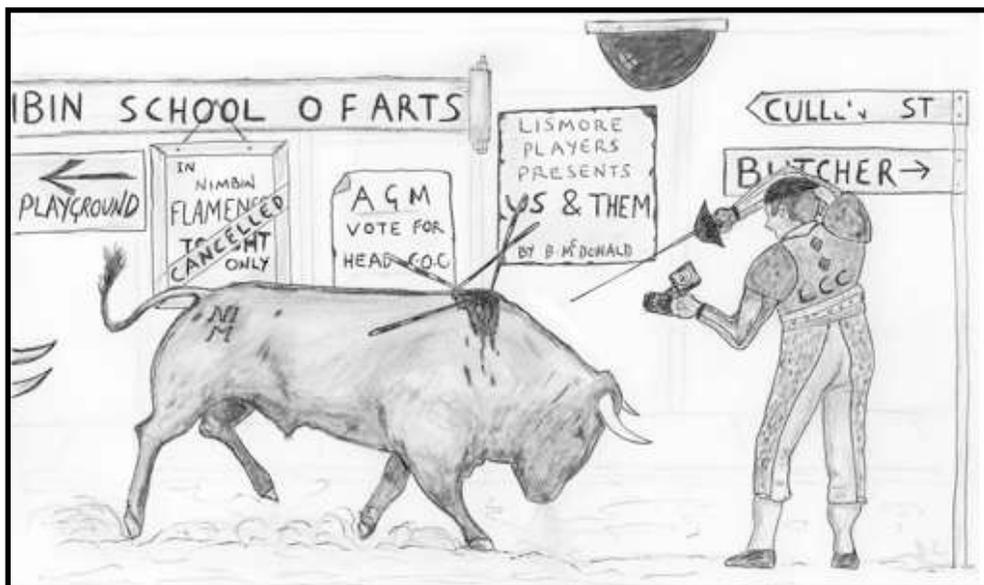
The following day a large sheet of plastic had also been added to the installation of a crude but effective awning, more shade cloth had appeared outside the e-bar café, and walls were sprouting the Nimbin Television poster, calling for street theatre actors.

In the afternoon, ABC regional radio interviewed Bill MacDonald, Lismore City Council's traffic and law enforcement officer, who insisted the cameras had received a "generally positive response" from the Nimbin community, and had proved successful when used elsewhere. A call-in session after the interview indicated community ambivalence on both points.

Thursday morning, The Northern Star had "Locals

split over need for 24-hour watch" as a lead, and ran a feedback line which will no doubt amply demonstrate it. When The GoodTimes spoke to Bill MacDonald

used to prune the branches of any trees that might block the cameras' view, while electricians continued to wire up the mysterious white boxes on telegraph poles.

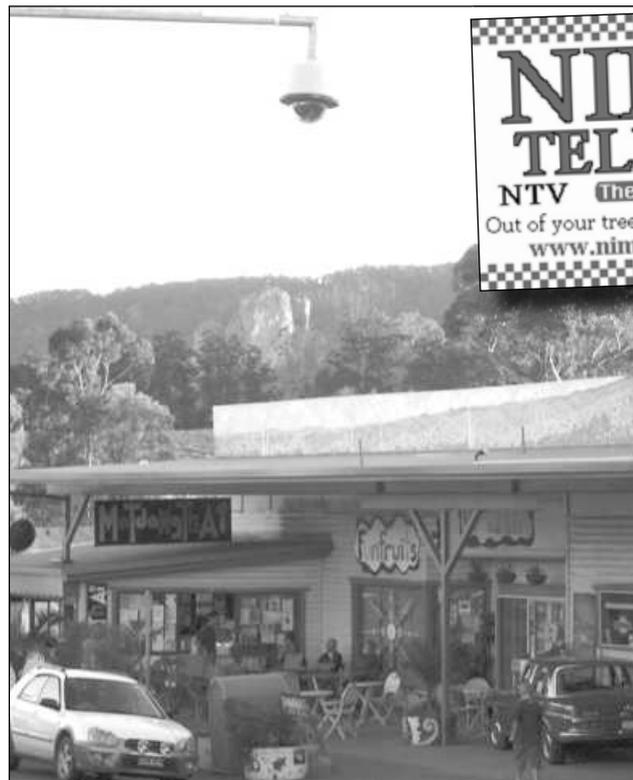


about the level of community support, he cited a great deal of consultation, involving the mayor, the general manager, police officers, the Neighbourhood Centre, the Nimbin Chamber of Commerce, in all of which cameras were overwhelmingly supported.

Split or not, on Friday morning, Council staff arrived with police, and took down the awnings. Two cherry-pickers were also

By 1pm, NIM-FM's "Hemp Hours" program had local sergeant Garry Acton and inspector Dave Larkin as guests, making public for the first time, information about the purposes, operation and use of the surveillance recordings.

Inspector Larkin said, "The primary reason for the cameras is that it can help us identify and stop violent crimes, anti-social behaviour, street drinking and malicious



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damage to windows." The five cameras will capture "all events and occurrences in Nimbin," but no-one will be physically watching the monitor at Nimbin police station on a 24-hour basis, and the recordings, in real time on digital video, actually belong to the Council. With Council

expectations of them should not be too high. "Cameras can never eliminate crime altogether."

When asked about the provisions of the state guidelines, Mr MacDonald said that these were being put in place now also, with a representative Community Safety Committee to be formed, meeting monthly, and a Code of Practice for the operation of the cameras being drafted at present.

The Nimbin Code of Practice will be closely modelled on the Lismore City Safe one, which stipulates the operational ethics, privacy issues and grievance procedures. When finalised, it will be available at the post office and neighbourhood centre as well as the police station.

The \$70,000 investment is buying some fancy gear. The cameras are full colour, low light sensitivity, with full remote, programmable tilt and zoom capabilities, and they use a wireless transmission system with microwave links. The Lismore practice is to keep the recordings for 14 days, which in real time requires enormous computer storage capacity, also expensive.

Police have appealed to the public to look after the installation. Garry Acton told NIM-FM's Bob Tissot, "I hope that some members of the Nimbin community

don't go so far with their objections to the cameras to the extent that they maliciously damage them.

"They will be replaced if they're damaged, so it will be a fruitless exercise.

Remember too, that they are being funded by Council, so it would be an additional expense incurred by the Council, monies that could be redirected for more appropriate welfare issues for Nimbin, rather than replacing broken cameras," he said.

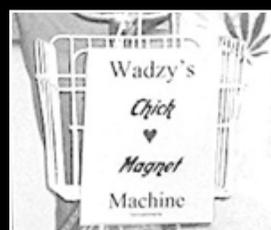
"For those contemplating 'getting rid of Big Brother,' apart from committing a criminal offence that will probably be recorded, it will only come back and bite the community on the backside."

Watch for a Charters Hardware special on 5-metre lengths of shade cloth.

Inside:



• Poetry World Cup



• Sustainable living

• John Pilger on London

• NIM FM program