

Police crackdown -a glimpse from the brink

by Gerald Taylor

Most Nimbinites moved to the village and surrounding area to 'drop out'. We began arriving about thirty years ago because we felt disgust at the direction our contemporary society was taking and we wanted to pursue a fairer, more sustainable alternative. In a way our colonisation of the North Coast hinterland was a passive protest against the illegal Vietnam invasion and how money had become more valuable than our souls, our air, food and water. Events such as global warming, salination, land degradation, drowning refugees and the Iraq invasion have proved us correct on all counts. We got out just in time.

Cannabis, the reason for Mardi Grass, became our drug of choice for two reasons. Firstly because unlike amphetamines, nicotine, alcohol and heroin, pot is benign, it has never killed anyone. Secondly we adopted pot as a vehicle of protest because we liked being stoned. It's peaceful.

The wheel has turned full circle since those ancient times but nothing much has changed. Honest John is once again scapegoating pot as the cause of dementia to distract us from our involvement with yet another illegal war of invasion as the planet blisters and bubbles from overheating. Taking a

page from Hitler's handbook our government prints more wealth for its citizens to smooth over its right wing excesses and abandonment of human rights. Australians are now richer in money than ever before, yet completely bankrupt of moral values. Now we won't even let refugees fleeing tyranny land on our shores. It's not a proud time to be an Australian.

As one result of our nations right wing deterioration Thomas George with the backing of Honest John and the NSW police force have decided to crush Mardi Grass, snuff it out as a political movement. Must be part of



their war on terror. No illegal activities will be tolerated in the village during Mardi Grass, according to the police media release, which implies that illegal activities will be tolerated when Mardi Grass is done and dusted. Pot will be no more legal after Mardi Grass than it was before, of course, they just want to make an example of the event.

For the last couple of weeks, task force 'Viking' has been let loose on the village, the same task force trained to deal with rioting mobs in Cronulla and Redfern. They have been

armed, rude, offensive and heavy handed trying, by all accounts, to cause the villagers to erupt in angry protest. In fact one trooper told me he'd 'just love us to try rioting'.

Mardi Grass has always been a peaceful political protest and rally and largely the cops have respected this and kept a low profile but this year it promises to be different. This year there's the whiff of teargas in the air. Already the Hemp Embassy has received offers of help from friends on Palm Island, Redfern and Cronulla. They've offered to come in force to protest alongside us against the crack down we've been

promised. We've told them we'd love them to come but that it's a peaceful rally and no matter the provocation we won't protest with violence, we'll protest with pot.

It's not an easy thing to get stoned old hippies to rise up in anger

but Thomas George and his troopers seems to be intent on doing just that. I wonder what will happen when five thousand people light up together and blow smoke at the troopers. Do you think they'll get stoned too? It seems the old Chinese curse has come to pass at last and that we do indeed live in interesting times. But as my Lebanese friend from Cronulla said to me after the riots, 'The police will go home at the end of their shift but we will still live here. Who do you think is going to win?'

Light, bright and clean

Not all the reaction to the police presence has been negative. Charlie Cohen, Nimbin RFS Snr Deputy Captain said, "I greatly appreciate civilisation being established in Nimbin once again," and it would appear he is not alone.

Neil Harris of the Nimbin Newsagency said, "Our trade is up since the police operation started, and other businesses are saying the same thing. If the idea is to make tourist stay longer in the village, the longer they stay the more revenue is generated, then if they feel safe that will help."

"The street is certainly quieter," he said. "But I do think eight police is overkill.

You don't need eight. What about four by day and four at night?"

Another long-standing Nimbin resident, who preferred not to be named, was also openly enthusiastic about the effects of the police operation on the village. "The town feels lighter, light and bright. It's clean now. The energy has shifted," she said.

She voiced concerns about the levels of disrespect, violence and disregard for many sections of the community, especially the elderly. "People screaming abuse in the park, filth all over the street... it's been pervasive for too long, it's become the norm without

being addressed."

"It would be nice, in a perfect world, if police weren't needed, but we've had 15 years of talking about this problem, and the people involved have ignored calls by community groups, such as the Women's March Against Violence, so now it has become men's business, to sort out the bully-boys, and if that involves ruffling some feathers, then so be it," she said.

Charlie Cohen put it this way: "Look, if a few people get arrested over bullshit, hard luck. We've waited for the community to 'look after its own,' and we haven't.

"Isn't it nice to go to town without hearing yelling and swearing? It's not actually ugly at the moment, and I like that."

In with a bong? Or out with a whimper?

By Sophia Hoeben

The threat by the police to this year's Mardi Grass is about far more than the distribution and inhalation of illegal vegetable matter. Unscrupulous real estate agents (have you ever heard of one with scruples?) and insane wars on terror and drugs play a major part in the occupation, as conservative values seek to homogenise and gentrify.

Conservatism spreads like a cancer into all aspects of our society and our thinking. It promulgates more concern about property values than the loss of human rights. A nice clean image with no riff-raff underfoot means higher property prices. In come the real estate sharks, and out go community values. The violence in Nimbin has been grossly over-stated by those who would seek to profit from the "cleaning up" of our town.

As a result our village way of life, along with its festivals, now appears under siege. The squad of police currently occupying our town (whom I've nicknamed the "Thug Squad"), are specially trained in the application of the heavy hand. So how did it get to



the point where we accept squads of paramilitary police, clad in the new universal soldiers uniforms (Neo Nazi USA) on our streets, whilst "Big Brother" cameras watch our every move?

There used to be a time around Nimbin, I remember it well, when our small community, along with like-minded souls, stood up to another bunch of thugs about to cut down the



Nightcap forest from around us. It was a time when courage was needed, as it all looked hopelessly against us. Yet it was our determination to protect and defend that won the battle.

Nimbin is a unique place where there's still hope for the future. There is no security without community. So if it seems a bit extreme, if not plainly ridiculous to you to have three or four armed men standing over you while you drink your coffee, then perhaps protest is called for now. When a law is unjust, it is every citizen's duty to disobey that law. It might be ganja today, but your freedom tomorrow.

See you at Mardi Grass!

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Cops on Cullen – the story so far



A squad of around 10 armed police have been patrolling Nimbin since before the Easter weekend and searching people for drugs, which has sparked allegations of heavy-handed policing.

Police commander Bruce Lyons has brushed off criticism of the "high-visibility crime reduction strategy," telling ABC radio on 27th April, "There are people out there who, no matter what you did, would not be happy."

His comments came in the wake of a barrage of allegations of strong-hand police tactics, the latest by local woodworker Paul Rozjyushka, who told the same ABC program that he was harassed, searched and accused of drug dealing when he came to town to do his shopping. "And I don't even take drugs," he said. "I feel they're trying to provoke a reaction."

In the previous week, Tania Theoharris told the *Northern Star* she was furious to learn her 16 year-old daughter Sophie had been searched by police while in town with her two friends. The girls were approached by three police officers outside the Kebab and Pizza Shop, in Cullen Street, and told their bags would be searched. "They called more police and there were about six altogether. I felt in-

timidated," Sophie said. "I was crying and so was my friend."

The same afternoon local artist Tonia sustained a dislocated wrist as she was being restrained, before being arrested for possession of a small quantity of cannabis.

The *Star* reported Bring-a-Bong shop assistant Michael Skinner, who witnessed the incidents, as saying police were disrespectful and the community was upset.

However, Police Superintendent Bruce Lyons said he had not received any formal complaints, and the overwhelming feedback from the community about the operation in Nimbin had been positive.

The overt police presence in the town would be sustained, he told the *Northern Star*. Two extra officers have been stationed at Nimbin permanently, bringing the numbers to six, and more police from within the command are being sent on a regular basis for foot patrols.

He told ABC radio, "I want to double the numbers in Nimbin, from four to eight. I have also been working hard to get a mental health worker 5 days per week."

"I want to get Nimbin off the front page," he said.

Set up for Mardi Grass?

by Elspeth Jones

What's going on? I feel, and others feel, that we're somehow being 'set up' here in Nimbin. Watching the extra alcohol being delivered to the pub, hearing whispers of 'large drops of ice' (and I don't mean hail), the ongoing police presence, with guns...

The thought of what 10,000 people would be like on alcohol and speed as opposed to 10,000 people stoned, leads me to think that what is being planned by the police is a riot. Well documented by a catastrophe-hungry press. Bad press for Cannabis. Bad

news for Nimbin. Great news for the arms industry and aggressors, the pompous politicians and greedy pharmaceutical companies.

I hope it's just paranoia, from a lifetime of being 'criminalised' because I occasionally use cannabis.

Is it some innate wish to control nature to suit ourselves, and in the process destroy it? This is too huge, this business of destruction and MardiGrass is just a small reminder that we still have a voice, but what else can we do, just cry because its too late?

As long as people remain

ignorant of the uses and the sheer beautiful logic of the cannabis plant and the other powerful medicinal herbs, we will be forced to swallow synthetic pharmaceuticals. For many of us, this is as ridiculous as ripping up a garden and planting plastic flowers!

All past MardiGrass' have been peaceful and good natured and the police presence has been minimal and discreet, a credit to them. I hope sanity prevails this year, its 14th. Maybe it would help if the police had a quick toke on their way in. We can still dream!

Casting the first stone

by G.M.C. Nimbin

Good Christian readers, in fact let's include all religious readers, see if you can get this one.

"There but for the Grace of God go I." What does this invoke in you when you smugly think 'good the street is a lot quieter, the park is empty, the laneway clear'? You don't feel frightened anymore, all those lovely young policemen are doing a good job, perhaps our property values will increase!!!

At least those incredible screaming matches won't be heard or need to be witnessed, the drunks, the punks, the homeless, the itinerants aren't there so we who can see, know how lucky we are.

We who have a nice home to go to, a warm bed, we who have family, be it blood or extended - who do care,

who do listen, who do share. We who carry our addictions, quietly, like alcohol, soapiers, coffee, tea, Panadol, Valium, dieting, binge-eating, sex, pornography, internet chat rooms, cheating, gambling, smoking, chess, 'token on the best home grown,' money, fame and here dear readers you can name your own.

How about this one, "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone"? All I ask of you is to contemplate "where have these people gone?" and know in the long run most will return. And those who continue to make big money out of this town, both legally and illegally, will continue to do so, protected, or simply they are too smart and don't operate between 8am-4pm.

Harassing the already inflicted doesn't score points with me. If we could instead

understand that this is part of the challenge living in Nimbin presents to us all who make this town home - it's what gives Nimbin its heartbeat.

Our compassion and tolerance, we do understand the nature of addiction, we do understand the nature of abuse, torment and homelessness, surely we are intelligent enough to see this overkill really gets us nowhere - fast.

To be the good Christian you see yourself to be - I ask you please, this week when you go down on bended knee in prayer, think about this and see if somewhere in your heart you can't find the truth and see clearly the True meaning of Christ's life on this earth, and what his teachings are really about.

God Bless you all, may you hear your own hypocrisies louder with each prayer.

Police fail to stir the pot Passive Nimbin hippies unprovoked

by Heathen J. Lovechild

Poor performances from the boys in blue on the street theatre stage. Appearing amateurish on set compared to the professional Nimbin troupe of seasoned actors. Sent to wrong place, the police appeared hot and bothered in non-hemp clothing. Arresting a blind cookie salesman and an unhelmeted cyclist then leaving town at five. An expensive exercise for the highly trained anti-terrorist tactical response SWAT team.

Operation Hippy Bash - Scare the women and children. Stop the circus with a hippy witch hunt. Stop the tourist industry developed by the Nimbin marijuana sub-culture. Turn away the refugees of society who seek an alternative lifestyle. Brand them as

criminals. Some South African tourists thought the police were lampooning apartheid and said they were impressed by the realism.

The new police powers are being abused on anyone that these fresh recruits consider to be a suspect. Discretion and public relations aren't part of the training. Grandmothers instinctively protecting their extended families with Nimbin style compassion are treated with brutality by these new-Reich fascist robocops. Although some police success was achieved in reminding a few hippy elders that there's still some work to do with cannabis law reform.

Prohibition laws have created a bigger problem than they have tried to fix. Good weed is still cheap at \$420 an ounce or \$15,000,000 per tonne and there is plenty around since the helicopter air-raids failed

to cause many problems this season again. Police are spending tax dollars to maintain the over inflated prices for all hemp products and sustain the black market economy that is an attractive career option. Same as the wheat dealers' incentive to supply the demand.

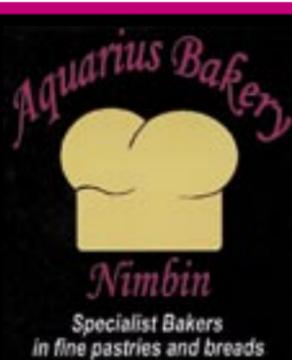
Maybe the government should be thanked for keeping cannabis an expensive commodity, void of any tax or direct control. Maybe we should thank the police for helping us stay united and remain active in the pursuit of justice for all the Orthodox Hippies that have faith in hemp and believe it is good therapy. Thanks for helping us remember what are protesting about at the 14th annual Nimbin MardiGrass and Cannabis Law Reform Rally 2006 6th and 7th May. The Sunday Rally is at 3pm.

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Skate Park Working Party Report

by **Wal Davies**
for the Residents Action Group

I would like the opportunity to present some facts on the Nimbin skate park that have still not been made available to the community. I would also ask that this letter be published unaltered or not at all.

We residents did not expect that Council would allow the construction of a metal skate park of the kind known worldwide to cause noise problems unless carefully located at least 200m from the nearest receptor, and with adequate sound mitigation structures planned and with adequate budget allowance made.

Noise level tests were carried out in July 2004 following complaints that neighbouring houses were becoming uninhabitable, and that Peace Park sounded like a metal foundry, a factory.

The test were carried out by Ambience Audio Services, who reported to the Nimbin Community Development Association (NCDA) that noise levels were unacceptable and that necessary mitigation measures would be costly. The results of these July tests were not published until the following year (2 March 2005), following a request by Council to make them available to the community.

On March 11 2005 a petition was taken around to houses immediately affected by the noise levels, measured in some house as the level of a jackhammer 7m away. Another illustration to explain why this noise is so unbearable, compared to markets, concerts in Peace Park, Mardi Gras, the pub bands, park drug fights etc, is that it is hard to reach the same level with the voice. You would have to shout as loud as you are capable into receiver's ear to reach comparable levels of loudness.

Residents adjacent to the park in Sibley St (1A,2,5,7) and Thorburn St (3,4,5,6,7,8,10,12,13,14) that were home on the day (March10), signed the following statement;

"This petition refers to the unacceptable noise levels

already being generated by use of the skatepark at 9 Sibley St. Nimbin. It does not refer to the unavoidable noise of constructing the ramps. We ask that sound mitigation works be installed immediately to eliminate the present offensive levels, as required under the Environmental Protection Act. We ask that this work be satisfactorily completed before the park is officially opened. We ask that access to the park be managed so that it does not continue to be used at all hours including after nightfall."

Council commissioned a sound engineer, Greg Alderson to investigate methods of noise mitigation. His report, published on 21 June 2005, recommended that sound mitigation works estimated to cost around \$120,000 would be required to approach legal sound levels. His recommendations included the construction of a 5 metre high wall around the entire skatepark. However, this would require a new Development Application from the NCDA and Council advised that it would be refused because of the likelihood of anti-social behaviour being fostered by the wall.

Council responded to the impasse by forming a skate park "working group". In his letter (21 Sept) to residents the Acting General Manager, Lindsay Walker, wrote "... Council will co-ordinate a working group comprising of representatives from key stakeholder groups in Nimbin, including immediate residents, skaters, the Peace Park Committee, Nimbin Community Development Association and TURSA. The process will be facilitated by Council staff and guided by environmental legislative requirements laid down in State and federal law and will be a transparent and accountable process. Options developed by the working group will be placed on public exhibition and submissions invited from the community."

At its first meeting on 27 Oct the group asked for expert advice on technical solutions to the impasse of the sound

mitigating wall being necessary for noise reduction, but not meeting Council's community safety requirements. It was resolved to delay the next meeting of the group until a further sound engineer's report could suggest alternative options for the group to consider. Greg Alderson's second report of 18 Nov was sent to members of the group prior to their meeting on Dec15.

The minutes of that meeting provided a summary of agreed points whereby work was to proceed until March15, when the TURSA Work for the Dole commitment was due for completion. A further 11 points made at the meeting were included in the minutes. The content of Greg Alderson's second report, and the minutes of the working group have not been made available to the Nimbin Community. The meeting scheduled for March 16, "or after compliance test completed" has still not taken place. A new 6 month TURSA work team has been assigned to continue work on the skate park. A scheduled skate park information night for Councillors was postponed indefinitely.

Greg's second report warned that even with the suggested alternatives to the wall, again estimated to cost over \$100,00, there was a real risk that legal sound levels could not be reached. Another impasse was also revealed. Works to infill below the ramps would prevent adequate safety checks of the rust prone metal supports, as required by law. It suggested that if one of the options, moving the metal structure to a new location, was adopted then the structure must be located at least 200m from the nearest receptor. It is at present 7 metres from the nearest house.

Much of the report relied on the "Skate Facility Guide", readily available on the internet. As a first step the guide advises close and continuing consultation with immediate neighbours of the proposed facility. This was not done. In addition, using the controversial Section 96 legislation, the NCDA gained Council approval, without

public advertisement, to eliminate the concrete section of the ramps, and the area for basketball, shown in the publicly advertised plan. This allowed quadrupling of the area of metal ramps. The legislation allows unadvertised modification to an advertised Development Application if that modification does not substantially change the original construction. Why did Council approve the modification? The change has been so great that a new Development Application would be required to carry out the noise mitigation measures recommended for a metal structure at the present location, and these may not succeed in reaching the required levels.

Having outlined the various

options, the engineer warns that his estimates may be inaccurate, as the ramp is being "retrofitted with the noise amelioration measures, which make estimation of the benefits difficult to assess". He concludes; "In all these options (other than relocation), maintenance of the asset will be difficult, if not impossible, as the ramps will need to be fully enclosed. Preventative maintenance is therefore required before enclosing the structure."

I am not aware of any resident who opposes a skate park at any location that meets the requirements of the Environmental Protection Act. At the present location only a concrete construction provides a long term low maintenance facility, acceptable to both

residents and skaters. The option of attempting a quick cheap metal construction, that none of the planners would ever contemplate living next to themselves, would never have been taken if those affected in the community had been allowed input into the planning process. This exclusion of the community from the planning process is apparently continuing. What happened to the working group, and to the promised accountability, publication of options, opportunities for comment?

I ask the *Nimbin Good Times* to publish in full the Dec 15 minutes of the Working Group, and the conclusions of the sound engineer. Council undertook to do this and presumably the *Good Times* was the intended means.

Who owns Peace Park?

By **Don Sharpe** of NIM-FM News

Nimbin people might be surprised to learn that they do not own the Community Centre complex, nor Peace Park.

And this is despite the community raising and borrowing \$350,000 to buy the former school and playing fields from the Education Department.

The situation arose when the Nimbin Community Development Association (NCDA) decided to withhold one dollar from the money it borrowed from Lismore City Council to secure the purchase.

NCDA has a ten year lease with Council to operate the properties. This lease expires in 2008.

The reason the NCDA gives for delaying the transfer of title to the community is to gain the benefits of being covered by Council's insurance umbrella for as long as Council is the technical owner.

This is a complex and technical issue, but bear with me, it's important, because it highlights the Nimbin community's ability to conduct its own affairs, as well as its relationship with Lismore Council.



Pros and cons. A view of the meeting held to discuss the ownership of Peace Park.

The future of the Skate Park is the real issue. The problems of completing noise mitigation works with only two or three thousand dollars remaining of the \$120,000 of State Government funding, and then addressing ongoing insurance and maintenance costs, have forced NCDA to consider a radical option.

That is to give Peace Park, for which the community paid \$70,000, to Council and so free itself of the burden of completing and managing the facility. A meeting this week called by NCDA, at the urging of Council, to resolve the ownership issue, ended with a strong consensus to pay the dollar and own the land.

And because of uncertainties hanging over the Skate Park, the meeting agreed to delay taking ownership while the future of the Skate Park remained uncertain.

The NCDA management committee will now make a decision based on the outcome of Monday's meeting and is expected to decide in favour of ownership.

The ownership question has only become an issue because much more work and money are likely to be needed to meet Council's noise reduction requirements before ramps can open. Noise works on a trial section are proceeding slowly.

Also, because it has become clear that Council would prefer to dismantle the steel ramps and rebuild on the same site in concrete, Council is unlikely to fund major noise reduction measures.

The skate Park is a much-needed facility for Nimbin's young people. It will take much will and community cohesion to see it through to completion.

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Anzac Day observance



Nimbin commemorated Anzac Day with the customary march to the war memorial where ceremonies were held to remember those who have suffered and died in war.

The march was led by Rachel Barron, who is a serving member of the Royal Australian Engineers, and was applauded as it moved along Cullen Street, flags aloft. Anton Eldridge delivered a moving extract from a speech given in 1998 by Keith Payne V.C. and D.S.C. (USA), which told of the death of a soldier aged 14, before the observance of a minute's silence. In place of a bugler, the piper, James Alexander of Tunttable Falls, played the lament.

A service followed at the Bowling Club, where there was further entertainment including two-up and social bowls. Another two-up school was conducted at the Nimbin Hotel. Reflecting on the march, Anton Eldridge estimated it was double the size of last year's. He recalled seeing recent figures that this area has the highest proportion of retired service personnel in Australia.

More life required at Mulgum House, say residents



by Ian Wickham

The Mulgum House story so far:

Former managers Anglicare have withdrawn in a blaze of bad publicity.

Now the few remaining residents have finally been granted long term leases.

This includes that homeless rebel, 73 year old Wendy Kay a.k.a Free, who brought the issue to a head by staging a 'live-in' at the home.

But amidst doomsday cries of 'financial unviability' interim managers, the Dept of Public Housing, and owners, Office of Community Housing, want to know 'Where to from here?'

So, Nimbin citizens organised a PUBLIC FORUM for 2.30p.m. Thursday 27th April at Nimbin Central School. At the well attended meeting (over 50 including Mayor Merv King and Councillor Jenny Dowell) we heard various speakers involved with Mulgum House outline the history, discuss the problems, and answer questions from the community.

Now read on:

'It's a lovely place, but in the last year or so it's been very upsetting for me personally because there's no comradeship. No nothing. This has been like a very nice prison.'

So said **Len Harper**, a speaker at the forum, and long term resident of Mulgum House.

I had a conversation with that rebel, **Wendy Kay** the day before the meeting.

'I need more than accommodation,' she said 'I need life. This place is dull.'

With the same problem in mind **Tamaso Lonsdale** read a letter from Vale Mendelson at the meeting, suggesting the house be open to all independent people with a disability regardless of age. This would give a more balanced age structure to the house, and make it more lively, she said.

Stephanie Ring, from the owners Community Housing, and **Claire Crawley-Brown** from interim managers Public Housing, both spoke at the meeting. Stephanie's statement that there is 'inadequate demand for this style of accommodation' was met with several objections during question time. Resident Sonia Atkinson said she could provide a list



Mulgum House resident Len Harper addressing the meeting. Inset: NRAHS chief executive Chris Crawford. Photos: Sue Stock.

of potential tenants, while another audience member pointed out that prospective tenants to the house were met with locked doors and no method of applying for a place.

Not surprisingly both Stephanie and Claire were both concerned with the financial viability of the house. **Fay Scherf** asked why models based on the Abbeyfield homes (on which Mulgum House is based), all over England as well as Orange and Oberon in Australia could be financially successful, while Mulgum House has not. Nobody could really answer that question.

As for the future, Stephanie announced that **tenders for a new manager** would be put out, (despite Sonia's insistence that Public Housing were doing a good job and didn't need to go).

Applicants would need to meet these criteria, Stephanie said:

- * ability to manage Housing, and an especially an ability to relate to elderly people. (After listening to the residents they would need to be able to bring life to the place, too.)

- * be able to change, to meet changing circumstances.

- * prepare a financially viable budget, based on a rent of 25% of a tenant's income.

- * be able to relate to Nimbin, and the myriad types of organisations you find here.

Tenders close 14th May 2006, and 6 to 8 weeks later Community Housing will announce the successful applicant.

Then the next chapter in Mulgum House can begin.



Living history

Nimbin GoodTimes researcher Sue Bayles welcomed Mr Moffatt (pictured) to Nimbin, and learnt a little about the olden days.

A spry 94 year-old Changi survivor who said he had been around the world three times, the gentleman is distantly related to the Moffatt family after whom Moffatt's Road is named. A dedicated caravanner, he

said he lives "here and there."

Mr Moffatt was in town to catch up with his old friend Darcy Goodwin who was expected later that day to conduct his Five Loaves street kitchen.

He was happy to sit outside the museum and take in the ambience of Cullen Street, chatting amiably about his experiences until his mate arrived.

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Say 'no' to violence

by Lizette Twisleton

Is it what women wear, or for that matter how old they are, that makes them vulnerable to sexual assault? The answer to this question is clearly no. Sexual assault happens to women, men, boys and girls of all ages and cultural backgrounds. No person asks or deserves to be sexually assaulted or raped.

One of the things we value in Nimbin is the right to be who we wish and to dress in a manner we feel comfortable with, one that expresses who we are as individuals. The photo that accompanied my last article (which I did not choose) could have confused readers. It seems that when we speak of rape and sexual assault, images of young women in short skirts is what many people think of. That we should dress making sure not to reveal bare skin if we are to avoid the unwanted advances of others. The fact that most sexual assaults



happen by someone known to the victim seems hard for us to take in, invariably, it does not matter how old we are or what we are wearing.

What is more important are the deeper questions we ask ourselves in regards to our Rights as human beings and how we respect the Rights of others. Rape/sexual assault is not about sex, or whether the seductive attire or movements of another turn someone on, it is about power and the need to control, hurt and dominate. Many perpetrators are known to their victim, well known, rape in marriage is one of the most common and most unreported sexual crimes.

The 2002 National Crime & Safety Survey, conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, stated that

only 20% of sexual assaults are reported to police, and in 58% of the most recent incidents the perpetrator was known to the victim. In the Australian component of the International Violence Against Women Survey (2002-3), a staggering 57% of all women surveyed reported they had experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. Over one third of these were by an intimate partner, 27% were by people known to them, with only 1% of women raped or assaulted by a stranger.

Sexual offenders use a variety of excuses to justify their behaviour, "she deserved it, she asked for it, it's my right as her husband/lover, she shouldn't have been so provocative". The list goes on and on, the blame often returning to the victim.

The shame and self-blame experienced by the victim (of either sex or any age) can be major factors that silence and prevent one from seeking help.

It takes great courage

to speak out and name what has happened after an assault/rape. If the community can challenge these commonly held beliefs, acknowledge that sexual and violent assaults happen in our community, we may be able to encourage those who have been assaulted to come forward and seek help.

If you have in the past, or are currently experiencing abuse and would like support, you can contact the following services.

Rape Crisis Line
1800-424-017 (24 hr service)
Lismore Sexual Assault Service 6620-2970
Domestic Violence Helpline 1800-656-463
Nimbin Police 6689-1244
Nimbin Hospital 6689-1400
Nimbin Neighbourhood Centre 6689-1692 (open 10am-4pm weekdays)
If you would like support to stop your own abusive behaviours contact
Men & Family Centre (Lismore) 6622 6116
Mensline 6622 2240

Four out of four for Tuntable Primary



The school as it looked in 1984. From Margaret Muro-Clark's *Communes in Rural Australia, Hale & Iremonger 1986*.

Photo: Sue Stock

Tuntable Falls Community Primary School has been awarded a \$66,000 grant under the federal government's Investing in Schools project. The funding will be used to upgrade infrastructure including lighting and power upgrades and a new solar hot water system, as well as to provide additional resources for the library, office and playground.

The grant is the latest in a series of grants awarded to the school, among which were a \$23,000 Community water

grant for new tanks, greywater system and fencing, and a \$2,500 Eco-schools grant for work on a retaining wall for erosion control.

Therese Biscoe, who is the Public Officer on the school's management committee wrote all four submissions last year, and all were successful.

Established in 1982, this is the first time Tuntable Primary has received any major funding for infrastructure, most of which had been donated by the co-operative or created by parents.

Birth & Beyond

Birth and Beyond has now been open for several Tuesdays for pregnant and postnatal women of the Valley, and it seems that there is plenty of interest and response. Up to 6 women and their babies have attended each Tuesday. We are now running Stretching sessions from 10-12 which are open to anyone. From 12-2 we sit together, have some lunch and discuss topics related to pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period, or any issues the women might bring up. This is also great for networking, as women exchange their phone numbers and catch up with each other at other times for support or dialogue.

From 2-4, specific topics are planned, such as presentations by guest speakers, about anything relevant to pregnancy and parenthood. For instance, the Apothecary has agreed to present on homeopathic

vaccination, and a local nutritionist is going to give a talk, and also teach women how to simply make their own bread. Malena is going to conduct dream interpretation circles.

Announcements are to be found on the Birth and Beyond sidewalk notice board on Tuesdays.

We are planning to visit some of the surrounding birthing units to discuss with the staff their birthing philosophy and what sorts of facilities they provide for labouring women. This consumer interest will provide strong incentive for units to expand their options for women such as providing baths to labour in and birthing seats to assist birthing in the upright position.

Furthermore, much interest has been expressed in antenatal workshops, so Monika is commencing the first workshop on Saturday, June 10. The workshop runs for four Saturdays in a row, between 10am and 2pm at

Birth and Beyond, and requires booking.

All of the women lament the fact that Nimbin lacks a Birth Center, as not everyone wishes to give birth at home for varied reasons. However, having to travel for over an hour in labour, just to reach another welcoming birthing facility such



as Mullumbimby, leaves them with little option other than to use Lismore Base, which is already

stretched to its limits, and does not offer facilities and options women of the Valley desire, such as waterbirths or the use of birthing seats.

Another difficulty with the Mullumbimby option is that women have to book in early, and have all their pregnancy visits with the midwives of that unit, meaning more travel, and due to the small size of that unit, the use of the bath in labour is not guaranteed, as it might already be occupied by someone else.

It really is a sad state of affairs, and strengthens the case for a Nimbin based Birthing Center, especially in the light of recent research findings strengthening the case for small birthing units, their safety and excellent track record of obstetric outcomes. We are inviting interested community members to form a working party that looks into this matter, generates some figures, and puts a case together which can be presented to the Department of Health for consideration. Alternatively, the working party would be contemplating the possibility of an independent Birth Center, which is owned and run by

the community, much as the Nimbin School.

This matter will be discussed further at our next "Womb Talk" meeting on Tuesday, May 2 at 7pm, so please come along to become involved!

Birth and Beyond is open every Tuesday, including school holidays, between 10 am and 4pm. For further information on any of the above, contact Midwife Monika on 6689 7490

Birth and Beyond would also like to update its library of pregnancy literature, as many of the existing books are falling apart, or have been eaten by mildew, moths or cockroaches. Women love to hire books or videos to absorb at home, or share with their partners or children, so donations towards the purchase of some new material would be much welcome. Monika is already volunteering her time to Birth and Beyond as a contribution to the community, which includes covering room rent and food. Any financial donation towards teaching materials such as books or videos, or indeed recent pre-read books that are in good condition, will find a grateful home here!

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