

# What to do about shoddy Centrelink treatment



**Positive response.** Gudren Buhler and her son Sebastian at home on their multiple occupancy in Nimbin. Below: One of many blogs.



**by Gudren Buhler**

During October I was cut off the pension, as a single mum working part-time, ringing in to declare my earnings. I was told the only way to restore my payment was to attend the Lismore office.

At Centrelink I waited 45 minutes in a queue to then be told to sit down and wait for however long it would take them to call my name. To many this might sound all too normal, but I hadn't been to a Centrelink office in years, and was appalled at the way things had changed.

The staff, what left are overworked with computer systems they can't operate adequately, because they aren't being trained as they upgrade. Centrelink used to be a place where you

got help to find work, and the people who helped you used to be nice. Now they are cranky and rude, and you are simply treated like cattle, which is really good for the self esteem and confidence to go out and get a job.

I wasn't going to be treated like this, and nobody should, so I said quite calmly but directly, "I am not sitting down. You don't know what it's taken to get here today, and my lift for Nimbin leaves in 15 minutes so I can pick up my son from school."

"I am not sitting down until you have restored my payments, and I will cause a scene if you don't."

"I'll get the manager," was the reply.

I turned to the queue of already unhappy people and addressed them all loudly:

"Sorry to keep you all waiting, but I've just been cut off the pension and I've got a 6-year old son to feed, so I'm not moving until I get paid."

I was quickly moved into a booth and had my payment restored in five minutes, except I was made to sign a look-for-work agreement and job network membership.

This isn't right as my child has only just turned six and I am already working part-time. So all this time, energy and resources was a complete waste.

The government wants to wear us poor people out so we don't have a voice. That is why we need to write and complain to the people who can change things. Write to:

- Commonwealth Ombudsman, PO Box 442 Canberra ACT 2601, or:

- click on 'feedback' link at [ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au](mailto:ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au) and also write to:
- Julia Gillard, Minister for Employment, PO Box 6022, Canberra ACT 2601

I went back to Centrelink on the day of my unnecessary Tursa appointment and handed out 10 stamped envelopes and writing paper addressed to the Minister for Employment, for people to express themselves in a positive and productive way. Everyone there was happy to write and complain. I know I'm not the only one who has been treated unjustly by Centrelink, and we all need to be heard.

I have been told that every letter you write and sign your name to is counted as a petition. Write and it will make a difference.

# Nimbin Fashion world hard at work this month

Behind the scenes the sewing machines are running hot, last stitches are made and everybody is getting ready to present our appreciative audience with the sensational 2008 Nimbin Fashion Show.

Showcasing 14 local designers this year, the show will present some new, interesting talents such as Nora Wolters with her beautiful, "other worldly" knitted creations; Honey with 100% recycled metal mesh handbags made into luxury garments; and a very sexy collection by Bobby K, believe it or not, made out of bicycle tubes.

Our favourite established designers will feature their trendsetting collections ranging from Satchi's hemp underwear, Robin Love and Janice Young in a collaboration, Barbara Mills felted garments in vibrant new colors, Pol who always delivers truly international fashion, Judy Who and her wild and sexy party outfits, Tara Austin and her quirky gothic evening wear, dreamy

feral cotton clothing by Gail, and 'art meets fashion' hand-painted designs by Christina Chester.

The show will be opened with a wearable art piece by Kyha, who two years ago won the first prize in Mullumbimbi's Wearable Arts Festival.

And to really make it a complete treat, delicious fresh finger food will be served, made with love by Angie and Steven, with 100% organic cakes by Ali and Sylvia.

After every show, the audience also has the opportunity to meet the designers and purchase the garments they fell in love with.

Nimbin Town Hall on Friday 14th November at 7.30pm and Saturday 15th November matinee 2.30pm and evening 7.30pm followed by a wrap party.

Tickets: Adults \$20 Children \$5, available at Perceptio Book Shop, 6689-1766, or at the door.

For more information contact [christina@ccdesign.biz](mailto:christina@ccdesign.biz) or Judy at [whodesigns@hotmail.com](mailto:whodesigns@hotmail.com)



**Innovative.** From the studios of Nimbin Fashion Shows organisers, Christina Chester and Judy Who. Photos: Thorsten Jones



**Inside**

## Snake Identification Chart

An important Reference guide detailing the Appearance, Characteristics and Habits of all snakes of the Rainbow Region

**See Centre Pages**