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Fair, frank and FREE

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Tent embassy 40th anniversary



Rallying for a fair go (clockwise from left): Pat Eatock holds the prime ministerial shoe alongside Aunty Isabel Coe; the volunteers tent; the sacred fire is taken to Parliament House; Nimbin identities Benny and Noel in the Rainbow Chai Tent.
Photos: Omega Breakspear



by Omega Breakspear

Around 100 Northern Rivers crew headed to Canberra last week to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the Tent Embassy, started by four brave young Aboriginal men in front of Parliament House on 26th January, 1972.

"The Tent Embassy stands for the Sovereignty of the Aboriginal people, the first Australians," said Lismore's Uncle Robert Corowa.

He is one of the Embassy's first men and has been going down there for many years. Sadly their rights both as a people and a nation remain as critical today as when the Embassy first started.

This was highlighted in the march from the Tent Embassy to the new Parliament House, now up the road, where the old 1970s chant, 'What do we want Land Rights, what have we got fuck all!' was sung with as much meaning

as ever.

The well organised event, going for several days, was spread over the entire grounds

The Rainbow Chai Tent, run by Michael Chai and his sister, Megan and mum, Elizabeth, as well as the ever intrepid Benny Zable, were one of the first to set up. During the next few days, thousands of meals were served from the well known Channon Rainbow Chai space and kitchen.

There were speakers including Michael Anderson, one of the original four, and long time Tent Embassy crusader Auntie Isabel Coe.

During the day there was a chance to listen to the stories of Elders who had come from as far away as WA, Darwin and Cape York. At night there was great music including from members of Coloured Stone and No Fixed Address and a Corroboree at

sunset.

There was even a chance to see the Gillard shoe surrounded by the frenzy of the media, most of whom had lost any ability to report the truth and focus on the real issues.

From its humble beginnings, the Tent Embassy has grown to be recognised internationally as part of the fight for justice for one of the most marginalised and yet brilliant people in the world today.



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