

# THE NIMBIN GOOD TIMES

Your FREE community paper

Cannabis Edition

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## MardiGrass succeeds despite cops



Photo: Sue Stock



Photo: Greg Soward

by Bob Dooley

In the wash-up after MardiGrass, organisers, business people and volunteers are assessing the success of the event from all angles.

Numbers appeared to be down, with the streets almost emptying during the showers on the Saturday.

According to the Phil Williams, President of the Showgrounds committee, camping numbers were down about 50%, particularly for pre-bookings which fell to 300 this year.

Never-the-less, about 400 vehicles were at the Showgrounds, where everyone enjoyed themselves and were generally well-behaved and

tidy with their rubbish.

Several shopkeepers also reported a drop in trade as a trend over the past few years, though there was no shortage of patrons at the hotel.

Creatively, the protestival was judged a resounding success, from the wondrous venue decorations, notably at the Community Centre's 'Magic Garden'; the excellent music played throughout the weekend on six stages; the hilarious comedy and Hemp Olympix; the Pot Poet's breakfast; and of course the dress-ups at the colourful street parade.

A poignant note in the parade was the absence of the drummers, a mainstay of the march in previous years, following the tragic hit-and-run death of Antonia Jansen

who had been integral to the performances.

Importantly, the educational goals of MardiGrass were well met, with Hemposium talks, panel discussions and demonstrations engaging large audiences, and though media attention was scant, videos of everything will soon be up on the MardiGrass website.

For the brave festival goers, undeterred by police roadblocks and vigilant street patrols, the weekend was a positive experience.

The younger demographic of millennials appeared to be having a great time all the time, with an estimated crowd of 8000 attending the street parade, camera-phones at the ready.

### Police operation nets 65

Highway patrol officers conducted 2,370 road-side saliva tests over a four-day operation during Nimbin's annual Mardi Grass Festival. Police say 65 people were caught with illicit drugs in their system.

Last year it was 180 positive out of 1800 tested, so from 10% to about 3.6% Still, 65 people's lives were tipped upside down, and they quite likely were not impaired.

Police say they also conducted about 2,500 road-side breath tests in the area, with only two people caught over the limit.

The rideshare system introduced this year, Ubud and Doober, proved very popular, as did the services of several excellent Uber drivers, and

certainly would have accounted for some of the reduced detection.

The saliva collectors alone cost more than all the MardiGrass expenses.

The cost of each initial saliva test was \$25.50 in 2016 according to police, amounting to \$60,435 worth of swabs to catch 65 DUI = \$929.78 per person caught, not including factoring for police wages or second screening tests at \$31 each.

Inspector Peter McMenamain said some motorists tested positive to a cocktail of drugs.

"There's a number that just tested positive to THC, and there's a number of them that tested positive to multiple drugs," he told the ABC.

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**Lismore Showground**

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\* Entry - \$5 per adult, \$1 per child (under 5 free)

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