

# THE HIPPIES WERE RIGHT!



MardiGrass celebration  
Photo: Garry Mimlich

by Bob Dooley

After a month of reflection, one thing seems certain: most of the ideals of the new settlers to the Northern Rivers have become mainstream.

Treading lightly on the earth, living simply, aiming towards self-sufficiency and rejecting rampant consumerism; the hippie lifestyle heralded new approaches that are now commonplace.

And it's quite an impressive list: off-grid power generation, recycling, complementary medicine and holistic therapies, intentional community living, DIY owner-builder architecture, home-grown organic agriculture, experiential learning, new procedures for birthing and death...

Hippie values don't seem so way-out now either. Respect for First Nations peoples, concern for the environment, encouragement of

originality in literature, media, performance, art, music and dress, co-operation rather than competition; these values are now on the table throughout the world.

Similarly, renewed interest in ancient spiritualism, the experiential use of psychedelics, and acceptance of atypical gender identity all seem pretty ho-hum these days, but it wasn't always so.

Fifty years since the Aquarius Festival, 40 years since the Nightcap forest protests and 30 years of MardiGrass protestivals have seen a growing acceptance of new ways of interacting, of working and of living on this Earth.

The ground-breaking influence of the counterculture was not just confined to Nimbin of course, though the Northern Rivers became Australia's epicentre of the movement, and still is.

And the work is not over yet. We're a long way from bringing

about an end to wars and living together in harmony, a long way from adequately responding to climate change, a long way from compassionately treating vulnerable people in society.

But we're on the right track.

With the ranks of the baby boomer pioneers thinning out, the issue of renewal and generational change was a feature of the Aquarius 50 sessions, with one of the ten days devoted to the young and young at heart.

It was encouraging to see a youthful demographic emerging that will carry the torch for humanitarian hippie ideals forward into the future.

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Aquarius50 Peace mandala at The Channon market. Photo: Beverlay Collow



Vocal Minority choir at the Aquarius50 closing ceremony  
Photo: Paul Tait



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