

Aquarius still shining



by Johnny Allen

Katie Cawcutt and Benny Zable of the Aquarius Foundation have organised a full year of events to mark the 40th Anniversary of the Nimbin Aquarius Festival.

A highlight event, timed to mark the dates of the original festival, was Aquarius and Beyond, a two-day contest created by Rob Garbutt and his team from Southern Cross University, which re-appraised the achievements and legacy of the festival.

With Lismore Mayor Jenny Dowell and festival co-directors Graeme Dunstan and Johnny Allen, many of the original Aquarians reflected on the festival's impact on their lives. Among those present were musician Paul Joseph, Bauxhau Stone, Alethea Scantlebury, Katie Cawcutt, Benny Zable, Vernon Trewkee, Neville Jennings, Mareid Sullivan and John Jiggins, who read from his novel based on the festival, *Rehearsals For The Apocalypse*.

Original locals Daisy Stewart and Rollie Couch reflected, with many in the audience remembering fondly the milkshakes, hamburgers and toasted sandwiches dispersed from Daisy's Cafe.

Mandie Hale reflected on the challenge of creating a viable counterculture, and convened a panel of young Aquarians to reflect on growing up in the community. Michael Balderstone detailed the local legacy of the festival, Christopher Dean the shift of planetary consciousness, while Natalie Meyer outlined the achievements of the Nimbin Neighbourhood and Information Centre.

In 40 sessions, speakers examined the historic event from its many facets, with presentations by academics from various universities brought depth and rigour to topics ranging from activism to the festival's impacts on intentional



John Allen speaking at the conference

support from local farmers and existing residents, (g) from Nimbin the counter-culture revolution reached out locally so that the Far Northern regions of New South Wales have become known for their innovative and sustainable technologies, ideas and models of community living, and (h) the Aquarians and those who were inspired to the area have made diverse contributions including:

- initiating ecological protection of old growth forests and North Coast biodiversity,
- developing alternative energy systems,
- establishing sustainable food production practices and promoting healthy lifestyles,
- promoting innovative architecture in intentional communities,
- encouraging cultural diversity including music, craft and arts,
- engaging in political activism, and the production of community media including newspapers and radio,
- supporting alternative economic models, including Local Economic Trading Systems (LETS) and community markets.

2. That this House congratulates the Aquarians and those who have contributed to and maintained a unique and vibrant cultural community in northern New South Wales for the past 40 years.

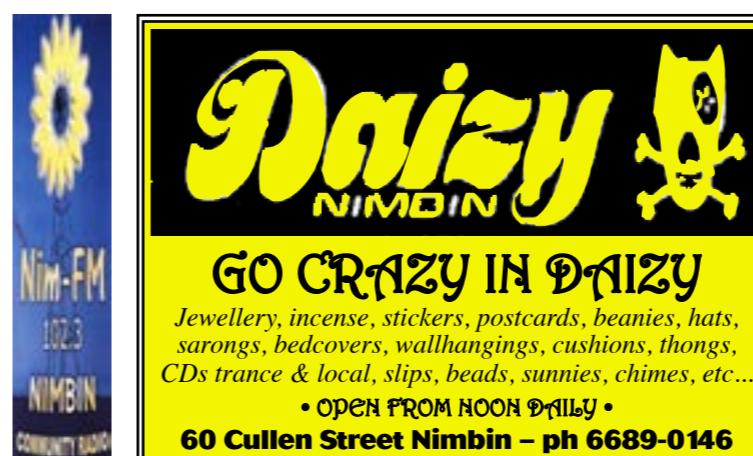
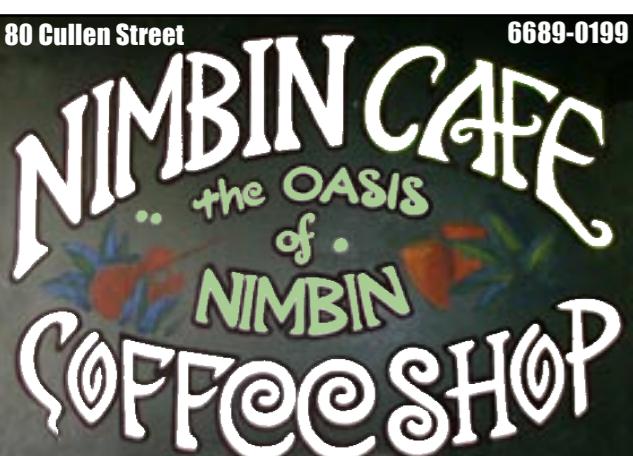
NSW LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Hansard, Wednesday 22 May 2013

Aquarius Festival Nimbin Fortieth Anniversary

Motion by the Hon. JAN BARHAM agreed to:

- That this House notes that:
- (a) 12 to 23 May 2013 marks the 40th anniversary of the Aquarius Festival in Nimbin, New South Wales,
- (b) the festival's organisers planned more than just the fourth Australian Union of Students music festival, they planned a festival of alternative thinking and sustainable living, in a valley where festival goers could stay on and live out their ideals and aspirations,
- (c) the Bundjalung Elders gave their permission and support to holding the festival on their lands, building a respectful connection with traditional owners that has continued to this day,
- (d) the Nimbin Valley and surrounding areas welcomed the boost that the festival offered the region, with traditional industries in a state of decline,
- (e) soon after the Aquarius Festival, Nimbin became identified as a centre for counter-culture and the environmental and sustainable lifestyle movement in Australia,
- (f) the new settlers in the Nimbin community experienced adversities and learned about living on the land with



The Aged of Aquarius

by Nathan Koenig

of May, by proclamation of Mayor Jenny Dowell.

Paul promoted *Aquarius in Lovemore*, a four-day event at the Starcourt Theatre on 9th -12th May.

John Seed is an environmentalist who successfully campaigned to save the sub-tropical rainforest of NSW and was a founder of Bodhi Farm, one of Nimbin's first communities. He is now in Sydney, co-ordinating Rainforest Information Centre and deep ecology programs.

To quote Aquarian troubadour Paul Joseph, "We wanted to change the world. This was our destiny." Let's take a look at some of the Nimbin settlers featured in my film series *Woodstock Downunder*.

Johnny

Allen, the young, long-haired, theatrically-minded entrepreneur of theatre and rock concerts, was hired by the AUS, Australian Union of Students, to coordinate the 1973 Aquarius Festival. He got Graeme Dunstan, an engineering student in Sydney, to help pull things together. Graeme went on to be a prominent Australian cultural and political activist.

A third part of the young Aquarian team was found meditating in a cave near Mullumbimby: Paul Joseph. He became the festival herald and troubadour, and recently wrote and created a music video called *Wot the Frack!* and had Lismore's name officially changed to Lovemore for the month

She granted our first interview when we landed in Sydney in 2003. Soon after, we were surprised to see her in Nimbin, heading up the MardiGrass parade.

And then there was Black Al, an elder Aboriginal who made us laugh while tuning us on to aboriginal music and culture. He found a comfort zone among his fellow social outcasts, the hippies.



Vernon, Mic and Sri Richard dreamers who kept it going and passes it on to the young people through the Nimbin Aquarius Foundation, whose President this year is Nimbin's iconic Benny Zable, known around the world as a performance artist for peace.

There are many more, like Christopher Dean, formerly the hippie who became CEO of Thursday Plantation; Richard Neville, editor of radical Oz Magazine who became an author and futurist; Juno Gemes, celebrated photographer, author and activist for Aboriginal rights; Michael Balderstone, who manages the Nimbin Museum and MardiGrass; Peter Pedals, founder of Rainbow Power Company and provider of sustainable energy systems; Ray Thorpe, the savvy proprietor of the Happy High Herb stores worldwide, and my wise wife and partner, Shelli Lipton.

Read an extended version of this article at: www.aquarius2013.nimbin.nsw.au

Our first hostess in Nimbin was Robyn Francis at Djanbung Gardens, Nimbin's Permaculture Centre, now an accredited institution with a constant flow of students. Aquarian pioneer Katie Cawcutt is one of the early

Nimbin Aquarius 2013 acknowledgements

by Benny Zable, President, Nimbin Aquarius Foundation Inc.

I wish to first acknowledge the Bundjalung nation and Wia-Bal people, whose land we are on.

Secondly I wish to thank the many people who organised the different aspects of the 40th anniversary of Aquarius in May to be the great success it has been, as follows:

The Nimbin Aquarius Foundation Inc. team, most of all Katie Cawcutt who managed the finance, complexity of meetings, website, and ongoing planning. Paris Naday for creating our website: www.aquarius2013.nimbin.nsw.au and for designing Aquarius 2013 posters. David Hallett for organising the Aquarius folk concert, Harsha Prabhu and Graeme Batterbury for exhibiting and publishing a 40th anniversary book edition of *Rainbow Dreaming: Tales from the Age of Aquarius*.

Rob Garbutt for organising from the Southern Cross University and bringing *Aquarius and Beyond: 40 years on* market of ideas forum to the Nimbin Hall. Graham Irvine, Southern

Cross University together with Nimbin Information Centre, bringing the *Nimbinovations: Living the Dream 18-panel Aquarian Archives display* to Nimbin shopfronts.

Also to Mic Conway and Fantuzzi for going out of their way to perform for us in Nimbin.

Which leads me to a most spectacular grand finale for the Aquarius 40th anniversary program in May, the Aquarius Masquerade Ball, which Ruth Miller worked so tirelessly on, together with Katie Cawcutt. And to all original 1973 organisers and participants especially Johnny Allen, Graeme Dunstan and Paul Joseph coming to Nimbin for this, our most stimulating Aquarius reunion.

FOOTNOTE
Excerpt from Rob Garbutt's acknowledgements: Thanks everyone – it was a lot of fun, it was informative, we learnt a lot, it was a communiversity.