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Cameras – bad for business?

The introduction of surveillance cameras to Nimbin earlier this year is of growing concern to a number of local businesses in the main street and further afield. The fear of diminished visitor numbers to the town due to the presence of cameras is the subject of strong debate on the streets of Nimbin these days.

November is normally the lead-in to Nimbin's busy tourism season, but one shopkeeper claims to have figures showing this to be the worst in terms of sales for five years. Others state that public servants and those in sensitive employment positions don't wish to be archived on digital technology while visiting Nimbin. As radio commentator on NIM-FM and human rights activist, Zev Friedlaender said, "People don't want to be filmed. The loss to the village outweighs the benefits."

The issue was the subject of discussion at the well-attended November meeting of the Nimbin Chamber of Commerce. Chairman Andrew Kavasilas said, "Business activity seems to have been down in the past few months, and some believe part of that could be due to the cameras and the nature of their operations, though there are other factors to be considered."

David Hallett, the Nimbin Community Economic Development Officer (CEDO) expressed sympathy for Nimbin businesses but said, "I think the

cameras need more time to achieve a true measure of their worth. Petrol pricing and the traditional pre-Christmas lull may also be reasons for a depressed economy. Council is planning a review of the cameras before Christmas."

Effectiveness

That review should investigate whether the cameras work at all. "There have been some cases where shops have been vandalized and the cameras have been unable to provide footage of the incident," said Andrew Kavasilas. "Yet we seem to have got the cameras and lost the police, to additional duties in Lismore," he added.

David Hyett, Chairperson of Jungle Patrol Community Safety Inc, and proprietor of the Bringabong clothing shop, stated that his sales are down 30% and added, "Cameras haven't contributed in any way to a reduction in violent crime on Nimbin's main street. People are behaving exactly the same as before. It is a totally ineffective use of upwards of \$80,000."

However, Robyn Archbold from Nimbin Lifestyle Real estate disagreed. "There has been a huge reduction in assaults, vehicular abuse (burnouts) and vandalism, particularly against business premises. After 18 years working on the main street in Nimbin I would say that the cameras have made a huge difference. In my opinion



this is absolutely inarguable," he said.

Michael Balderstone from the Nimbin Museum tended to agree with Archie. He said, "I suspect that it has made the main street a bit safer. Spontaneous brawls don't happen so easily, and by the time people have gone down the back the heat has gone out of the dispute.

"I've heard of two people being busted for cannabis by police using the cameras, and if that starts to happen frequently it could go in any direction. At the moment, there seems to be quite a bit of respect for the cameras. Who doesn't want a peaceful street?"

Shifting crime

There is substantial evidence now from Nimbin to support the oft-

repeated claim that surveillance cameras relocate crime into more discreet locations within a community. The Nimbin Community Development Association (NCDA) has outlined its concerns to Council about increased dealing and associated anti-social behavior moving into the Nimbin Community Centre grounds and near to child care, youth and family support facilities.

Sergeant Garry Acton from the Nimbin Police Station said "From a police perspective the cameras have been a positive strategy – but I am aware of community concerns that there has been a displacement of crime within Nimbin."

There are further claims of territorial maneuvering and that drug dealing has also been pushed

down to the Nimbin Info Centre and into the western car park. Both areas are close to Nimbin Central school and outside of the camera zone.

Code of Practice

The operational policy for cameras in Nimbin has now been released by Lismore City Council, and is available for viewing at the Nimbin Post Office, the Nimbin Police Station and the Nimbin Neighbourhood Centre.

Garry Hemsworth, Executive Director of Infrastructure for Lismore City Council told the GoodTimes that "It is a priority of Council, and beneficial to the Nimbin community to communicate that document so the public understands the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders." The document addresses issues of privacy, probity, security, access as well as grievance procedures.

It is stated in the Code of Practice that the introduction of surveillance cameras to Nimbin is part of an integrated crime reduction strategy. That crime reduction strategy now needs to initiate processes that alleviate drug-related violent crime within our Community Centre and near our school.

An upcoming meeting of the Nimbin Police Consultative Committee will hopefully address this very issue.



Drop-waisted. Donna Swan shows off the latest, um, fashion.

Picture: Paul Tait

What a showing!

Things didn't go quite according to plan for first-time model Donna Swan at the Nimbin Fashion Show on opening night, but in true Nimbin style it hasn't fazed her one bit.

Donna was roped in at the last minute to model for young designer Tara Austin when one of her crew pulled out, and Donna was about the same size. "I did a rehearsal and everything fitted, and it went OK, so suddenly there I was, doing my first modelling gig," said Donna.

Wearing her last outfit for the collection, Donna strode down the catwalk, struck her pose at the end, did the turn and was walking back when her low-slung skirt slipped from her size 8 hips, and step by step

dropped down her thighs.

"I didn't realise it was happening until it was practically around my ankles, by which time I was almost off-stage anyway," she said, explaining why she appeared to make no effort to retrieve the errant garment as she walked. Afterwards, members of the audience asked her whether it was part of the show. "At least I was wearing nice undies, not old granny ones," Donna confided.

But Nimbin is a small village, and news travels fast. Once backstage, Donna got changed into her street clothes and walked from the Town Hall to the hotel,

**More fashion
see colour
centre pages**

only to be greeted with hilarity by patrons who had already been told of her unconventional modelling debut.

But will it deter her? "No way," Donna asserted. "I'm all set to go for the next two shows." And will she put a couple of stitches in the waistband of that skirt? "I might just leave it the way it is," she grinned.

Donna featured in NGT a year ago, with her sister Kylie and friend Clint, dressed up for the 2004 Pimps and Players Ball. For this year's ball she is making a revealing laced bustier.

The 2005 Pimps and Players Ball will be held at the Nimbin Hotel on Saturday 10th December, "Dress: pimped out," with prizes for best-dressed singles and couples.

**What
about
the
old
bank?**