

Rainbow Region Property Guide

Wasted electricity

by Lizzie Buscaino,
Rainbow Power Company

When people think about wasted electricity, they usually picture lights left on or appliances running unnecessarily.

But for many homes, the real waste is timing.

Solar panels produce most of their power in the middle of the day.

If you are out at work and your biggest electricity use happens at night, you may be exporting solar energy for a low feed in rate and buying power back later at a higher price.

The good news is this is often easy to fix.

Start by checking your electricity bill or retailer app to see when your usage peaks. Then look at what can be shifted.

Dishwashers, washing machines and dryers often have delay start functions.

Pool pumps can be scheduled to run during daylight hours.

Electric hot water systems can be put on timers so they heat while



the sun is shining.

EV charging can also be programmed to align with solar production.

These practical adjustments help you use more of the energy you generate, rather than sending it back to the grid.

And if, after optimising

your usage, you find you still need more generation or energy storage, that is where the right system design comes in.

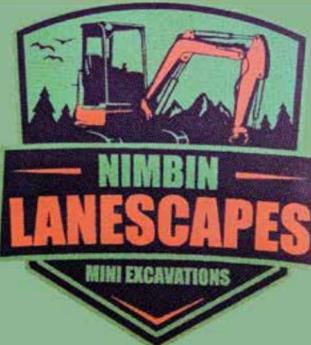
A properly sized solar or battery upgrade can then be based on real data, not guesswork.

Small changes first. Smart upgrades second.



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Before the first shovel hits the ground



by Josh Reilly, Figtree Building and Design

When people think about building a home, they picture the slab going down or the frame going up. What they don't see is everything that happens before that first shovel hits the ground – and that early stage matters more than most realise.

Every project starts with concept. What are you building? How does it sit on your block? In our region, slope, soil conditions, flood overlays, bushfire zoning and council controls can all shape a design before it's even drawn.

Getting clarity early avoids costly redesigns later.

From there comes design and documentation. This may involve a building designer or architect, contour surveys, soil tests, BASIX commitments and structural engineering.

Good design isn't just about how a home looks – it needs to be practical to build, suited to our climate, and aligned with your budget.

Next is approvals. Depending on the

project, that means either a Development Application (DA) through council or a Complying Development Certificate (CDC).

You may also require bushfire or flood reports, engineering details and energy assessments. Only once those are in place can you obtain a Construction Certificate – the formal approval to begin building.

This preliminary phase can feel overwhelming. It's also where many projects run into trouble.

Rushed decisions or incomplete documentation often lead to delays, budget blowouts and unnecessary stress.

The reality is simple: the smoother your preparation, the smoother your build.

If you're considering building, start with the right advice.

At Figtree Building and Design, we guide clients from early concept through to Construction Certificate and construction.

Have the conversation early. It could save you months – and a lot of frustration – down the track.

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Feature artist – Michelle Jeffery: Landscapes of the imagination

by Linda Frylink Anderson

For Michelle Jeffery, painting is an act of indulgent make-believe – a doorway into worlds that feel both familiar and fantastical.

Working primarily in acrylics, she creates atmospheric landscapes that could easily belong in a science fiction story: tranquil, luminous environments that invite the viewer to wander, wonder, and lose themselves in the unknown.

Michelle's painting journey began more than 30 years ago when she studied art in Newcastle, completing three years of training and majoring in painting. In those early days her materials were traditional – enamels, oils and the

unmistakable scent of turps.

Over time her practice evolved, and she now favours acrylics for their versatility and fast drying time, allowing her to build layers of colour and mood with freedom and immediacy.

Inspired by the intricate beauty of the natural world on a microscopic level, Michelle focuses on what she describes as nature's lighter side.

Her paintings offer a sense of calm and quiet intrigue – places where you feel small, as if peering into an enchanted terrain.

In these imagined landscapes, detail is softened and fleeting, fading away as though unimportant in the greater scheme of things. What remains is atmosphere: playful,

otherworldly, and gently surreal.

A distinctive feature of Michelle's work is her willingness to leave areas of the canvas blank, allowing space for the viewer's imagination to take hold.

These unfinished passages become part of the narrative, prompting questions: What lies beyond the visible scene? What might exist outside the focus? How did this strange and beautiful place come to be?

Now living and working in Kyogle for the past 12 years, Michelle is surrounded by lush gardens – a fitting setting for an artist whose work celebrates nature transformed into dreamscape.

Her paintings offer not only an

escape, but a reminder that wonder is always waiting just beyond the edges of what we see.

View Michelle's work at Nimbin Artists Gallery, open every day from 10am to 4pm.

Nimbin Art Fair returns

One of the Northern Rivers' most anticipated creative celebrations is set to return this autumn.

Proudly presented by the Nimbin Artists Gallery, this much-loved annual exhibition will run from 4th to 19th April in the historic Nimbin Town Hall, conveniently located beside the Nimbin Artists Gallery.

A vibrant showcase of artistic talent, the fair will feature an exciting mix of works across a wide range of

mediums, from striking 2D paintings and drawings to bold and imaginative 3D creations. Visitors can expect a rich and diverse exhibition, offering something to delight every art lover.

This year's event is again generously supported by the Margaret McLaren Art Foundation, which will present art prizes totalling \$5,000, continuing to encourage both established and rising creative voices with \$3,000 for the outright Best Artwork winner and a \$2,000 Emerging Artist Prize.

Artists' proposals are due by 2nd March. All artists will be notified regarding acceptance of proposals by 9th March.

For more information, contact the gallery on 02 6689-1444 or email: nimbinartistsgallery@gmail.com

Celtic and Egyptian mythology



'Botanical' by Turiya Bruce



'Cosmic Creation' by Nuro Oliver



'Geometric Duck' by Crystie Saulwick (detail)

by Ali Walker

The Blue Knob Hall Gallery enjoyed a wonderful opening for the 'Back to The Garden' members exhibition and 'Immersed in Print' in the Solo Space.

The members exhibition is a gentle invitation to step away from the weight of world events and immerse ourselves in nature's quiet healing power.

Our artists have captured rivers, flowers, trees, gardens and the simple beauty that keeps on blooming regardless of the headlines.

The artworks remind us that nature doesn't debate the news; it simply continues offering renewal, colour and a place to rest our minds.

Thank you to all who contribute their artwork to the hall, which has long been a heart space for our community, and invites us to step back to the garden both literally and metaphorically and let nature heal what the headlines cannot.

'Immersed in Print' is a collaboration between two local printmakers from Yellow Door Studio, Nimbin.

Nuro Oliver is a multidisciplinary visionary artist who combines traditional and contemporary printmaking techniques. She embellishes her metal plate intaglio etchings with archival inks, drawing inspiration from nature, sacred geometry and Egyptian mythology.

Crystie Saulwick's work is inspired by the natural world and a deep love of symmetry, pattern, and fantasy landscapes. She explores Tetrapak printing and copperplate etching, creating intricate works influenced by childhood storybook illustrations, psychedelic patterns and her Celtic heritage.

Both exhibitions will run until Saturday 21st March.

Kin Café is open Thursday-Sunday from 9.30am to 3pm, with news about additional opening days coming soon. The menu of fresh, seasonal dishes celebrates the best local produce with as many organic ingredients as possible, thoughtfully crafted into vibrant, flavour-filled plates.

• **Blue Knob Writers Group** meet weekly at Kin Cafe on Sundays. For more info contact Alex 6689-7268 or Helen 0487-385-134

• **Blue Knob Singers** meet on Thursdays from 4pm. Everyone is welcome. For more info call Peter 0458-487-865

• **Sound Journey with Amma:** Gentle breathwork flow and sound journey meditation on Wednesday 4th March at 6pm. Cost is \$20. Bring yoga mat and cushion.

• **Life drawing** will be held every 3rd Wednesday in the gallery, 5-7pm. All welcome. Cost is \$25. Phone (02) 66897-449, Email: bkbgallery@iinet.net.au Web: www.blueknobgallery.com

Tweed Gallery launches new season

Tweed Regional Gallery has launched the gallery's autumn program, presenting four exciting exhibitions spanning photography, installation and contemporary painting.

The new season features a landmark survey by acclaimed photo media artist Anne Zahalka, a playful yet probing installation series by Antoinette Edmunds, a monumental self-portrait by Archie Moore (Kamilaroi/Bigambul) touring from the National Portrait Gallery, and a new body of paintings by Oliver Abbott exploring memory and place.

Gallery director, Ingrid Hedgcock, said that the exhibitions were an example of depth of talent and diversity in the Australian art landscape.

"Together, these shows invite audiences to step inside artists' methods and archives, consider the politics of identity, reflect on our shared environment and reimagine local histories through the lens of memory and making," Ms Hedgcock said.

ZAHALKAWORLD – an artist's archive (Anne Zahalka) Renowned Australian photo media artist Anne Zahalka (pictured) presents a major survey drawing together key bodies of work from four decades of practice.

Centred on the artist's archive, the exhibition pairs seminal series with personal and professional materials – notes,

ephemera and collected treasures – that have informed her image making.

A striking re-creation of Zahalka's house studio within the Gallery invites visitors into the creative processes behind her visionary worlds.

Anne Zahalka explained that the exhibition is intended to explore her artistic practice and showcase her work over time.

"I'm excited to be presenting a major survey of my work... this immersive exhibition will offer a first hand experience of how I develop artworks, the research and material processes that are involved, and the context the works are made in," Ms Zahalka said.

Her work 'The Bathers' (pictured), photographed at an open studio at Bondi Pavilion in 1989, has been selected for a new \$1.70 Australian postage stamp.



Curator Anouska Phizacklea said Zahalka's photographs have become iconic and represent key moments in Australia's history and being able to see how the artist works is an exceptional opportunity.

'ZAHALKAWORLD – an artist's archive' is a Museum of Australian Photography touring exhibition on show at Tweed Regional Gallery until 17th May.

Border Song at Roxy Gallery



Above left: 'Boulders' by Wendy McGain Above: 'Water Bird' by Marion Arent Right: 'Metal Man' by Keith Cameron

Roxy Gallery is delighted to welcome back the Practising Artist Network Group (PAN) with their newest exhibition, Border Song, a vibrant and varied showcase that highlights the creative breadth within this group.

Last seen in the gallery in 2022, PAN returns with a diverse gathering of established and emerging artists who each bring their own voice, medium and story to this beautifully layered exhibition.

Inspired by the themes in the Elton John and Bernie Taupin song of the same name, Border Song invites viewers to reflect on peace, harmony and the search for connection in a world that feels increasingly complex.

For the artists of PAN, the theme resonates strongly with the region they call home. The Northern Rivers offers a sense of calm, belonging and serene landscape that threads through many of the works.

The exhibition brings together a range of media including oils, acrylics, pastels, ink and sculptural forms. While each artist interprets the theme in their own way, the works share a unifying sensitivity: reflections on family,

relationships, environment and the intimate ties that anchor us.

Alongside group exhibitions across the region – including past displays at Roxy Gallery, Northern Rivers Community Gallery, Ballina and Lone Goat Gallery, Byron Bay – PAN also supports a lively program of social and creative activities, from life drawing to plein air sessions.

It is a group built on shared inspiration and a passion for artistic growth, offering members a place to create, connect and exhibit.

This year's exhibition features work from a wide range of the PAN artists, including our very talented local artists Marion Arent, Keith Cameron and Wendy McGain, and many others from the Northern Rivers.

Join us for a relaxed morning tea launch on Saturday 7th March from 10am, as we enjoy a look at the works, a

few words from some of the artists and a nice cup of tea alongside a little baked treat.

The exhibition will run from Saturday 7th March to Sunday 19th April. Make sure to visit the gallery during March and April for a thoughtful and uplifting journey through the many voices of Northern Rivers artists.

Art as witness in major exhibition

Wallum Brunswick Heads is heading to Sydney, taking pride of place in a major contemporary art exhibition at the SH Ervin Gallery in The Rocks.

Holding Ground, opening 7th March and running until 3rd May, brings together leading Australian artists in a powerful show curated by Gavin Wilson. Through painting, ceramics, sculpture, textiles and photography, the exhibition explores the meaning of place – and what it means to defend it.

Ten striking photographic works from Wallum Brunswick Heads feature in the exhibition. Eight are by Ocean Shores photographer Mac Maderski, with two by Brunswick Heads local Mark Seiffert. Together, they document the ecological richness of a landscape now under threat from a proposed 124-lot housing development at Bayside Brunswick Heads.

One of the exhibition's centrepieces is Maderski's Grandmother Tree – a commanding portrait of a 300-year-old scribbly gum. The ancient tree, one of 76 giants marked for destruction if the development proceeds,



Grandmother Tree, a 300-year-old scribbly gum (*Eucalyptus racemosa*) by Mac Maderski

stands as a living witness to centuries of coastal life. In the gallery setting, this tree becomes more than a photograph. It becomes testimony.

Other works reveal the intricate ecosystem sustained within this high ecological value site. Particularly moving is the image of a juvenile South-Eastern glossy

black cockatoo, which arrived at Wallum after the 2023 fires – singed but alive.

Now the emblem of Save Wallum, this vulnerable subspecies is listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and continues to face habitat loss across its range.

Among the exhibiting artists are internationally recognised figures including Imants Tillers and Sydney-based Janet Laurence, whose practice has long explored ecology and environmental fragility.

By bringing Wallum Brunswick Heads into a major Sydney gallery, Holding Ground invites audiences to reflect on what is at stake in every patch of so-called "undeveloped" land.

Is it empty land or living country? Is it potential real estate or a wildlife corridor supporting threatened species? And what does it mean, collectively, to hold ground?

For the Wallum community, these are not abstract questions. They are urgent, local and real.

To learn more about the campaign to protect Wallum Brunswick Heads, visit: www.savewallum.com

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Bushwalkers go for a paddle

by Peter Moyle
Nimbin Bushwalkers Club

The year got underway with a paddle on Simpsons Creek on the southern arm of the Brunswick River from in town heading towards Tyagarah.

14 members took off and with the assistance of the king high tide we made quick and easy progress in the early morning.

The clear water gave us great views in the shallow water and the aquatic life within, the schools of mullet and numerous stingrays a standout.

Overhead we had a sea eagle follow us for over a kilometre.

After 90 minutes the tide slowed before turning and gave us an easy paddle home, on the way a stop to walk through to the deserted beach and lunch.

Coming up a couple of walks that should have the waterfalls flowing nicely, as well as a day out in Lismore to help keep our forests safe.

Walks Programme

Sunday 15th March
Minyon Falls, Nightcap National Park

Leader: Sha East 0421-653-201. Please ring to book in. The full track has reopened.

Grade: 3. Some rocks and tree roots to walk over and track can be slippery; care needed at drop-offs. There should be plenty of water on the falls and always an enjoyable walk. Starting at the picnic area at 9am. Comfortable but appropriate

footwear for bushwalking required.

Bring: the usual, hat, lunch, water.
Meet: 9am Minyon Falls Picnic Area.

Sunday 22nd March
Lismore – March in March for Forests

Leader: Helena Hodson, 0403-144-236. Please ring to book in. The Bob Brown Foundation is organising an Australia wide day of action to help protect our Native Forests.

A march in Lismore is planned, and some of us are going to walk. Final details on-line with a 10am start. We are planning to "value add" to the day with one or two short walks around Lismore.

Saturday 12th April
Unicorn Falls and Whiskey Creek, Mt Jerusalem NP

Leader: Peter Moyle 0412-656-498.
Grade: 3-4. The first part of the new multi-day walk, leaving Unicorn Falls carpark before heading to Whiskey Creek walking on some new trails. There may be slippery conditions after rain. We have combined the two regular walks; on return to Unicorn Falls a swim under the falls is available and recommended. Good footwear needed.

Bring: Water, lunch and hat.
Meet: Two spots, whichever suits: 9am at the primary school in Uki or if coming from Mullumbimby meet at Uncle Toms at 8.30am. Ring to organise car-pooling and to register.



Nimbin Garden Club notes



by Peter Brooker

It was 1996 when Amanda stood at the gates of her property on Tuntable Creek Road and gazed out at 20 acres of empty paddock: a tabula rasa, a blank slate.

She very quickly saw great potential in the land and began building a house. She calls her place Eternity Springs.

Once settled, the first priority was to plant fruit trees, lots of them, and typically, they all grew to be very large trees indeed.

Having established the north point, Amanda kept the tall trees and shrubs away to avoid overshadowing the house and other plants but, as many of us have discovered, plants grow extremely well around Nimbin.

As a result of our fertile soil and ample rainfall, Amanda has recently had to trim back or cull some of her trees, resulting in a bumper crop of plums from a tree that had previously struggled in the shade.

We began our walk by climbing the stairway to heaven, an open area with views and a very large raised and covered deck area once used for parties or weddings. I believe it is still available by request.

We descended from heaven and followed the path down to the river, sadly passing the grave site of Amanda's last pony, one of two Amanda rescued after the fires, tragically a victim of a brown



snake bite in the year of the fire horse.

Once at the river, we travelled upstream to the waterfall accompanied by the four dogs, only two of which took advantage of the cool water at the base of the falls.

Walking back toward the house we pass a Tabebuia tree that, after shedding its foliage, is covered in yellow flowers, then we came upon the vegetable garden with the usual summer crops of cucumber, asparagus and beans, and next to it, the duck enclosure with not one but two duck ponds and the option to free range.

There are various artworks dotted about the property and a seat, between the house and road, that looks like it awaits Frodo and Gandalf.

Amanda set out with the intention of an artists' retreat and a bed and breakfast. To this end she had two more houses built, but with the advent of Airbnb and



the ensuing loss of permanent homes she decided to rent the houses to people who just wanted somewhere to live.

Next month's meeting will be a guided walk along the Nimbin Rainbow Walking Track. We will meet at the Bowlo end at 2pm on 21st March.

Modern medical fast train cabbage

The Loon writes directly from his post-operative delusional state in bed 2, C6 East at University Hospital.

I had woken after a prolonged slanging match with the chief executive officer on the sixth circle of hell, East wing.

I had to give it to the ole man, he ran a tight ship.

The tall beige walls and fake grey marbled floors held a plethora of interchangeable component-based rolling machines with lights that blinked, graphs that printed out and a wide range of alarm noises, with each alarm creating a different level of consternation in the profoundly overworked staff.

All of these were attached to their own machine and were kept busy using them to ensure the infidels lived through the cruel and unusual tortures that the head inquisitors meted out.

I looked down at the two lengthy lacerations on my forearm and leg and wondered, they didn't hurt? The strange



Revenge of the Loon
by Laurie Axtens

blue slug on my stern did though – did I agree to this?

Hades had assured me that I was there of my own volition and had produced my signed agreement – the medico-legal catheter was very firmly attached.

Considering the cruel excesses of the torture, mere observation was hardly going to keep we apostates in the temporal world of pain: a wide array of drug options were utilised.

These would only be given to the ever more delirious infidels if they recited their name, DOB and serial number.

The delirium had become quite severe. Great waves of brown earth full of branches and legs like the Somme in July 1916 rolled toward me every time I shut my eyes.

A kookaburra sat on a branch that was being engulfed. It laughed, and its laugh became a cloud of red dust as the bird dissolved into dust.

Things were starting to settle, the pain had stabilised, fatigue was stealing sleep from an unwilling mind.

Hades and I had talked... we'd struck an agreement. I said, "I'm never coming back to hospital."

"Well agreements can be drawn up," he told me, "but you need to get on it early – it's an industry. It has its own momentum, shall we say. I can't always intervene."

It pays to be a night owl

by Scott O'Keeffe

On these hot nights, it's tough to sleep well. On one particularly torrid night I was up very late reading quietly.

I heard an odd, somewhat musical sound. Two notes, faint but distinct and repeated about every 30 to 40 seconds.

At first, I thought it was a squeaky ceiling fan. I turned the fan off and listened more carefully.

It turns out I have two individuals of Australia's largest owl at my place. The powerful owl (*Ninox strenua*) is around the same size as a brush-tail possum. Powerful owls weigh 1-2kg and stand about 60 to 70 cm tall. Like most owls, they are nocturnal.

Powerful owls are inconspicuous, living mostly in forests where they roost quietly by day in dense foliage. They are more likely to be heard than seen. The musical two-note call carries for long distances.

On that hot night that I heard my two birds, one was about 150m from me while the second was about a kilometre away. The two birds seemed to be calling to each other. This suggests that they might be a breeding pair on a territory.

The ancestral habitat of powerful owls is extensive old growth wet or dry eucalyptus forest with huge canopy trees.

They are found in coastal and sub-coastal areas from central Queensland to southern Victoria and they are rarely seen on the western side of the Great Dividing Range.

Powerful owls establish permanent territories that vary in size. Depending on the productivity and prey density of the forest their territories may be between 300 and 1400 hectares.

Powerful owls usually nest in the cavities of large limbs on massive, live, old growth trees. Large eucalypts are favoured, especially those growing on slopes or in gullies. Powerful owl territories often contain several established nest sites.

After using one nest site continuously for several years, breeding pairs will often move to one of the other established sites in their territory.

The breeding season is usually May to June, but in northern NSW, breeding has been recorded in February during unusually dry periods.

The female usually lays two eggs in the nest cavity, which is strewn with wood chips. She incubates the eggs for between 35 and 40 days while the male hunts and supplies food.

After the chicks hatch, they grow quickly. Both parents then share the hunting and feeding until the youngsters fledge in about sixty days.

As they mature, juveniles cease sharing territory with



Photo: David Lochlin

the parent birds. In order to avoid depleting the supply of prey, the independent offspring disperse widely to establish their own territories.

They often disperse more than 10 kilometres from the nest site. Large territories are needed to supply sufficient prey so the density of powerful owls in any landscape is always quite low.

Arboreal and ground-dwelling mammals make up a large part of the powerful owl diet. This includes native species and introduced mammals such as rabbits, hares and rats. Flying foxes and large birds are also important components of the diet. Amazingly, powerful owls will hunt and consume other large predatory birds such as brown goshawks.

The proportion of mammals and birds in the powerful owl diet varies depending on the environment. Powerful owls are able to alter their diet depending on their circumstances.

In recent times, powerful owls have shown some ability to live in altered environments. They always require large tracts of forest but have adapted to those that have been thinned or lightly logged.

They're also found in fragmented forests when the remnants are large enough to provide a constant supply of prey.

In these fragmented landscapes, the variety and number of native mammals

often decreases while the abundance of large birds such as cockatoos, kookaburras, currawongs, crows and others, may increase.

In these environments, powerful owls increase the proportion of large birds in their diet.

This adaptability perhaps explains the increasing presence of powerful owls on the fringes of urban areas. This is something new. Prior to the 1970s powerful owls were never seen near or in urban areas. They are now seen regularly in gullies and forest remnants that adjoin or run through the outer urban areas of major cities.

Sometimes they are even seen in urban parks that have lots of large eucalyptus trees. As powerful owls in peri-urban areas have changed their diets, they have included a new item. Cats! As a wildlife lover, I must say this development is very pleasing.

As with so much of our native fauna, the biggest threat to the existence of powerful owls is habitat destruction and transformation. Of particular concern is the fragmentation and clearing of large forest tracts. These changes are usually accompanied by declines in prey animals, and the loss of nesting sites.

So, although resident owls may persist for a while in altered landscapes, they might eventually disappear if there is insufficient prey over the long term, or if suitable nest

sites are not available.

Another source of mortality is vehicle collisions. These sometimes kill powerful owls when they hunt on roadsides.

If you live in a rural area of Northern Rivers that has patches of remnant forest, there are simple measures you can take to help conserve powerful owls.

If you can, create links between forest patches by planting connective vegetation, especially across valleys or along creeks. This improves the general function of forest remnants for all sorts of wildlife and provides a potential avenue for dispersal of juvenile powerful owls after breeding.

Despite a preference for natural tree hollows, powerful owls will use constructed nest boxes. The organisation Wild B&B have powerful owl nest boxes available. There are also plans for suitable boxes to be found on the internet if you want to make your own. Consider installing one if you think you might have powerful owls in your immediate area.

To check the occurrence of powerful owls, go to the Atlas of Living Australia (ALA) website and search for records of powerful owls. These will appear on a "zoomable" map.

You can then focus on your location to see whether or not you have these owls nearby.

Remember, because PO's have very large territories, a sighting does not need to have been made on your property to suggest that owls might take up residence.

If you have some forest, any observation of a powerful owl within a kilometre or two of your location suggests that erecting a nest box might get a result.

You will need to install a box at least 10m above the ground in a large tree, preferably a eucalypt. If you're not an experienced climber, get some help from someone who is.

Next time you're up late, go outside for a few minutes when it's nice and still. Listen carefully. You're bound to hear something interesting. With some luck, it will be a Powerful Owl.

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DYING MATTERS CAFE
Lismore
1st Monday each month
10.30am - 12pm
www.sacredearthfunerals.com.au

nimbin valley dairy
FARM SHOP
OUR CHEESE
COFFEE • CAKE • TOASTIES
ANIMALS • WALKS • VIEWS
FULLY LICENSED
THURSDAY to SUNDAY 8am - 2pm
Nimbin Valley Dairy, 392 Tunttable Falls Rd Nimbin
Drop in for a picnic, 3 minutes from town.