

MEDIA BRIEF

CLEANING UP THE DRUG PROBLEM IN NIMBIN

Prepared: 17.5.89

## OVERVIEW

1. The vast majority of people in the Nimbin area are fed up with the town's street drug problem. They recognise that it is time to bite the bullet and take decisive action.
2. Whilst it would be simple to blame the local police, it is people's perception that the drug problem in Nimbin has been allowed to grow to its present proportions through what we call "benign neglect" at the State planning level.

The key need is to alter Government and police perceptions of Nimbin. Unless decisive action is taken at this level the problem is guaranteed to grow. Perhaps exponentially.

3. Accordingly, a two-track strategy has been devised:

One - to be directed through State Government and police channels to effect the necessary changes.

Two - Media involvement to focus the issues and bring public attention to Nimbin's desire to eradicate its street drug problem.

4. The only acceptable solution is removal of the Nimbin street drug scene (dealing and use of illegal drugs - particularly hard drugs) permanently.
5. In terms of visual impact, the media should understand that the "peak" season (in terms of big marijuana deals taking place in town) is now passed for the year. So unfortunately the obviousness of the street scene is somewhat diminished in communication terms.
6. Obviously, good media coverage will be vital to the success of this campaign. Therefore it is important that the media understand and focus on the central issues involved. The risk of irresponsible reporting is that the thrust of the campaign could be lost and lives of good people put at risk.
7. Because of the dangers involved it should be understood that whilst there is a considerable depth of opinion and case examples, not everyone will volunteer to come forward. It is important that confidentiality be maintained.
8. The Minister for Police, Mr. Ted Pickering, will be opening the new Nimbin Police Station on May 31. A small deputation will be requesting a meeting with Mr. Pickering to discuss the matter.

A written synopsis of the drug problem, together with a list of the town's demands, will be presented to him.

9. The campaign outlined in these notes will continue until Nimbin receives the level of law and order it is entitled to.

## INTRODUCTION

Nimbin is confronted with a significant and growing drug problem which is highly visible as well as disproportionate to the town's population.

The drug problem in Nimbin is larger than the drug problem in any other country town in Australia.

On a "syringe issued" basis, the scale of Nimbin's key drug problem (intravenous use of hard drugs, predominantly heroin) runs second only to Kings Cross. (Ref 1) On this basis, adjusted for population we estimate the two centres would have a hard drug problem of a similar magnitude.

This highly abnormal situation is compounded by the fact that neither the State Government nor the Police have adequately addressed the problem by taking appropriate effective action - despite being aware of the problems for more than 12 months.

This is resulting in an escalation of the problem and extreme anger and frustration in the residents of the area who are forced to confront the problems on a daily or regular basis.

A real danger we now face is that unless the NSW State Government and the Police take urgent appropriate action to counter the problem, some people may resort to taking the matter into their own hands via the formation of vigilante groups. This of course will result in an even further breakdown of law and order in the area.

In April 1988, the first public meeting was held on the matter of trafficking in hard drugs on the streets of Nimbin. This meeting was attended by 350 concerned residents who voiced their frustration and disapproval of the problem to a panel which included senior representatives from Lismore Police and the Health Department as well as a local state politician.

Despite two optimistically phrased letters from the Minister for Police, Mr. Ted Pickering, those problems raised by the Community have been largely ignored to date. However, this has only served to strengthen the people's determination to win this campaign against illegal drugs:

To win Nimbin back for our children. And ourselves.

This document outlines a strategy which, when implemented and fought with courage and the determination to win, should achieve that objective. This approach is assured of a very high level of support across the spectrum of our community.

The key elements of this paper are:

1. Background and Analysis of the Drug Problem
2. Community Action to Date. Government and Police Response
3. Definition of the Solution. Demands of the Government
4. How we will Ensure the Solution is Implemented.

1. BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS OF THE DRUG PROBLEM

The following considerations are relevant in understanding and appraising the problem:

- a) The vast majority of residents in Nimbin and its environs who are good citizens and are disassociated with the drug problem are anxious to refute the widely held image that Nimbin is a hot bed of drug users and traffickers.

The reality that we must now come to terms with is that Nimbin has, in fact, become exactly that.

Nimbin is now the focus of drug abuse on the North Coast. Nationally, in terms of both image and performance Nimbin is now synonymous with illegal drugs.

An illustration of this fact is the recent case of the curious Japanese couple who were sent from Queensland to Nimbin to experience a visible street drug problem first hand.

- b) To a large degree our community has become a victim of its renowned compassion and tolerance. Now many locals perceive that they are in real danger of losing their town to the drug dealers and addicts.

We need to re-define the limits of our community's tolerance. We must ensure our tolerance no longer serves as a vehicle to facilitate the growth of the town's drug problem.

- c) The street scene in dealing illegal drugs has grown rapidly over the past 5 years. In quantitative terms a relatively small but growing number of full time intravenous drug users now dominate the streets of Nimbin. Health Dept. resources conservatively estimate that in April 1989 Nimbin had 30-40 full time intravenous drug users. This figure is estimated to expand to about 120 when occasional I.V. users are included.

The transient population of I.V. users boosts these figures by 0-25 on any day. In percentage terms this number of I.V. users is extraordinary when Nimbin township's total population of only 350-400 is considered.

The growth factor of the problem is demonstrated by the fact that in 1984 Nimbin had only about 15 I.V. users.

- d) I.V. drug users support their habit through the sale of other drugs, including marijuana which is presently commanding very high street prices so it only takes a few deals per day to support a full scale habit. Being the so called drug capital of Australia there is no difficulty in finding willing buyers for what ever drug the I.V. user has to sell including heroin, cocaine, amphetamines and ecstasy.

- e) The people of Nimbin want urgent action taken now to control the existing drug problem before crack becomes widely available in Australia.

The devastating impact of crack in American cities is becoming increasingly obvious. In a recent television report (on either 60 Minutes or Page One) on the crack problem in the U.S., a Washington resident outlined the social effect by describing her city as a war zone. She compared the American political capital with Beirut.

The crack problem is so significant in Washington that apparently the police have their hands full just attending to the aftermath of shootouts between rival factions.

- f) We recognise that lack of public and police interaction since 1983 has been a factor in reducing police effectiveness. This lack of public support has been exhibited as lack of co-operation as well as specific criticism of police actions while they were performing their duties.

Whilst police inertia on the drug problem is inexcusable, the community must realise that public support and co-operation with the police are key factors in beating the drug problem.

- g) Ironically, the courses of action planned by the NSW Dept. of Health and the Police in relation to the drug problem appear to be unco-ordinated and working against each other in terms of effectiveness. The Health Dept. is responding to the heroin problem that the Police seem to deny exists by setting up a methodone clinic under the Hospital in Nimbin. An effective methodone program in Nimbin cannot be undertaken if heroin is readily available across the street - which is presently the case.

An effective therapeutic model demands an effective police model.

Clearly the two departments need to interface and co-operate on the matter.

- h) For far too long the I.V. users and drug dealers have been allowed to set the agenda in terms of their dominant presence in Nimbin. Their often unacceptable street behaviour and dealing in illegal drugs (which is conducted fairly openly with relative contempt for the law) has been encouraged by a low police profile.

- i) We have highly reliable information (from a member of the Dept. of Public Prosecution in Brisbane) that Nimbin has been mentioned on several occasions in The Fitzgerald Enquiry interview tapes regarding drug matters.

- j) Some examples of the street drug problem:

1. The all too frequent impact on tourists who may be approached by dealers on a multiple basis to buy drugs - sometimes hard drugs. Now, whilst in the past this sort of behaviour seemed to be considered the norm in Nimbin (rather than bizarre), it is often received with outrage by the majority of tourists who visit our town and beautiful area for other reasons.

- J) ii. I.V. users "bombed out" and lying in the main street for residents and our children to step over or around. For some mysterious reason the police choose to allow this to continue. This growing visibility of the street scene is a function of the lack of effective police presence.
- iii. Aggressive, abusive drug related street behaviour at any time of the day. Throughout the day.
- iv. The devastating impact of the problem on the children or our area. Regardless of age our children readily absorb these impressions and grow up to view a highly abnormal town situation as normal.

A lot of impressionable children are coming to view a junkie/hard drug dealer as a status symbol. And why not? He's "cool", he has plenty of money to put into his arm and the police rarely or never touch him.

You don't need a Phd in lateral thinking to see the opportunity for our children to be sucked into hard drugs.

We know of several instances of young adolescents being used as couriers by local dealers. We wonder how Mr. Greiner or Mr. Pickering would view this situation if it confronted their children.

- v. Numerous cases of intimidation by death threats and guns being produced by drug concerned interests who are opposed to anyone addressing the drug problem.

The ready availability of illegal drugs (and in particular hard drugs) is providing attraction to our area of an increasing criminal element.

Twelve months ago one man had his car burned because he reported heroin dealings to the police on successive occasions. Without, we might add, any police actions on those reports.

Accordingly, it should be clearly understood that the danger of physical threat or injury is a real possibility to anyone involved in co-ordinating anti-drug activities. This applies to Nimbin as much as anywhere.

- vi. Well placed reports from a number of sources that on one day in January this year \$60,000 exchanged hands in drug deals in the park - a small area of lawn in the centre of town, right next door to police living quarters.

It is estimated that dealing turnover by the main known drug dealers in Nimbin averages around \$35,000 per day in peak season.

That's around one million dollars a month, yet some people consider this to be conservative and place the figure even higher.

- j) vii. Bashing and rape of a woman in the main street on Saturday night April 22. Whether or not this case was drug related, it was as far as we know, a first for Nimbin and a certain indicator of the direction our town is taking. Further testimony to the lack of effective police presence.
- viii. Drug dealing on the streets is so obvious that everyone who spends much time in town seems aware of where and when it is taking place. In the case of heroin, it involves known dealers delivering to distribution points in the main street.
- ix. The absurdity of the law enforcement situation can be illustrated by 2 random examples:
- a) Recently a shop manager phoned the police to report dealing taking place on the premises. She was intimidated by the police who rationalised their failure to attend by advising the informant that she "could be held responsible if she didn't stop the dealing".
- b) A person recently testified that she had reported drug dealings in Nimbin, to the police, on approximately 50 occasions in the past year. The judge to whom she was giving evidence seemed understandably surprised to learn that the police had attended only one of those reports.

## 2. COMMUNITY ACTION TO DATE, GOVERNMENT AND POLICE RESPONSE

The first public meeting 12 months ago attracted 350 residents. The prime objective of that meeting was to stop the dealing of illegal drugs in Nimbin.

Amongst guests on the panel was Senior Sgt. Bruce King, the Acting Commissioner, Lismore Police Division.

The police response was "we are looking at measures to improve our image and see if we can increase our arrests for drug trafficking in that area (Nimbin)". (Ref. Northern Star 22.4.88). Following that first meeting was a 2 week police "blitz" on the Nimbin street scene. Most people saw this 2 week clean-up program of law enforcement as only a short term exercise which provided the minimum of law and order enforcement services the town was entitled to on a permanent basis.

To be fair, there have been follow-up raids by the Drug squad, but most people feel that they have not been successful in addressing the problem outlined here because they have not been part of an integrated campaign aimed at netting the primary targets: the street dealer and suppliers.

The Community set up three committees:

1. Prevention Committee
2. Educational Committee
3. Rehabilitation Program

A fourth, called the Police/Community Consultative Committee was later set up by the police.

After 12 months Committees 1, 2 and 3 have distilled into one committee of approximately 15 members and is now called the Drug Interest Group.

Disappointingly, Committee No. 4 never re-convened after its first meeting.

The Progress Association wrote to the Minister of Police twice last year, (1988) requesting increased police activity on the problem. The first letter of response from Mr. Ted Pickering dated 29.9.88 can best be interpreted as misinformed and intent on retaining the status quo by reassuring us all that no problem exists - "There is little to suggest that obvious trafficking in hard drugs is taking place in Nimbin".

However, there is a possibility that an optimistic interpretation of his second letter dated 9.12.88 could suggest that the State Government has received the message from Nimbin loud and clear and is in the process of taking appropriate action to combat the drug problem.

Support for this point of view comes in the form of a new police Station (to be formally opened at the end of May 1989) together with this second letter in which Pickering acknowledges that the Government accepts responsibility for dealing with the drug problem in general and specifically that "the (new) strategy includes establishing a new centralised drug body within the Police Department, the Drug Enforcement Agency ... which will be operational in the first half of 1989" and "the situation in the Nimbin area will continue to be closely monitored".

So it is possible that the police are preparing to meet Nimbin's demands. But if so, they aren't making this public. Positive response in this regard would indeed be a pleasant surprise. Incidentally, our group has now established a direct line of communication with the head of the new Drug Enforcement Agency in Sydney.

The strategy developed in this document is based on the assumption that the people of Nimbin will need to continue to apply pressure in order for the Government and Police to take decisive action.

After 12 months of work the campaign effectiveness and morale seem at a low ebb. Anger and frustration levels run high in the community.

However, we understand that as a community we do in fact possess the skills necessary to win on this important issue.

3. DEFINITION OF THE SOLUTION

- a) To change State Govt. and Police perception of the Nimbin area to ensure the police become active and effective in addressing the drug problem on a permanent basis.
- b) Police action should totally remove drug dealing (particularly hard drugs such as heroin) from Nimbin and environs. To remove drug use from the streets of Nimbin. To put the message out that Nimbin has regained its respectability and intends to retain it.
- c) To ensure the focus of police activity is directed at the key to the drug problem by specifically targetting the main dealers (particularly the heroin dealers) and by tracing the sources of the drug coming into the area.
- d) Ensure that the Dept. of Health and the Police are co-ordinating activities to successfully address the problem.
- e) Ensure Nimbin police are available 24 hours a day - not as is often the case via Lismore which involves unreasonable and often dangerous delays in Police response. We want immediate response.
- f) Whilst the community is aware that the Police have attempted to escalate their involvement, to date this has been insufficient to deal with the problem which is obviously much bigger than they perceive.

The police must understand that the scale and public nature of Nimbin's drug problem necessitates its being tackled on a "special case" ongoing basis.

- g) Community consultation and liason in determining the type of police required and methods of police operation most likely to produce effective results. Such as police foot patrols which are felt to be effective in controlling behaviour by demonstrating police presence. To re-establish community respect and support of the police force to enable the police to be effective.
- h) Stationing a police woman on the Nimbin police staff.
- i) Priority police protection of the people and families who are involved in organising this anti-drug campaign to counteract the inherent personal dangers. This would involve immediate prioritised police response without the usual delays and form filling.
- j) Re-establish the Police/Community Consultative Committee with at least 50% membership from the Drug Interest Group.
- k) A specific liason officer within the Police Minister's office to enable direct community contact.

4. HOW WE WILL ENSURE A SOLUTION IS IMPLEMENTED

This strategy is, to a degree, based on the hypothesis that the Nimbin drug problem has been allowed to occur as a function of benign neglect of our area in state planning terms.

Our roads are a national disgrace. We have heard cases of troublemakers being run out of places like Byron Bay and told by the police to go to Nimbin.

We have an out of control street drug scene in Nimbin where the Police apparently do very little. Consider for a moment that in State planning terms it would be very convenient for the North Coast to have a place like Nimbin.

Therefore if this logic is correct and there is abundant evidence to suggest it may well be, then the Government and Police will continue to neglect Nimbin until the people of this area force a change in attitude at State level. Success in our case will result from an intelligent combination of the following:

- a) The guts and determination to win;
- b) A well developed case argued in an articulate manner;
- c) Carefully selecting the correct channels through whom to communicate our message to the relevant decision makers;
- d) Persistence and the absolute refusal to take no for an answer;
- e) Focusing the issues through use of appropriate media via carefully prepared briefs.

The key to turning this case into a political issue or a first rate investigative media story is that the State Government and the police have done very little about addressing a serious problem which directly relates to the issue of law and order - despite the fact that they've known about it for more than 12 months.

We believe that this is the key to turn. It is exactly the sort of issue that makes Governments suddenly appear interested and first rate media avenues start asking who, what, when, where and most importantly, why?

At the same time the community must continue to address the problem within the overall framework of the adopted Plan of Action, which addresses the various facets viz. Law and Order, Rehabilitation, Community Image, Education.

REFERENCES

1. Needle Exchange Program statistics

In January	1989	Nimbin issued	3,600	syringes
February	1989	Nimbin issued	4,100	syringes
March	1989	Nimbin issued	3,700	syringes

In January 1989 Kings Cross issued 7,000 syringes

TO: ALL RESIDENTS OF THE NIMBIN AREA

PUBLIC MEETING TOWN HALL 7.30 PM MAY 23, 1989.

CLEANING UP THE DRUG PROBLEM IN NIMBIN

Just over 12 months ago (April 20,88) Nimbin held a large public meeting to discuss the drug problem, in particular intravenous use of heroin in town. The 3 committees formed at that meeting have continued their work and have amalgamated into 1 - The Drug Interest Group (representing the Chamber of Commerce, A. & I. Society, Progress Association, Sports Association, Hotel, Health & Welfare Council, Health Department and Nimbin Schools).

Despite close to unanimous community concern and sustained committee activity, the problem has become even more serious. Serious enough for Nimbin to be mentioned on drug related matters in the Fitzgerald Inquiry.

The vast majority of residents are fed up with Nimbin's street drug abuse.

As a community we now recognise that we must re-define our tolerance limits.

It's time to take decisive action to solve the problem. The only acceptable solution is removal of the street drug scene (dealing and use of illegal drugs - particularly hard drugs).

It would be simple to blame the local police, but we must be aware that the problem has been allowed to develop as a function of neglect at State Government planning level.

Example: Minister for Police, Mr. Ted Pickering's response to a letter on the matter from the Progress Association (1988). Quote "there is little evidence to suggest that obvious trafficking in hard drugs is taking place in Nimbin".

It is essential to change State Government and senior police attitudes towards Nimbin. Until decisive action is taken at this level the problem will grow. Rapidly. The Drug Interest Group has developed a Comprehensive Plan of Action which addresses the various aspects of the problem. viz:

1. Law & order
2. Rehabilitation
3. Community Image
4. Education

With regard to the law and order issue, a detailed 2 track strategy has been developed to target the Media, N.S.W. State Government and Police.

Stage 1 of this campaign will be the opening of the new Nimbin Police Station by Mr. Pickering, May 31.

A small deputation has requested a meeting with him to discuss the matter, present the Plan of Action and list Nimbin's demands.

Other stages of the campaign are scheduled to continue until Nimbin receives the level of law and order it is entitled to.

It is very important to understand that we can win on this issue. AS long as we assume personal responsibility and work together. The future direction of Nimbin is on the line.

Please make it a priority to attend the public meeting on May 23.

Don't leave this important issue up to your neighbours - because they might be leaving it up to you!

Paul Hunter  
897205

full community understanding and support. Given the size of Nimbin village, this is made simpler and would involve ensuring that vigorous efforts would be made to inform ratepayers of every decision and allowing representation on decision-making bodies.

Environmental Monitoring would analyse the volume and composition of effluent runoff to see what needs to be done and how effectively it is reducing pollution.

The Community Management Program is set up using the Nimbin sewerage fund allocation to ensure the smooth operation of the on-site treatment systems. This involves being available for emergencies and ensuring that routine maintenance and service take place.

Site and Waste Surveys are necessary to assess the particular needs and attributes of the site and to determine the most appropriate treatment method, and to ascertain the preferences of the ratepayer.

The four components above would be required in the process of completing the requisite Environmental Impact Statement or Development Control Plan. This would provide for the rare circumstances where an EIS was a welcomed component of a development!

Other components are:

A Water Efficiency Retrofit, which means providing water efficient showerheads, tap aerators and where appropriate, low flush toilets to all the buildings in Nimbin. Why do this in an area that has 1600mm rainfall per year? Simply because water not used is

effluent that doesn't need to be treated and the savings that are possible are enormous. With no loss of comfort it is possible to save over 40% of shower and tap water and 60% of toilet use. As a bonus, the average savings on hot water bills are around \$80 per year.

A Source Control Community Education Campaign will be run by the Nimbin Environment Centre to inform residents of the environmental benefits of using low-phosphate detergents and being aware of the impact of what goes down the sink or toilet. This will assist, but not be essential to, the success of the strategy.

### Further Information

If you want to know more about Option Four, the strategy for improved on-site treatment, you can look at a file containing many of the relevant papers at the Nimbin Environment Centre, or you can come to the:

### Nimbin Public Meeting Thursday May 31st at 10am Nimbin Town Hall

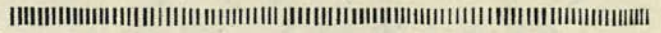
This leaflet prepared on behalf of the Nimbin and District Progress Association in conjunction with the Nimbin Environment Centre. For more information 'phone during business hours 891 529.

# IMPORTANT NEW INFORMATION

## NIMBIN SEWAGE TREATMENT SCHEME



# OPTION FOUR



CHEAPER,  
MORE EFFECTIVE,  
ENVIRONMENTALLY  
SOUND

## The Existing Problem

It is widely known that some septic tanks in Nimbin are overflowing and are a potential risk to the environment and public health. The Public Works Department has designed a sewerage system that meets all the required health and environmental requirements. The problem is: a \$2.4m price tag and \$55,000 a year to run. It's clear that changes are needed, but what changes?

The Nimbin and District Progress Association, the Nimbin Environment Centre and other local ratepayers, have researched the possibilities, and with the assistance of consultants, are proposing **Option Four**.

## The Aims of Option Four

The objectives of Option Four are to provide an effective sewerage service which is cheaper, protects the environment and public health and is council or manufacturer maintained.

## What Is Option Four?

A strategy which employs a combination of three separate waste treatment methods, each appropriate to the site circumstances or ratepayer preference and

which provides improved on-site treatment following a site and wastes survey and the installation of efficient water-using devices.

### Method 1

Advanced Waterless Toilets are self-contained, odourless, chemical free and non-polluting systems for treating human waste. They break wastes down to harmless, odourless humus using aerobic decomposition resulting from a constant flow of air into the waste reservoir. Combined with a roughing filter or similar for treating residual kitchen, bathroom and laundry wastewater, this is the most effective and environmentally sound treatment method. They are also economical to install and operate. In their modern form, they have been in use around the world for twenty years and have been widely used in Australia where septic tank disposal is unacceptable. The maintenance of the system would be arranged by the Council through the Community Management Program.

### Method 2

Localised Tertiary Treatment Systems are like a septic tank system but include aeration of effluent, followed by disinfection to give a clean wastewater which can be safely sprayed onto gardens or paddocks. These could be employed where ratepayer preference or architectural factors ruled out waterless toilets. There are thousands of such systems in use in NSW and in one street in Sydney's northern suburbs 90% of the houses have them! They are available in

larger sizes for buildings with larger discharge, such as the hotel, public toilets and some shops. The maintenance and performance monitoring would be undertaken by the manufacturer under a contract with the Council Community Management Program.

### Method 3

Improved Septic Tank Systems may be possible in some cases. Depending on the site survey and environmental monitoring modifications to existing systems will improve their performance to levels which ensure the environment and public health are protected. Experience overseas suggests that the size of required septic tank leach field areas can be considerably reduced by the use of water efficient showerheads, tap aerators and low flush toilets. System modifications include the construction of new effluent disposal beds that allow for aerobic (oxygen-using) bacteria to do their work. This, and the planting of water tolerant plant species to help transpiration of water may overcome the problems of certain of Nimbin's struggling septic tank systems. Maintenance of the improved system would be the responsibility of the Council's Community Management Program.

### Other Components

Option Four has other important components that would be 'built-in' and common to all three treatment methods. These are: Community Consultation would be a priority. An on-site treatment strategy requires

3. Other effects of an on-site sewerage scheme need to be looked into. For example, there may be tourism opportunities arising from Nimbin being the first town in Australia to creatively confront the sewerage issue in this way. There may be new development opportunities and local employment possibilities in the manufacture or sale of equipment. There would certainly be benefits in terms of reduced water consumption through efficient use. The requirements of future developments needs to be considered at the same time as the existing houses, shops and other buildings.

4. Clear explanations of the costings and the possible rating schemes need to be provided. If effective on-site treatment is cheaper, ratepayers should expect lower rates and therefore more disposable income. In addition, a bonus from lower prices flowing from lower rates for businesses should be expected.

An on-site treatment strategy is more likely to allocate costs fairly. Large wastewater producers are often subsidised by centralised systems.

### **What We Will Be Doing**

The Nimbin Privy Council will be acting on your behalf on these and other issues relating to appropriate sewage treatment methods that come up in the course of the

Feasibility Study. We will be keeping you posted. We will be setting up demonstration models of waterless toilets. We can make available information and speakers on the issue.

We would welcome your involvement and assistance.

### **For More Information**

For further information about OPTION FOUR and the Nimbin Privy Council, come to the Nimbin Environment Centre at 54 Cullen Street, or 'phone 891 529. There are copies of the OPTION FOUR leaflet and a file of information on different aspects of on-site sewage treatment available.

The Nimbin Privy Council meets on some Monday afternoons. Watch the noticeboard at the Nimbin Environment Centre for details.



**NIMBIN  
PRIVY  
COUNCIL**

**Community - Based  
Sewage Management**

**IMPORTANT UPDATE:  
NIMBIN SEWERAGE**

**NIMBIN  
PRIVY  
COUNCIL**

keeping our  
**OPTION  
FOUR**  
on the track

## BACKGROUND

The proposal to investigate a cheaper, more effective and environmentally sound sewage treatment scheme for Nimbin arose from concerns about the high sewerage rates that may result from the proposed \$2.4m centralised scheme. It was also felt by some members of the community that there had not been enough attention given to options which do not involve the centralised collection and treatment of wastewater and disposal of effluent to Goolmangar Creek.

## Option Four

An outline of a scheme which involved on-site sewage treatment and a program for community management of the treatment systems was developed by the Nimbin and District Progress Association in conjunction with the Nimbin Environment Centre. This was known as the 'Option Four' proposal. A survey of ratepayers indicated that a majority were in favour of a feasibility study.

On July 3rd Lismore City Council agreed to conduct a feasibility study to look at improved on-site treatment as an option for sewage in Nimbin. The Public Works Department (PWD) offered to provide the usual 50% subsidy for this study and a steering committee was set up to oversee

the process. The consultants doing the technical part of the study have finished their literature search and the site surveys will start soon. All Nimbin village ratepayers will have received a letter from the PWD about this.

## Nimbin Privy Council

The Nimbin Privy Council has been formed (not by royal decree as the name suggests!) to act as a voice for the ideas that were outlined in the 'Option Four' proposal during the Feasibility Study process. We want to ensure that important parts of the proposal are not lost and to assist in communicating with Nimbin residents and ratepayers about sewage treatment options generally.

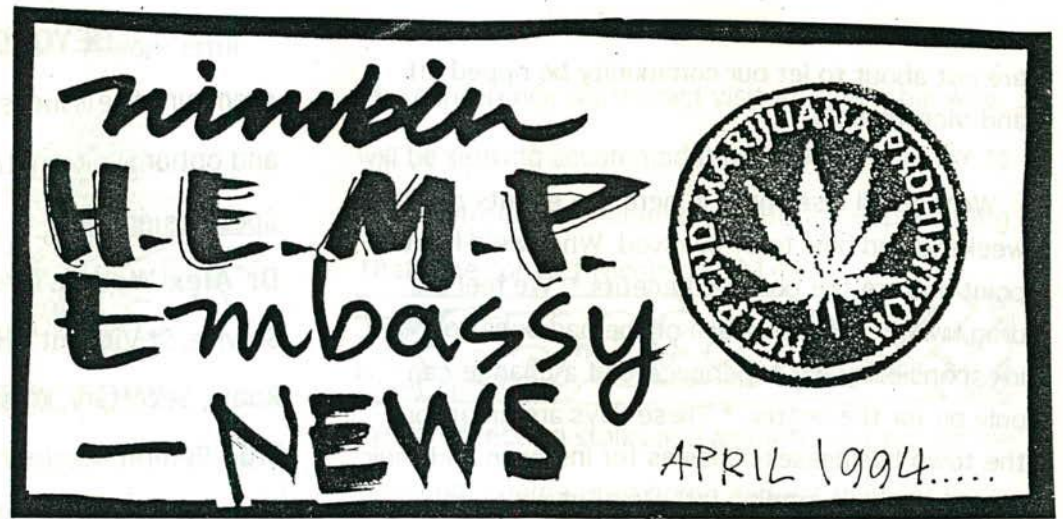
The Nimbin Privy Council is a sub-committee of the Nimbin Environment Centre and will continue to make information available to the people of Nimbin on this issue and to set up local demonstrations of treatment methods (such as waterless toilets) and to look at local employment possibilities in sewage treatment.

## Important Principles

What are some of the principles of 'Option Four' that we want to make sure the Feasibility Study doesn't lose sight of?

1. Community Management not community regulation. To be successful, it would be vital that on-site treatment be funded in the same way as the centralised scheme. In other words, you as the ratepayer should not have to pay the cost up front. The scheme should be financed through rates, and enjoy a subsidy equivalent to that which would be given to the centralised proposal. The Study will look at the legal questions to do with this, but it is up to the community to keep up the pressure for the best outcome. Be sure to ask the members of the site survey team about this.

2. Full range of options. It is important that the viability of all options be considered fairly. Creative thinking may be necessary, given the small areas of some sites and the demands of some of the larger sources of wastewater, such as the hotel, school and hospital. There are a number of opportunities for reducing effluent flow, and at no inconvenience. An example: *the toilet and shower block recently installed at the Nimbin showgrounds has flush toilets. At Wyvenhoe Dam near Brisbane, and Govett's Leap in Sydney's west, large capacity Soltran public toilets have been installed. These are modern, hygienic, solar-assisted waterless toilets which have no odour problems and could handle the large surge capacity that accompanies a show or a sporting event.* The shower wastewater is then easily dealt with, especially if efficient shower roses are installed.



This newsletter comes with the intention of as fully informing you, our fellow residents of Nimbin and district, of what we, the Nimbin HEMP Embassy, have planned on the upcoming weekend 29th/30th April/May 1st in Nimbin. The event has been organized as an opportunity for people who feel dissatisfaction with the current 'drug' prohibition laws to gather together and in a peaceful, celebratory way express these concerns. Last year was the first such event and the response so overwhelming that it was decided to make these celebrations an annual event.

1993's activities consisted simply of a street parade from the Bush Theatre, uptown to the police station where it turned and returned to the hall to a people's summit forum on illegal drugs held where everyone with a concern about the laws was given the chance to express that concern.. At night a Harvest Festival Ball was held in the Nimbin Hall.

That day proved to be a major day in many people's lives. To at last stand in the open and declare yourself as a drug law criminal can be very liberating. To shrug off the fear that paralyzes whole aspects of our community, to walk proud and free in the knowledge that you may be illegal but never a criminal, to be amongst your countless brothers and sisters in crime affirming your collective existence- that is why this day is seen to be so important.. From such peak experiences great changes flow. HEMP groups were formed in Brisbane and at Lismore, Terania and SCU following the day. We received colourful and positive media coverage across a wide spectrum of national press, broadcast and television outlets.

HEMP has consolidated locally and we now have an office and a shop in the Environment Centre building. We played a major part in the recent town meeting on the street. Things, we feel, are getting better but slowly, so slowly.

So we act in the way we do to highlight and bring change on this issue.. But a major concern of ours in organizing this event is about the impact the weekend could have upon you and our village, and ensuring that we don't attract into town any unwelcome yobs, drug selling entrepreneurs or their clientele, spin-outs, drunks, angry and aggressive people masquerading as politically concerned but simply seeking a fight... these things we're working to avoid. That is why we describe it as a celebration. A chance for people who are perpetually hampered by their criminal status to publicly respond by feeling OK, by feeling good about themselves in an empowering spirit of carnivale and mardi grass. We're hoping to attract gentle, caring, creative people to our fiesta with the street parade as full of colour and fun and vitality as our Gay and Lesbian counterpart. We're selling nothing but a vision of a healing world and if that's not cause for celebrating what is.

We see Nimbin's reputation as a chemical drug centre was a picture painted first (both sensationally and inaccurately) by the press which reality then went on to imitate. More and more bad publicity led those people here who capitalize on such situations. We're aiming to turn that picture round and give out the strong message to the world- "We're a happening vital village who sorts out its problems in a creative compassionate fashion. We

mean that charges be dismissed. The police have a month to appeal this historic, precedent forming decision, but they have little legal ground from which to manoeuvre. The Weed Inspectors have already been put on notice to conform with legal requirements.

All indications are that an era is about to end.

WE INTEND TO BE FULLY ACCOUNTABLE FOR WHAT WE DO.  
BRING US YOUR FEARS, OBJECTIONS, SUGGESTIONS etc

# LET IT GROW!

A video of our 1993 Fiesta was made by PLC TV, a local video production company.

It is called LET IT GROW! and is available for overnight hire from the Nimbin Emporium

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to the householders of  
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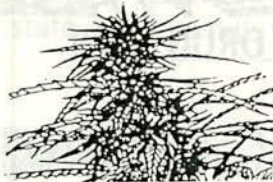


*nimbin H.E.M.P. Embassy*

(HELP END MARIJUANA PROHIBITION)

54 Cullen Street, Nimbin, NSW. 2480

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## “LET IT GROW!”

fiesta, drug law reform rally & mardi grass  
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## *A DISCUSSION PAPER*

### WHATS HAPPENING TO Nimbin?

#### **Introduction**

Over recent months even the most unobservant observer would have noticed that our Nimbin has been the centre of a lot of attention, from a number of areas, including local and national media. The attention unfortunately, has been mostly negative. In response I have written the following discussion paper, which I hope will stimulate debate from a more balanced understanding of the character of Nimbin and further, to consider how the community can regain control of the direction that Nimbin may take in the long term future.

#### **The Recent Attention**

A first example was the Lismore Council's decision, following considerable pressure from National Party elements and local developers etc. not to approve any more development applications for MO's. A second example was the state election. Nimbin's Bob Hopkins, (Prohibition End) outpolled the National and Labour parties in the Nimbin area and received a very respectable vote in the broader electorate.

More recently the village has been/is caught up in a political struggle with the developers, Hunter and Riddell and the Lismore City Council. This struggle is against the developers plans to set up a new commercial centre in Cecil St. No one expected consultation with or consideration of community views from the developers, but they did expect the Council to take notice of the unprecedented objections and the petition signed by 419 local residents. The developers have lobbied well. Except for the consistently ethical, independent women councillor's, council ignored the wishes of the people. Democracy was by-passed.

The next Nimbin drama came from the police. Following the state election we saw weeks and weeks of increased police activity, which included drug busts (mostly grass) harassment of MO's' and individuals in the main street and vehicle checks at both ends of the village, While police claim to have charged a few dealers in hard drugs, the big dealers and the white powder run from the Gold Coast, it seems, continues to operate.

The next issue to make headlines was the "60 Minutes" program which focused on the Ferals. National TV gave coverage to one element of Nimbin life, in true "gee whiz" journalist form. The following day, federal Minister for Social Security announced an urgent inquiry into the Nimbin unemployed. The dole bludger image reared it's ugly head again.

There are probably more examples one could identify, but the above are enough for me to ask, what is happening to Nimbin and why? I ask the question because I know that those who live and participate in the culture of the village love the place, warts and all. The answer, I suggest lies in the connection of all the above examples. I'm not saying there is an organised conspiracy, but I do suggest they are all linked. Stopping more MO's, the success of Prohibition End, the Cecil St, development with the Council's attitude, the drug busts, the 60 Minutes program and the DSS investigation.

The problem with Nimbin in the eyes of the establishment and conservative elements is that we are a maverick town we don't conform to the rest of Australia. At least 70% of the population of Nimbin are criminals because they smoke dope or condone the smoking of dope. Nimbin won't wholeheartedly join in the consumer society. Even though we score high on the tourist scale, we don't attract the right sort of tourist and when we do they are discussed with our behaviour, especially the dreaded tioletts.

Worst of all we don't dress proper. No one wears a suit and tie or high heel shoes. Not everyone owns a car and there is a noticeable absence of respect for people of so-called high status. Indeed people who want to be in charge of anything lose status and respect very quickly. As I write these words of non conforming behaviour I realise more clearly why I love living here. Getting back to the plot however, I posit that the connection of the above examples then is a concerted, if random effort to make Nimbin conform, to clean us up. The alternative society that was born in 1973 must be brought back into the fold.

## The Nimbin Culture

The first thing about the Nimbin culture is its diversity and openness. There is a great tolerance for people to behave as they wish. While such tolerance and non conformism should be encouraged, we still need to have some direction, albeit a direction determined by the majority of people who live in the village. It is this aspect of Nimbin culture, community control over our future that is increasingly at risk because a small group in the village and other conservative elements outside, are trying very hard to force their direction on us. Rather than "react" to their actions we need to take the initiative. We, as a community should take a longer term view on how we can improve the non conformist alternative lifestyles and how we can creatively deal with the problems associated with the issues of drugs, jobs and our future direction.

Nimbin's greatness lies in its difference, in that it has not gone in the same direction as every other small country town in the country. Despite the efforts of some to attract a "better class of people" to settle, it is nevertheless attracting people who are trying to get away from mainstream, economic rationalist directions and the straight society.

## Development, Tourism, Jobs & Drugs.

The issue of drugs is used to try to isolate Nimbin and suggest that the alternative lifestyle has created a drug problem. That view is absolute rubbish as intelligent informed people know. Drugs are a problem throughout the country and indeed the world and is much more complex than redneck critics suggest. I say redneck quite confidently because the issue is being dealt with much greater understanding and intelligence in the ACT and South Australia for example. Also, we recently saw on national TV, one of Australia's most senior police officers suggest the law should be changed to decriminalise cannabis. He also suggested that most of his colleagues agreed with him on that point. It is the other three questions though, that gives the conservatives their power to ride roughshod over the wishes of the majority. When a developer seeks approval for a Development Application (DA), they always get the automatic support of most councillors by claiming they are going to create jobs. Further, if their DA is to promote tourism they are likely to get a medal as well as approval.

## Jobs, An Alternative Approach

We certainly don't want to oppose definite job creation, but I believe we can challenge simplistic claims by developers. They don't and won't guarantee jobs, so it is questionable as to whether they create jobs or not. Often the jobs created are at the expense of others lost. In fact, that is the case with the Australian and global industrial economies generally. Economic rationalism, the dominant global philosophy, requires continuous growth. It is based on massive consumerism requiring more and more depletion of our finite natural resources. Even if we stupidly disregard the issue of depletion of our finite resources, economic rationalist policies are unable any longer to provide full employment. We now have a permanent pool of unemployed. Even politicians admit that fact. So from a wider regional and national perspective, unemployment and jobs are a bit more complex. If a developer claims the development is going to create jobs, he or she should be specific on numbers, when they are to be created, what they are going to be and show clearly that they are extra jobs, not just changed jobs. If they cannot do that, then no credence should be given to their claims.

Nimbin is not going to change the national and global economy, but in a small way it has already challenged the growth mania concept by establishing economic principles and lifestyles that are overshadowed by ecological and ethical considerations. The LETS system of work exchange is a success and can be improved upon. The low cost of labour which exists in Nimbin is also a big plus. One of the great advantages of keeping the cost of labour down is that we put a greater value on our leisure time. History shows that with a higher rate of pay people work more hours rather than less, as one might expect. Their total waking time is valued more in economic terms and leisure time goes down the priority list.. That principle is reinforced by employers who expect more work if they pay more.

Chief Executives Officers are a good example. They may earn a couple of hundred thousand a year and more but they are expected to and usually want to spend virtually their entire waking life working. In my last job with a salary of \$50,000, it was expected I should work about a 9 to 10 hour day. I am now receiving \$15,000 but I am richer, healthier, with much more leisure time and I no longer exchange a large slice of that \$50,000 on an energy greedy, city jobs lifestyle.

The point I want to make strongly is that (a) the 8 to 5 full employment principle is a myth (b) the conspicuous and often wasteful consumerism associated with economic rationalism continues the depletion of our finite resources and (c) we can seek alternatives to the way we work to satisfy our needs.

Consider the 60 Minutes program which led to the charge that the so called "ferals" were not really interested in getting or training for a job. This is the old story of blaming the victim for the problems of unemployment. It is the economic rationalist society that stops them getting a job, not themselves. But look at it from another point of view. Compare the lifestyle of a 60 Minutes TV presenter on over \$100,000 a year and a feral living in Nimbin. Which lifestyle contributes more to the destruction of our planet? If we place ethics, ecology and morality in the jobs, debate, Nimbin and ferals are well in front.

Yes, we do need jobs, but if we apply the concept of ethics and ecology to work, there are alternatives to the main stream approach. LETS, job sharing, growing one's own food, working a three day week, cooperating rather than competing to produce our needs, etc.

### **Tourism**

The other issue which I suggest can and should be seriously questioned is tourism. Mass tourism is now at the centre of economic rationalist policies, indeed many towns and even cities base their entire economy on tourism. The sometimes crude and disgusting bidding for the Olympic Games was an example of the power and role of tourism in our economy. What is more alarming though, is the way many vested interest groups are jumping on the alternative tourism or eco-tourism band-wagon. Eco-tourism is dribbling from the lips of politicians, tourist bureaus, travel agents and even developers these days. Like the jobs issue, we have both the right and responsibility to question what tourism and eco-tourism means. Eco-tourism has developed as an attempt to restrain the growth of mass tourism, in so doing help sustain the environment. While eco., means ecological sustainability to environmentally concerned people it means economics to many.

Regardless of where its proponents come from though, there are many questions which must be asked before we nod, when anyone talks about alternative tourism. For example: Will eco-tourism be able to stand against "mass" tourism. The very idea of tourism, of what ever form, is to get people to come to a particular place thereby boosting the local economy. It must follow then that the more tourists you can attract, the better.

It should be remembered that while eco-tourism has been an ethical response to sustain the environment it has also been developed to make tourism more sustainabil. It has been conceived primarily as an alternative to mass tourism.

In some writings on eco-tourism it has been described as, "involving small-scale, locally controlled development which is based on local nature and culture and pays special attention to environmental and social carrying capacity." But how does a local area deal with the predicted tourist growth. The World Tourist Organisation records that world tourism arrivals have exploded since the second world war and they predict that at the current rate of increase, the world will experience some 637 million tourist arrivals by the year 2000. (Just think of the amount of high octane fuel used to carry all those passengers.) With Australia having a share of those millions how is a small village like Nimbin going to control the local nature and culture given the current political structures. Our village community for example, appears to have no control when it comes to tourist based local development. The Hundel development proposal was not subject to any consultation with the community, and when the community objected in an unprecedented way, the local council ignored the people the same way as did the developers.

Another important consideration when determining our attitudes to tourism, particularly eco-tourism, is that it is essentially elitist and unequal. Such tourists are likely to be highly educated, affluent, mature and probably white. (There is empirical evidence to support this contention.) The third world has the same, almost non-existent share of the resources devoted to tourism, as they have to the rest of the world's resources. The point that worries me also is that tourism values visitors by how much money they spend. Surely visitors to our country have a lot more to offer than their money.

I am not advocating a view that suggests there should be a ban on tourists, or that eco-tourism is a bad thing. Although I do wish it did not have the word tourist in the concept. What I am suggesting is that there are a lot of questions that need to be considered by any community, small or large if there are plans for tourist development.

The first question is that of community control. Anyone who understands and supports eco-tourism must, in my view, accept the fundamental principle that the community itself has control of what is developed and how it is developed. It should not be solely in the hands of developers and undemocratic councils. They should be required to carry out the wishes of the wider community. We want visitors to Nimbin, but the town should first and foremost be for those who live here. Further we should never allow our village to be based primarily on one industry, particularly the tourist industry. When that one industry goes, the whole town goes. I believe if the village were in control of the flow of visitors to and from Nimbin we could do a lot of very good things. Particularly from a multicultural and cultural diversity point of view, rather than the purely economic. We might be able to develop some visitor exchange programs from black Africa for example. Or promote some Japanese visitors to live here for periods. That could be so much more rewarding for them and us than busing from one motel and junk food joint to another.

### **Conclusion**

If there is one major point I have tried to convey in this discussion paper it is that, as a community, we have to have a greater say in what is happening to Nimbin and what will happen in the future. We cannot leave the future to developers, governments, councils and conservatives who don't understand or care why most of us have settled here. In 1973 a very significant change began with the development of alternative lifestyles. I think we are now observing a concerted attack upon those lifestyles. It is not enough to react to those attacks. I suggest therefore that we might consider a series of community forums which opens up all issues of local concern including how we as residents might gain control of our village. I make the suggestion of forums, because long term residents have informed me that they have been successful in the past.

I have distributed this paper to a number of people I know, and some I don't know but have been told may be interested. I would appreciate any feed-back and would be willing to help organise the first forum if there is support for the idea.

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# AQUARIUS REVISITED

## INTRODUCTION

This proposal is offered as a contribution to the general discussion that has been going about in Nimbin about how best to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Aquarius Festival. The proposal is neither complete nor committed. It is offered as just one in a year long program of events that might celebrate the anniversary. Feedback and comment is welcomed.

## OBJECTIVES

- To create a celebration which would give cause to many of the original participants in the 1973 Aquarius Festival (and all those who wished they had of been) to return to Nimbin to reflect on the event and the significance it had in their lives;

- To renew and re-position Nimbin's national media image by focussing on the prophetic and visionary aspects of the 1973 Festival and by bringing forth the powerful influence it had in shaping the lives and careers of that generation of student activists and many others;

To stimulate story telling about the 1973 Aquarius Festival and to add to the Rainbow Archives of Mitchell Library through the recording and collection of oral histories and other archival materials which the participants in Aquarius Revisited will bring with them;

- To reflect on the process of vision making so that the inspiration of the 1973 Festival can be shared and passed on to the children of Aquarius.

## THE NIMBIN MEDIA IMAGE

At this time Nimbin's media image is not good. My guess, which is informed by ten years in Sydney and Melbourne, knowing Nimbin well and observing what Nimbin means to people there, is that it is seen as:

- a peculiar and anachronistic cultural phenomena left over from the seventies
- a New Age dream which went wrong with too many drugs and drop-out no hopers.
- bedraggled, dirty and irrelevant

This poor media image has nothing to do with the truth of Nimbin and there is little profit in arguing its cause. It is important to understand the consequences. These are:

- no huge crowd is going to rush to Nimbin just because a festival is announced
- a lot of people expect the worst from Nimbin and a lot of the worst goes and gets sent to Nimbin
- Nimbin is not a tourism destination in the league, say, of Byron Bay

*A proposal for an event to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the 1973 Nimbin Aquarius Festival*

- association with Nimbin does not have much marketing pull, Norco cheddar notwithstanding, for local products. (It has some but the point is it could have a lot more.)

It is also important to understand that media images can be re-defined and that it takes concerted effort and smart strategy to do this. The benefits are:

- increased community pride
- more and more up-market visitors and settlers who bring with them new energy and money to the local economy
- more potential to market local products based on association with a positive image

The 20th anniversary of the Nimbin Aquarius Festival is an opportunity to re-define Nimbin's image in the national media by bringing forth what is positive and prophetic about the culture of Nimbin. By emphasising its achievements in green community development in a context of urban decay and a cynicism about national and international politics, Nimbin could be associated with hope and optimism and thus attract a lot more goodwill and positive attention.

## NIMBIN REVIEWED

The 1973 Aquarius Festival was produced by the Australia Union of Students and it was a peak expression of the creative cultural ferment which arose with the anti-war, anti-conscription, student activism of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The Aquarius Festival brought to Nimbin student and counter cultural activists from all across Australia. The isolated rural village of Nimbin was chosen as the festival site because it was far away from the urban and campus structures and symbols which had been the objects of so much student protest. The years of protest had made clear what students of that era were against - imperialism, sexism, racism, authoritarianism, industrialism, consumerism and progress at any price. By 1973 Whitlam had been elected and for Australians, the war was over. Our protest had been won. In Nimbin we gathered to ask "What are we for?" and "What future do we want to create for ourselves?"

It was called a "lifestyle" festival - a "Survival Softlick" - and visionaries, prophets and social activists came as

tribes and networks of friends to live and share their visions. The cutting edges of many, many cultural changes were represented there. There were conservationists talking ecology, healers offering wholistic medicine and rediscovering herbs and acupuncture, architecture students and engineers talking about low energy and low tech, post Illich educational theorists talking de-schooling, foodists offering new diets, bakers offering wholemeal bread, kooris talking land rights, psychotherapists talking about growth and human potential, food co-operatives, videots, alternative media and an array of gurus, guru followers and seekers of spiritual truths. All this and troubadours, shaman, tight rope walkers, dancers, ecstatic singers from the East and soul rhythms from African, easy sexuality and drugs to open the "Doors of Perception".

The Festival astonished us. It was a brave new world of wonder, ecstasy, creativity and goodwill. Here were our dreams and anything seemed possible to us. It was as if some great doorway in our hearts and minds had opened. It opened only a fraction and only for a moment and we were seared by a light which streamed through and illuminated our lives. We glimpsed how things would and could be. We saw our future. And we were changed forever.

After the Festival we went separate ways.

Most went back to their campuses and anguished on the question, "After Nimbin What?". Some dropped out and went back to

# AQUARIUS REVISITED

the land in order to embody those Aquarian values in family and community. Nimbin became counter-cultural capital of Australia and drew attention and visitors from far and wide. The rural resettlement it configured became the most pervasive influence on the North Coast lifestyles since the arrival of the white people who came to cut cedar.

And others followed their dreams in different ways and in different geography, carrying the Nimbin experience of what could be as a fond memory and a bright spark of inspiration as they applied their talents and pursued their careers.

Twenty years later and it is opportune to pause and reflect on the dreams of our youth. To acknowledge our achievements for our achievements are many. And also to laugh at our delusions, to notice our limitations and to grieve for our losses and misadventures.

The invitation of **Nimbin Revisited 1993** is to gather again in Nimbin to celebrate our ability to dream and to create a future. This is a talent at the core of our humanity and the Earth has never called more urgently for it.

We are a generation who dared to dream. How to teach our children to dream and to seek the vision splendid?

## TIMING

It is proposed to produce Nimbin Revisited over two weekends and the week days between, **9 days in early July 1993** (the week that includes the full moon). This will coincide with the semester break of schools and universities and be at much less risk of being rained upon. The 1973 Aquarius Festival occurred in May because this was first term break.

## FORM

As an event **Nimbin Revisited** would have the following elements:

- A **comfortable camp** in some area adjacent to Nimbin which allows for tents and campervans and food stalls offering cheap wholesome and tasty food. (The model for this is the Maleny Festival.) Homestay accommodation should also be offered.
- As much as possible the event would be **Nimbin centred** and make use of the Nimbin Hall, the Media Factory, Bush Factory and school facilities for concerts, workshops, seminars and meetings.
- The major emphasis of the program would be on meetings and **story telling** with lots of low key but highly structured opportunities for story telling and listening. Aquarians and old Nimbinites to exchange stories. A formal collaboration with the Rainbow Archives would give this process added

credibility. The stories that are recorded in this process can be expected to form the basis of future histories, novels and film scripts for which Nimbin is the focus.

- The evening program would be much more formal with concerts in which what is best about the **post Aquarian culture of Nimbin** is shared. Poetry, music, dance.
- At the end of the week a program of **pre-advertised, intensive residential workshops** would be offered to allow the visitors a more in depth experience of some aspect of North Coast post Aquarian culture. For example a Permaculture planning for the Rainbow village, vipassana retreat at the Forest Mediation Centre, a Council of All Beings at Terania Creek, a Heart Politics conference at Lennox Head, a Men's Retreat at Mount Warning or a Birth and Beyond conference in The Channon.

## PROMOTION AND PUBLICITY

The aim would be to create national publicity for the event and for Nimbin. The media would be fed with the life stories of ex-Aquarians going back to Nimbin, people who are now at the peak of their careers - judges, politicians, public servants, architects, engineers and the like.

## SIZE OF THE EVENT

This event does not have to be large to be myth-making. If it is not oversold with false expectations, it will work well for the participants and as a publicity vehicle for Nimbin if it attracts only a 100 people.

My guess is that it will draw **500 - 800 visitors** which is about Nimbin A&I Show size

By asking for pre-bookings, an idea of the likely attendance will be known closer to the event.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*While working for the Australian Union of Students, Graeme Dunstan (Director of the Aquarius Festival), together with Johnny Allen (Director of the Aquarius Foundation), was responsible for the concept, siting, publicity and programming of the 1973 Festival which transformed Nimbin from a decaying dairy village to a booming counter culture capital.*

*Graeme came back to live in Nimbin after the Festival as a grassroots community organiser and was a major influence on the political, social and cultural development of Nimbin post Aquarius. He organised the first Lismore Festival of Arts in 1977 on the theme of integration through celebration.*

*He left Nimbin in 1980 to pursue his career as a cultural organiser. In 1981 he studied community celebrations in the UK - he worked with the outdoor celebratory theatre company, Welfare*

## ORGANISATIONAL NEEDS

Promoting and organising the event will be a full time job for at least one person from November onward. More people will be needed to set up the camp in the weeks before. The funding chase should begin now.

An office space in Nimbin with access to telephone, fax, photocopier, computer, laser printer and desktop publishing software is also essential.

A weekly and well presented *Nimbin News* will be essential to the publicity effort. *Nimbin News* will be the prime vehicle for publishing the news and stories about who is coming. It will have a key role in keeping the Nimbin community informed about Festival developments. And it will be sent to people who indicate their interest to attend, thus creating the opportunity for *Nimbin News* to expand its subscription base.

Getting development approval from Council will be a major hurdle. At this time the event has no capital and no underwriting so it is essential to keep it within manageable bounds. The proposal will be sunk if the approval is dependent on any large outlay of funds for security deposits or the hire of unnecessary temporary toilets and showers.

## CONCLUSION

A lot of community goodwill is a necessary pre-condition for this event. It is going to need a lot of volunteer assistance and a lot of assistance from local government.

It is important that there be wide understanding about the benefits which will flow to Nimbin in terms of tourism and the marketing of Nimbin name products generally, if an event is created which attracts national media attention in a way that positions Nimbin as an interesting and visionary community.

*State International - on a fellowship from the Community Arts Board of the Australia Council.*

*As a cultural innovator Graeme is also known for his influence on the community arts movement (he has served as a Community Arts Officer at Campbelltown, Sydney's south western suburban frontier) and on tourism development (he has served as a Festival Consultant to the Victorian Tourism Commission and developed ideas for the policy and practice of cultural tourism which is now also referred to as eco-tourism and is taught as a part of all tourism studies in Australia).*

*Graeme is currently living in Lismore and he is active as a cultural entrepreneur promoting job creation through the development of cultural industries. He is deputy Chairman of the Lismore Arts Trust and Executive Officer of the North Coast Entertainment Industry Association. He is also a director of the Theatre of Social Action where he teaches the arts of changing the world, having fun and not burning out.*