

Helicopter season - are you ready?



They can be used for good or evil. An RFS helicopter water-bombing a fire on Mt Nardi attended by a Nimbin crew earlier this year. Photo: Dave Christmas

While police helicopters are being seen in our skies as the annual cannabis eradication operation comes our way, it is the fire-fighting choppers from the RFS air-transport division that are really getting the locals excited.

Earlier this year, the Northern Rivers Remote Area Firefighting Team (RAFT) team of five experienced firefighters were repeatedly being airlifted into dense bush to fight the 'Section 44' bushfire in the Lions Road area, north of Woodenbong and the Hogarth ranges.

Deputy captain with Nimbin Bushfire Brigade, Charlie Cohen said, "We were helicoptered into the firezone, and our job was to chainsaw down these big burning trees, and make sure they fell the right way. Then we either trekked out, drove

out, or got lifted out by the chopper."

"It's great fun," he said, "hard physical work, and a seriously important job, but also huge fun. Everybody's well-trained and experienced. The pity is there's not more of us around."

Rural fire brigades throughout the state are facing a challenge in attracting young, fit members to replace the ageing volunteers who are the backbone of most brigades.

The Nimbin brigade strength was tested mid-year with a record number of call-outs, and now with two trucks to crew, Mr Cohen sees the need to recruit young people to the brigade as urgent.

"They need to be starting now, to get the experience to replace us when we can't do it any more," he said, adding

with a grin, "Not that I'm in a hurry to give it up."

Membership enquiries can be made through the website <rfs.nsw.org> or just turn up to a brigade meeting. Nimbin's are held on the first Wednesday of the month at 7.30pm at the fire shed in Sibley Street.

Hazard Reduction

Get a fire permit now, and get rid of that pile burn, after the best spring rains we've had for a long time, as long range forecasts predict a bad summer to come.

The window of opportunity to carry out hazard reduction is pretty small – no permits will be issued throughout the area from 22nd December until the second week of January, so get in quick.

Contact your RFS brigade captains for a permit. Nimbin brigade captain is Brad Soward, 6689-1221.

Plenty of reasons to celebrate this year

Christmas, Hanuka, the Solstice, school holidays, whatever.

If all of that weren't enough cause for a great festive season, the outcome of the Federal election has certainly put a bounce in the step of a majority of locals, on a two-party preferred basis.

Some election tragics still haven't come down off cloud since local Labour women made a clean sweep of the two electorates covering the Rainbow Region.

Plus Maxine McKew winning Bennelong for the ABC. (See our exclusive election analysis on page 2.)

Congratulations to the J-team, Janelle Saffin in Page and Justine Elliot in Richmond for their decisive victories, but beware, the HEMPsters will be hounding you to establish a hemp industry on the North Coast and to legalise medical pot (see page 8).

Jimmy Willing sang, "Old Howard's dead and gone," and incredibly, he really is.

In Nimbin, celebrations invariably involve performances, and already there's been quite a bit of song and dance (see pages 4, 5 and 10), as well as fashion, film-making and fire-twirling, though the season is still, officially, some way off.

Still, good idea to get an early start.

For those still searching for a more spiritual flavour to their celebrations, there's a panalopy of ancient Gods with birthdays at the same time to choose from – Mithras for example (see page 16). So Merry Mithra-mas.

The contributors, advertisers and staff of the GoodTimes (see page 6) wish all our readers a happy and safe festive season, and hope you will continue to enjoy reading our community newspaper each month throughout the New Year.



He's really gone. Jimmy Willing, organiser of 'Rage Against Howard' roady-ing for Circus the Singing Dog, with the Perch Creek Family Jug Band.

