

# WikiLeaks and Julian Assange

by Warwick Fry

There are two debates raging over Julian Assange and WikiLeaks. Only one of them acknowledges (sometimes) that Julian Assange and WikiLeaks is not the same thing. That is the media debate. It focuses more on WikiLeaks than on Julian.

The other debate, the feminist debate, is all about Julian. In its muddled way of thinking the 'establishment' of mainstream media and government seemed to assume that accusations of rape brought against Assange would somehow delegitimise WikiLeaks.

The 'feminist' debate is interesting mainly because it hinges around questions of the 'special treatment' accorded to celebrities when they are caught up in allegations of sexual misconduct. We have seen quite a bit of that in Australia, with high profile sport icons caught in the spotlight. The 'feminist' discourse flared up in 'leftist' blog sites when a blogger did a bit of background research on Assange's main accuser and discovered that she was closely involved with the anti-Castro expatriate Cuban community in Miami.

While a committed 'feminist' (she taught women's studies at a Swedish University), she had also marched beside Posada Carriles in Miami and was active in the (anti-Castro) Cuban community. Carriles is notorious as the anti-Castro terrorist who blew up a plane carrying Cuban athletes in the 1980s, but has escaped prosecution because of his links with the CIA. Defenders of accuser Anna Ardin claim that this is 'blaming the victim' a 'trial without jury' and an attack on her credibility without proof, that she had CIA connections. Critics claim that this is precisely what is happening to Assange. Supermodel Naomi Campbell's public expression of support for Assange has fuelled the flame wars.

Far more interesting is the media debate that does not focus with such single-minded scrutiny on Assange's guilt or innocence. WikiLeaks is doing quite nicely without Julian thank you very much, with over 2,500 mirror sites around the world, and the archives available for anyone to download. (<http://wikileaks.ch>). Nevertheless, Julian is a most articulate and charismatic spokesperson for what WikiLeaks represents, and for what WikiLeaks is trying to achieve.

Over the New Year break I watched a modern makeover of "Citizen Kane." It was done as the story of Orson Welles' struggle to produce and present his masterpiece about media magnate and failed politician, Randolph Hearst. To me there was an uncanny correlation between the stories, and



Photo: Peter Macdiarmid/Getty Images Europe

the principles, of Orson Welles and Julian Assange. Orson Welles, like Assange, upset the powerful by pushing the envelope of what were considered the limits of 'media ethics' of the time. (Welles produced an account of the life and the psychology of a media magnate that was purportedly fictional, but easily recognisable as the real life character).

Both were about speaking truth to power. Both incurred the wrath of vested interests that did not hesitate to use its power with 'dirty tricks' to try to destroy the perceived threat. There was even the bitter protest from the beleaguered Hearst " ...you can't begin to know the damage you've done..." resonating with the accusations flung at Assange by the defenders of privileged knowledge, and underlining some uncomfortable parallels between the character of Orson Welles and the subject of his work.

Yet, Assange has gained the support of the world's leading journalists (with Australian John Pilger leading the pack). A letter of public support was published in *The Walkley* magazine, the official mouthpiece of the AJA (Australian Journalists Association) and the Media Alliance. The letter included the signatures of the editors of all the major Australian newspapers, no doubt nervous about what a tightening of FOI (Freedom of Information) and 'Whistleblower' protection legislation would mean to press freedom.

It repudiated PM Julia Gillard's ill-conceived statement that what Julian Assange had done was illegal (it wasn't), and demonstrated that there is a growing recognition in the mainstream media (albeit belated) that with the Internet, the media game has changed, but the rules should remain essentially the same.

The leaks are being released selectively, and the latest news is that the WikiLeaks staff is selecting relevant files from a huge database leaked from the Bank of America. Assange mentioned casually in an interview last year that "...they could bring down a bank or two..."

# Coal seam gas – policy issues

by Sue Stock

The *Sydney Morning Herald* 2nd January 2011, reported that Eastern Star Gas, headed by former National Party leader John Anderson, had been favourably mentioned in speeches by two National MP's in NSW State Parliament.

Other NSW Nationals, the *SMH* said, had also been busy lobbying the NSW government for support for the expansion of the coal seam gas (CSG) industry in NSW to a level similar to that in Queensland, where there are already 4000 coal seam gas exploration wells.

Eastern Star donated over \$22,000 to the Coalition in 2009, according to the Election Funding Authority.

In an earlier article in December, the *SMH* also reported that a second CSG company, Aston Resources, was chaired by another former National Party leader, Mark Vaile.

It is vital to know the details of the Coalition's policy on coal seam gas mining, if as expected they come to power after the next State election in two months time. We urgently need to know the views of our local National Party representatives here in the Northern Rivers.

Overseas experience, as seen in the movie *Gaslands*, has shown that CSG presents significant environmental risks to water supplies and



Drilling rig in Keerrong, last April

can have a devastating impact on productive farming lands.

The NSW Greens say that the environmental risks associated with CSG can include surface and groundwater pollution, land use impacts from surface infrastructure, greenhouse pollution from leached methane in addition to human health impacts.

Methane is 72 times more powerful as a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide and significant amounts escape into the atmosphere during the gas mining process.

Substantial volumes of water are often pumped from the coal seam to allow the gas to be released. This water is highly saline and will often contain chemicals used in the drilling or fracking processes and can also contain other chemicals naturally occurring in the coal seam.

Recent monitoring in Queensland has identified BTEX (benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, and xylenes),

traces in water samples from several CSG wells. These Volatile Organic Compounds are known to cause central nervous system disorders as well as other health and environmental impacts.

Local residents and environmental groups like the Northern Rivers Greens are very concerned about the explosion in exploration of CSG mining in our region, such as the exploratory drilling at Keerrong, Bexhill and Geneva last year, and its impact on farmers, prime agricultural land and our aquifers.

The Greens believe there are currently unacceptable risks associated with CSG mining that are not adequately addressed by regulation.

There is also very little community consultation, limited strategic assessment of costs and benefits, and no overall environmental oversight on this. The Greens are calling for a moratorium on all CSG mining in NSW.

# Skate park gets rolling



Robert Lewers and Scott Walsh, of Concrete Skateparks, on the job

Construction of the new skate park in Nimbin has started.

The construction of a purpose-built concrete skate park at Peace Park has been a priority for the Lismore City Council and the Nimbin community for some time, and has been made possible with \$449,000 in funding from the Regional & Local Community Infrastructure Program.

The park features a snake run that drops down into a larger bowl section with four heights, ranging from advanced vertical sections to lower beginners' levels. The levels provide stepping stones for newer skaters to tackle more difficult challenges.

The design was developed through consultation with the local community, and the plans can be viewed at [www.lismore.nsw.gov.au](http://www.lismore.nsw.gov.au)

The project is expected to be completed in February, but rain could slow progress.



Demonstration in London

Photo courtesy freeassange.org

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# Dam good decision, Costa

The NSW Minister for Water, Phil Costa, has upheld a State government prohibition on the proposed damming of Byrrill Creek.

Mr Costa wrote to Save Byrrill Creek spokesperson Joanna Gardner to say that the decision had been made based on the high environmental and world heritage values of the area, and the availability of other water supply options for the Tweed Shire.

Residents have opposed the proposed dam since the Tweed mayor, Kevin Skinner, used his casting vote to push through the decision in October.

"After a tense few weeks awaiting the Minister of Water's decision, I feel a great

sense of relief," Ms Gardner said.

Mr Costa's office has received hundreds of letters asking him to maintain the prohibition, and a 7000-signature petition was compiled in just a few weeks. "I thank everyone who has supported this process," Ms Gardner said.

The decision vindicates the efforts of residents who fought to stop Tweed Shire Council from committing ratepayers to a dangerous decision, after three Councillors rejected staff advice not to consider a dam on Byrrill Creek.

Northern River Guardians spokesperson Andrea Vickers said residents begged the three minority Councillors

not to press for the proposed dam.

"It would have paved the way for even more massive developments like Kings Forest, Cobaki and Bilambil Rise to fast-track population growth and pack many tens of thousands more people into Tweed.

"We thank Minister Costa and his colleague, the Environment Minister Frank Sartor, for their wise decision, and Greens MLC Ian Cohen who has represented our concerns in Parliament.

"The Save Byrrill Creek group, the Northern Rivers Guardians and the Tweed Greens call on Tweed Shire Council to immediately scrap its \$3.6 million pre-



Save Byrrill Creek group celebrates the decision  
Inset: Andrea Vickers

approval plan for the Byrrill Creek dam, and reconsider its water augmentation strategy for Tweed."

"We also renew the call for Council to implement an independent review of the current water demand management strategy, and hold a public forum on

growth and population plans for Tweed."

For more information visit the newly launched Save Byrrill Creek website at [www.byrrillcreek.com](http://www.byrrillcreek.com)

## MO proposal brings benefits for Kyogle

A new Rural Landsharing Community (RLC) is on the drawing board for the Shire of Kyogle.

Nestled on 200 acres along Afterlee Road in the Eden Creek area, this proposed new community would provide low-cost home-ownership opportunities for 22 families.

Business partners Debra and Jonathan Lamberton (pictured) have been at work on the initiative since mid 2009, and aim to have the project up and running early this year.

"These RLCs, or MOs in the old terminology, have been provisioned by NSW State legislation since 1988 to provide low-cost housing for low-income households," said Debra.



"Even though the process of setting up a new community has been slowed by a massive amount of red tape, each one that gets over the line provides a huge economic boost for the region. Extra families mean extra kids

in schools and extra adults in local shops, businesses, services and clubs."

Jonathan, who has 20 years' experience in setting up communities in the region, says the benefits don't stop there. "The flow-on effect

is significant, with families and friends also relocating to join or be near community residents," he said. "We have observed this effect occurring in this region for more than two decades.

"As well as that, Kyogle Council collects more than \$6,000 per approved dwelling in Section 94 levies on each of our proposed 22 sites.

"That's around \$136,000 which goes to the upkeep of local roads, State Emergency Service, Rural Fire Service, Kyogle Council amenities, public open space and community facilities."

Enquiries about this Rural Landsharing Community project can be made on 6633-3223 or by emailing [jonathan4452@bigpond.com](mailto:jonathan4452@bigpond.com)

## Council explains road repair process

The Lismore City Council has responded to questions and criticisms of pot-holed roads in the region.

It says it does not provide a dedicated pot hole hotline service, "but uses an efficient and effective recourse of customer service officers who take calls on a whole range of issues including that of pot holes".

When a pot hole call is received, details of its location and severity are recorded on a Customer Request Management System and forwarded to the appropriate engineer, who places it in a

program of works. This system has a follow-up system to ensure the required action is undertaken

All roads have an inspection schedule, using a criteria based on traffic volumes. Engineering staff driving the network record pot holes they come across in the course of their daily duties. Correspondence, both "snail mail" and electronic, is also received advising of potholes

Mapping the roads on the web is possible but would make it difficult to assess the severity of the pot holes. Reports can be sent to the council by email.

Council has three bitumen repair trucks that cover urban and rural roads. Works are prioritised according to the severity of the pothole/defect, the number of defects in an area, the classification of the subject road, and traffic volumes.

The repair of potholes is not contracted out, but undertaken by council day labour staff. Work schedules are undertaken by the works supervisor in consultation with the works engineer taking into account competing priorities throughout the road network.



## Mulgum House needs people

Mulgum House, in Thorburn Street, is a supported accommodation facility managed by Multitask Human Resource Foundation for people who require varying levels of support to live in their own home and in the community.

Currently, there are eight people who need support, residing at Mulgum House, plus two seniors from the Nimbin community. Multitask will always retain three bedsit rooms for Nimbin seniors. At the moment there is a bedsit room available for a senior from the local community.

In order for the people who live here to become more involved in the community we would like to invite volunteers to

participate in some of the activities of daily living. These activities might include reading aloud to someone, helping with the development of the vegetable garden and shade-house, picking flowers, playing board games or cards, playing tennis, hanging out with someone to have a chat or simply developing new friendships.

We have already had a few inquiries from some locals about the possibility of volunteering at Mulgum House, and to assist potential volunteers to realise their dreams, Mulgum House is holding a morning tea on Thursday 27th January at 10.30am.

This occasion will allow volunteers

to meet residents and find out what sort of activities residents might need or want some support with. There will also be an opportunity to meet with Multitask's Volunteer Co-ordinator, who will happily discuss the requirements of the volunteering process within this organisation.

Mulgum House has plenty of lovely aspects that make it a wonderful place to live. Perhaps the most outstanding of these aspects, after recognising the beauty of the location, is its positioning in Nimbin that allows real community inclusion for the people we support. By promoting the opportunity for community members to volunteer we are encouraging inclusion to occur.

Please ring Rod Conroy at Mulgum House on 6689-0151 with any questions.

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# Birth & Beyond faces costly court battle



Uncle Cec Roberts speaks at the dedication ceremony. Inset: Text of the plaque

A court case appears to be looming over the future of the Birth & Beyond building in Nimbin.

The history of the building and the dispute over its future were recounted on Nimbin's rainy main street on Saturday, 11th December, at a dedication ceremony.

"This is not about blame or shame," said Paul Joseph, convenor of the ceremony. "Our purpose here is to raise awareness of the community's ownership of this building, and to inform about the legal threat to sell the building and begin to coordinate a comprehensive defence."

"Our intention is to take a positive approach and appeal to the plaintiffs to recall the spirit of community we all shared when we bought the building 38 years ago, and all agreed it was community property."

The assembly was told that the building, previously the town's Returned Services League club, was purchased for \$500 in 1973 by AUS (Australian Union of Students) and used as the organisational hub of the Aquarius Festival.

After the Aquarius Festival, AUS member Graeme Dunstan wanted the building to remain in public ownership, for use by the community and arranged its sale to six trustees at \$150 each. These trustees included Harry Freeman, Gael Knepper and the formative Co-Ordination Co-Operative Ltd, which later became Tumble Falls community.

Now, 38 years later, some of the surviving custodians have initiated proceedings in the NSW Supreme Court against the Tumble Falls Community to force the sale of the building. Tumble Falls had decided to defend the status quo and Nimbin Law is representing the case for the Community.

David Spain of Nimbin Law, wrote to the meeting to summarise the case.

He said there was a strong case for preventing this property – which has been improved with volunteer effort and public money – being sold for private gain.

"We have a letter from March 1980, signed by the plaintiffs, acknowledging that they hold the property on trust," Mr Spain said.

"From that time to this the building

has been used on a non-profit basis as a home for various services that might loosely be described as personal, social and environmental healing.

"All rental has been applied to maintain, improve and insure the building and pay rates.

"No dividend or profit has ever been paid to the registered proprietors and they have never injected further funds (or probably labour) into the building since the beginning."

Mr Spain said that in 1983 Birth and Beyond applied for, and received, a grant of about \$83,000 under the Commonwealth Governments Wage-Pause Grant scheme to renovate the building.

"The owners consented to this renovation and we believe they signed a declaration that they held the deeds on trust, which was required by the Grant authorities.

"We have been hoping the plaintiffs would desist, but they have not and we understand they are budgeting to spend \$150,000."

Nimbin Law has not charged to date and David Spain said that the expense of a five to 10-day trial in Sydney with accommodation, travel and witness expenses, could be significant.

Paul Joseph called for volunteers to join a committee to campaign to raise funds. Several people have committed to help, and artworks have been donated.

"It's a very sad irony and stressful for all involved to have to battle old friends over what has been a great and enduring success of youthful idealism," said Mr Joseph.

"I don't know how they can reconcile the betrayal of community trust, but they most certainly would have to account for public money. If the plaintiffs spend \$150,000 on the court case, then have to pay back the government grants with interest, it's hard to see it all being worthwhile."

"We are still hopeful that good sense will prevail. At least we have years of experience and commitment to peaceful resolution of conflict."

"It is that spirit that is at the core of Nimbin's special culture and this building, and its community ownership, is the home of that spirit."

# Behind the scenes of the Nimbin Village Park Project

by Monika Boenigk

No, Friends of Nimbin Village Park are not asleep, nor have we gone to seed!

Although I have been overseas for a few weeks looking after very ill parents, I have been communicating with Lismore Council and other relevant parties about progress on the Village Park project. In particular, Councillor Isaac Smith has been preparing a motion for the next Council meeting which will put the park project firmly on the agenda.

Unfortunately, due to an administrative blunder, the motion was omitted from December's agenda, but will definitely be tabled at the next meeting in February 2011. I will attend that meeting to make sure the facts are straight and to add weight



to the motion, and would encourage other interested and able bodies to accompany me on that mission. Look out for the yet to be set date!

Furthermore, our group is planning a meeting with the Nimbin Aquarius Village Planners and Council

Town Planning to discuss possibilities and options in regards to community land distribution. I will keep NGT readers posted on developments.

Interested parties can contact us on 6689-7490 or by email: [m.b@idl.com.au](mailto:m.b@idl.com.au)

## In your neighbourhood...

News from the Nimbin Neighbourhood and Information Centre



All of us at NNIC wish all of you in the Nimbin community a Happy New Year!

### Opening Hours

The Centrelink Agency will be re-opening as from Tuesday 4th January from 10am to 2.30pm (the rest of NNIC will be closed). NNIC will re-open as normal on Monday 10th January.

### Nimbin Community Solar Farm Update

The final DA for the solar farm arrays was approved in the last week of December. This means the final part of the total array will be installed at NNIC in January (weather permitting).

The arrays at the Bowlo, the Town Hall, Tomato Sauce building, Blue Knob Hall and the Headers Soccer grounds are now installed and all but the Headers' array are up and running.

The entire farm will soon be viewable on line in real time any time of day via our on-line monitoring system... watch this space and our website [www.nnic.org.au](http://www.nnic.org.au) (under Sustainability – Energy tabs).

### NNIC website - we want your weblinks!

If you are a local not-for-profit organisation, send in your links to [nimbinnic@yahoo.com.au](mailto:nimbinnic@yahoo.com.au) so we can add them to our links on our website [www.nnic.org.au](http://www.nnic.org.au)

If you are a for-profit business or organisation you can become a sponsor of the NNIC website. For \$220 per annum you can advertise on our website. Contact [nimbinnic@yahoo.com.au](mailto:nimbinnic@yahoo.com.au) for details.

We are currently averaging around 2000 visits per month and 1500 hits per day, so there is plenty of traffic to make your sponsorship worthwhile.

Visit our website, and use the Community Calendar. The more folks who use it, the more useful it will become for the whole community.

See the website [www.nnic.org.au](http://www.nnic.org.au) for info on how to access the on-line calendar to put your events up yourself.

### Nimbin Food Security Project

The next meeting of the Working Group is on Wednesday 12th January at 1pm at NNIC, when we will be meeting with a consultant regarding regulations covering food stalls and commercial kitchens.

To assist food stallholders in the permit process, tools are now available in the Food Tools section on our website (Sustainability tab – Food – Food Tools), including a template to assist you to develop your own Food Safety Plan.

The **Community Grain Mill** has been ordered and should be delivered in late January.

Nimbin **Local Food Day**, a day of feasting and celebration of locally produced food, will be held later in 2011.

We are interested to hear from anyone who has ideas about workshops, events, farm gate tours, cook-offs, as well as anyone (food producers in particular) who would like to be involved in any way.

Contact Guy, Food Security Project Co-ordinator, at [food@nnic.org.au](mailto:food@nnic.org.au)

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## Santa hits Nimbin in style



## Community Christmas Party

Nimbin Senior Citizens group joined the BIG Xmas party at the Town Hall on the 17th December.

This has been a long time plan that the NNIC Soup Kitchen Co-ordinator, Gail Clarke and Nimbin Aged Care and Respite Services worker, Rose Cubis finally made a reality. Thanks go to all the volunteers who supported the event... it was a huge success from all the feedback we received.

Every year we are humbled by the support of local business who donates prizes and food to the event; and then our community buys the raffle tickets that mean we can continue to enjoy this celebration of community each year.

Thanks to: Bringabong, Choices Café, Daizys, Fashionating, Hemping Around, Nimbin Apothecary, Nimbin Oasis Café, Nimbin Craft Gallery, Nimbin Emporium, Nimbin Hardware, Nimbin Hemp Embassy, Nimbin Newsagency, Nimbin Pharmacy, Nimbin PO, Nimbin Pub, NRMA, Rainbow Café, Retro Café, Susukka Trading, Snipping Heads, Perceptios, St Vinnies, Tribal Magic

Thank you Val Mace, what songbirds you produced... The Vocal Minority choir, Steve Smith, Williamina Bowers and Tomaso Lonsdale. Thank you Doug and Biko also, who are always there for the older community, and who are well loved by us all.

We had one mishap when Faye Sherf fell heavily and scared us all. I'm sure you'll all know; Faye whom we know and love has recovered well.

Finally to the Nimbin community, wishes of a safe, healthy and happy holiday.... see you around in 2011.



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Lots to do at Tuntable Falls Preschool



There are new and exciting things happening at Tuntable Falls Preschool.

A new bike track is currently being constructed, and will be ready for the new year, and enough funds were raised at the fete to purchase new bikes, scooters and tandems for the children to share.

The children, families and staff had input into designs for the track. Thanks to everyone who came and supported the Preschool and Primary.

The multi-terrain track will provide different textures and surfaces for the children to experience, with a tunnel, a sandstone wall built by Christian Young, and landscaping.

The Preschool runs on the philosophy of a play-based educational programme with a balanced amount of

structured and free play opportunities. The school is nature-inspired, in a peaceful leafy setting, and provides the children with interesting and educational experiences.

The large stone sandpit, built by artist Gwanje, is full of intriguing surprises, including dinosaur bones, a hand pump that fills a trough with rainwater from the preschool's tank, and various pipes, trucks and kitchenware for imaginative construction and water play.

The Preschool has a weekly music programme run by Conservatorium-qualified music teacher Kael, who engages the children fully with lots of singing, movement and instruments.

There is a weekly circus class by the talented Hartje, and a sports program for the active children. The kids really enjoy initiating lots

of art, craft and building – often getting an idea that staff will investigate further with the children.

Their latest adventure has been building a volcano from our hill – the ideas are amazing. Weekly cooking is another favourite, often using produce from our vegetable garden.

Spanish language lessons will start in Term One, led by Lisa, who lived for several years in Spain. The children have been mesmerised listening to her use a different language, and have expressed great interest in learning colours, numbers and songs in this beautiful language.

Staff and parents have developed a School Readiness Programme for the older children, to prepare them in their transition to school.

Tuntable Falls Preschool, a ten-minute drive from Nimbin, is open Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9am to 3pm during school terms.

A playgroup runs on Tuesdays from 10am to 12noon – call 6689-1179 to arrange a visit.

During the holidays, contact Lisa for information on 0418-667-157. Enrolments are being taken for this year 2011, and there are still some places available.

Nimbin Central, by name and by nature



Nimbin's Central School has been through a turbulent passage, but support has never wavered for some members of the community.

Two parents of central school students, Tina Fuller and Angela Solomon, have written to *The Nimbin GoodTimes* to voice their support for the school.

Life continually throws challenges at us and sometimes we cope, sometimes we crumble, Tina says. "But it's how we come out of the experience that really matters. The wisdom we gain in the process makes us stronger for having gone through it.

"Nimbin's Central School has been through one of those times. Things got rough and out of control for a while, parents lost confidence and enrolment numbers fell. The school, which had been such a big part of this community for many years, was becoming disowned and deserted."

She admits that NCS lost its way for a few years, but says teachers, students and staff all pulled together to turn things around and revive the school's good image. "They have shown that the

strong community spirit, for which Nimbin is so well known, is being nurtured in our young people," she says. "Our school is, once again, a place of learning and creativity which we can all be proud of, and which reflects the diversity and talent of the people in our region.

Angela Solomon says she's proud to say her children go to NCS. "I have two older children who have gone through their primary years there and I still have two younger children enjoying their time at this precious school," she says.

Nine years ago the school was having some tough times, including staff changes and bullying issues. "I watched as the staff worked hard with the children and the parents to transform the school into an amazing school community."

Tina says the school has had to deal with a bad reputation, and "the unfortunate thing about a poor reputation is that it is always easier to gain than to shake off".

"Sadly, there are still some locals who find it difficult to accept that the rough patch, which NCS went through a few years ago, was just a small

hiccup in its otherwise great history.

"Those of us who have had the pleasure of spending time at the school or with its students in the last couple of years find it hard to believe that there ever was a rough time."

Tina praises the students themselves.

"We should all acknowledge the effort that our young people have put into making their school great again," she says. "Let's support and embrace the school which so clearly reflects all the things that have drawn us to this remarkable part of the world, and is a wonderful representation of what growing up and living in Nimbin is all about."

Angela says it's sad that a teacher has been lost because of low numbers. "We will be losing one of the pillars of the primary school, Marc Everingham, all because the student numbers are down half a dozen. It makes me want to scream. Wake up, Nimbin parents, put down your preconceived ideas and dated prejudices and actually take a good hard look at our gem of a school."

Drama Classes for kids in Nimbin

During the last half of Term 4, Drama classes for kids were run at the Nimbin Community Centre Dance Studio, conducted by Maia Ryall, a local year 10 student.

The classes were very successful, and due to the enormous amount of interest, the lessons will continue to run for a full program in 2011. There will be two classes, ages 5-8 on Monday afternoons from 4.30-5.15pm and ages 9-13 on Thursday from 4.30-5.30pm. Classes commence Monday 31st January, run for ten weeks and cost \$8 per child per class.

In Term 4, students learnt some basic improvisation skills as well as playing some fun games and creating characters. Next term will have a main focus on character development, with children devising their own character and creating a story around all of the characters, finishing the term with a short play for parents and friends.

Thank you to all the children who came this term and Maia looks forward to seeing you in 2011. New children are always welcome. Contact Maia on 0421-019-156 or 6689-7227, or email [maia@baremetalsoft.com](mailto:maia@baremetalsoft.com)

Vacation Care Summer Program

These school holidays, the Nimbin Vacation Care program will be operating from the Youth Connections Building. However, on excursion days, please meet us in the school car park as usual at 9am.

The program runs for children aged 5 to 12. Please read the dates and venues below carefully and book to avoid disappointment. To book, phone NNIC on 6689 1692 between 10am and 4pm. Please note that the fee is \$10 for Vacation Care. Please pick up your child no later than 3pm, and ensure that your child wears appropriate clothing, covered shoes, brings a hat, sunblock and has adequate food and drinks.

*This program of the Nimbin Neighbourhood & Information Centre is funded by DoCS.*

Date	Program	Cost
Friday 7 <sup>th</sup> January	Today we will be based at Nimbin Youth Connections Building. Painting and other crafts will be provided. We will swim at Nimbin Pool. Please bring pool toys. <i>April &amp; Ajita</i>	\$10
Tuesday 11 <sup>th</sup> January	Today we will be based at Nimbin Youth Connections Building and will be making objects out of papier maché. We will also have a swim at Nimbin Pool. <i>April &amp; Lisa</i>	\$10
Wednesday 12 <sup>th</sup> January	Excursion to Amaze 'n' Place Alstonville. We may stop at the Water Park at Summerland House as well today, so bring bathers and a towel. <i>Signing in and out at the Nimbin Central School Car Park. April &amp; Lisa</i>	\$17
Friday 14 <sup>th</sup> January	Today we will be based at Nimbin Youth Connections Building. We will have a swim at Nimbin Pool and a sausage sizzle will be provided. We will finish papier maché projects and perhaps watch a video at the end of the day. <i>April &amp; Ajita</i>	\$10
Tuesday 18 <sup>th</sup> January	Today we will be based at Nimbin Youth Connections Building and we will have a swim at Nimbin Pool. We will make clay sculptures and do some painting. We may take a walk down to the Bowling Club for an informal game of bowls. If possible please try to wear smooth-soled shoes. <i>April &amp; Terri</i>	\$10
Wednesday 19 <sup>th</sup> January	Excursion to Sphinx Rock Cafe and Park for the day. We will have nets to survey life in the creek, and we will have a game of cricket. Children should bring bathers and a packed lunch. The cafe provides healthy kids lunches for \$7. <i>Signing in and out at the Nimbin Central School Car Park. April &amp; Terri</i>	\$12
Friday 21 <sup>st</sup> January	Today we will be based at Nimbin Youth Connections Building and will have a swim at Nimbin Pool. We will be continuing with crafts from earlier, and the children may wish to produce a small performance for parents at the end of the day. <i>April &amp; Ajita</i>	\$10

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# Grow, Sow and be in the know at Blue Knob



On Christmas Eve, in pouring rain, the Blue Knob Farmers Market went ahead with its first twilight market.

Stallholders in gumboots and dripping broad-brimmed hats carried baskets of produce to their stalls. The Blue Knob Art Gallery was open and a yuletide platter was ready for diners at the verandah café.

The Northern Rivers lived up to its name: The creeks flooded and many were cut off, but still the people came. In that massive downpour, people with huge smiles on their faces arrived to buy fresh produce and enjoy some local Christmas festivities.

The entertainment included young flamenco dancers, bright with colour as they danced under an awning. It takes more than monsoonal rains to dampen the spirit of the Blue Knob community.

### Sharing Local Knowledge

The market reopens Saturday 8th January, then on January 15th a new venture, Sharing Local Knowledge, begins.

The aim is to increase self-reliance within the local community with a

series of workshops and seminars. Brief talks from local farmers, growers and other skilled people on the growing of food and other sustainability skills are planned throughout 2011.

The venue is the workshop space behind the gallery, with seating for 22 – the first to arrive will have seats. The talks start at 10.30am and run for 40 mins.

### Saturday 15th – Growing seedlings

Greg James is the co-founder of Farmer's Choice Organics, an organically certified nursery near Byron Bay. Farmer's Choice produces around 20,000 seedlings per week for sale at eight outdoor markets and 14 retail outlets. Greg will share some of the knowledge and skills he and partner Vanessa have developed to mass-produce healthy, vibrant vegetable seedlings.

### Saturday 22nd – Building with hemp

Klara Marosszeky is a pioneer in the industrial hemp industry, with over 10 years of research and practical experience in using hemp as a construction material. Come along to



hear how it's possible, if you have one hectare of land, to grow enough hemp to build your own fire resistant, very economical, hemp fibre house – with no need to render, paint or insulate. Hemp houses also have good sound-proofing qualities and will easily withstand extreme weather. You'll begin to wonder if rammed earth and straw bale houses are old hat!

### Saturday 29th – Home Beekeeping

How to set up a hive. James Creagh has been cultivating an orchard of mixed fruit and nut trees, both exotic and native, at Lillian Rock for the last 10 years using biodynamic and organic methods. James has eight years' beekeeping experience, and is a member of the Northern Rivers Amateur Bee Keepers' Association. His 10 hives are registered with the NSW Department of Primary Industries. James is passionate about bees and the important role they play in the production of our food.

# Nimbin: The Valley of Weeds?

by David McMinn

Since we arrived on our farm near Blue Knob in 1983, we have had to deal with so many new weeds – these have been listed below.

(The species denoted by an \*asterisk have been eliminated from our property.)

- African Tulip Tree\*
- Apple Mint\*
- Balloon Vine
- Coral Tree
- Coffee\*
- Curry Leaf Tree\*
- Devil's Fig
- Giant Paramatta Grass
- Golden Rain Tree\*
- Golden Tabeuia\*
- Honey Suckle
- Ice Cream Bean\*
- Madeira Vine
- Moth Vine
- Paper Mulberry
- Spanish Moss\*
- Tropical Chick Weed

There are a few others that I have been unable to identify.

Many of these new weeds were originally purchased at the markets as ornamental plants. After several years, I realised that they posed a serious weed problem and had to be eradicated.

Unfortunately, unsuspecting gardeners can still purchase many weedy species at various local nurseries. I feel that most nursery people are only interested in making a quick dollar and do not care about the long-term environmental impact of the plants they sell.

Some of the new weeds are quite horrendous. Paper Mulberry will out-compete lantana – plant a tree and you'll have a suckering forest in 15 years. However, the worst are Madeira Vine and Cats Claw Creeper, which are slowly spreading throughout the Nimbin valley.

These insidious, rampant vines can strangle large trees, which die and then collapse. All that remains is a thick matt of vines.

Many of the weeds have a very narrow gene pool. Usually a few plants are grown by a gardener and these spread out into the surrounding countryside. Due to inbreeding, these species often have very little resistance if they do come under attack by a fungus or other pathogen.

For example, Tropical

Chick Weed was a rampant weedy herb in the 1990s and people living in the area at the time will remember it well. After several years, the population crashed and now it grows as a few isolated specimens in local gardens.

Peter Hardwick, the local bush food researcher, says nurseries and botanical collectors introducing new weeds are now a greater threat to biodiversity than logging in the Northern Rivers region.

"That may come as a shock to some community-based conservationists, but it's very important to see the whole picture when it comes to the impact of environmental weeds, and the evidence of severe damage is mounting," he says.

"Basically, we are turning zero-maintenance native ecosystems capable of self regeneration into high-care disabled ecosystems via weeds."

The Green movement is very pro-active in trying to combat old growth logging, the building of new dams or the construction of new mining projects, and some major successes have been recorded over the past 40 years. The problems arising from local nurseries selling weedy plants are overlooked, despite the threat to the local ecology.

In another 50 years, the Nimbin valley will become choked with weedy species and our beautiful natural environment will be severely degraded. Native forests will become museum pieces and only be maintained if they are intensively manicured by humans.

What can you do to help slow down this process? Firstly, grow only species that are native to the Northern Rivers region, as well as exotic plants that are known to be non-weedy. The ideal exotic is one that can be planted in the garden, with zero chance of becoming a "garden escapee".

Secondly, if a plant is becoming weedy in your area, get rid of it quickly, as a few plants are easy to eliminate. Once a weed becomes established, it will be impossible to eradicate.

All the best dealing with your new weed infestations – alas the problem can only get worse, a lot worse.



## Council's storm in a chai cup

by Benny Zable

Lismore City Council has condemned the Rainbow Chai Tent – which has serviced The Channon Market for around 30 years – on health grounds.

Michael Jack has until May to replace the old trailer, which was condemned by the Council health inspector.

The Rainbow Chai Tent was copied by the Woodford Folk Festival mob for their annual festival, but unlike the Woodford facility the Rainbow Chai Tent is a full-time service that has been the kitchen and meeting place for activists around Australia.

It came from the St Andrews Market in the hills of Melbourne, and its duplicate travelled with the Peace Train in 1986 and has been based in the Rainbow Region of NSW ever since.

After much wear and tear over the years, both the trailer and Rainbow Tent need replacing. It is a private business, but Michael and family have subsidised its upkeep.

Many events operate at a financial loss for our enjoyment and comfort. Donations for the Chai Tent's new trailer can be made at the Commonwealth Bank, account BSB # 062580, account # 10278485. Please include name, initials, and state that the donation is for the new trailer.

Friends of the Chai Tent are on Facebook and at [www.rainbowchaitent.com](http://www.rainbowchaitent.com)



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