

Chasing a new dream in Coober Pedy

Ironically yours
by Dionne May

There's a couple I know. Some say they're crazy, old enough to know better. They're off chasing a new dream, new colour.

Nimbin was a dream that contained these drifting souls for years, long enough to label them as locals. The once colourful lifestyle in the Northern Rivers faded for them. The new money-alternative, committee and rule abiding have rolled in, forever changing the very fabric of Nimbin's community. Relentless persecution of the pot smoker and consorting laws have emptied the streets, driven all the colour out of the rainbow. That great big 'tall poppy' of freedom and choice has taken too many blows and the sick and dying, desperate for access to this wonder medicine, are wilting in the shadows.

Deep in the Outback, sad memories began to fade for Ant and Dee as a new palette of colours formed, signalling for them a way



forward, renewed hope. Enormous skies dared their spirits to fly free or shrivel and die under such intensity. Through the dust and heat a shimmer, a sparkle, a small town, Coober Pedy appeared. Ninety-four different nationalities with one thing in common, treasure hunting.

Legends and tales unfold at the local coffee shop as deep, crazy and wonderful as Nimbin's own.



A hidden underground world spinning and revolving around the rainbow filled precious opal stone instead of the green plant of home. A quirky parallel universe. Before the alternative hippies flocked to the northern rivers, the old soldiers of WW1 and ex-railway workers from the completed Transcontinental Railway were turning up on the 'opal fields' digging themselves holes

in the ground to live and searching for opals.

With picks and shovels they literally dug up dreams out of the hardest, rocky inhospitable country in Australia. Tales of huge fortunes found and lost, buried and stolen. Two Italian brothers rounded up during the war, stashed two full suitcases of opals somewhere between Coober Pedy

and Alice Springs. They have never been found. Some newly 'wealth-endowed' miners made hasty calls for mail order brides... now no love and no money!

Ant and Dee pull up at an abandoned dug-out. It is literally a cave with a front wall of corrugated tin with two broken windows held together with old shade cloth and a bullet-ridden piece of perspex. Empty cartridges lie on the ground, ominous reminders of wild days.

A desert snake slides by... pastel rainbow in motion. The 42 degree morning with fifty knot winds is replaced by two swirling storm fronts. Deep rolling grey clouds twist and twirl into titanic colour at sunset. The expanding desert stretches out 360 degrees as the quiet descends.

Two old hippies make their bed on top of their old ute. Dirty, dusty and crammed with shovels, picks and stumps to stake a claim, the old girl provides a panoramic view of the night sky. Cuppas in hand, the two smile into each other's eyes at their new rainbow dreaming.

Postcard from Japan, Part 1

by Bob Tissot

First impressions. Fuji-san a black silhouette against a tangerine and salmon sunset as seen from 10,000ft on our way in... very, very tasteful.

Landed and immediately got on the wrong train at the airport. Some other Aussies in the carriage recounted how they'd gone 200k the wrong way before they could turn back... most encouraging.

Anyway, managed to get off and change to a branch line to get to our suburb which had us feeling very bloody competent; a feeling that vanished like the mountain gorillas when we tried to make sense of our Google map/directions to the house. A piece of paper v reality - who ya gonna bet on?

Luckily, an awesome fellow (thank you Honda) asked the magical question, "Can I help you?" and between Honda and a local policeman we managed to locate our cupboard... er, I mean our accommodation. Wow! So roomy, so spacious. More than enough room to swing a very tiny cat if your arms were very short and you kept your elbows bent. But hey, it's got a single-person balcony, shared shower and squat dunny down the hall. Bloody luxury!

Next day met the Yank (Ken) in the adjoining closet, who told us about a samurai festival at the Anahachimangu shrine. All we need to do is find it. Should be a piece of piss but, is there public wi-fi in cafes? No there is not! So we don't have Mr. Google to help (not that his street directions were a great deal of help last night). We're reliant on the help of strangers with little or no English, most of whom were incredibly generous with their time and directions (except for Mr. Hardhat who, rather than admit ignorance, sent us 2k in



An actual Samurai

the opposite direction).

Unbelievably, we arrived at the shrine just as the samurai were heading off on horseback for a parade round the block before galloping flat out along a very thin, sandy track (one at a time) and shooting arrows at targets. I expected younger samurai and better accuracy; Shintaro would never have missed.

Back at our spacious cupboard, Ken recommends a place for dinner that he swears has the best food in all of Japan, but after eventually locating it hidden down a tiny alley, they very haltingly tell us, "No English menu, no pictures" which means that if you can't order in Japanese, forget it.

Found another place with a window display of fake food, took the owner outside and pointed. "One lacquered stir-fry and one Estapollé tofu". Serves were massive, and soon we were stuffed.

Next day it's off to Kyoto on our Hiker 465 Shinkansen (bullet-train), ripping along at 260kph. And this is the slow one; the fast one cruises at 360 and the new GenB apparently cracks 400! A bit like being in a plane at a dangerously low altitude. We arrive before we left (how fast is that!) and actually

manage to find our B&B without getting officially "lost". Our hostess, Coco, is a delightful soul who speaks English and cooks us a delicious brekky each morning.

So first, we kick-off with the Golden Shrine, the most famous (and popular) Shrine in all of Nippon. Got there at sparrow's fart to avoid the rush, and only had to share it with maybe 300 people. It's a one-way circuit around the shrine; up the hill, past the tea house, across the bridge, through the trinket stalls and into the cafe at the end. On entry we're accosted by the photo police who forced us into the mandatory photo-taking spot, even if you didn't have a camera. No-one was allowed to pass until they'd captured the golden beauty. No exceptions. We did the circuit twice and by the time we started the second round it was a solid sushi train of happy snappers. A green tea soft-serve cone from the cafe at the end and it was time to move on.

Next was the Imperial Castle. Wow! Awesome stronghold. Surrounded by not one but two moats and encased in walls made of HUGE, perfectly fitted stones. A real treat. And for all you book lovers who have read the trilogy... YES, I have walked across the

Nightingale Floor. Perhaps not quite as deadly and stealthily as a ninja, but I tried. Hai!

That night we headed off for the geisha district (didn't actually find it), but after wandering down ancient, dark and silent back alleys, untouched since the days of the Shogun, turned a corner and emerged into a seething mass of boisterous humanity, acres of lurid neon and a roaring crowd packed around some big screens watching Japan and Australia playing in their World Cup qualifier. We squeezed into the crowd, grabbed some food and screamed the Aussies into a 1-1 draw, so we all went home as friends...

Look, I've just realised the whole Geisha/soccer thing was the night before last night (it's all starting to blur). Yesterday afternoon and night we went to the Fushimi Inara Shrine which has 1000s of those classic Japanese gates (two thick posts topped with a crossbar that sticks out the sides - you know what I mean) winding their way up a mountain side. They're all painted orange with black bases, and we started strolling along the path between them, climbing a few steps here and there, and then some more until finally we realised that we'd come so far up the mountain, to not continue to the top would be silly. Ha!

So we kept climbing the steps between the gates, upwards, ever upwards. Bloody hell my friends, those steps went on forever. Thousands of them. Eventually reached the top (le puff, le pant), awesome views, and of course decided to stay for the sunset, which naturally meant the whole journey down was made with minimal light and ankle-twisting black shadows.

Limped out of the shrine and off to the hot spa... but more about them next time.



Club members at Evans Head earlier this year

Nimbin Bushwalkers elect their new committee

by Peter Moyle

Sunday 20th November saw 16 members meet up in Brunswick Heads for a short walk through the Nature Reserve and then back along the Ocean Beach.

An absolutely brilliant warm day with clear skies and no wind made this a very pleasant way to get some exercise and enjoy the beautiful surroundings. We moved away from the crowds and made our way south, walking through the coastal heathlands before finding a track that had us coming over the sand hills onto a deserted beach, and in the distance saw gulls diving on a school of bait fish.

After a meander along the beach, some went for a refreshing swim while the rest settled in the shady grassed area near the surf club for a refreshment break before the club's AGM.

A good turnout for the AGM with 16 members, and the meeting was short with all reports being positive including the bank balance, so down to the election of the Committee for 2017. All positions were nominated for, making a good sign for a full year of walks ahead.

President Judy Hales, VP Bill West, Secretary Michele Alberth, Treasurer Lynne Hacked, Walks Co-ordinator Peter Moyle, and general committee Lindsay Wood, Carol Evans and Lorraine Christie.

After the close of the meeting, we discussed what we wanted in the way of walks for the coming year. It was obvious that those attending were keen to see the weekend walks/camps expanded and held monthly, to complement a day walk once a month, giving us two opportunities a month to get out and about.

To clarify, when we have a weekend walk/camp this is not only for the campers. Day walks are also available for those who can only spare a Saturday or Sunday and want to come for a day.

A very positive get-together and an exciting year ahead for the Nimbin Bushwalkers.

I did it! The Great Wall! I cannot believe it!

by Gail Wallace

I arrived home from the Great Wall Challenge, organised to raise funds for the Crohn's and Colitis Association, with my body battered, stiff and sore but not sorry, from the most punishing, gruelling, mentally and physically taxing experience of my life!

It was, without question, the hardest thing I have ever done. (Yes, even harder than giving birth!)

I could never have imagined the degree of difficulty of this Challenge: the irregular terrain, the steepness, uneven, damaged quality of the steps, the never-ending snaking of its continuation up hills, down hills, over mountains including between the Crouching Tiger and Hidden Dragon.

Thousands and thousands of steps for five consecutive days. More climbing than walking. Did I want to give up? Many times...

No two days were alike. Moreover, no two steps were alike in width, depth, strength, or surface. We were well away from 'tourist zone' and even further from 'comfort zones'. We walked on the thinnest goat trails with hundreds of metres drops on both sides, steps so high and narrow we had to 'rock climb' on all fours.

Broken, unrestored paths. Sections minus handrails, minus any sides! My relationship with steps has dramatically changed forever! Travelators, escalators, elevators... bring them on. Ramps around my house are looking good.

However, it was life-changing... Was it worth it? Most definitely!

All in all, I mightily surprised myself – at 62, somewhat unfit, carrying more 'poundage' than just my backpack and with a damaged / torn meniscus, I could still achieve this goal.

As a team (pictured), we have most definitely made a difference. Between



20 trekkers, we raised over \$100,000.

Doing it for charity was a great motivator, and I somehow accessed powers within, of which I was unaware (or perhaps they just lay dormant).

Thanks to all the local businesses and both the Nimbin Farmers' Market and Blue Knob Market, as well as the many friends who so positively supported this achievement. Being supported by all of you was, without doubt, a major contributor to my determination to complete and 'cross the finish line'. How could I not, with all of you backing me so strongly?

Thank you again from my heart (and boots) for your encouragement, both monetary and your welcome words in a collective chorus of "Go for it, Gail!" And I did! Woo hoo!

My supporter page is still open until the end of the year for any more online donations. My personal goal is now \$5000 and I'm getting close! Contributions can be made to: <https://crohnsandcolitisaustraliachinachallenge2016.everydayhero.com/au/gail-wallace>



Nepal village rebuild nears

by Helen Simpson

Jo Peterson, Michael Forsell and myself travelled up to Bolgaun (VDC Baruwa) last week with engineer Isham and manager Roshan from Good Earth Nepal, with whom we have joined forces in using earthbag technology to rebuild the village.

The village is quite remote and has received no help in rebuilding. People are living in temporary dwellings of rubble and leaky old tin. A grim reality with winter coming on.

We talked up the project, and 20 sites were surveyed for soil suitability and size after an amazing community meeting with 25 village elders and women to ascertain those most in need.

The road has finally re-opened and we can now commence the rebuild.

We will start with building five houses, training as many locals as possible with a view to building more when more funds can be raised.

We aim to commence the rebuild starting with the five houses in mid to late January, so as to mobilise more volunteers to motivate the locals in participating in rebuilding their own village and help their neighbours.

We also hope to do health clinic and



environmental education concurrently with the rebuild.

Anyone wishing to volunteer and learn about earthbag technology contact me on 6689-1417 or email me at: helensim7@gmail.com I will be back on 2nd December.

Funds are still required: the Nimbin Relief Fund is with Summerland Credit Union, BSB 728-728; account number 22305642. It is supported by the Nimbin Health and Welfare Association.



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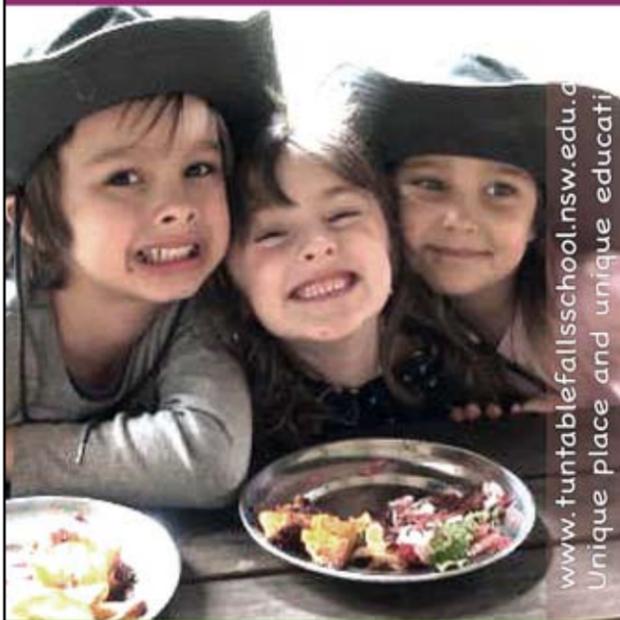
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Daisy has a new home

by Carina and the team at Nimbin Child Care Centre

Our outside area is coming along nicely, with our new worm farm in place and also our rabbit, whose name, Daisy was chosen from a hatful of names.

Thank you so much to Toni, Lilly and family for your donation of our new rabbit. I think she will be very spoiled and loved here at the Centre.

We always enjoy finding out about our cultures

among our families, and this month May, one of our beautiful educators, cooked the children Thai fried rice which was so yummy that we had to make it more than once.

We hope you all had a great month.

Please feel free to call the Centre on 6689-0142. It is located in the grounds of the Nimbin Community Centre.

You can book in for our Wednesday Morning Orientations, which are held between 10.30 and 11.30am.



Family camp at Stradbroke

by Riaan Corneelsen
Year 6 student

In November, Tuntable Falls Community School departed for their annual family camp to Stradbroke Island.

Many families descended on the Adder Rock campground. There were varied age groups: it was baby Tyco's first, and 30 years since Nanna Jens' first camp. It has been eight years since my first camp, when I was at Tuntable Falls preschool, and now possibly my last, as I am about to graduate from Year 6.

The trip to Stradbroke started by everyone catching the ferry. The water was infested with blue jellyfish – the ferry ploughed through what seemed like millions.

I caught the 1 o'clock ferry with Bodhi and Mika. We met with the rest of school and set up the camp kitchen, which we used to prepare all the food for the week.

A lot of people volunteered for cooking breakfast, lunch and dinner, and for the



clean-up afterwards. The food is always healthy and delicious.

On the second day, everyone had fun around the beautiful beach, with no bluebottles in sight.

The waves were great and

everyone from camp was swimming.

All the kids who had boogie boards, including myself, caught the majestic waves that came with the wind.

Later that day was the

time to go to the gelato shop for the first time in the week. Everyone had double scoops, which caused mayhem once the sugar rushes kicked in. A lot of kids rode their bikes around the camp, including myself.

The passing days had choppy waves, and it was hard to catch them. Bluebottles were about and people were getting stung. The older kids spent a lot of time fishing. Finally, the day of the traditional 3km ice-cream walk arrived. Everyone started at the beach and walked up the path on the rocks.

We crossed a few beaches and some people stopped to have a swim but a small group, including myself, continued on until we arrived at the gelato shop.

The next few days were spent playing beyblades (spinning tops), board games, swimming, riding bikes and fishing. There were no electronic devices allowed on camp, so we had to entertain ourselves in other ways.

Nimbin Playgroup supports families

by Rachel Whiting
Nimbin Playgroup Officer

November has seen an increase in families coming to enjoy playgroup as the weather warms up.

Mums, Dads and Grandparents enjoy time to mingle and chat, and an opportunity to discuss parenting challenges over a cuppa. Topics like toilet training, feeding, weaning, sleep strategies(!), and general support and encouragement on the parenting journey are commonly discussed.

Sometimes it's about just relaxing and enjoying time with your child, doing puzzles and craft together, while I prepare activities,



clean up, and provide a tasty healthy morning tea each day.

This month we made fresh playdough to take home, finger paint from corn flour, and continued work on our pine cone fairy characters.

We were visited by Kirrah Holburn who talked about pre and post natal health, Maureen Sayer our local Child & Family Health

Nurse who is here to discuss any child development questions you may have.

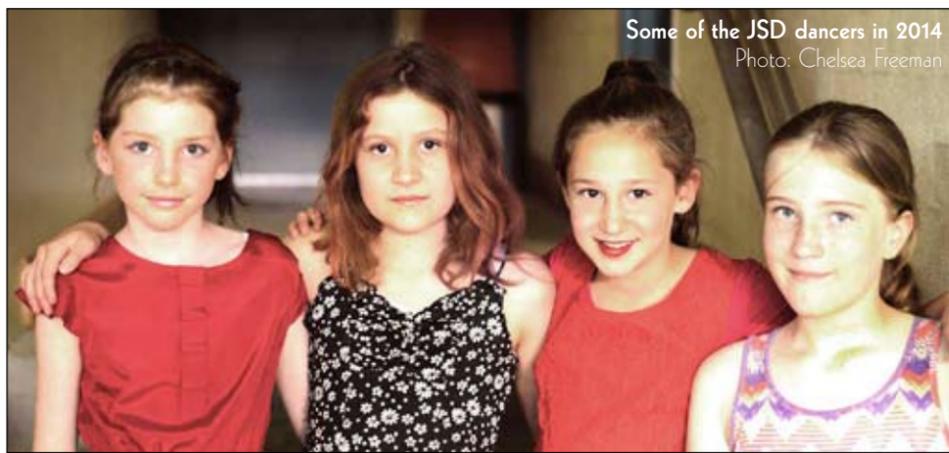
We also visited Nimbin Central School where Maz the librarian sang nursery rhymes and sing-a-long books together with us on her guitar. The children had a go on the guitar themselves and received some free books.

We gave away tickets to

a Magic Show which many families enjoyed, and our organisation, the Family Support Network, ran a free full 'Pamper Day' in Lismore to support parents' wellbeing with baby and parent massages amongst many other luxurious activities!

Feel free to drop in and join us with your under-5 child/ren, for craft, music, story-time, a variety of fun activities, or just to chat and have a cuppa and take time out from home to make some new friends or catch up with old. All families are welcome.

We offer additional one-on-one family support, if you feel you need it, just come and talk to me. Doors are open Tuesdays and Fridays 10am-1.30pm, no cost.



Some of the JSD dancers in 2014
Photo: Chelsea Freeman

Jump shake and dance!

Jump Shake Dance is looking forward to creating, inspiring and entertaining children and adults alike through the magic of dance in the coming year.

Following the fantastic 2013-14 year-end concert, and 2015's instructional classes and participation in the Stars of Lismore fundraiser, JSD principal teacher Roisin Francis (pictured) took a much-needed break.

She has returned home enthusiastic to share her years of training and expertise in tap, modern and world styles with local dance lovers.



The 2017 program, for students from four years old to adult in the fun, fitness and finesse of modern dance, aims to assist in co-ordination, cardio health and

lifelong enjoyment of physical activity and artistic pursuit.

With plans to offer after-school sessions in Nimbin, JSD is seeking expressions of interest from former and newly interested dancers to commence classes in February 2017 fitting in with the school terms and working towards performance at the end of year concert extravaganza – an exciting community dance event.

Contact Roisin at: jumpshakedance@outlook.com or phone 0457-370-396 to receive enrolment and session details and updates.

Home education – what about socialisation?

by Susan de Wall

When we tell people that we are home educating, often the first question that comes up is: what about socialisation?

I think this happens because many of us remember long days spent at school with friends. Or perhaps it is because we can easily see large groups of children at school, playing outside together almost anytime we drive past a school.

Perhaps we believe that home educated kids are spending the same six hours in the day at home with just their own family, doing lessons school-style. Whatever the reason, this big concern usually becomes the smallest after families start home education.

At the beginning of our home education journey, I was hyper conscious of ensuring my son got enough social time – I even had a special place to record social events in my diary, along with the records for maths, English and other subjects. I worried that he - a natural introvert - would miss his friends or would become somehow 'unsocialised'.

After a while I started to relax.

As I scanned my records of 'social' activities, I found that there was an abundance. I saw that meetups with other home educators, extended play/learning/fun days with friends, outings in the big wide world, classes, and time with family filled our life. Like most home educating families, I found myself saying 'no' to social activities, because there were just too many opportunities in the week.

After a while, I thought to ask my son if he was satisfied and got a resounding 'yes'. He said that he preferred the social life of home education, because he was able to spend much more time in deep conversation and extended play. So I stopped worrying about it.

School is the obvious place where children gather. It isn't the only place though. In our region, I counted at least 11 home education meetups in a given fortnight. On top of that there are classes and excursions for home educated kids during school hours – it's less busy then. Our kids belong to sporting clubs,



Photo by Katie Ryan

scouting groups, music groups and more.

We have special meetups just for teens, just for kids over ten and just for little ones. We have a Self Organised Learning Environment and a Freeschool – co-operatives for groups of home educated students to gather where parents provide support, inspiration and materials to allow kids to collaborate and design their learning.

We meet at parks and pools in Nimbin, Lismore, Kyogle, Mullumbimby, Brunswick, Byron Bay, Drake, and Tweed and lots of places in between.

Home educators quickly find out that great learning doesn't necessarily happen at a desk at home. Our children are out and about in their communities (and, in recent years, online) interacting and collaborating on a daily basis with people from a variety of backgrounds, traditions, ages and social groups.

This encourages development of healthy social skills, confidence and the ability to interact comfortably across social settings.

Still not convinced? Here are two questions to ponder. Are you only friends with people with whom you went to school? And are you only friends with people who are roughly the same age as you?

Home education is on the increase in Australia and worldwide as people recognise the need to nurture a lifelong love of learning. If you'd like to know more, or would like to join our meet-ups please contact us at: rainbowregionhomeschoolers@gmail.com

A growing school

by Marga Helms,
Educational administrator

Rainbow Ridge School for Steiner Education has offered a curriculum for Kindergarten and Primary School and recently classes 7 and 8, for the last 20 years. Next year we'll be celebrating the school's 21st birthday. In that time the school has grown from around 30 to 100 students for 2017.

We have been establishing a playgroup once a week where parents come with their young child and experience story, song, baking and craft for the young child while meeting with other parents of young children. We also have a family day care facility operating from our premises four days a week.

The school started in two different premises before we moved to Lillian Rock. It was a real pioneering time with a strong desire from parents to give their child/ren an education based on an impulse by Rudolf Steiner. Only after two buildings were built, in a true pioneering spirit with a lot of voluntary help, did we get our first capital grant from the government for more classrooms. The grant from



the education revolution established the school with another classroom, a hall, a kitchen and a new library space. Now, with another capital grant we will expand again, starting building next year.

Having been at the school through all the pioneering years, I have seen a lot of changes. After all these years I am as passionate as ever about Steiner education. It provides a clear guidance of how and what to teach at different stages of development of the child.

This is consistent knowledge that puts the human being at the very front of our interest. The

environment of our lives changes, but what it means to be human does not.

For the earlier years in kindergarten and primary school, we are allowing the children to be children and develop to their best abilities, without pressures and competition but out of wonder and interest in the world.

We value equally the learning of English, maths, science, history and geography with all the creative arts, foreign languages and different forms of movement activities.

Thanks to this beautiful diverse community, we could grow and keep on growing.

Making real connections

by Natasha Livock

At Cawongla Playhouse, we envision that the children who journey through our preschool will be advocates and caretakers of the Earth, each other, and all its inhabitants.

A vision needs a foundation; one that is inclusive and where we all feel nurtured. Where we feel that we matter and that we belong.

As we near the end of the year, we wondered, "What do you love about Cawongla Playhouse?"

Here are some answers.

Byron (4): Just eating food and because my Mum brings me here, she likes me being here.

Jack (4): I just love playing around. There are spiders, real spiders and they are safe.

Ashanti (4): Yes, the beautiful flowers.

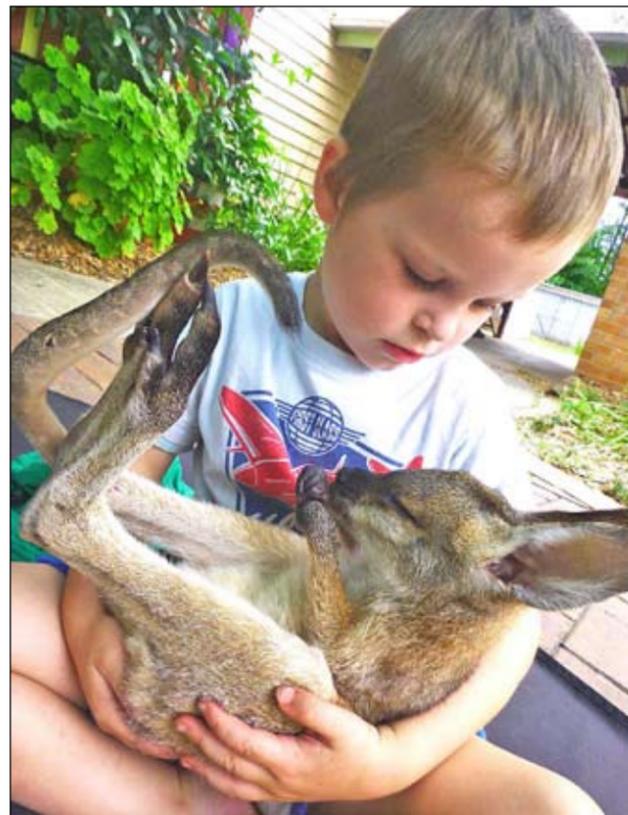
Kalida (5): I like climbing on the playground and the swings.

Issi (5): I like that the teachers play with you a lot. We play nice together. It's a lovely place, we play all day.

Moss (4): I love the slide.

Huwyn (4): Umm, because I like having lunch here because we all eat together and I like eating under the trees.

Eddie (5): I like coming here all day, because I love you.



Jack and the joey

Myrtle (5): Children can play here and even climb trees and we have lots of stuff that's fun.

Sarala (3): The turtle! Nothing else. Just everything.

Kim (educator): The Playhouse garden and the community.

Natasha (educator): We talk about our feelings and help each other to problem solve.

Leanne (educator): We have

a beautiful space to be, and we care about each and every one of us... spiders and earthworms included.

Rose (educator): The beautiful gardens and the trees.

As we say "farewell" to some children going to primary school, we wonder, will they continue to be advocates and caretakers of the Earth, each other, and all its inhabitants?