



MAYAN CEREMONY AND SUSTAINABILITY

by Warwick Fry

For a moment there, I was back in Nimbin. A circle of intent faces lit by flickering flames, a full moon, local musicians with unplugged home grown music, a splash of home brew, quiet talk of environmental sustainability, indigenous rights and culture, and a sense of ceremony.

And indeed it was – a full moon midnight ceremony based on the ancient Mayan belief system that postulates respect for the *Pachamama* (Mother Earth) and ancestral spirits. Long drawn out calls on a conch shell, an address to the spirits of the ancestors

of this sacred site close to the Guatemalan border in Nahuatl, an indigenous language once spoken by the Mayans, and the hour long ceremony began.

The celebrant was eighty year old Amadeus, better known as *El Abuelo* – the Grandfather. Mari and I met the *abuelo* in the capital of El Salvador, San Salvador, when we were goofing around at the *feria*, San Salvador's equivalent to the Sydney Royal Easter Show. We had found a quiet spot to listen to a *Marimba* band when *El Abuelo* came over from a nearby stand promoting indigenous rights and introduced himself with a glass of *chicha* (home brew) that he was

selling. He had recognised me from the time I was covering the 1989 *guerilla* offensive on the capital, and he was with the *guerilla*.

El Abuelo addressed the lit candles at the centre of the circle as ancestral spirits, humbly and with dignity. Four candles at the cardinal points of the compass represented the four elements, with one in the centre signifying 'spirit'.

He spoke of the ethical and moral dimensions of the Mayan belief system and how to unload negative thoughts and behaviours. "This is not art, this is not a religion. It is a means of communication..." (perhaps prompted by the belief of many strict church-goers that these

ceremonies were a form of satanic devil worship). It was a motif he evoked in all three of the ceremonies he conducted over the two days.

His discourse was peppered with references to the despoliation of the Mayan culture by the Spanish invasion and how indigenous culture and belief was in harmony with the environment, based on respect for the *Pachamama* (Earth Mother) and nature.

The short speeches in Nahuatl were particularly poignant. Almost half of the thirty or forty present was a bus load of Guatemalans where indigenous languages are still spoken. But many of the Salvadorans were from the

local Nahuatl language school. Nahuatl had almost died out in El Salvador after the peasant rising of 1932. In the merciless retributive massacre that followed much of the indigenous population was wiped out; the indigenous *campesinos* feared to speak their native language, the ruling oligarchy fearful to hear it spoken. This era gave birth to the death squads of the 1970s.

So it was gratifying to see this almost forgotten (in El Salvador, at least) language being resurrected through the efforts of men like the *abuelo*, as the heart of the developing movement for indigenous and environmental rights.

Village visit

by Mick Watson

Almost a year has passed since I read the article in the local paper of a village destroyed by the 2015 Nepal earthquake. An info session in Nimbin in February, followed by several volunteer meets later, had me ready to help out with the rebuild scheduled for October.

Glen, Bryce and myself met up at our base camp, the Tibet guest house in Kathmandu, to fix a plan. Our task was to sell to the villagers the preferred option to rebuild the village using Earthbag technology, with the help of a local company Good Earth Nepal, which would provide technical support and training to volunteers and the residents.

Additional meetings were held with Good Earth Nepal, and we met our translator Suraj, a 20-year old hospitality student who spoke some English and had only been out of Kathmandu a couple of times, so it was going to be hard work for him.

At 6am we left Kathmandu behind and by 10am we had gone as far as the Jeep would take us. The road to the village had been closed by the monsoon, landslides and impassable bogs, so it was walking uphill from here on in.

In the heat and humidity, we climbed over 1100 metres, and although the road was long and gradual, occasionally we took the killer shortcuts used by locals, naturally steeper and slipperier.

We were told it was only a six-hour walk, but after taking an alternative track as there were no signs, it was obviously going to be a lot longer, and by 4pm we were not even half way, so we stayed in Kakani. The one-star guest house had no restroom, only a tap, but it seemed like five-star. Dahl bharta for dinner and plenty of it as darkness covered the mountains surrounding us.

Early start next morning – with Tibetan bread and tea for breaky, we left our host and climbed another 600 metres.

The road had taken us to Langtang National Park, and if we wanted to get to the village this way then we had to pay the admission charge to the park, approximately A\$42 each (or pay a bribe).

Efforts by Suraj to explain our mission to the official were to no avail, so out of principle



we paid the fee so the government would get the money and not him!

Thankfully the remaining two-hour walk to the village of Bolgain was pretty much downhill and we arrived mid-afternoon. We were greeted by the locals and soon there was a good crowd of helpful and very interested onlookers. Explaining our needs, they all tried to come up with a solution, but first a cup of tea.

We were taken in by Lucktae, who had lost his wife and daughter in the earthquake, but had since rebuilt his life and home as best as he could. He was more than happy to share what he had left with us. We were treated like royalty, and entertained by his four-year old son Usard.

By midday the next day, the secretary arrived after much confusion on his whereabouts. Other visitors turned up prior just to greet us, so we were kept busy until then.

Talks seemed to go well and it became apparent a lot needed to be done. The list of people needing rehousing was extensive. From there the secretary would discuss with the villagers and Good Earth Nepal to qualify any concerns.

The day passed quickly but we had time for a walk around the village and nearby fields. The school is partially rebuilt by the Italians and another by the government. No-one is sure if or when they will be finished.

We left early the next morning to complete our return trip down the mountain. Prior to leaving though, a ceremony was performed by our host with scarves and a toast to bid us a safe journey.

We weren't going back the same way we

came, and we descended long stairways, tracks through rice terraces, crossed long suspension bridges and finally back along an endless boggy road. Our driver and Jeep were just as pleased to see us as we them!

In Kathmandu we dropped Suraj off on our way to base camp. I'm sure the time with three Aussies, the mission, the village and the mountains has been life-changing for that city kat. He said he was going to have a day of rest!

The whole journey has been an experience, a real adventure, and I'm looking forward to the rebuild.

Don't forget Nepal update

by Helen Simpson

Just to recap, we are fundraising to rebuild a village in province of Baruwa in Central Nepal, where 98% of houses were destroyed in the 2015 earthquake and 14 people died.

This has been a long journey – rebuilding has been hampered by monsoon rains, landslides, and fuel and gas blockades at the Indian border. People are living in temporary accommodation of tin, tents and tarps.

The numerous festivals, though fantastic, mean that not a lot happens for weeks at a time also. We have linked in with Good Earth Nepal who are undergoing various projects in disadvantaged villages using Earthbag technology which, after extensive research, we have found to be the most ethical, sustainable, cheap, quick and safe.

Volunteers Glen, Bryce and Mick have walked up to the village of Bolgain because the road is still closed since the monsoon – hoping



it will be open in the next couple of weeks. They talked up the Earthbag technology to the Village Secretary Saroj and other village people, and it is looking good.

Good Earth Nepal are waiting for the road to open, then we begin by surveying, and training interested locals and volunteers. Three of us are going in November for training, and more are waiting in the wings until we actually start the rebuild – most likely early new year now.

Fundraising has been going well – our target is \$25,000 for the ten-house project, and we have \$17,000. More raffles this coming Open Mic Night at Nimbin Bowlo, with some great woodwork by Michael Forsell who is coming with us: a rocking roo, a tall clock and a flatscreen TV. Good Chrissy presents!

Any information required regarding this project (donations and volunteering), ring Helen Simpson 6689-1417 (leave a message and I will get back to you), or email me at: helensim7@gmail.com

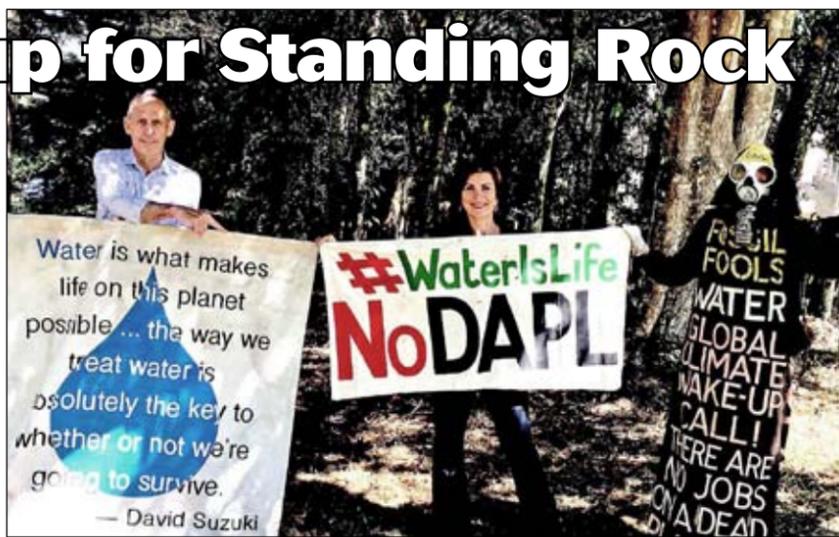
Standing up for Standing Rock

by Benny Zable

After a most successful Byron Stands With Standing Rock benefit event at Broken Head, Nimbin will be doing another on Saturday 19th November at the Nimbin Bush Theatre.

Regardless of who wins the US presidential elections, this campaign is where the real changes are being forged in unity with a Native American uprising. The community at Standing Rock is digging in for the long haul. With a severe winter coming on, there is a need for funds to build sheltering spaces. Also this will be helping an ongoing plan for building an alternative model village, which is the next stage of development at Standing Rock.

This is the way forward I feel for protest/protectors camps to go. From encampments with Indigenous leadership in forming communities towards planning and building the sort of places that care and heals, governance by the community for the Earth. During my short visit to Standing Rock, this was the direction decided on there.



Bob Brown, Dawn Walker and Benny Zable standing with Standing Rock

The same is needed everywhere.

Here in Australia, the government is hell bent on pushing ahead with fossil fuel developments. Coal mine approvals have and are being signed without the proper dialogue with Aboriginal and communities as a whole.

Bob Brown pledged at the Big Scrub Rainforest Day that he will be driving up with a busload of people to stand with the Wangan and Jagalingou

people, the traditional owners of the land in Queensland's Galilee Basin, opposing the coal company Adani who have achieved government approvals to use their ancestral lands for their Carmichael coal mine.

This alone is good reason to attend and donate to Standing Rock. It has become the rallying campaign to stop all abuse to Aboriginal lands all over the world.



by Tori Bail

This year marks the 50th Anniversary of the Pine Gap Military Spy Base, one of the largest and most important US war fighting and intelligence bases in the world. All this and more I was to discover on a recent trip to the 2016 Alice Springs Peace Convergence, 9th September to 3rd October.

Attracting Anti-War and Peace Activists from around Australia, there was a programme of independently organised events drawing attention to Australia's complicity in US lead wars and invasions around the world. Including Art Exhibitions, "Secrets in the Centre" Public Forum, Women for Survival! Revival Camp, Quaker Grannies Peace Breakfast, colourful and creative actions like Lamentations of War – a lantern lit theatre performance and the bike ride from Alice to the Gates of Hell (Pine Gap) as well as the attendance by two Senators Scott Ludlam and Lee Rhiannon at the Independent Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN) National Conference.

At the invitation of traditional custodians the Arrernte people, Healing and Protesters Camps were established. The gleaming white fibreglass domes of Pine Gap occupy their lands, to which they were never consulted, asked or compensated for. Arrernte elder Chris Tomlins states, "As lawful custodians we are responsible for what occurs on our land and the harm Pine Gap brings to the rest of the world. The activity of the facility has implicated us in criminal military actions which threaten the dignity of all people, implicates us in war crimes and generates instability and conflict around the globe as a consequence of US imperialism".

Pine Gap's role has expanded from its original purpose in the 70's to monitor



Peace Pilgrims
Photos: Omega Breakspear

hostile ballistic missile launches and analyse data collected by orbiting CIA satellites to now include interception of mobile phones and satellite communications that supply target data to land and sea-based missile systems and US military armed drones.

PhD candidate Alex Edney-Brown from Melbourne University is examining the psychological and physiological effects of drone warfare for people living under drones and for US Air Force drone operators. As a speaker at the IPAN Conference, she stated that "the Australian public is not told about the alarming rates of civilian casualties from drone strikes and the psychological effects of living under drone surveillance and attack."

"Government and military spokespeople in US and allied countries tell the public that drones are ethical weapons – that drones stop civilians from being killed and limit the destructive effects of war. This is simply not the case. Laser guided drone weapons only land within their target radius 50% of the time. The kill radius of drone strikes can be up to 90 metres."

Australia has no say in the current use of the Pine Gap "Joint Facility" for drone attacks.

The documentary *Drones* offers an interesting perspective on this disturbing weaponry. Screened during the Peace

Convergence, Drones revealed that one officer, Brandon Bryant, a former drone pilot turned vocal critic, was responsible for the death of 1600 people. Wedding parties, innocent people and children were included in the collateral damage.

From the School of Political and Social Studies at Melbourne Uni, Prof. Richard Tanter, also speaking at IPAN Conference, said, "Australia is not a passive bystander. Pine Gap integrates and co-opts Australia into US strategic planning and execution of wars."

Despite the all day lock-on at the premises of Raytheon, a U.S. weapons manufacturing contractor to Pine Gap, which stopped workers getting in, and a roadblock into the base, there was little one could do to actually get arrested. As police dutifully looked on, guided by knowledge that media coverage would follow any arrests, there was little media reporting, or arrests.

Five faith-based activists known as the "Peace Pilgrims" did however break into the boundary of the top secret military base at dawn to sing a mournful lament about the human cost of war. They were arrested. The charges laid against the group were thrown out of court because police failed to gain the consent of the Attorney-General before the prosecution began, as is the requirement in Commonwealth legislation.

Time spent contemplating under desert skies and during the long trip home, I can only hope that during this time, where the fist continues to beget the spear, that we can make some peace. For the benefit of all beings, present and future, we should all be keenly interested in what is happening here on our island home.

For more information, visit the Close Pine Gap Facebook Page. See also: www.ican.org.au www.nautilus.org www.spiritofeureka.org www.anti-bases.org www.ipan.org.au

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Children imagining and defining their response to the word "storm"



Charli creating her image of a pirate ship

Image-making at preschool

If you were able to go along to the recent Spring Arts Exhibition in the Nimbin Hall, then you may have seen the images created by some of the children from Nimbin Preschool.

These images of storms, landscapes and pirate ships were all about children interpreting form and colour through

their own lens.

Image making is powerful because it is about what someone sees. The images children create help to define their place because they are about what children think. When we engage with the intentions of children's thinking through their image-making, then we are able to

see a new idea: a new way of imagining.

All too often our own expectations prevent us from seeing what's there to see. Reminding ourselves that children use image-making to understand things and to form their own level of enquiry, is always a useful strategy to see something new.

Milk marbling and pinecone fairies

by Rachel Whiting,
Nimbin supported playgroup officer

We started our new term recently at Nimbin Playgroup, and have had a lovely time so far, with new faces discovering playgroup, and old faces returning. Everyone seems to have had a nice holiday, enjoying some great adventures with family and friends.

So far we have enjoyed milk marble paper-making with old milk (great use for out-of-date milk, rather than tipping it down the sink) exploring some amazingly beautiful chemical reactions between milk, detergent and food colours.

We have also been making pinecone fairies with mostly natural materials, using feathers, leaves, slices of twigs and other found interesting natural materials as inspiration and intrigue. The fairy house is ready to go up in a nearby tree to welcome local fairies in... some pinecone fairies may be found hanging around!

Keep your eye out over the next couple of months as they begin to appear in the Community Centre grounds near our purple building opposite the skate park.



Feel free to drop in and join us with your under-five child/ren, whether for craft, music, dance, children's yoga, storytime, or just to chat or have a cuppa and take time out from home and make new friends.

All families are welcome – we are a diverse lot! Doors are open Tuesdays and Fridays, 10am-1.30pm, no cost, and a healthy morning tea provided.



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Interschool competition returns to Nimbin Central

After months of planning and preparation, Nimbin Central School played host to an interschool sports competition at the end of Term 3, its first in several years.

Students from Nimbin Central, Woodenbong Central and Bonalbo Central competed in both a boys and mixed teams basketball comp, as well as an open soccer competition, under a clear blue sky and against the backdrop of the Nimbin Rocks.

Woodenbong arrived first and were greeted with huge platters of fresh fruit, courtesy of a friend of the school, before the competitions got underway.

It soon became obvious that Nimbin were outskilling their opposition in the soccer, and the score quickly rose, with Nimbin winning 6 to 1.

Without a break, the team had to immediately back it up against Bonalbo. Nimbin dug



deep to take the game 4-0.

In the meantime, the basketballers had a fight on their hands, up against firstly Bonalbo and then Woodenbong. Nimbin were winning in the boys competition, but went down by 6 in the mixed teams.

The game was cut short as Bonalbo had to leave to return to school. This was understandable as the trip is an hour and a half each way.

The games against Woodenbong were also hard



fought. The mixed team won 11-4, while the height and speed of the Woodenbong boys proved to be too much for the Nimbin team. The final score was 34-18, but it was a fantastic game and the energy in the hall was electrifying.

The day proved to be a treat for the players, as well as the rest of the school who came to spectate.

Teacher Mark Everingham, who co-ordinated the day, said, "It has inspired so many

other students to now want to be part of interschool competition and to get involved in a variety of sports opportunities during the break times.

"Hopefully next year we will be participating in a range of sports knockout competitions both in the Central Schools Division as well as the Combined High Schools competition."

Enrolment enquiries for 2017 can be made to the school on 6689-1355.



State Athletics Championships success

Congratulations go to Cooper Levy and Hunter Roadley of Coffee Camp Public School for their monumental efforts during the State Athletics in Sydney in October.

These two budding athletes both turned in personal best performances to achieve some inspiring results. Hunter competed in the para-athlete category for the 100 metres, 200 metres, 800 metres, long jump, shot put and discus, and fought off exhaustion to gain a place in the finals for all events.

Cooper cleared his greatest bar-height yet of 1.35 metres to finish a meritorious 8th from a field of 38; the eventual second-place getter is an athlete who Cooper had previously overhauled. It is only the top athletes in NSW that gain entry to the

Sydney Championships with, historically, only a smattering of Coffee Camp students achieving this honour.

These recent results bode well for the sporting futures of Cooper and Hunter and we are all immensely proud of them!

Kinder Orientation and enrolments

Students who will be enrolling in kinder in 2017 are currently enjoying Fridays at Coffee Camp as they familiarise themselves with the school environment before starting school next year.

Coffee Camp School has vacancies in years K-4 for 2017. If you would like more information about kinder orientation or enrolments for 2017, please contact the school on 6689-9259.

Glorious fete at Tuntable

by Louise Mehta

We had a gorgeous fete in late October at Tuntable Falls School. As a parent, I was so proud of the happy kids, smiling grandparents, groovy music and gorgeous setting. The families and staff all contributed to make the fete run smoothly.

It's second nature to treat the school as our extended home. Kids were proudly showing grandparents the vegetable gardens. Parents made pakoras, pizzas, baklava, biscuits, bliss balls, cakes and coffee (thanks to Gerard's donation of locally roasted Caffiend beans and Nimbin Dairy's donation of milk). An abundance of salad from our veggie garden completed the feast.

The kids had their lavender eye pillows, jars of scented bath salts and potted-up plants for sale. You should have seen the racks and racks of beautiful second-hand clothes and shoes donated by our families! Plus boxes of excellent books, coffee table magazines, quality toys and puzzles. It was heart-warming to be among such generous spirited folk... not just generous with things, but also their time and love for our school.

Biskit & Doug performed, which was very cool, and then Elvis' amazing gypsy band Out Of Range. Our gardening teacher, Nicola, has got our veggie garden so beautiful it is worthy of photos in Country Style Magazine! Our famous



Some of the kindy kids

waterslide was its usual wild self – the older kids flying down supervised by parents.

My daughter, Molly, is in kindy here. The tuition is free for kindies, only having to pay for extras like circus, music and excursions. Classes are held Mondays to Thursdays, 9am-3pm.

Molly likes school so much that even when I offer her a day off, she would prefer to be there! I can't remember liking school that much!

The kindy teacher, Deborah has been trained in Steiner and Montessori, which are opposite each other in terms of philosophy, but allows Deborah to draw from both schools of thought and tailor her teaching with a wider perspective. And she has many years of experience

in the role. All the kids adore her... she is playful, entertaining and warm, but firm, fair and dedicated.

Currently there are 10 kindy kids here. At break times it is so beautiful to see all the classes mixing together freely and easily, and looking after each other. You don't have to live on Tuntable Community to come to the school here.

If there are any kindy age kids out there thinking of joining us in January 2017, we have two taster days on 17th and 24th November, from 12 to 2pm. Come have lunch with us and a play... see what you think. Bring your Mum or Dad.

If it is hot, we'll probably end up playing in the creek next to the school... bliss!

Schooling at home?

by Susan de Wall

I was part of a conversation recently where a parent had been asked: "How can a parent at home possibly offer the same thing a school offers?" The short answer is that they can't but also that they mostly don't want to.

- Parents choose home education for a variety of reasons, but some of the most common are:
- to better meet educational, developmental or special needs of the child;
 - to provide education that matches the values of the family, e.g. less competitive, more social;
 - to resolve issues such as bullying, peer pressure or low self-esteem;
 - to take on the responsibility of education for their children rather than delegating to others;
 - to promote a richer family life;
 - to achieve a particular lifestyle, e.g. extensive travel;
 - to provide a 'bespoke' education; and
 - a perfect fit to their child's abilities, needs and interests.

In our case, our oldest child was so unhappy with school he became completely disengaged. Some children internalise stress but act it out in other ways – withdrawal, illness, unusual behaviour – we were seeing every shirt collar shredded by our boy's teeth during school hours.

So we make our decision and we bring our children home. Many of us try out homeschooling for a term or two. Some may eventually return to school but not many. At first, because most of us were educated in school, we tend to think that learning needs to look like school, that we need to teach our children and that we need to know more than they do to make it happen. It is a very common misconception. It turns out that school-based education is only one way – there are many alternatives.

As we gain experience, home educating parents come to recognise the learning in the everyday, in every moment. Children will take charge of their own learning if given



the freedom and the space – it's impossible to stop them. The major light-bulb moment for us was when we brought home a new poster – a map of the world. Suddenly we found ourselves learning geography in an impromptu activity that lasted hours. We googled some of the places we could see to find out more about them and we compared the poster to an atlas. We observed sizes of countries and their populations, leading to a discussion about population density. We eventually led a tired small person to bed, having exhausted all his questions.

At home, our now high school-aged child is thriving and creating his own educational plans to suit his areas of interest. We can give him the time and space to exhaust his current passion before moving on to something else. He is getting a much wider yet more individual education than is possible within the constraints of a classroom environment. He spends hours collaborating with fellow home educated students on educational projects and fun learning experiences. And yes, we have our tough days and our challenges – we learn from them and move on. Do we offer the same thing as a school? Not at all. We don't even try. We are in the ideal position to offer exactly what is needed for this unique individual.

Home education is on the increase in Australia and worldwide as people recognise the need to nurture a lifelong love of learning. Many universities welcome children from the home education environment, acknowledging the benefits of this learning style.

If you'd like to know more, or would like to join our meet-ups, please contact me at: rainbowregionhomeschoolers@gmail.com

Nature pedagogy at Cawongla

by Leanne Logan

November – the start of the storm season. I know this, like I know that pecans drop in autumn and snakes come out in spring. It's a knowing that comes from experience.

At Cawongla Playhouse, we turn more and more to the outside for our experiences and learning. Is this because we have immersed ourselves in nature pedagogy training for the last two years? Or because our embedded knowledge tells us that the outside world – and what is beyond our own preschool gate – is the basis of all learning? Has nature pedagogy simply reinforced, further inspired and given us a vehicle to drive the road we already knew?

Having recently completed the third component of the nature pedagogy course founded by Claire Warden, I am excited. "Depression or activism," big-time environmentalist Bob Brown recently told the 5000-strong audience at the Big Scrub Rainforest Day at Rocky Creek Dam. For me it's activism – and nature



Five-year-old Myrtle's visual interpretation of the dead bandicoot

pedagogy will be one of my banners.

Watching preschool children authentically engage with a dead bandicoot last week confirmed that our next generation needs nature – be it alive or dead, beautiful or ugly – for their learning. And it doesn't have to be as exotic as a dead bandicoot – sticks, rocks, earth, water, wind, fire... the possibilities are all around us and offer enormous opportunities.

As we sat around the roadkill bandicoot, some children declined the offered

gloves. "I want to feel its fur," Myrtle said. "I can't do that with gloves on." Children who initially put gloves on, peeled them off when their second chance came to touch the dead animal.

Learning. Knowing. It comes from opportunities to discover, from moments of awe. We're so lucky at Cawongla Playhouse – to have a loved place where we can immerse ourselves in deep learning on many subjects and levels. We are grateful and we welcome you to join us. Phone 6633-7167.