

# Aquarius Rising

## Terania Creek and the Australian Forest Protest Movement

Vanessa Bible

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## Contents

Disclaimer	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Preface	v
Introduction	1
Chapter One – ‘You Say You Want a Revolution’	7
Chapter Two – The Power of the Collective	26
Chapter Three – The Spirit of Terania Lives On	46
Conclusion	59
Bibliography	61

I certify that to the best of my knowledge I have acknowledged any help I received in writing this thesis, and all sources used.

I certify that the contents of this thesis have not already been submitted for any degree and are not currently submitted for any other degree.

Vanessa Bible

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*The Northern Rivers region of NSW was once known only as Bundjalung Country. At its geographical and spiritual heart was Wollumbin, or 'Cloud Catcher', a long extinct volcano that erupted over twenty five million years ago, leaving a caldera of rich volcanic soil that nurtured the ancient Gondwana rainforest remnants that once covered the Australian continent. The Widjambul people of the Bundjalung nation resided in these rainforests. The trees provided food and medicine and supported the recreational, ceremonial and spiritual culture of the Widjambul people.<sup>1</sup> The land was imbued with Dreamtime stories, and every rock, tree, mountain and waterway had its place within Aboriginal culture. One of these waterways was a creek that flowed down from the southern edge of the rim left by the once enormous shield volcano. Its name was Terania, meaning 'place of frogs'.<sup>2</sup>*

*After tens of thousands of years, these sacred sites were given new names, new understandings and new values by white settlement. Wollumbin became known as Mount Warning, and the rainforest became known as 'The Big Scrub'. The forest remained undisturbed for a considerable time after colonisation. The Gondwana rainforest supported valuable timber varieties such as Cedar, Beech, Brushbox, Rosewood, Teak and Coachwood. Settlers believed it to be impenetrable, but in 1842 the first cedar cutters arrived.<sup>3</sup> The clearing of the Big Scrub was intended to both strip the forest of valuable timber, especially Red Cedar, while clearing the land for agricultural use, particularly dairy farms. By the turn of the century most of the rainforest was cleared.<sup>4</sup>*

*The clearing of the Big Scrub continued unchallenged until a third demographic shift brought with it a third era of human understanding and shaping of the forest. In 1974 a new settler to the area learned of the NSW Forestry Commission's plans to clearfell and burn the Terania Creek basin, one of the last remaining tracts of the once magnificent rainforest. The forest had attracted many new people who felt drawn to the ancient ecosystem at a time when humanity started to learn the importance and significance of preserving such environmental wonders. Supported by large numbers of new inhabitants determined to fight for this rare ecosystem, what followed was a five year campaign that culminated in 1979 in the world's first successful direct action anti-logging protest. Terania Creek has since echoed around the country and the world, greatly changing the nature of environmental campaigning and empowering people to challenge the destruction of forests on a global scale.*

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<sup>1</sup> National Parks and Wildlife Service, 'Nightcap National Park'.  
<[www.environment.nsw.gov.au/NationalParks/parkHeritage.aspx?id=N0062](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/NationalParks/parkHeritage.aspx?id=N0062)>, accessed 31 July 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Nigel Turvey, *Terania Creek: Rainforest Wars*, Brisbane, 2006, p. 169.

<sup>3</sup> Lyn C. Furnell, *Out of the Big Scrub: Bangalow*, Casino, 1981, p. 15; Norman C. Keats, *Wollumbin: The Creation and Early Habitation of the Tweed Brunswick and Richmond Rivers of NSW*, Point Clare, 1988, p. xx.

<sup>4</sup> Big Scrub Environment Centre, 'The Original Big Scrub Forest'.  
<[www.bigscrub.org.au](http://www.bigscrub.org.au)>, accessed 26<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

## Introduction

Terania Creek was a momentous, unprecedented and highly influential protest of great importance and significance to the world, yet to date this has been little recognised.

Discussions of the Australian environment movement never fail to bring up familiar names and events – Lake Pedder, the Franklin, the Daintree, the Green Bans – yet in the vast majority of these discussions, Terania Creek is either completely omitted or at best briefly referred to as our first successful attempt to use direct action to halt environmental destruction and left at that. Terania Creek is the unrecognised hero not only of the Australian environment movement, but of the global movement. Never before had people taken the philosophy of grassroots action so literally. The protest pioneers of Terania Creek were not familiar with the now common images of a forest blockade such as tree-sitting and bulldozer obstruction – rather, they are techniques of their own creation. With no idea as to how it would unfold, the Terania Native Forest Action Group (TNFAG) was formed in 1974 and for five years challenged the NSW Forestry Commission's plans for Terania Creek in any conceivable way they could. Five years of campaigning, lobbying and appealing to the NSW State Labor government led by Neville Wran failed to save the forest, and logging was approved to commence in August of 1979. Hundreds of protesters converged on the property at the end of Terania Creek Road with the intention of demonstrating their opposition to the logging. With no set plan in mind, what unfolded was a natural and spontaneous response – a direct action blockade of the rainforest that the protesters had sought so fiercely to protect.

Direct action was no new theme and it was common knowledge for many protesters: what *was* new was the use of direct action in a forest setting. A very significant factor of the Terania Creek protest was that it occurred 'within walking distance of the largest alternative community in Australia'.<sup>5</sup> The Aquarius Festival of 1973 took place in Nimbin, and many people who came to the counterculture festival stayed on afterwards, boosting the already growing

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<sup>5</sup> Ian Cohen, *Green Fire*, Sydney, 1996, p. 42.

numbers of new settlers seeking solace in the green hills of the Northern Rivers. The number of intentional communities (or 'communes') in the region dramatically rose, and the widespread social change and growing awareness of environmental issues that was borne of the 1960s spirit became a part of the culture of the 'Rainbow Region' itself, as the area became known.

While this thesis will argue that Terania Creek marked the start of a highly innovative and influential Australian forest protest movement, it must be acknowledged that the protest occurred in the shadow of the 1960s and certainly owes much to this fact. Terania was carried by alternative settlers influenced by the new ideas that a revolutionary era brought with it. Protest techniques such as sit-ins and moratoriums were adopted primarily from Britain and the United States, both of which exerted a strong influence on Australian protest movements including the environment movement.<sup>6</sup> However this thesis will dispute the claim that Australian protest culture is merely an international import – in fact, the Australian forest protest movement is quite the opposite. From 1979 onwards innovative Australian techniques spread from Terania Creek, around Australia and across the oceans. Terania Creek and the culture of northern NSW has had a tremendous and unacknowledged impact on the history of our environment movement and has helped to create and shape an anti-logging movement that has resonated around the Earth. The forest protest movement deserves to be reclaimed as our own, original, innovative creation and export. While there have certainly been other Australian groups, individuals, and larger organisations that have made significant contributions to forest protest, this thesis will focus on Terania Creek as the most significant - yet relative to this significance, unacknowledged – agent of what would become a global shift in environmental thinking.

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<sup>6</sup> Many have argued this, including Sean Scalmer, *Dissent Events*, Sydney, 2002; Margaret Munro-Clark, *Communes in Rural Australia: The Movement Since 1970*, Marrickville, 1986; Richard Gordon & Warren Osmond, 'An Overview of the Australian New Left' in Gordon (ed.), *The Australian New Left*, Melbourne, 1970, pp. 3-39; Stephen Alomes, *A Nation At Last?: The Changing Character of Australian Nationalism*; North Ryde, 1988, p. 193; Donald Horne, *Time of Hope: Australia, 1966-72*. Sydney, 1980, p. 52; Robin Gerster & Jan Bassett, *Seizures of Youth: The Sixties and Australia*, South Yarra, 1991.

Sean Scalmer's *Dissent Events* analyses the Australian protest movement and argues that our movement is based on the interpretation and extension of the imported concept of the 'political gimmick'. He concludes that Australians have appropriated protest techniques to suit our own movement and imbued these techniques with our own culture. It may well be that every aspect of the Australian protest movement that Scalmer *has* looked at supports this theory, but what he doesn't look at cannot be assumed to reach the same conclusion. Absent from *Dissent Events* is any mention of Australia's anti-logging movement. Contrary to his theory of importation, Australian forest protest is, in fact, an export - Scalmer does not consider the reverse process. This is not so much a weakness as an opening for further research, and it is important to point out that Scalmer does acknowledge that his work is an incomplete history.<sup>7</sup> There are several other works that will be looked at that discuss the influence of the United States and Britain on Australian protest culture from the scornful to the reflective, including articles contemporaneous to the 1960s, and yet all fail to mention the forest protest movement. This can of course be expected from the sources which predate 1979 but any claims of unoriginality published after this time will be challenged by this thesis.

A surprising number of sources acknowledge that Terania Creek was the first, unprecedented display of successful direct action in the forests – including general discussions of the environment movement, travel guides, and newspapers - but this acknowledgement is almost always reduced to a fleeting comment and its significance never expanded upon. For example, in looking at the campaign to save the Franklin River, Greg Buckman comments; 'Major direct action protests at the time were rare, and had only been conspicuously used in Australia once before, in 1979 as part of the ultimately successful fight to save the Terania Creek Rainforests in New South Wales'.<sup>8</sup> Nigel Turvey's *Terania Creek: Rainforest Wars* offers the most comprehensive discussion of Terania Creek to date, but focuses on the conflict generated between loggers and protesters. Turvey briefly acknowledges however, that the

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<sup>7</sup> Scalmer, *Dissent Events*, p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Greg Buckman, *Tasmania's Wilderness Battles: A History*, Crow's Nest, 2008, p. 51.



Teranians were “unknowingly forging a new model of environmental activism in Australia”.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Ian Watson’s *Fighting Over the Forests* discusses Terania Creek but focuses on the conflict of interests between timber workers and conservationists.<sup>10</sup>

The single most valuable source of published information that supports this thesis is the work of Green MLC Ian Cohen. *Green Fire* offers more analysis of the unprecedented nature of Terania Creek than any other source. Cohen acknowledges; ‘Unwittingly, Australian environmentalists have pioneered, mythologised and impassioned certain attitudes, approaches and ideas which have echoed around the world, giving others the models and metaphors that they craved.’<sup>11</sup> *Green Fire* does not look specifically at the originality of the movement; rather it traces Cohen’s journey as an environmental activist, offering an insider’s perspective. However it is clear that Cohen has no doubt as to the significance and impact of our uniquely Australian environment movement, just as many participants of the many anti-logging protests of Northern NSW have no doubt in their minds as to the importance of their actions. A trip to Terania Creek today reveals that locals certainly haven’t forgotten - in fact the watershed action has become a part of the local culture, and a waterfall on Terania Creek itself has since been named Protestor’s Falls.

The best sources of information come directly from the ‘Rainbow Region’ itself, allowing access to a wealth of knowledge and memory that remains nearly completely unacknowledged by academic discourse. Locals are proud of the history of the area and there are many groups and organisations that have been working to preserve the unique history and culture of ‘Aquarius’. The Lismore campus of Southern Cross University, in the heart of the Rainbow Region, currently holds an as-yet uncatalogued archive known as the Aquarius Archives. The archives contain a vast amount of old records from the North East Forest Alliance (NEFA), a highly successful group that grew from the success of Terania Creek. Also included are media releases, a vast array of local alternative media from Nimbin concerning Terania Creek and NEFA actions, original artwork by world-renowned theatrical protester Benny Zable and an

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<sup>9</sup> Turvey, *Terania Creek: Rainforest Wars*, p. 37.

<sup>10</sup> Ian Watson, *Fighting over the Forests*, Sydney, 1990.

<sup>11</sup> Cohen, *Green Fire*, p. 27.

immense quantity of original, primary documents direct from the local culture of the 1970s and onwards. More broadly, the State Library of NSW contains a similar archive known as the Rainbow Archives, although the Aquarius Archives are much more area-specific for the purposes of this thesis. Other invaluable primary documents include short films about the Terania Creek protest as well as NEFA protest, literally demonstrating the very techniques and processes that will be discussed.

Many of the people who participated in these protests still remain in the area and have been willing to share their experiences and insight, so while this thesis will remain primarily document based, oral history interviews have provided an excellent opportunity to support and elaborate on several of the key issues surrounding the Terania Creek protest. Similarly, while there has been little written about Terania, what does exist often comes from the Rainbow Region itself and when reading such sources it becomes evident just how much a part of the local culture Terania Creek has become. For example *Belonging in the Rainbow Region*, edited by Helen Wilson<sup>12</sup>, is a collection of chapters written by locals on their experience of belonging in the Northern Rivers. While only one article focuses on Terania, seven of the fifteen chapters make reference to the watershed event.<sup>13</sup>

The thesis is divided into three chapters, each looking at before, during and after Terania respectively. Chapter One will outline the conditions from which Terania grew, including the context of the 1960s, the significance of the Rainbow Region and the emerging Australian environment movement. Chapter Two will trace the events surrounding the protest as they unfolded, explaining how new and innovative ideas, theories and techniques were

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<sup>12</sup> Helen Wilson (ed.), *Belonging in the Rainbow Region: Cultural Perspectives on the NSW North Coast*, Lismore, 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Gerard Goggin, 'Digital Rainbows: Inventing the Internet in the Northern Rivers' in *Belonging in the Rainbow Region* ed. Wilson, pp. 227-246; Michael Hannan, 'From Blockades to Blue Moon: Musical Cultures of Nimbin' in *Belonging in the Rainbow Region*, ed. Wilson, pp. 247-262; Cathy Henkel, 'Emerging Screen Industries in the Northern Rivers Region: A Documentary Film-maker's Perspective' in *Belonging in the Rainbow Region*, ed. Wilson, pp. 207-220; Graham Irvine, 'Creating Communities at the End of the Rainbow' in *Belonging in the Rainbow Region*, ed. Wilson, pp. 63-82; Russel Kelly, 'The Mediated Forest: Who Speaks for the Trees?' in *Belonging in the Rainbow Region*, ed. Wilson, pp. 101-120; Fiona Martin & Rhonda Ellis, 'Dropping In, Not Dropping Out: Evolution of the Alternative Media in the Rainbow Region 1970-2002' in *Belonging in The Rainbow Region*, ed. Wilson, pp. 179-205; Aidan Ricketts, 'Om Gaia Dudes: The North East Forest Alliance's Old Growth Forest Campaign' in *Belonging in the Rainbow Region*, ed. Wilson, pp. 121-148.

developed and successfully employed, while Chapter Three will assess the influence and dissemination of Terania Creek on a personal, national and international scale.

Tim Doyle, in his work *Green Power: The Environment Movement in Australia*, asserts that 'the environment movement in Australia remains the most powerful dissenting social movement in our society'.<sup>14</sup> The Australian environment movement is often given such credit, yet without the inclusion of Terania Creek and the innovations that would follow the history of this 'powerful dissenting social movement' is incomplete. This thesis aims to reclaim an important and inspiring part of our history that deserves to be remembered with at least the same prestige as the world famous Franklin River campaign, and to demonstrate that were it not for Terania there would be far fewer forests than the precious little we currently have left. While the protesters who saved a small patch of rainforest in August 1979 were overjoyed by a seemingly small victory on a global scale, their actions had far wider consequences and brought much more success than they could ever have anticipated.

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<sup>14</sup> Tim Doyle, *Green Power: The Environment Movement in Australia*, Sydney, 2000, p. xvii.

## Chapter One - 'You Say You Want a Revolution'

*The counter cultures are, in fact, a crucial part of conventional society: and eventually they will be judged on how successfully they transform it.*

Craig McGregor, 1975.<sup>15</sup>

The Terania Creek protest was a spontaneous, innovative and unprecedented event. While Terania was spontaneous, it did not spring from obscurity - there are two very important elements underlying its occurrence. Firstly, Terania Creek is situated in the Rainbow Region, which in 1979 boasted a concentrated population of alternative lifestylers influenced by the environmental concerns, protest culture and counterculture of the 1960s. While the 1960s in Australia was very much a part of an international revolutionary spirit, the emerging environment movement which exploded in 1979 was borne of a unique Australian context –this is the second critical aspect of Terania. The Australian environment movement is an organic and innovative movement that is unique to our own history and culture. It is a response to the rapid and widespread destruction of a continent that is paradoxically the oldest continent on earth, yet the most recently 'civilised' by Western standards – or rather, the most recently devastated by industrial development. The result of this paradox is that there remains in this country isolated pockets of an ancient environment that is rapidly disappearing, and Terania Creek was one of these remnants.

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<sup>15</sup> Craig McGregor, 'What Counter Culture?' in *The Way Out: Radical Alternatives in Australia*, eds. Margaret Smith & David Crossley, Melbourne, 1975, p. 17.

Terania cannot be looked at in isolation from the wider context of the 60s. Protest, counterculture and environmentalism, some of the strongest characteristic elements of the 60s era, were also strongly characteristic of the events at Terania Creek in August of 1979. Although the protest occurred outside the boundary of the 60s, its key elements – the concept of protest as an effective political tool; countercultural values and environmental concern each owe much to their development and influence during the 60s era.

The 1960s marked the ‘dawning of the Age of Aquarius’, as described by the music of the era.<sup>16</sup> Empowering individuals to challenge the status quo, protest exploded across Australia, the United States, Britain and wider Europe in the 1960s over all manner of injustices including civil rights, war, racism and sexism as part of a worldwide transformation of thought on such issues.<sup>17</sup> The Vietnam War in particular was one of the most important issues of the 60s and millions took to the streets in protest, and the anti-war protests ‘became a symbol of dissent’.<sup>18</sup> Protest became a way of life for many students, and by 1969-70, three quarters of a million American students identified with the philosophy of ‘New Left’ politics.<sup>19</sup>

American 60s culture, as with British culture, was a strong source of inspiration for the Australian movement – so much so that Australia has been accused of merely replicating international models of protest. It has been argued that it wasn’t until the late 60s and early 70s that the ‘radicalisation’ of society would reach our shores,<sup>20</sup> and when it did, it was largely

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<sup>16</sup> The 5<sup>th</sup> Dimension, ‘Aquarius/Let the Sunshine In’, *The Age of Aquarius* (sound recording), 1969.

<sup>17</sup> Gerster & Bassett, *Seizures of Youth*; Verity Burgmann, *Power and Protest: Movements for Change in Australian Society*, St Leonards, 1993; Daniel Snowman & Malcolm Bradley, ‘The Sixties and Seventies’, *Introduction to American Studies*, eds. Malcolm Bradley & Howard Temperley, New York, 1989, pp. 267-295; Paul Monk ‘The Sixties: Remembrance of Things Past’. *Quadrant*, May 1998, p. 31.

<sup>18</sup> Gerster & Bassett, *Seizures of Youth*, p. 34.

<sup>19</sup> Maurice Isserman & Michael Kazin, ‘The Failure and Success of the New Radicalism’, *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980*, eds. Steve Fraser & Gary Gerstle, Chichester, 1989, p. 213.

<sup>20</sup> Burgmann, *Power and Protest*, pp. 189-190.

in the shadow of American student political action.<sup>21</sup> Australian students looked to Britain and particularly the United States for inspiration as they attempted to replicate protest culture. Initially, what they replicated was not only the culture of protest but the causes themselves. Scalmer demonstrates that Australian student causes were characteristically international in focus.<sup>22</sup> While draft card burning was a direct import that held significance for anti-war activists in Australia, students also protested in solidarity with the US Civil Rights Movement and against South African Apartheid before the establishment of Student Action For Aborigines (SAFA) at Sydney University and the Freedom Ride of 1965. Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) led the way for student activism in America,<sup>23</sup> and so Australian students 'faithfully followed its American brother' and looked to the SDS for inspiration.<sup>24</sup> 'Radical critiques of US origin', as well as techniques such as sit-ins, talk-ins and moratoriums were imported.<sup>25</sup> Horne notes that:

(I)n the twelve months from March 1965 to March 1966 there were eighty or so reported demonstrations, vigils, strikes, folk concerts, marches, sit-downs or teach-ins, almost all based on forms of protest developed in the United States.<sup>26</sup>

Gerster and Bassett have argued that 'even the Australian anti-war movement, so rhetorically antagonistic to Uncle Sam, derived much of its impetus from its American counterpart, and aped many of its forms of protest.'<sup>27</sup> Our very involvement in Vietnam was dependent on our alliance with America. Gerster and Bassett also claim that US 'cultural imperialism' had such a strong hold in Australia that when US President Lyndon Johnson visited Australia in 1966 he was 'virtually a de-facto leader'.<sup>28</sup> Australian protest culture was yet to earn its independence from its parent cultures.

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<sup>21</sup> Scalmer, *Dissent Events*, p. 14; Munro-Clark, *Communes in Rural Australia*; Gordon & Osmond, 'An Overview of the Australian New Left'.

<sup>22</sup> Scalmer, *Dissent Events*, p. 13.

<sup>23</sup> See for example The Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society, 1962, online at <<http://coursesa.matrix.msu.edu/~hst306/documents/huron.html>>, accessed 20 May 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Peter O'Brien, 'Some Overseas Comparisons', in Gordon (ed.), *The Australian New Left*, p. 227.

<sup>25</sup> Alomes, *A Nation At Last?*, p. 193.

<sup>26</sup> Horne, *Time of Hope*, p. 52.

<sup>27</sup> Gerster & Bassett, *Seizures of Youth*, p. 34.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

While there had been a growing conservation movement in progress around the world since the 1950s, conservation had focused more on preserving both the planet's economic resources and our anthropocentric right to enjoy recreational areas. In the 1960s the focus shifted from conservation to ecology as people became aware of waste and pollution and discovered new kinds of environmental issues, 'in our earth, in our skies, in our waters, in our homes', and... in Vietnam.<sup>29</sup> Paul Joseph helped organise the Aquarius Festival in 1973 and was a central figure within the Terania campaign, and like many others found himself deeply moved by the Vietnam War moratoriums.<sup>30</sup> While the Civil Rights movement could be said to be the start of the 'radicalisation' of American society, the Vietnam War was a major catalyst for dissent in Australia,<sup>31</sup> and it was the war that for many created an awareness of environmental destruction.<sup>32</sup>

In the wake of the post-war explosion of affluence and industry, the ecology movement also found its roots in the United States and Europe. Several highly influential works had an impact on environmental consciousness in a manner never before witnessed, including Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962)<sup>33</sup>, Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* (1968)<sup>34</sup>, Barry Commoner's *The Closing Circle* (1971)<sup>35</sup> and the Club of Rome's *Limits to Growth* (1972).<sup>36</sup> The influence of these seminal American texts can be seen across the world and more specifically within the idealism of the Terania Creek protesters themselves. Terania Creek participant Rhonda Ellis had like many others moved to Mullumbimby from Sydney during the growing 'back to the land' movement as a conscious choice to leave the city for a rural existence. Ellis had read *Silent Spring* and assumes many others who were fleeing the city were also familiar

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<sup>29</sup> A. Jamison, *The Making of Green Knowledge: Environmental Politics and Cultural Transformation*, Cambridge, 2001, p.82; p.2.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Paul Joseph, Lismore, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>31</sup> O'Brien, 'Some Overseas Comparisons', p. 229.

<sup>32</sup> Drew Hutton, 'What is Green Politics?' in *Green Politics in Australia*, ed. Drew Hutton, North Ryde, 1987, p. 1; Fred Cole, 'The Moratorium as the Catalyst of World Wide Cultural Change' in *The Way Out: Radical Alternatives in Australia*, eds. Margaret Smith & David Crossley, Melbourne, 1975, pp. 130-133; Ken McLeod, 'The Anti-War Movement and Radical Political Alternatives' in *The Way Out*, eds. Smith & Crossley, pp. 137-143.

<sup>33</sup> Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*, Boston, 1987 [1962].

<sup>34</sup> Paul Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb*, New York, 1971 [1968].

<sup>35</sup> Barry Commoner, *The Closing Circle: Nature, Man and Technology*, New York, 1971.

<sup>36</sup> Donella H. Meadows et. al., *The Limits to Growth: A Report for The Club of Rome's Project on The Predicament of Mankind*, London, 1972.

with Rachel Carson's work.<sup>37</sup> Nan Nicholson moved to the end of Terania Creek Road, the last property before the rainforest, with her partner Hugh and their two children. With an interest in environmentalism, they had come from Melbourne to Terania Creek to 'live it, rather than talk it'. Paul Ehrlich, who had visited Australia in 1971 and appeared on national television, was Nan Nicholson's 'hero'.<sup>38</sup> In 1972, Dudley Leggett and his wife Carol had bought a property on Terania Creek Road in the hopes of establishing an Intentional Community (or 'commune') to seek an alternative and sustainable lifestyle. It led to the foundation of one of the earliest Intentional Communities the area would become famous for - Dharmananda, a Community that still exists to this day.<sup>39</sup> Again evident of the influence of American sixties culture, Leggett had previously spent time in California with people that described themselves as belonging to the 'flower power' culture.<sup>40</sup>

The counterculture in Australia was also initially heavily influenced by the all-pervading international scene. The French slogan of the 1960s, 'L'Imagination au pouvoir' ('all power to the imagination') encapsulated a sentiment that could be found across the world.<sup>41</sup> Dennis Altman has equated the American rock musical *Hair's* Australian debut in 1969 as the epitome of 60s counterculture itself, condensed in one show and unleashed upon Australia.<sup>42</sup> Intentional communities, a very significant element in the alternative scene of the Rainbow Region, were frequently based on 'cultural radicalism' and environmentalism and had become an established social movement in North America and Europe before they grew to such proportions here.<sup>43</sup> Johnny Allen, co-organiser of the 1973 Aquarius Festival, described the early counterculture ideals as an 'American pipe dream'.<sup>44</sup> However, he continues:

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<sup>37</sup> Interview with Rhonda Ellis, Lismore, 13 April 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Nan Nicholson, Terania Creek, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Dudley Leggett, Suffolk Park, 6 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>40</sup> Dudley Leggett, 'Building Communities: The Green Alternative' in *Green Politics in Australia*, ed. D. Hutton, Sydney, 1987, p. 221.

<sup>41</sup> Monk 'The Sixties: Remembrance of Things Past', p. 31.

<sup>42</sup> Dennis Altman, 'Inside the tent' in *Griffith Review*, 'Still the Lucky Country?' no. 28, 2010.

<sup>43</sup> Munro-Clarke, *Communes in Rural Australia*, p. 53; David Pepper et. al, *The Roots of Modern Environmentalism*, London, 1984, p. 18.

<sup>44</sup> Johnny Allen, 'Nimbin: Myths, Dreams and Mysteries' in *The Way Out: Radical Alternatives in Australia*, eds. Smith & Crossley, p. 28.



There had been stirrings of fantasy, inside all of us and inside the common consciousness, but we had been too timid to unleash them upon ourselves and upon each other. But the last few years has changed all that – Nimbin, Whitlam, Gair and the Great Irish Prawn Conspiracy, Double Dissolutions – this is the stuff that fantasy is made of.<sup>45</sup>

While the counterculture was undoubtedly an international import, the Nimbin Aquarius Festival of May, 1973, as Allen tells us above, ‘changed all that’.

The remnant edges of the Wollumbin caldera encompass an area from Byron Bay in the east, to Blue Knob, west of the Nimbin valley, north to the Border Ranges, and south to the Nightcap range, from which Terania Creek flows.<sup>46</sup> It is roughly within and upon these mountainous remnants that the largest concentration of Australian counterculture established itself. After the clearing of the Big Scrub the dairy, cattle and banana industries of the fertile hinterlands enjoyed a successful few decades, but by the late 60s, the dairy industry was in serious decline, farmers were selling degraded farms at very low prices and farming villages were dying.<sup>47</sup> The result was a region of green hills, pockets of rainforest, idyllic climate, coastal beaches and very cheap land. Coinciding with the back to the land movement, the area became a haven for alternative settlers and at its centre, a near-abandoned dairy village named Nimbin was to become the very centre of Australian counterculture.

The biennial Aquarius Festival was promoted and staged by the Australian Union of Students (AUS, now National Union of Students, or NUS). It was usually held on city campuses – the previous Festival in 1971 had been held in Canberra at the Australian National University, but in 1973 the AUS were inspired by the ‘back to the land’ concept and decided to find a rural location to promote these ideals.<sup>48</sup> The momentous result of this decision was the creation of

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> National Parks and Wildlife Service, *Mount Warning National Park: Plan of Management*, Sydney, 1985, pp. 14-15.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Paul Joseph, Lismore, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author; M. Ryan, *The Days and Ways of Old Time Nimbin*, Nimbin Chamber of Commerce, 1999, cited in Michael Hannan, ‘Making Music in the Village of Nimbin’, *Transformations*, no. 2, March 2002, online journal < <http://www.cqu.edu.au/transformations>>, accessed 26 April 2010.

<sup>48</sup> ‘The May Manifesto’ in *The Way Out*, eds. Smith & Crossley, p. 20; Interview with Paul Joseph, Lismore, 7 March 2010.

the Rainbow Region. The Nimbin Aquarius Foundation website, established to commemorate the Aquarius Festival, states:

It is hard to think of anywhere in the world like Nimbin and the Rainbow Region in terms of an aggregated self-consciously counter-cultural demographic concentrated in such numbers in a rural setting. Perhaps more than any other nation's young people, the "alternative society" in the Rainbow Region was, proportionally the biggest, most influential and successful counter-cultural sub-society on the planet.<sup>49</sup>

The ten-day festival became the expression of the Australian counterculture - co-organiser Graeme Dunstan envisioned the Aquarius Festival as 'a total counter cultural happening'.<sup>50</sup> The town of Nimbin had been bought, literally, for the festival, after Colin James, an architecture lecturer from Sydney University suggested that the AUS 'recycle a town'.<sup>51</sup> The Nimbin Progress Association was only too happy to have the festival held in their struggling village in the hope that it would revitalise their home.<sup>52</sup> The Aquarius Festival certainly achieved that, but perhaps not in the way the locals had intended. Complete with all the recognised symbols of the counterculture; drugs, music and 'free-love', Nimbin is still to this day a monument to the spirit of the 1960s. The festival was in many respects, the Woodstock of Australia- in fact the two cultural icons are 'sister-cities'.<sup>53</sup> However while Woodstock dissipated afterwards and people returned to their homes (in fact, the locals were very adamant that the 'hippies' returned to their own homes afterwards<sup>54</sup>), many Aquarians were so inspired by the festival that they decided to attempt to keep the spirit of the festival alive. People bought up the remaining

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<sup>49</sup> Nimbin Aquarius Foundation, 'Archiving Aquarius: The Significance of the Festival'. <<http://rainbowregion.com.au/aquarius/>>, accessed 21<sup>st</sup> December 2008.

<sup>50</sup> Graeme Dunstan, 'Nimbin: The Vision and The Reality' in *The Way Out*, eds. Smith & Crossley, p. 19.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Paul Joseph, Lismore, 7 March 2010.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Lismore City Council and the Woodstock Town Board, Sister Village resolutions November 1st 1996', <[http://www.nimbinweb.com.au/resources/nimbin\\_woodstock.htm](http://www.nimbinweb.com.au/resources/nimbin_woodstock.htm)>, accessed 20 December 2008.

<sup>54</sup> Steve Israel, 'Woodstock at 40: A Tale of Two Towns'. *Times Herald Record*.

<<http://www.recordonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20090813/ENTERTAIN2302/908130310>>, accessed 8 May 2010.

cheap land (although demand made prices rise suddenly and dramatically<sup>55</sup>) and many Intentional Communities were established after the festival. The Tuntable Falls Community was a direct result of the Aquarius Festival and was the first land-sharing cooperative, in itself creating legal history. Paul Joseph was central to the creation of the Tuntable community. He recalls:

We had to get the registrar of co-ops to agree to us being allowed to form a co-op... There'd been co-ops formed to produce butter and distribute the butter, and cheese, and dairy co-ops... there'd never been a co-op formed before to own land.<sup>56</sup>

The historical legal precedent opened up the concept of Multiple Occupancy (MO) properties, strengthening the Intentional Community movement. By 1975 there were 1000 alternative settlers in Tuntable and the surrounding valleys.<sup>57</sup>

While the Festival is generally held to have marked the start of the culture of the region, there had already been a growing alternative culture in the area. In 1971 an Intentional Community named Kohinoor was established at Upper Main Arm, near Mullumbimby,<sup>58</sup> and Dudley Leggett's community, Dharmananda had been established in 1972.<sup>59</sup> Contrary to theories of importation, the Intentional Communities of the Rainbow Region have become 'known around the world as role models in the development of alternative lifestyles'.<sup>60</sup> They were more successful than many Communities because they were in a concentrated area and had the advantage of support rather than the 'abrasive rural resistance' which was a common issue for international Communities.<sup>61</sup> Graham Irvine was one of the original Aquarians,

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<sup>55</sup> Interview with Hugh Nicholson, Terania Creek, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Paul Joseph, Lismore, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>57</sup> Allen, 'Nimbin: Myths, Dreams and Mysteries', p. 28.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Paul Joseph, Lismore, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Dudley Leggett, Suffolk Park, 6 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>60</sup> Irvine, 'Creating Communities at The End of The Rainbow', p. 63.

<sup>61</sup> Frank Wingham, 'Communities on the North Coast of New South Wales' in *The Way Out*, eds. Smith & Crossley, p. 32

travelling to Nimbin in 1973 with the specific intent of establishing an intentional community.<sup>62</sup>

Irvine comments:

(T)hose communities have outlived all communities in the past, now that they've reached 30 years old, some of the older ones. There's never been a successful community that's lasted that long in history, which is pretty remarkable...<sup>63</sup>

The Intentional Communities of the region played a very significant role at Terania Creek, and have proven themselves to be uniquely Australian in their success, legal precedent and in their enduring existence.

The critical consequence of the Aquarius Festival in relation to the later occurrence of the Terania Creek protest was the influx of new settlers and the creation of an environmentally conscious community. The Festival has been recognised as a very important event in the creation and growth of the Australian environment movement.<sup>64</sup> A local to the region, Andy Parks has pointed out that the festival's 'May Manifesto' promoted a desire for the festival to be 'an experience in living in harmony with the natural environment'.<sup>65</sup> It deliberately sought a rural location and it led to the establishment of Intentional Communities, many of which were based on environmental principles such as permaculture and sustainability. The 'back to the land' convergence on Northern NSW was diverse – not just 'hippies', couples and families escaping city life also migrated<sup>66</sup>, including Hugh and Nan Nicholson who are more reluctant to identify with the 'hippie' culture. While Nan Nicholson expresses a keen interest in many of the values held by their more radical neighbours, the couple were not actively involved with the culture and were unaware that the Aquarius Festival had brought many more new settlers to the area.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Wingham, 'Communities on the North Coast of New South', p. 32.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Graham Irvine, Lismore, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>64</sup> Australian Greens, 'History', *The Greens*

< <http://greensmps.org.au/history>>, accessed 15 March 2010.

<sup>65</sup> Andy Parks, *Environmental Protest Songs of North East NSW 1979-1999*. Lismore, 1999, p. 15.

<sup>66</sup> Wingham, 'Communities on the North Coast of New South Wales' p. 32; William J. Metcalf, 'A Classification of Alternative Lifestyle Groups' in *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, vol. 20, no. 1, March 1984, p. 67.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with Hugh Nicholson, Terania Creek, 7 March 2010.

The back to the land movement was indisputably environmental in focus. There was also an element of survival – many were fleeing the possibility of nuclear war, confronted with new colour images of Vietnam on television.<sup>68</sup> Rhonda Ellis believes that many of the new settlers were well educated and informed, and were familiar with the wealth of new information about environmental destruction espoused by scientists and ecologists such as Rachel Carson, Paul Ehrlich and Barry Commoner.<sup>69</sup> Ellis also cites the Oil Crisis as a motivating factor:

...a lot of people came because of the Oil Crisis, the idea that oil was going to run out and people went, 'Oh bugger it, I'm going to the bush'. And these kinds of things raised our awareness about environmental issues. And Silent Spring had already been published, it was not new, we knew about global warming, we knew about holes in ozone layers...<sup>70</sup>

The new settlers, both those who lived in communities and those who moved as couples or families seeking a rural lifestyle, had unknowingly transformed the Rainbow Region into a concentrated population of creative hippies, idealists, anti-authoritarians, spiritual practitioners and environmentalists. The 'Rainbow Army'<sup>71</sup> that would stand in defence of the rainforests had come together, although they were not yet aware of it. Reminiscing on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Terania, Nan Nicholson wrote; '(n)one of us grasped the national demographic shifts that had converged many young people of similar philosophical outlook into one area within a few months.'<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Interview with Paul Joseph, Lismore, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Rhonda Ellis, Lismore, 13 April 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Nigel Turvey refers to the Terania Creek protesters as the Rainbow Army – see Turvey, *Terania Creek: Rainforest Wars*.

<sup>72</sup> Nan Nicholson, 'Terania Creek: Nan's personal perspective on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Terania blockade'. *Terania Times*, August-September 2009.

It has been argued that Australia's dependence on inspiration from outside sources was a hindrance, rendering us incapable of creating our own distinct 1960s culture.<sup>73</sup> This accusation, coupled with Australia's renowned 'cultural cringe', left many saying that Australian radicalism was 'weak'.<sup>74</sup> Patrick Morgan wrote in 1973:

...imitation of Overseas modes has a long history of failure in Australia. I think the counter-culture will not succeed in Australia for two reasons: firstly, it isn't a culture; and secondly, it has nothing to counter in Australia.<sup>75</sup>

Roszak's *The Making of a Counter Culture* describes the movement as that which 'radically diverges from values and assumptions that have been in the mainstream of our society at least since the... seventeenth century.'<sup>76</sup> Given that White Australia had only a short history at the time, it would certainly appear fair to say that we had little to counter. There was however one critically important issue that was perhaps not yet apparent to all in 1973, and that was the rapid, widespread and severe destruction of the Australian environment.

The ancient and powerful Australian landscape, indeed the oldest landscape on earth, was frighteningly unfamiliar for many European settlers who characterised Australia as unattractive, desolate, 'gloomy and weird'.<sup>77</sup> In 1822, lawyer Barron Field declared; 'There is a dry harshness about the perennial leaf, that does not savour of humanity in my eyes. There is no flesh and blood in it; it is not of us, and nothing to us.'<sup>78</sup> This inability to identify with the Australian environment had disastrous consequences – from the first moments of colonisation, white settlers set about making the country 'useful' for its new inhabitants. Environmental scientist and activist Dr Tim Flannery explains:

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<sup>73</sup> Munro Clark, *Communes in Rural Australia*, p. 57; Gordon & Osmond, 'An Overview of the Australian New Left', pp. 3-39; Patrick Morgan, 'Dropping Out Down Under: Prospects for the Counter-Culture in Australia' in *Australian Politics: A Third Reader*, eds. Henry Mayer & Helen Nelson, Melbourne, 1973, pp. 726-731.

<sup>74</sup> Gordon & Osmond, 'An Overview of the Australian New Left', pp. 3-4.

<sup>75</sup> Morgan, 'Dropping Out Down Under', p. 727.

<sup>76</sup> Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, New York, 1969, p. xii.

<sup>77</sup> Peter Read, *Returning to Nothing: The Meaning of Lost Places*, Melbourne, 2000, p. 139.

<sup>78</sup> Quoted in Jeff Angel, *Green is Good: An Insider's Story of the Battle for a Green Australia*, Sydney, 2008, p. 33.

Our European heritage... left many Australians unable to see the subtle beauty and biological richness of the land, and what they could not understand they strove to destroy as alien and useless... Much of this terrible history reads as a rush towards 'development', which was then – and often still is – just a soft word for the destruction of the Australian resource base. That arrogant colonial vision left a fearful legacy, for it actually made people feel virtuous while they dealt the land the most terrible blows.<sup>79</sup>

What we lacked in industrial 'development' and 'progress' given our short time in an alien land, we soon made up for by logging, clearing, mining, killing (both native animals and people alike) and 'conquering' the landscape.<sup>80</sup> A long-time CSIRO ecologist and later an Honorary Professor of environmental science at Griffith University, Len Webb was heavily involved in the Terania Creek campaign and was aware of the need to stop the near-total transformation of the continent; 'Before the early 1960s, Australia distinguished herself among all nations by knocking (the) hell out of the place so rapidly.'<sup>81</sup>

The conservation movement, the forerunner of Australia's powerful and influential environment movement, concerned itself with preserving the earth's 'resources' rather than preserving the life on earth itself.<sup>82</sup> While conservation - ecology's older and somewhat more anthropocentric relative - had a different focus, it allowed for Australians to start questioning the 'value' of land, or if there could be any such thing as a human constructed economy of the earth. Since the 1960s conservation journals such as *Wildlife* and *Walkabout* had been promoting the idea that Australian nature deserved to be embraced as an important part of our national identity and conscience,<sup>83</sup> and the Australian Conservation Foundation was established in 1965. Bill Lines' *Patriots* argues that increasing numbers of Australians felt a connection with the land, and their sense of belonging propelled the conservation movement. Our relationship

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<sup>79</sup> Tim Flannery, Australia Day Address, Sydney, 2002.

<sup>80</sup> Many have written on this topic and it is a commonly accepted historical fact – see for example Elim Papadakis, *Politics and the Environment: The Australian Experience*, St. Leonards, 1993, pp. 45-69; Geoffrey Bolton, *Spoils and Spoliers*, North Sydney, 1981.

<sup>81</sup> Steve Brouwer (ed.), *The Message of Terania*, Lismore, 1979, p. 15.

<sup>82</sup> Fred Pearce, *Green Warriors*, London, 1961; Jerome Price, *The Antinuclear Movement*, Boston, 1982, p.38; Clayton Koppes, 'Efficiency, Equity, Esthetics' in *The Ends of The Earth: Perspectives on Modern Environmental History*, ed. David Worster, Cambridge, 1988, p.251.

<sup>83</sup> William Lines, *Patriots: Defending Australia's Natural Heritage*, St. Lucia, 2006, p. 58.

with the Australian landscape, argues Lines, was the building block of our national culture.<sup>84</sup> Far from an importation, the environment movement emerged as a consequence of white Australia settling into our landscape. It was a unique combination of the realisation that the Australian environment had been greatly damaged by white colonisation and the developing sense of attachment that Australians started to develop for their homeland. Echoing critics of Australian protest imports, Ken Johnson comments on the transplantation of European iconography upon an Australian landscape:

Ideas and images from other places are strong, both because of the mental baggage brought from overseas, and also because there is a heavy reliance on ideas from overseas and particularly from places of origin, like Britain.<sup>85</sup>

Just as the 60s were influenced from outside, so too were our mental images of place. Terania was central to breaking away from both of these accusations.

It is commonly accepted that Australia 'came of age' when we went to war and our identity and culture could only grow once we had fought to protect our homeland.<sup>86</sup> It is interesting, then, that in creating an identity based in the Australian environment, the language of war is so often employed. The notion of 'patriotism' used by Lines evokes a concept of Australian environmentalists as war heroes.<sup>87</sup> The language used by people recalling memories of Terania supports this – 'fighting'<sup>88</sup>; 'battle'<sup>89</sup>; 'guerrilla'<sup>90</sup>; 'It was like hearing deaths... it just seemed like the forest was screaming'<sup>91</sup> and 'it was like being suddenly in a war. A warzone.'<sup>92</sup> Judith Wright argued that Terania Creek aroused an unprecedented patriotism in Australians

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<sup>84</sup> Lines, *Patriots*, p. 74.

<sup>85</sup> Ken Johnson, 'Creating Place and Landscape' in *Australian Environmental History: Essays and Cases*, ed. Stephen Dovers, Melbourne, 1994, p. 42.

<sup>86</sup> See for example Ann Curthoys, 'History and Identity' in *Creating Australia: Changing Australian History*, ed. Wayne Hudson & Geoffrey Bolton, 1997, p. 29.

<sup>87</sup> Lines, *Patriots*.

<sup>88</sup> Interview with Nan Nicholson, Terania Creek, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>89</sup> Interview with Paul Joseph, Lismore, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>90</sup> Interview with Nan Nicholson, Terania Creek, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>91</sup> Interview with Rhonda Ellis, Lismore, 13 April 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>92</sup> Interview with Dudley Leggett, Suffolk Park, 6 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.



who fought for *this* land.<sup>93</sup> Milo Dunphy asked if Terania Creek was ‘the Eureka Stockade of Australia’s forests’, drawing not on international influences but on our own culture of resistance.<sup>94</sup> Far from international concerns and issues, Australians fought for something that had become very personal.

Prior to Terania Creek, environmental action in Australia was already making an impact and establishing itself as original and innovative. In 1971 the ‘Battlers for Kelly’s Bush joined forces with NSW Builders Labourers Federation (BLF) to preserve the last remaining piece of forest on the Parramatta River. The result was the creation of the Green Bans, which continued over several years and successfully halted unwanted development, preserved parklands and saved historic buildings, including The Rocks. Jack Munday, one of the central figures behind the Green Bans, tells us that the movement ‘was unique and attracted the attention of environmentalists the world over’.<sup>95</sup> Interestingly, Scalmer’s single mention of the environment movement (excluding the anti-nuclear movement, which is certainly based on strong environmental concerns) recognises the Green Bans alongside Anzac Day, the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras and the Aboriginal Tent Embassy, as ‘perhaps the most outstanding improvisations of contemporary Australian political history’.<sup>96</sup> In 1972 the Lake Pedder Action Committee (LPAC) was formed in an attempt to prevent the Tasmanian Hydro-electric Committee’s (HEC) inundation of Lake Pedder. LPAC called a meeting at Hobart Town Hall. The turnout was overwhelming; people flowed out of the hall and down the street, and although the public response was not enough to save Lake Pedder, that meeting saw the creation of the first Green party in world history – the United Tasmania Group.<sup>97</sup> It was in the wake of Lake Pedder that Whitlam established the National Estate, for the first time recognising the natural environment as part of our Australian heritage. It is evident that even before Terania and the recognised

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<sup>93</sup> Judith Wright, ‘Wilderness, Waste and History’ in *Habitat*, vol. 8, no. 1, February 1980, pp. 27-31.

<sup>94</sup> Milo Dunphy, ‘Is This the Eureka Stockade of Australia’s Forests?: The Significance of Terania Creek’ in *Habitat*, vol. 7, no. 6, December 1979, pp. 11-13.

<sup>95</sup> Jack Munday, ‘From Red to Green: Citizen-Worker Alliance’ in *Green Politics in Australia*, ed. D. Hutton, Sydney, 1987, p.109

<sup>96</sup> Scalmer, *Dissent Events*, pp. 100-101.

<sup>97</sup> For a detailed discussion of the United Tasmania Group, see Pamela Walker, ‘The United Tasmania Group: An Analysis of the World’s First Green Party’ in *Environmental Politics in Australia and New Zealand*, eds Peter Hay et.al., Hobart, 1989, p. 163.

symbolic actions of the movement such as the Franklin campaign, Australia was already forging new methods in the battle against environmental destruction - independent of aid or instruction from international activists.

The single most important and unique element of the Australian landscape is the intrinsic relationship between Indigenous Australians and the land. Few other countries have the unusual history to support an indigenous community that had managed to live uninterrupted by external influences for many thousands of years. The ancestral memories are still strong. Dreamtime stories 40 000 years in the making can still be recalled, despite continuing and unacceptable assaults on Aboriginal Australia. There has been a strong connection between the environment movement and the Aboriginal rights movement, both fighting to preserve our country for an ancient civilisation and awe-inspired newcomers alike.

Paul Joseph, one of the organisers of the Aquarius Festival, recounts what happened when the organisers heard that Nimbin was a men's initiation ground for the Bundjalung people and women 'couldn't survive there'. In their naivety they thought it was a 'curse' that could be removed, so they set out to find a witch doctor – revealing just how little white Australians knew of Aboriginal spirituality in 1973. However in doing so, Joseph and others came in contact with Bundjalung elders;

By going and seeing these elders we were the first white people to fully recognise the ownership of the country with respect. And we built tremendous relationships... (Dickie Donnelly) came and sang, did a Welcome to Country at the Aquarius Festival, and it was probably the first ever Welcome to Country... And with the Whitlam Government getting in, we were able to get money to bring people here. Other Aboriginal people. We had about 800 Aboriginal people all in a big camp. And people had come from Pitjandjara, down in South Australia, and Yirrkala... So we had all these people all gathered and it was a truly remarkable part of the festival. I think that was the secret. The key ingredient that has been the success of the community here. And it was very much a part of the whole battle for Terania and Mt Nardi. By Terania we were

proving to them that we truly cared for the country, and that they could link with us. By Mt Nardi, they were leading us.<sup>98</sup>

Terania was of tremendous importance to the coming together of Indigenous and White Australia. Elders were approached during the campaign, which is now common practice within the environment movement.<sup>99</sup> It was established that Terania Creek, in the rainforests of the most sacred Wollumbin, was an important Aboriginal site used for male initiation and on closer inspection Indigenous artefacts were found.<sup>100</sup> Terania was recognised as 'unique' for the unusual collaboration of indigenous and non-indigenous taking on authority, as opposed to the familiar situation of white authority challenging the indigenous community.<sup>101</sup>

Aboriginal activist Burnum Burnum addressed a crowd of 2000 when the Terania Native Forest Action Group (TNFAG) organised a public awareness day at Terania Creek during the month-long protest. Burnum Burnum referred to the Teranians as the 'new aborigines', recognising the connection they had felt with the land.<sup>102</sup> White Australians had behaved just like the Aboriginal people in fierce defence of the environment. Nan Nicholson explains:

Lots of things were firsts. Even the idea of a blockade. Actually no, I shouldn't say that. I'll retract that. Because it's so unfair for us to say that we were the first to defend the landscape because actually the Kooris did it, they've been doing it for a long time and no one ever gave them any credit. This place was defended of course by them, everywhere was defended. We were just the second ones. The ones that got all the notoriety over it.<sup>103</sup>

While Terania was the first successful anti-logging blockade, indigenous Australians had been attempting, unsuccessfully, to halt the destruction of the very same land of belonging for hundreds of years. Len Webb commented during the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of Terania

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<sup>98</sup> Interview with Paul Joseph, Lismore, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>99</sup> Nicholson, 'Terania Creek: Nan's personal perspective on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Terania blockade'; Personal observation.

<sup>100</sup> Jeni Kendell & Eddie Buivids, *Earth First*, Sydney, 1987, pp. 41-42; Griff Foley, *Learning in Social Action: A Contribution to Understanding Informal Learning*, London, 1999, p. 29.

<sup>101</sup> Marlene J. Norst, *Burnum Burnum: A Warrior For Peace*, East Roseville, 1999, p. 44.

<sup>102</sup> Milo Dunphy, 'Climbing the Political Tree' in *The Message of Terania*, Lismore, 1979, p. 5.

<sup>103</sup> Interview with Nan Nicholson, Terania Creek, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

Creek; 'physical confrontation to defend land, in which people have a deep emotional and special religious roots, is of course not new in Australia.'<sup>104</sup> While the invasion and takeover of Aboriginal land occurred across the continent, the Bundjalung people in particular were known to have directly resisted invasion.<sup>105</sup>

This spiritual connection to the remarkable and powerful Australian landscape had started to grow in the hearts of non-indigenous Australians, and the Aboriginal people taught us something of the Australian environmental experience. Terania Creek had 'inspired something new', believes Greens MLC Ian Cohen, 'an irresistible drive to protect'.<sup>106</sup> Deep ecologist John Seed, who had been living at the alternative community of Bodhi Farm at the time, concurs - 'it was just very powerfully intuitive, I knew what I had to do.'<sup>107</sup> White Australians made a connection between Aboriginal spirituality and national identity, calling for 'the re-establishment of our innate spiritual relationship with the Earth... a movement toward reviving identity with the natural environment for the birth of a truly Australian culture.'<sup>108</sup> Nan Nicholson comments:

...that land stuff is terribly important; it was at the core of it... The whole movement I think really got it about how land is terribly important to identity and spirituality and our whole life.<sup>109</sup>

It is now widely recognised that emotional attachment to the environment can be just as strong for those who the environment movement perceive as being adverse to the interests of the land such as loggers, miners and farmers. Forests, for example, have provided livelihoods for loggers and often a deep reverence exists between the forest and those who toil in them.<sup>110</sup>

The issue of conflict over the interests of environmentalists at odds with the foresters charged

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<sup>104</sup> Len Webb, quoted in 'Terania Forest Blockade - 20th Anniversary Tributes, 14/8/99', *Rainforest Information Centre*, <[http://www.rainforestinfo.org.au/terania\\_forest\\_blockade.htm](http://www.rainforestinfo.org.au/terania_forest_blockade.htm)>, accessed 20 December 2008.

<sup>105</sup> Nicholson, 'Terania Creek: Nan's personal perspective on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Terania blockade'; Jo Kijas, 'From Obscurity into the Fierce Light of Popularity: Internal Migration on the Far North Coast' in *Belonging in the Rainbow Region*, ed. Wilson, p. 27.

<sup>106</sup> Cohen, *Green Fire*, p. 16.

<sup>107</sup> J. Seed & J. Bennet-Levy, 'James Bennet-Levy Interviews John Seed', *Rainforest Information Centre*. <[www.rainforestinfo.org.au/deep-eco/levy.htm](http://www.rainforestinfo.org.au/deep-eco/levy.htm)>, accessed 1 December 2008.

<sup>108</sup> Norst, *Burnum Burnum: A Warrior For Peace*, p. 44.

<sup>109</sup> Interview with Nan Nicholson, Terania Creek, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>110</sup> Ian Watson, *Fighting Over the Forests*, Sydney, 1990.

with the care of the forests was also, for the first time, witnessed at Terania Creek. This issue is explored in detail by both Turvey<sup>111</sup> and Watson<sup>112</sup> and so does not need to be discussed here.

The Australian experience is unique. No movement can be like our movement, given our history, culture and legal system. While British anti-roads campaigners, starting in the early 1990s<sup>113</sup>, concerned themselves with protecting trees 'some of which are over 200 years old!'<sup>114</sup>, trees in Australian rainforests and old growth forests are many times older - some species such as Red Cedar and Antarctic Beech are commonly accepted to be 2000 years old. A protester at the Franklin campaign in 1983 wrote a 'communiqué from the blockade' to the *Nimbin News*. She said:

There is a huge Huon Pine tree not far from where the dozers [sic] working. Estimated to be the oldest living thing on this earth, 4000 years old, the last of the ancient trees. Every last one of us will make a stand if they touch that tree.<sup>115</sup>

Another very important element of the success of forest protest in this country is the fact that our democratic system of government allows for dissent and protest. In other nations, such as throughout South East Asia, such action would not even be attempted for fear of one's life.<sup>116</sup> In Brazil in 2005, a nun was murdered for her efforts to save the rainforest there.<sup>117</sup> In Australia, the worst that can happen is arrest, and many activists make the informed decision to take this risk. Additionally, our State forests are state-owned, making access much easier. In the US for example, forests are privately owned, making blockading a much more serious offence.<sup>118</sup> Nan

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<sup>111</sup> Turvey, *Terania Creek: Rainforest Wars*.

<sup>112</sup> Watson, *Fighting Over the Forests*.

<sup>113</sup> See Kate Evans, *Copse: The Cartoon Book of Tree Protesting*, Biddestone, 1998.

<sup>114</sup> 'For Flapjack and Mother Earth: Earth Warriors at Jesmond Dean', *Eco-action.org*.  
<<http://www.eco-action.org/dt/jesmond.html>>, accessed 4 June 2009.

<sup>115</sup> 'Comuniques from the blockade', *Nimbin News*, March 1 1983, p. 5.

<sup>116</sup> Cohen, *Green Fire*, p. 28; Personal Communication with Sean O'Shannessy, Toonumbar, 21 December 2008.

<sup>117</sup> Ched Myers, 'The Cedar Has Fallen!: The Prophetic Word versus Imperial Clear-Cutting' in *Earth and Word: Classic Sermons on Saving the Planet*, ed. David Rhoads, New York, 2007, p. 211.

<sup>118</sup> Personal Communication with Sean O'Shannessy, Toonumbar, 21 December 2008.

Nicholson relates; 'when the blockade was on, we had a big advantage because they hadn't invented trespass laws – they (introduced the laws) as a consequence of what we did.'<sup>119</sup>

While protest and counterculture may have had a later debut in Australia, by the mid 1970s Australians were laying the foundations of a movement that would instruct the world. The Rainbow Region had been transformed into a living and enduring haven of counterculture, and the Australian environment movement found inspiration in a country that it could look upon with new and promising vision.

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<sup>119</sup> Interview with Nan Nicholson, Terania Creek, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

## Chapter Two – The Power of the Collective

*We kept meeting and we kept enjoying each other's company, we kept doing it. And we kept coming up with crazy ideas, most of which were rejected but it was fun talking about them. And a couple of them were still crazy, but we did them, and they worked.*

Nan Nicholson<sup>120</sup>

Terania marked the passage from conventional environmental politics to grassroots direct action. International groups such as Greenpeace had already adopted direct action methods in the defence of the natural environment,<sup>121</sup> but there was no protocol for forest blockading. While the earlier periods of conservation and preservation, characterised by letter-writing, lobbying, and submissions could be described as institutionalised, polite and proper, Terania Creek was the start of a radical new form of protest in Australian forests which empowered individuals in a way not yet witnessed in the environment movement. Aquarius Festival co-ordinator Graeme Dunstan commented, 'It has the Aquarian touch – light, forward-looking, innovative, portentous, real and relevant to the times.'<sup>122</sup> Anyone could stand in front of a bulldozer, climb a tree or dig up a road. Lisa Yeates recalls a phrase written on the side of a tent at Terania that would become 'the thing that drives (her)'; "I used to think somebody should do something about it until I realised I'm somebody".<sup>123</sup> The Teranians had first attempted the polite methods; for five years they persevered. But when their efforts looked likely to fail, a mass of new settlers with an environmental conscience and hippie idealism in their hearts moved in to actively and physically stop the loggers. There was no precedent for what occurred for the first time on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1979; it was a spontaneous response to a

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<sup>120</sup> Interview with Nan Nicholson, Terania Creek, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>121</sup> Greenpeace are well-known for their use of environmental direct action – see for example Michael Brown & John May, *The Greenpeace Story*, Moorebank, 1991.

<sup>122</sup> Dunstan quoted in Kendell & Buividis, *Earth First*, p. 48.

<sup>123</sup> Lisa Yeates quoted in Parkes, *Environmental Protest Songs*, p. 47.

government that had failed to act. From that date onwards forest protest methods had changed forever, and the Teranians had unwittingly created history.

The Terania Native Forest Action Group (TNFAG) was formed in 1974 when Hugh Nicholson inadvertently learned of the Forestry Commission's intention to allow logging of the last remaining patch of rainforest in Terania Creek Basin, in the Goonimbah and Whian Whian State Forests north of Lismore. It was the job of the Forestry Commission to manage the forests, and local sawmills from Lismore and Murwillumbah had been granted use of the forests as a timber supply. Once loggers had clearfelled the area the Forestry Commission intended to burn the remaining scrub and establish a Eucalypt plantation in its place. Initially devastated that their new forest home would soon be destroyed, the Nicholsons' initial reaction was to pack up, sell their property and leave. Fatefully, they decided not to. Unaware that the back to the land movement had brought so many like-minded people to the Rainbow Region, particularly Mullumbimby, Nimbin and the valleys around The Channon, the couple soon learned that there were 'six or eight' other couples that happened to share their valley and were prepared to fight for the forest.<sup>124</sup> Dharmananda was on the same road, and Dudley Leggett became involved:

(W)hen the forests were about to be logged, we saw we'd come there particularly for that forest. To be close to that forest. And then suddenly that critical ingredient was going to be taken away. There was this natural uprising against that, being something that wasn't tolerable.<sup>125</sup>

What followed was a five year campaign, during which time TNFAG learnt a great deal about campaigning, politics, rainforest and the NSW Forestry Commission. The Commission had been entrusted with the responsibility of caretaking NSW forests and had done so since it was established under the *Forestry Act 1916*. TNFAG felt that the Commission had abused that power; the result being that much of the forest had been over logged and the logging industry

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<sup>124</sup> Interview with Hugh Nicholson, Terania Creek, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>125</sup> Interview with Dudley Leggett, Suffolk Park, 6 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.



were exhausting their timber supply, with disastrous consequences for native forests. The first of many firsts, TNFAG openly challenged the authority of the Forestry Commission, who were considered by some to be bipartisan to the interests of logging and conservation alike.<sup>126</sup> After all, the NSW Forestry Commission were the experts', comments Borschmann in his study of attitudes towards the Australian bush.<sup>127</sup>

Larger conservation organisations were at the time campaigning (politely) for the Border Ranges, just north of Terania Creek.<sup>128</sup> Both areas were originally a part of the Big Scrub, but the area TNFAG was campaigning for was much smaller and considered insignificant in the battle for the rainforests.<sup>129</sup> Conservationists thought that the Border Ranges were much more important and refused to get involved over such a seemingly insignificant remnant. TNFAG were left to run the campaign on their own. With no experience in running an environmental campaign, the group fortuitously included a number of people with a range of different skills. They had a teacher, an advertising executive, an architect, an engineer, someone who knew how to sustain a community of people through such methods as consensus decision making, people with knowledge of environmental science, musicians and entertainers, and their academic skills put them in a good position to liaise with politicians and write letters and submissions. Foley's 1999 case study of Terania Creek looks at Terania as an example of on-the-ground learning, or '*learning in the struggle*'.<sup>130</sup> Foley demonstrates how the group learnt and acquired skills as they went, and notes that 'the experience of the campaign challenged and significantly altered the campaigners understanding of the world.'<sup>131</sup> The lack of support from larger groups meant that TNFAG were left to forge a campaign and acquire vital knowledge in the process.

Such vital knowledge included knowledge of rainforest. While rainforest is now a household word, in the 1970s it was still a new concept, and the science of ecology had only

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<sup>126</sup> Lines, *Patriots*, pp. 150-151; R Taplin, 'Adversary Procedures and Expertise: The Terania Creek Inquiry' in *Australian Environmental Policy*, ed. K. Walker, Sydney, 1992, p. 171.

<sup>127</sup> Greg Borschmann, *The People's Forest: A Living History of the Australian Bush*, Blackheath, 1999, p. 111.

<sup>128</sup> See The Colong Committee, *How the Rainforest was Saved: The Inside Story of the 10 Year Battle*, Sydney, 1983.

<sup>129</sup> Interview with Nan Nicholson, Terania Creek, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>130</sup> Griff Foley, *Learning in Social Action*, p. 39.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

come to prominence in the 1960s as a direct result of the environment movement.<sup>132</sup> The Forestry Commission contended that Terania was in fact not rainforest at all. While TNFAG initially lacked the knowledge required to make such assumptions (as did the Forestry Commission itself, they later discovered<sup>133</sup>), Nan Nicholson wrote to ecologist Len Webb to ask his opinion. Consequently, Webb became a central part of the campaign to save Terania. TNFAG were also in contact with and aided by botanist Alex Floyd, who worked as a rainforest expert for the Forestry Commission itself.<sup>134</sup> TNFAG conducted transects of the forest and sent the report to the Forestry Commission, arguing that the Commission lacked sufficient knowledge of rainforest to be destroying it unknowingly.<sup>135</sup> (In fact in the year 2000, forest ecologist Robert Kooyman discovered the Nightcap Oak – an extremely rare and ancient Gondwana descendant previously unknown to science, which would have perhaps passed forever unknown to human knowledge had Terania and the surrounding forests been logged<sup>136</sup>). Many Teranians recall how Terania Creek was their first experience with rainforest and through the protest, they came to learn of its significance.<sup>137</sup> Musician and activist Lisa Yeates remembers, '(w)hen I was at Terania we were learning words like revegetation, reforestation, this was a language that none of us knew... rainforests, biodiversity, all of these words we didn't know',<sup>138</sup> while long-time activist and deep ecologist John Seed comments, 'in the process of finding reasons to protect Terania, we discovered what rainforest was.'<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Robert Leo Smith, *Ecology and Field Biology: Fourth Edition*, New York, 1990, p. 2.

<sup>133</sup> Interview with Dudley Leggett, Suffolk Park, 6 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>134</sup> Interview with Nan Nicholson, Terania Creek, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*; Interview with Dudley Leggett, Suffolk Park, 6 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>136</sup> Madeleine Faught, 'A New Rainforest Tree Species for New South Wales', *Big Volcano*.  
<[www.bigvolcano.com.au/default.htm](http://www.bigvolcano.com.au/default.htm)>, accessed 28 April 2010.

<sup>137</sup> Interview with Hugh and Nan Nicholson, Terania Creek, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author; Interview with Dudley Leggett, Suffolk Park, 6 March 2010, transcript in possession of author; Interview with Dailan Pugh, Byron Bay, 13 April 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>138</sup> Lisa Yeates, quoted in Parks, *Environmental Protest Songs*, p. 47.

<sup>139</sup> John Seed, 'James Bennet-Levy Interviews John Seed', *Rainforest Information Centre*.  
<[www.rainforestinfo.org.au/deep-eco/levy.htm](http://www.rainforestinfo.org.au/deep-eco/levy.htm)>, accessed 1 December 2008.

From the outset, TNFAG were creating history. One of the more innovative actions TNFAG took in the early stages of the campaign was to produce a television advertisement. Nan Nicholson recalls:

(W)e had this advertising executive, Bren Claridge. He knew how to make ads. So we made an ad about what would happen to a woman down the valley and her school kids if the logging trucks were on this road. It was such a scandalous thing to have done that the local news kept playing it, over and over and over. And Standard Sawmills objected to this, and they tried to block it. And of course that meant it got played over and over again. We only had enough money to pay for one or two plays, and then it got played over on the news... And it seems advertising now for green groups is so run-of-the-mill, but at the time it was a really radical thing to do.<sup>140</sup>

Ian Cohen has argued that this was possibly the first ever environmental group to produce a television advertisement<sup>141</sup>, and TNFAG did so without the aid and finance available to large conservation groups. While challenging the Forestry Commission and producing television advertisements were examples of TNFAG's departure from conventional conservation campaigns, the group also tried the 'polite' forms of campaigning. TNFAG wrote 150 letters to politicians, churned out media releases and information kits, attempted to liaise with politicians and gathered the scientific knowledge lacking on both sides of the debate.<sup>142</sup>

A compromise was reached between TNFAG and the Forestry Commission – only the Brushbox and Blackbutt would be logged; the rest of the rainforest was safe. Although jubilant at first, TNFAG had learnt enough about rainforest during the campaign to feel that the compromise was unacceptable. Local biologist Norm Mackay argued, 'this is equivalent to saying "ok, you can keep your heart, but we're going to take your lungs and kidneys" '.<sup>143</sup> TNFAG feared that it was impossible to remove centuries-old rainforest giants without inflicting irreparable damage to the rainforest canopy and the forest itself. The group called for an

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<sup>140</sup> Interview with Nan Nicholson, Terania Creek, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>141</sup> Cohen, *Green Fire*, p. 18.

<sup>142</sup> Turvey, *Terania Creek: Rainforest Wars*, p. 49; Interview with Hugh Nicholson, Terania Creek, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>143</sup> Norm Mackay, 'Simple Ecology'. Aquarius Archives, Southern Cross University, Lismore, circa. 1976.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), but it was refused on the basis that it would cost the Commission too much money (although the costs associated with denying the protesters their EIS would eventually accumulate to a far greater amount than the EIS itself<sup>144</sup>). Lin Gordon, NSW minister for Conservation and Forestry, left no doubt as to which side of the debate his sympathies lay. He was openly hostile to TNFAG, later referring to them as 'filthy hippies'.<sup>145</sup> In 1979 it was declared that logging would commence.

Even at this late stage, direct action had not been a consideration. '(W)e certainly hadn't planned on any blockade, because... the concept was so unusual, no one knew about blockading. We hadn't thought we could do that.'<sup>146</sup> The contemporaneous local alternative media supports Nan Nicholson's statement - the *Nimbin News* reveals the sentiment after the decision was made, and before the logging started. What it reveals is that Terania truly was a spontaneous action. A representative from TNFAG announced, '(we) seem to have run out of ideas'.<sup>147</sup> They called on people to come to the Nicholsons' property, which was the last property on Terania Creek Road before the rainforest basin, but there was no mention of direct action or impeding the logging operation in any way. A 'massive demonstration' was on the agenda, not a blockade. TNFAG had been told by Paul Landa, State Minister for Planning and the Environment, that if they wanted the government to act they needed to prove widespread opposition to the logging.<sup>148</sup> 'We feel that the only avenue left open now is for a massive show of support at the forest as the bulldozers arrive... if a thousand or two arrive they won't be able to ignore us'.<sup>149</sup>

The Channon Market, a product of Aquarius, was (and still is) a monthly market attracting thousands of visitors, and it was the perfect place to mobilise the large numbers of environmentally conscious people that had been amassing in the region. The market was an outlet for local produce and crafts, contributing to the sustainability of the local alternative

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<sup>144</sup> Interview with Dudley Leggett, Suffolk Park, 6 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>145</sup> Lines, *Patriots*, p. 174.

<sup>146</sup> Interview with Nan Nicholson, Terania Creek, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>147</sup> Bren Claridge, 'The loggers are coming', *Nimbin News*, no. 76, 1979, p. 2.

<sup>148</sup> Claridge, 'The loggers are coming', p. 2.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

movement. Bren Claridge, one of the core members of TNFAG, was the market organiser.<sup>150</sup> There was no better opportunity to rally support for Terania. The Channon Market of August 1979 was held the weekend before the loggers were due to commence and there a large concentration of people present sympathetic to the cause:

(W)e were able to go to the market for our stall... and say, 'They're planning to come in and log the forest', and people just came home to our place after the markets, instead of going back home to their place. They just came up with no gear, nothing, and just stayed. And there was no power, there was no infrastructure. It was just extraordinary.<sup>151</sup>

As the protest endured, support would be gathered from far and wide. Paul Joseph recalls that alternative networks throughout the region and the country, particularly the Down to Earth network, provided a 'very strong means' of support and interest. Joseph goes on to say that this is an aspect of Terania that has never been noted.<sup>152</sup> While Sydney conservation groups were reluctant to get involved, 'fearing extremism more than forest destruction'<sup>153</sup>, the era of individual, grassroots empowerment was pulling together at Terania. The old style conservation campaigning was about to be surpassed by a radically new blend of conservative and innovative thought.

The organisation of the camp on the Nicholsons' property is a central aspect of discussions about Terania. Several people commented on its 'festival' atmosphere<sup>154</sup> – despite the tension in the forest, which bordered the property, the camp was an amazingly spontaneous and vibrant place. Hugh Nicholson recalls:

I found (the camp) just incredible. We had nothing really, it was just spontaneous, it was just people getting together and organising. People... volunteered for the kitchen detail, and they just provided three meals a day every day, and they were brilliant meals, they were just

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<sup>150</sup> Interview with Paul Joseph, Lismore, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>151</sup> Interview with Hugh Nicholson, Terania Creek, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>152</sup> Interview with Paul Joseph, Lismore, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>153</sup> Cohen, *Green Fire*, p. 17.

<sup>154</sup> Mark D. Hayes, 'Greenies and government at loggerheads', *National Review*, 1979, p. 775.; Neil Pike, 'Terania and All That', 2009.

extraordinary. There was just the camp detail, who organised that there would always be firewood, there would be hot water, that everything worked. And then there were the people who organised themselves into the first aid, or the ... child-minding group. So there were all these people who spontaneously volunteered for important roles... I found that really inspiring, that that could happen without any organising.<sup>155</sup>

It is evident that even those participating at Terania were shocked by the level of innovation. The Nicholsons had been living in a one-room cabin with their two children, yet in a matter of days their property had been set up to accommodate 300 protesters complete with 24-hour hot running water, showers, toilets and a camp oven.

One of the central features of the camp was the organisation of roles. A piece of striped rainbow cloth had been torn where each colour met, producing coloured strips to designate each groups' role. Groups included food, first aid, transport, clothing, and entertainment. There was also a group of core TNFAG members who donned strips of cloth torn across the stripes to produce a rainbow effect, indicating their wider knowledge of the scenario. The colour-coding of roles for easy identification is a feature found at modern environmental events, including the annual Students of Sustainability (SoS) conference.<sup>156</sup> While it cannot be ascertained that this innovation is a direct outcome of Terania, it was an ingenuitive development that may well have been passed along by the many Teranians that continued the fight for the Earth. Possibly coincidentally, Hugh and Nan Nicholson's daughter helped in the organisation of SoS in Newcastle in 2001, and in 1996 SoS was held at Southern Cross University in Lismore and a group of students travelled to Terania Creek, led through the rainforest by the Nicholsons.<sup>157</sup>

The involvement of several intentional communities also played an important role in the camp organisation. It was the Tumble Falls Community from over the ridge who organised the camp kitchen<sup>158</sup> and produced food that most agree, was 'brilliant'.<sup>159</sup> People donated money

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<sup>155</sup> Interview with Hugh Nicholson, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>156</sup> Personal observation. Students of Sustainability is an annual five-day conference organised by the Australian Student Environment Network that brings together university students from across the country to discuss and learn about all manner of environmental and social justice issues.

<sup>157</sup> Interview with Hugh and Nan Nicholson, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>158</sup> Hayes, Greenies and government at loggerheads', p. 775.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

when needed and the food group would travel to town to restock.<sup>160</sup> The Intentional Communities provided the obvious advantage of knowing how to live communally – providing for and caring for many people at a time was a part of their everyday experience. The Nicholsons' property had in effect, been transformed into the Terania Community.

The principles of the Dharmananda Community played a vital role in the story of Terania. Dudley Leggett is a strong believer in nonviolence and consensus decision making:

(T)hat was something I had to offer, the fact that I had a degree of expertise because it was my \$focus... how to establish community living. And the consensus decision making was something I was absolutely committed to... (T)hat was fundamental to our success, I believe.<sup>161</sup>

Drawing on the expertise of individuals' knowledge, Terania was strengthened by those such as Leggett. For the four-week duration of the protest meetings were held in a circle. All were invited to participate and in theory, anyone who wished to speak was given the opportunity to do so. Leggett comments; 'everything was listened to, so that's where it became so innovative and created the whole thing, because it was drawing on so many people'.<sup>162</sup> People were allowed the freedom to participate in their own way – the designation of roles was a personal choice, and anyone could make suggestions they felt might contribute to their success. Drew Hutton and Libby Connors have recognised both the originality and influence of this critical aspect of Terania:

The organisation of the protest action at Terania was a model for many other direct action campaigns by environmentalists... In fact, consensus decision-making, meeting facilitation and conflict resolution have become part of the everyday workings of many protest actions and green organisations.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Interview with Rhonda Ellis, Lismore, 13 April 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>161</sup> Interview with Dudley Leggett, Suffolk Park, 6 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> Drew Hutton & Libby Connors, *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*, Melbourne, 1999, p. 154.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> August the logging trucks entered the forest. It was in this moment, when the protesters stood ready to challenge the loggers, that Terania would change the world in a very real way. Dudley's memory of the event demonstrates perfectly the spontaneous and natural occurrence:

... we didn't know what to do. We didn't have a clue. We didn't really have any other models to look at... it just happened on the first day, really. There was nothing else we could do. We'd tried every level of argument and discussion and here we suddenly had a bulldozer which you can't talk to, we had a bulldozer driver that was just working... and we heard them coming and we just all rushed out and stood in the road so they couldn't proceed... We were really completely spontaneous. And everybody just clogged the road to argue with the guys, to say 'don't, you can't do this, it's not ok.' And of course they couldn't proceed. So they ended up just backing off, and we all went 'right, what are we going to do now?'... And so the next time... we said 'we'd better put some cars on the road as well'. A bit harder to move. And so there was a line of cars put on the road, and then all the people and so on.<sup>164</sup>

From that first moment of impulsive action, the Teranians realised their new power. Ideas and techniques developed rapidly, and tactics were formulated in response to what each day would bring for the next four weeks.<sup>165</sup>

Australia was shocked by such daring and audacious action. As the protest exploded in the mainstream media and word spread, more people joined the cause. Peace studies lecturer Dr Bert Jenkins was an environmental science student at the time. He recalls;

(A)ll these people were interested in saving the rainforest, and it was bizarre that people would, you know, at that time... I went there to see this very special rainforest that was being saved.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Interview with Dudley Leggett, Suffolk Park, 6 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> Interview with Bert Jenkins, Armidale, 4 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.



Bert was not the only person who found the protest 'bizarre'. The media, loggers, police and government were unprepared for the unexpected – nothing like Terania had ever happened before and authorities did not know how to react. There was a tone of disbelief in the mainstream media, with comments such as 'long time residents in the area are saying that they have never seen anything like the Terania protest'<sup>167</sup>, and 'the scene was set for one of the most bizarre, futile and worrying confrontations'.<sup>168</sup> The local newspapers were hostile towards these new and outrageous settlers who dared to question the logging industry that had long provided a source of employment for the region. Associated Country Sawmillers of NSW ran advertisements proclaiming themselves to be the true conservationists,<sup>169</sup> while the editor of Lismore paper *Northern Star* proclaimed, 'If groups such as those at Terania Creek were allowed to go unchecked chaos would be upon us, and the economy ruined'.<sup>170</sup> The Teranians were pushing an issue that none had dare challenge before in such a confronting manner, and they were doing so in the face of much opposition.

Viewers at home found the images 'unexpected and startling'.<sup>171</sup> When the loggers first encountered the blockade in the forest they had no idea how to react. Turvey recounts:

The scene was alien to the bush crew. No company orders covered this. The crew had never seen so many people in the bush... where on earth had all of these people come from and what were they planning?<sup>172</sup>

The loggers never anticipated the eventual success of these strange folk in the forest and thought it would only be a matter of time before they moved out<sup>173</sup> – after all, no one had

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<sup>167</sup> Hayes, 'Greenies and government at loggerheads', p. 775.

<sup>168</sup> Craig McGregor, 'The battle for Terania Creek', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1979, p. 7.

<sup>169</sup> 'First Here, and we'll be the last to leave', *Northern Star*, 15 August 1979, p. 24; 'Conservationists... caring for our natural forests', *Northern Star*, 16 August 1979, p. 8.

<sup>170</sup> 'Terrorism charges ridiculed', *Northern Star*, 5 September 1979, p. 2; See also Martin & Ellis, 'Dropping In, Not Dropping Out', pp. 186-187.

<sup>171</sup> Turvey, *Terania Creek: Rainforest Wars*, p. 21.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>173</sup> *Northern Star* Editorial, 14 August 1979, quoted in Lester Brien, 'War in the North', *Rolling Stone*, 1979, p. 42.

dared confront the authority of the Forestry Commission in such a way. The government were also caught completely off guard; no one had expected this.<sup>174</sup>

Many of the techniques devised at Terania are commonly found in forest actions around the world today. History in the making has been captured in *Give Trees a Chance*<sup>175</sup>, a film by two of the protesters. Jeni Kendall and Paul Tait, ex-ABC 'film crew', recorded footage of the protest as it happened and later pieced it together to tell the story of Terania. The short film features footage of one of the consensus meetings, in which a protester addresses the crowd:

We have to be prepared to change our tactics all the time. On any given day, if we see them acting in certain ways, we can just turn around our tactics altogether and totally confuse them. Like today, they've flown over, and noted all our blockades. Now we could confuse them completely tomorrow if we didn't have the blockades, if we had some other little system going. Now this is what we've gotta think of, we've just gotta totally confuse these people.<sup>176</sup>

Not only does this reveal once again the originality of Terania, it indicates that the protest was intelligent and creative, and comments like these have informed many protests since.

Radio networks from lookouts to the camp and surrounding areas informed the protesters of any incoming threats and a telephone tree was established to call in support when necessary.<sup>177</sup> Later North East Forest Alliance (NEFA) actions are well-known for exceptional communication networks such as this,<sup>178</sup> and many aspects of Terania have echoed at later forest protests around the country and the world, as will be demonstrated in Chapter Three. Cars planted on the road had had their wheels taken off to make it harder to remove them.<sup>179</sup> 'Tree-hugging' made its first official appearance – protesters climbed small trees that were in

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<sup>174</sup> Colong Committee, *How The Rainforest Was Saved*, p. 21.

<sup>175</sup> Jeni Kendall & Paul Tait, *Give Trees A Chance*, 1980.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> Hayes, 'Greenies and government at loggerheads', p. 775.

<sup>178</sup> Personal Communication with NEFA activists; Aidan Ricketts, 'Om Gaia Dudes', p. 126.

<sup>179</sup> Ian Galliard, quoted in Foley, *Learning in Social Action*, p. 33.

the path of larger trees scheduled to be logged<sup>180</sup> and hammocks were strung between trees, some ‘maybe one hundred feet up’, while protesters sung from their perches, ‘forgive them, they know not what they do’.<sup>181</sup> Some stayed in hammocks for days at a time<sup>182</sup>, with the intention of preventing loggers from continuing as it would endanger people’s lives. Tree-sitting is now arguably the most recognised form of forest protest across the world.

Others flitted through the forest in the intended path of felled trees<sup>183</sup>, hoping the loggers would cease for safety’s sake. Techniques such as this were used at the Mt Nardi protests in 1982<sup>184</sup>, the Daintree protests in 1983<sup>185</sup>, and NEFA activists later refined the tactic, naming it ‘black wallaby’ and exporting it to the world via the *Intercontinental Deluxe Guide to Blockading*.<sup>186</sup> Activist Marty Branagan’s *We Shall Never Be Moved: The Art of Australian Nonviolence* credits Terania as the first use of ‘black wallabying’ and claims that the technique has been used ‘in many, if not most, major Australian forest campaigns of the last decade, and is a popular and effective tactic.’<sup>187</sup>

Steel cable was used to wire trees together, risking the rainforest canopy in the hopes that the loggers would cease – if they continued they would pull down not only the intended tree but the whole web of cable, and the canopy with it.<sup>188</sup> This too was seen at later protests, including Chaelundi in 1991.<sup>189</sup> Aquarius Festival organiser and Peace Bus activist Graham Dunstan reported in the *Nimbin News*, ‘the tree people court death and invite the police to do likewise’.<sup>190</sup> The Teranians were well aware of the risks, but the task at hand was more

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<sup>180</sup> Interview with Nan Nicholson, Terania Creek, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>181</sup> Graham Dunstan, quoted in Kendall & Buividis, *Earth First*, p. 51.

<sup>182</sup> Michael Murphy, quoted in Foley, *Learning in Social Action*, p. 34.

<sup>183</sup> Dunstan, quoted in Kendall & Buividis, *Earth First*, p. 51.

<sup>184</sup> Cohen, *Green Fire*, pp. 41-58.

<sup>185</sup> Doyle, *Green Power*, p. 58.

<sup>186</sup> Personal Communication with NEFA activists

<sup>187</sup> Marty Branagan, *We Shall Never Be Moved: the Art of Australian Nonviolence*, Köln, 2008, p. 231.

<sup>188</sup> Cohen, *Green Fire*, p. 21; Christopher Manes, *Green Rage: Radical Environmentalism and the Unmaking of Civilisation*, Boston, 1990, p. 118.

<sup>189</sup> Cohen, *Green Fire*, p. 198.

<sup>190</sup> Dunstan, quoted in Kendall & Buividis, *Earth First*, p. 51.

important. Dailan Pugh, another city evacuee, felt that Terania was a very special place and he couldn't possibly let them devastate it; 'it would be over my dead body, literally'.<sup>191</sup>

Civil disobedience was a feature in many of the Teranian tactics. It was of course no new idea – civil disobedience had been espoused by both Gandhi and Thoreau and many of the Teranians were undoubtedly familiar with such ideas, including Dudley.<sup>192</sup> What was new however was the use of civil disobedience in a forest setting. Again, while such tactics are used around the world today, they were for the first time tried and tested at Terania Creek. Protesters stood in the path of bulldozers while others laid down.<sup>193</sup> Many were arrested for 'obstructing the passage of a vehicle'.<sup>194</sup> 43 people were arrested in total over the four-week blockade<sup>195</sup> - obstructing bulldozers was one of the more popular tactics. Not only did the protesters use their bodies as blockading instruments, they also attempted to make the road to the forest impassable so that bulldozers and logging trucks could not proceed (again this would become a very popular technique in forest protests across the country and the world). Ellis had already decided before she got to the protest that she would dig the road up; 'On the very first day the Mullumbimby people went down onto the road and we got some shovels and we dug a big ditch, quite a big ditch across the road in the forest'.<sup>196</sup> Her desire was to stop the protest in a 'physical way'.<sup>197</sup> The road was also blocked with logs and boulders.<sup>198</sup> *Give Trees a Chance* shows a protester offering the use of his nearby dam as a water supply to turn the road into a quagmire, while on another occasion, Terania Creek itself was dammed so that the water

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<sup>191</sup> Dailan Pugh, quoted in Borschmann, *The People's Forest*, p. 212.

<sup>192</sup> Interview with Dudley Leggett, Suffolk Park, 6 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>193</sup> Hayes 'Greenies and government at loggerheads', p. 775.

<sup>194</sup> Interview with Rhonda Ellis, Lismore, 13 April 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>195</sup> Dailan Pugh, 'My involvement in forest campaigns'.

<sup>196</sup> Interview with Rhonda Ellis, Lismore, 13 April 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>198</sup> Lines, *Patriots*, p. 175; Tim Bonyhady, *Places Worth Keeping: Conservationists, Politics and Law*, St Leonards, 1993, p. 48.

flooded the road.<sup>199</sup> Lisa Yeates voices the feeling around the camp – despite the controversy of these radical new techniques, the Teranians did not perceive of their actions as wrong:

...for the first time (we) didn't step back because we felt that we were on the outside of society, we in fact said 'You can't stop us, we're not doing anything wrong, this is more important'. Together, that's when we first realised the power of the collective.<sup>200</sup>

The Teranians persevered with frayed nerves and uncertainty for four weeks, never sure how close they were to victory, or even if they stood a chance of success.<sup>201</sup> Christopher Manes, writing on the renowned Earth First! in the United States, recognises the unprecedented nature of Terania; 'it presaged the kind of militarisation of the wilderness that the United States and other countries would eventually experience'.<sup>202</sup>

For the duration of the protest, core TNFAG members were busier than ever writing press releases, ringing politicians and liaising with the media. The old, conventional style of lobbying, writing and negotiating was happening at the camp while the protest was evolving in the forest. Ellis describes it aptly:

The peace-love-and-brown-rice brigade on the ground and a crack publicity and negotiating team on the phone was a successful combination and established the right of conservationists to speak on forest management.<sup>203</sup>

The people of the Rainbow Region have been very good at producing independent media that tell the stories the mainstream media overlook or distort.<sup>204</sup> The Teranians were no exception. With their own printing press<sup>205</sup> and the expertise of advertising executive Bren Claridge and ex-ABC film crew, TNFAG could wage a campaign – as the Sydney newspapers described it –

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<sup>199</sup> Bonyhady, *Places Worth Keeping*, p. 48.

<sup>200</sup> Lisa Yeates quoted in Parkes, *Environmental Protest Songs*, p. 45.

<sup>201</sup> Interview with Hugh Nicholson, Terania Creek, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>202</sup> Manes, *Green Rage*, p. 118.

<sup>203</sup> Rhonda Ellis, 'Keeping Protest Alive in the Face of Sophisticated Spin'. *Byron Shire Echo*, 2003, p. 11.

<sup>204</sup> See Martin & Ellis, 'Dropping In, Not Dropping Out', pp. 179-205.

<sup>205</sup> Kelly, 'The Mediated Forest: Who Speaks For The Trees?', p. 111.

'equal to anything any major advertising or PR house could mount'.<sup>206</sup> Ellis noted the symbiotic relationship between media and action – 'I think that had they had no action to publicise, we wouldn't have won. Had there been no media team to publicise it, we wouldn't have won'.<sup>207</sup>

Also of relevance to the originality and ingenuity of Terania was their instinctual exploitation of the mainstream media. Leggett comments on the 'media savvy' group:

...we knew that you have to be creative to get people's attention. Or violent, and we didn't want to be violent. So we wanted to be colourful, and entertaining, and so on. And that's what this whole movement is about, really... As I understand, we sort of made TV history by being the lead story nationally, 3 nights in a row. And that's never been done by any group of people before as far as I know.<sup>208</sup>

Such entertainment included, as well as the novel idea of tree-sitting and bulldozer 'obstruction', musical performance. On one occasion the police agreed to allow the protesters to stop a bulldozer so they could sing to it – a 'very interesting song which got the whole message across'.<sup>209</sup> There were several talented musicians at Terania who wrote songs specifically for the cause, including Lisa Yeates, Brenda Liddiard and Paul Joseph. Self-described 'song man', Joseph composed and sang 'Save The Trees', the song that featured in TNFAG's television advertisement. Andy Parks' work, *Environmental Protest Songs of Northern NSW 1979-1999* demonstrates the use and impact of music written at Terania and recognises its dissemination in later protests around the country.<sup>210</sup>

The experience was not only new for the protesters; the police had never before had to deal with a situation such as this. Keeping with the commitment to nonviolence, the protesters decided that despite the obvious clash of interests in the forest they would keep in mind that

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<sup>206</sup> Hayes, 'Greenies and government at loggerheads', p. 775.

<sup>207</sup> Interview with Rhonda Ellis, Lismore, 13 April 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>208</sup> Interview with Dudley Leggett, Suffolk Park, 6 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>210</sup> Parkes, *Environmental Protest Songs*.

the police as well as the loggers were, as they argued, 'just doing their job'.<sup>211</sup> The protesters made efforts to speak to the police and explain their actions, and why they felt it was necessary. They also talked about children and family, establishing friendly common ground.<sup>212</sup> Perhaps the most famous image of the protest is a young woman massaging a policeman as part of a 'kiss a cop' campaign. Ellis recalls:

(O)ne of the things that I found really interesting was a couple of young women decided that they would get to know these police officers... And at first, my initial reaction to seeing that was consorting with the enemy. But I guess over a period of time I began to realise that the kinds of tactics that people were using there may well work.<sup>213</sup>

While maintaining positive relationships with authority figures is again an important factor at protests and demonstrations today,<sup>214</sup> Ellis' comment reveals that at the time it was just another hopeful approach in an unfamiliar battle.

While consensus decision making allowed for all voices to be heard, no matter how radical, Terania Creek was based strictly on nonviolence. Not all at Terania were committed to this concept. Ellis didn't identify with the 'peace, love and brown rice brigade'.<sup>215</sup> Her original intentions for the protest were challenged by the majority:

The first thing I noticed was that a meeting was called on the flat near Hugh and Nan's place... And people stood around in a big circle and held hands and went 'Om'. And I thought they were wasting their time, I'd never seen anything like that, and I just wanted to get down there and sabotage something.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Interview with Nan Nicholson, Terania Creek, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author; Interview with Dudley Leggett, Suffolk Park, 6 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>213</sup> Interview with Rhonda Ellis, Lismore, 13 April 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>214</sup> Personal Observation.

<sup>215</sup> Personal Communication with Rhonda Ellis.

<sup>216</sup> Interview with Rhonda Ellis, Lismore, 13 April 2010, transcript in possession of author.

Sabotage, or 'monkey-wrenching', would become a technique used among Earth First! members in the United States. American author Edward Abbey's novel, *The Monkey Wrench Gang*<sup>217</sup> had been published in 1975 but was not available in Australia until 1978.<sup>218</sup> While the novel was fictional, it is known to be the first reference to 'ecotage', or sabotage for environmental causes. Ellis had never heard of monkey wrenching<sup>219</sup>; her brand of sabotage dated from her days in the BLF and her involvement in the Green Bans. She recalls, 'although I had not sabotaged a bulldozer in that capacity I had certainly wanted to, and my colleagues and I had discussed how one would do that'.<sup>220</sup> Ellis was not influenced by US actions or ideas - her knowledge of sabotage was an Australian product. While Ellis and her Mullumbimby colleagues had initially come to the protest 'thinking that we would teach the hippies about obstruction tactics',<sup>221</sup> Terania Creek changed Ellis's initial attitudes, and she confesses, 'I softened a bit in the bush'.<sup>222</sup> As the protest stretched into weeks, many attitudes were transformed, including Ellis':

(L)iving there, on site was really interesting because almost everybody else there was peace-loving hippies, whose attitude was totally different to mine. And listening to them, watching how they operated began to change my ideas of what is a protest... The lessons I learnt at Terania were quite significant I think, especially when we won'.<sup>223</sup>

Conversely, the event that finally succeeded in stopping the logging was an act of violence. Late one night, logs that had been felled in the forest but not yet trucked out were cut into lengths, rendering them useless to the timber industry, and trees were rumoured to be

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<sup>217</sup> Edward Abbey, *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, New York, 1975.

<sup>218</sup> Bonyhady, *Places Worth Keeping*, p. 41.

<sup>219</sup> Personal Communication with Rhonda Ellis.

<sup>220</sup> Interview with Rhonda Ellis, Lismore, 13 April 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>221</sup> Ellis, 'Keeping Protest Alive in the Face of Sophisticated Spin', p. 11.

<sup>222</sup> Interview with Rhonda Ellis, Lismore, 13 April 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*



spiked\* in what Bonyhady describes as 'perhaps the first instance of tree-spiking in the world'.<sup>224</sup> Ellis had been told by a friend that he had heard of tree-spiking previously<sup>225</sup>, so it is possible that Bonyhady is incorrect, but there appears to be no documentation of earlier tree-spikings. The trees were marked as 'spiked' although there is some doubt as to whether it was actually done<sup>226</sup> – just the possibility of tree-spiking was enough to prevent the loggers from felling marked trees, as it creates a life-threatening danger. The action was widely condemned by the group, although many have commented on the fact that in retrospect it contributed to the success of Terania. It was only after the tree-spiking incident that NSW Premier Neville Wran ordered that the logging be stopped and an inquiry established.

After the initial shock of the audacious action, *Give Trees a Chance* tells us, 'scientific, aboriginal and conservation groups, with memberships totalling well over 100 000 people, had come out in support of the protesters at Terania Creek.'<sup>227</sup> The result of the month-long action was an Inquiry in to the logging of Terania Creek under the authority of retired Judge of the Supreme Court, Simon Isaacs.<sup>228</sup> This, too, was a unique outcome of Terania – both Doyle and Taplin credit the Terania Creek Inquiry as the start of environmentalist participation in the legal system.<sup>229</sup> The Inquiry dragged on for two years under 'appallingly biased'<sup>230</sup> conditions, and Isaacs eventually ruled in favour of the logging of Terania Creek. However after Terania the protesters had not retired – as a direct consequence of Terania, a group known as the Nightcap Action Group (NAG) was formed and when loggers moved to Mt Nardi, just north of Terania Creek, NAG continued the fight for the adjoining Terania rainforest.<sup>231</sup> It was during the Mt

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\* The act of tree-spiking involves driving long nails into trees, the idea being that if a chainsaw was to hit a nail the chainsaw could potentially kick back at great risk to the tree feller. The US Earth First! group are most often associated with these type of 'ecotage' techniques.

<sup>224</sup> Bonyhady, *Places Worth Keeping*, p. 48.

<sup>225</sup> Interview with Rhonda Ellis, Lismore, 13 April 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>227</sup> Kendell & Tait, *Give Trees a Chance*.

<sup>228</sup> See Taplin, 'Adversary Procedures and Expertise: The Terania Creek Inquiry'.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156; Doyle, *Green Power*, p. 128.

<sup>230</sup> Interview with Hugh Nicholson, Terania Creek, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>231</sup> NAG were much less committed to nonviolence and built on techniques developed at Terania before changing their name to the Nomadic Action Group, continuing on to other protests around the country, including the Daintree and the Franklin.

Nardi campaign that Neville Wran made the landmark decision to end all rainforest logging in NSW, and Terania Creek and Mt Nardi became a part of the World-Heritage listed Nightcap National Park. Terania was the first, over thirty years ago - but we have not yet seen the last of direct action forest protest. 'The fight had not ended but only just begun'.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Brien, 'War in the North', p. 45.

## Chapter Three - The Spirit of Terania Lives On

*Terania has been synonymous in the environmental movement with the birth of radical action in defence of the forest. It has echoed down the years at succeeding forest actions. The spirit of Terania lives on. People move across the face of the earth spreading the message of that birthplace of Australian eco-activism. So overpowering was the draw of those trees that people risked their lives... It was an event which inspired many who were pioneering a new way in their lives.*

*The year was 1979, and Terania had lit a green fire.*

Ian Cohen<sup>233</sup>

The first sign of the significance of Terania was its success, but it soon became apparent that Terania would be one of the most important developments in Australian environmental history. Learning as they went, protesters, politicians and the general public alike came to realise the importance of preserving ancient rainforest remnants, opening a Pandora's Box in the process. If the destruction of Terania Creek was unacceptable, and individuals, they had discovered, had the power to do something about it, then the destruction of forests and natural environments around Australia and the world was also unacceptable and something could be done about them, too. The 'green fire' lit in the hearts of Teranians ignited forest protests, organisations and individuals who were forever changed by Terania Creek. Activists from Terania travelled to Mt Nardi, the Franklin, the Daintree and across the world, sharing knowledge learnt at Terania. While the Franklin is held as the watershed of the Australian environment movement, it owes much to Terania and this seems to have passed largely unrecognised in the many discussions of the world-famous Franklin campaign. NEFA, a direct

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<sup>233</sup> Cohen, *Green Fire*, p. 17.

descendant of Terania, have been an amazing source of success and influence in their own right. And international movements, which had encouraged and inspired Australians in the 60s, learnt a great deal from the pioneering efforts of Australian forest activists – the cultural interchange had come full-circle.

As a result of Terania, rainforest entered the national consciousness direct from the rainforest to televisions across the country. The Teranians succeeded in making rainforest conservation a national issue<sup>234</sup>, while conservation groups had been attempting to do just that for years beforehand.<sup>235</sup> Saving the rainforest was now an attainable goal – the Colong Committee, a conservation group who were at first hesitant to align themselves with ‘radicals’, were amazed when the ‘hippies’ were successful. John Seed recounts; ‘none of them in their wildest dreams would have thought that it was possible to protect the rainforests.’<sup>236</sup> It was not only the forest however that benefitted from the outcome. For many, Terania marked the start of a literal life transformation. The following is a chorus of protesters’ memories, the many voices testimony to the life-changing effect Terania Creek had on people’s lives.

The lessons I learnt at Terania were quite significant; I look at the Nightcap [National Park] and I think... that’s something that I actually had a share in achieving; It started me off on a green path; it really played an important part of how my life and thinking starts, [in relation] to the world around me; it changed my consciousness completely... I lost my ignorance; that’s where my spiritual awakening started; It was seeing that it really was truly possible for people to come together around the most fanciful ideas, like a future for the planet, and to achieve that; it was like fulfilment of the dream; So this led to a whole change of life for us; travelling overseas and all that sort of thing pale into insignificance compared to those few weeks when I put my total life, body and mind into Terania Creek; being involved in the rainforest struggle was one of the most worthwhile things I’ve done in my life; I’ve just never been able to have anything happen in my life that was as uplifting and as fulfilling as that; I just found myself so captivated, transformed, excited by what I came to understand; But I think what Terania gave me the most,

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<sup>234</sup> Dunphy, ‘Is This the Eureka Stockade of Australia’s Forests?’ p. 13.

<sup>235</sup> Colong Committee, *How the Rainforest was Saved*, p. 22.

<sup>236</sup> John Seed, quoted in Alexandra de Blas, ‘Terania Creek 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary’, Earthbeat Radio Program, 1999.

was the belief that it was worth putting the effort in, because you could achieve results if you did so.<sup>237</sup>

While this represents only a small number of those involved, there are surely many more who felt the effects of Terania; Nan Nicholson comments, '(p)eople still come up to us in the street and say "I was at Terania Creek and it changed the direction of my life!"'.<sup>238</sup>

It is not only the protesters who can look back and feel pride in the power of Terania. Neville Wran credits the saving of the NSW rainforests as the most significant contribution of the state Labor government of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and hopes that this is what history will remember of him.<sup>239</sup> In 1999, during celebrations for Terania's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Wran noted:

Terania Creek and the men and women who fought for it played a critical role in shaping my views and the views of the government of the day in relation to conservation. Indeed, there is no doubt that Terania Creek was a milestone in the history of conservation in Australia.<sup>240</sup>

Terania certainly did help to shape the views of government – Jack Hallam was a junior minister of the NSW Wran government at the time of Terania, and later became Minister for Forests. He has noted, 'the impact of that protest went well beyond Terania Creek and the bounds of

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<sup>237</sup> Listed respectively – **Rhonda Ellis**, Interview, Lismore, 13 April 2010, transcript in possession of author; **Neil Pike**, quoted in Turvey, *Terania Creek: Rainforest Wars*, p. 156; **Bert Jenkins**, Interview, 4 March 2010, transcript in possession of author; **Geoff Box**, quoted in Turvey, *Terania Creek: Rainforest Wars*, p. 155; **Dee Grebner**, quoted on 'Terania Creek 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary', *Earthbeat*, 21 August 1999; **Brenda Liddiard**, quoted in *Terania Creek: Rainforest Wars*, p. 161; **Paul Joseph**, Interview, Lismore, 7 March 2010; **Dudley Leggett**, Interview, Suffolk Park, 6 March 2010, transcript in possession of author; **Hugh Nicholson**, Interview, Terania Creek, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author; **Bren Claridge**, quoted in Turvey, *Terania Creek: Rainforest Wars*, p. 156; **Peter Saulwick**, *Ibid.*; **Justin Lee (pseudonym)**, quoted in Watson, *Fighting Over The Forests*, p. 88; **John Seed**, 'James Bennet-Levy Interviews John Seed'; **Dailan Pugh**, Interview, Byron Bay, 13 April 2010, transcript in possession of author. Format borrowed from Read, *The Meaning of Lost Places*, p. 128.

<sup>238</sup> Nan Nicholson, 'Terania Creek: Nan's personal perspective on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Terania blockade'. *Terania Times*, August-September 2009.

<sup>239</sup> Neville Wran, Speech to ALP NSW State Conference, May 1983.

<sup>240</sup> Wran, quoted in 'Terania Forest Blockade - 20th Anniversary Tributes, 14/8/99', *Rainforest Information Centre*, <[http://www.rainforestinfo.org.au/terania\\_forest\\_blockade.htm](http://www.rainforestinfo.org.au/terania_forest_blockade.htm)>, accessed 20 December 2008.

government bureaucracy... (I)n retrospect it was a dawning of an awareness of the damage we are doing to the planet.<sup>241</sup>

While it would be impossible to measure the influence of Terania's inspiration and dissemination, there are obvious examples of Terania's transmission through individuals. Hugh and Nan's lives were transformed by the rainforest so much so that they became a conduit for the forest itself - establishing a rainforest nursery, writing a number of books on rainforest species and selling plants for regeneration. Not only did they defend what little rainforest was left, they then went on to help replace what had been destroyed.<sup>242</sup> Bert Jenkins, who initially went to Terania to have a 'sticky-beak', found himself transformed:

It started me off on a green path. I went on to finish my degree in environmental studies, I did my PhD in rainforest ecology, I became an ecologist for several years, and then I started linking the environment with peace... Before that, I didn't know anything about the green movement, I didn't know anything about conservation... all of that means, (Terania) is continuing for me.<sup>243</sup>

Ian Cohen was not at Terania, but he was inspired by the direct action that saved the rainforest. 'Knowing that I had missed an important historic event, I made a commitment to protect the forests by opposing the continuing destruction.'<sup>244</sup> Cohen has since attended many major environmental protests throughout Australia and was the first Greens member to win a seat in the NSW parliament in 1995.<sup>245</sup>

After Terania, Dudley Leggett continued to protest against environmental destruction. He was central to anti-sandmining protests at Middle Head, attended blockades at Washpool and Baryugil in northern NSW and shared his Terania-based expertise at the Franklin;

I was asked (by Bob Brown) to come down for that, and explained that I couldn't be there for the whole event, but I would come down – (they offered to) fly me down, which they did – and

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<sup>241</sup> Cohen, *Green Fire*, p. 24.

<sup>242</sup> Interview with Hugh and Nan Nicholson, Terania Creek, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>243</sup> Interview with Bert Jenkins, Armidale, 4 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>244</sup> Cohen, *Green Fire*, p. 42.

<sup>245</sup> *Green Fire* provides Cohen's comprehensive insiders' account of the Australian environment movement.

(asked) would I come down and train the people that were going to do the nonviolent action. So I trained the trainers for the nonviolent action.<sup>246</sup>

Dudley was not the only Teranian to share his expertise; NAG, the group that continued the fight for the Nightcap, was a direct flow-on from Terania. After NAG successfully saved the Nightcap they ventured south to the Franklin and north to the Daintree, where they maintained the notion of consensus decision making first employed at Terania.<sup>247</sup> John Seed, Brenda Liddiard, Lisa Yeates and Benny Zable (who was not at Terania but was a part of the Rainbow Region scene) also trained protesters at the Franklin, the Daintree and at Errinundra in East Gippsland.<sup>248</sup>

While it would be impossible to argue that the Franklin would not have been a success without the influence of Terania, the contribution of Terania should not be underestimated. Prior to the Franklin, Tasmanians were still attempting to save the environment through the 'polite' form of politics and bureaucracy. In 1983, Nick Lenore reported in *the Bulletin*; 'The Hobart greenies are different to the Terania creek greenies...'<sup>249</sup> Tension arose between NAG and The Wilderness Society, who were not comfortable with the more radical 'ferals' from the north.<sup>250</sup> Nonetheless, both sides acknowledge the valuable contribution of Terania. Ian Cohen was a core member of NAG. He recalls:

We were a formidable part of the whole blockade experience. In fact we held together the upriver aspects of the blockade, and that was something that The Wilderness Society in Tasmania wasn't capable of doing... that was a particular skill and it was a skill that we'd learnt in earlier days at northern NSW so we exported that product really from northern NSW. We were exporting a non-violent environmental, revolutionary strategy.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Interview with Dudley Leggett, Suffolk Park, 6 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>247</sup> Doyle, *Green Power*, p. 54.

<sup>248</sup> Turvey, *Terania Creek: Rainforest Wars*, p. 155.

<sup>249</sup> Nick Lenore, *The Bulletin*, vol. 103, February 1983, p. 23.

<sup>250</sup> Issues over what constitutes 'violence' and 'nonviolence' within the environment movement has been an issue at many Australian environmental protests – see Branagan's *We Shall Not Be Moved* for a comprehensive insight into this issue.

<sup>251</sup> Parks, *Environmental Protest Songs*, p. 39.

The Wilderness Society's *For the Forests: A History of the Tasmanian Forest Campaigns*, similarly acknowledges:

Terania raised the organisational and tactical profile of non-violent direct action. The organisation of the protest action became a model and a great inspiration to members of the Tasmanian Wilderness Society...<sup>252</sup>

Many individuals have demonstrated the Teranian power of inspiration, however the work of John Seed alone would be enough to exemplify the legacy of Terania. John had been living at Bodhi Farm, an Intentional Community bordering Dharmananda. He recalls, 'I just found myself so captivated, transformed, excited by what I came to understand that I wasn't going to let go of it just because the government called a moratorium on logging.'<sup>253</sup> The first action John took after Terania was to establish the Rainforest Information Centre (RIC). The RIC has been credited as the first organisation in the world dedicated to rainforest conservation.<sup>254</sup> The organisation is well respected internationally, and John Seed and the RIC are still active today, working on projects in Ecuador, Papua New Guinea and India, sharing knowledge and workshops on deep ecology, running campaigns against gold mining and globalisation and conducting international 'rainforest roadshows.'<sup>255</sup>

Seed was also central to the exportation of Teranian techniques to the world. He toured Australia and the world in the early 80s, screening *Give Trees a Chance* for a global audience; 'Wherever it went it inspired people & raised money to help save the rainforest'.<sup>256</sup> Seed also took the film to the US, sharing Australian knowledge with the newly established, powerful and leading-edge environmental organisation Earth First!.<sup>257</sup> Nan Nicholson recalls, 'I remember at the time, John Seed coming back with reports from The States that he was exporting it over

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<sup>252</sup> Helen Gee, *For the Forests: A History of the Tasmanian Forest Campaigns*, Hobart, 2001, p. 84.

<sup>253</sup> Seed & Bennet-Levy, 'James Bennet-Levy Interviews John Seed'.

<sup>254</sup> John Seed, 'Campaigning for the World's Rainforests'. *Green Left Weekly*, 11 October 2000.

<sup>255</sup> See Rainforest Information Centre,

[www.rainforestinfo.org.au](http://www.rainforestinfo.org.au)

<sup>256</sup> *Nimbin News*, June/July 1987.

<sup>257</sup> Interview with Paul Joseph, Lismore, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.



there, and they were amazed at what we were doing, and even said that Australia's probably the leader in the world now.<sup>258</sup> Seed took part in early Earth First! actions and was responsible for raising awareness of rainforest issues within the organisation, establishing rainforest preservation 'as a priority for many Earth First!ers'.<sup>259</sup> Seed also influenced the British movement – British activist George Marshall had spent time in Australia as an active participant in the rainforest campaigns and had gone back to Britain in 1990, working to create a rainforest movement based on Seed's methods and actions.<sup>260</sup>

Like Seed, Dailan Pugh has also been responsible for the creation of an organisation dedicated to saving the forests. For Pugh, Terania was 'a catalyst to my devotion to forest protection, starting first with rainforests further west, expanding to include the fight for oldgrowth eucalypt forests, and culminating with the establishment of the North East Forest Alliance.<sup>261</sup> NEFA are a product of the same culture that produced Terania and in their own right have contributed to forest protest techniques around Australia and the world. Established in 1989 and still active today, NEFA have been a highly successful and powerful group that, like Terania, deserve more recognition than what they have been given. Aidan Ricketts<sup>262</sup>, Marty Branagan<sup>263</sup> and Cohen<sup>264</sup> have all been active within NEFA and have provided insiders' accounts that demonstrate the unique, innovative and influential nature of the group, so while it is unnecessary to replicate their work here there are some key aspects of NEFA that demonstrate its significance as an outcome of Terania and their role as a pioneering force in their own right.

NEFA's first (and successful) campaign took place at Washpool from 1989, but their first major success was Chaelundi in 1991. There are estimates that as many as 5000 people took

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<sup>258</sup> Interview with Nan Nicholson, Terania Creek, 7 March 2010, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>259</sup> Manes, *Green Rage*, p. 119; Derek Wall, *Earth First! and the Anti-Roads Movement: Radical Environmentalism and Comparative Social Movements*. London, 1999, p. 47.

<sup>260</sup> Wall, *Earth First! and the Anti-Roads Movement*, p.21.

<sup>261</sup> [http://www.rainforestinfo.org.au/terania\\_forest\\_blockade.htm](http://www.rainforestinfo.org.au/terania_forest_blockade.htm)

<sup>262</sup> Ricketts, 'Om Gaia Dudes'; Ricketts, 'Theatre of Protest: The Magnifying Effects of Theatre in Direct Action' in *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 89, 2006, pp. 77-90.

<sup>263</sup> Branagan, *We Shall Never Be Moved*.

<sup>264</sup> Cohen, *Green Fire*.

part in the Chaelundi protests<sup>265</sup>, but it must be noted that NEFA have cooperated with local and national groups for many of their campaigns so credit must also be given to the many organisations and individuals that have worked with NEFA over the years. One such individual is Armidale local Pat Shultz, who speaks of a friend who was at Washpool and Chaelundi, and who was also at Terania Creek. She would often talk about what happened at Terania. 'It really was a continuation. People brought knowledge with them. Everyone knew people who had been to previous protests.' Protest techniques were not imported or based on international models; they were informed by local knowledge, experience and expertise – with Terania being the first and foremost informant. Chaelundi, for Cohen, symbolised:

the re-emergence of the radical activist... with a set of matured tactics and outrageous theatre of the environment. This cultural phenomenon related directly back to the Terania Creek protests over a decade before and gave rise to a new generation of young, alternative environmental activists. Chaelundi spawned this new generation, just as Terania had years before.<sup>266</sup>

NEFA activists, unlike the earlier Teranian consensus model, were free to 'pursue strategies of their own choosing.'<sup>267</sup> This allowed for an organic and spontaneous creation of a new repertoire of technique. Like Terania, these techniques were often borne of the Australian landscape itself.

NEFA activists have at each protest utilised the natural lay of the land and the materials available to them. Blockades have been strategically constructed on cutting roads and bridges to maximise the efficiency of the blockade, making the road impassable. Sean O'Shannessy notes:

a lot of it... was innovative – it was made up on the spot. What are we gonna do with this particular set of trees or this particular bit of road, or this particular circumstance... it was the politics of the situation as much as it was tactics. (It was a matter of) what could we bring. What could we get. What was lying around, available to us to put in place. Oh look, someone's got all

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<sup>265</sup> Helen Wilson, 'Introduction' in *Belonging in the Rainbow Region*, ed. Wilson, p. 6.

<sup>266</sup> Cohen, *Green Fire*, p. 182.

<sup>267</sup> Ricketts, 'Om Gaia Dudes', p. 138.

these nice pipes lying here on the side of the ground, what can we do with them? Or oh, look, there's a stick farm, plantation down the road full of nice thin poles, we'll go and get a few of those and bring them up.<sup>268</sup>

Activists utilised concrete culverts left on the side of the road for future roadworks at Chaelundi, planting them upright into the road while people climbed inside them, locking-on to the base and resulting in a highly efficient blockade. Ricketts recalls; 'soon we had 42 pipes dug in, in six different battlements, as well as tripods and cables strung between trees... it got bigger and bigger'.<sup>269</sup> The Chaelundi blockade held for 10 days and as was common at NEFA blockades, activists reconstructed the blockade each night while the police came by day to dismantle their efforts. It became a battle of ingenuity between protesters and police as each side became more efficient at constructing and dismantling structures that were deliberately designed to hold the road as long as possible. As Pugh describes it, it was an 'arms race'. Tim Thorncraft had worked as an engineer and was central to the construction of many of the blockade structures:

...it was a sort of weird engineering principle, just making things strong enough to be stable, but building a certain amount of precarious dangerousness into them so the cops had to take lots and lots of time and trouble to pull them down.<sup>270</sup>

Structures such as tripods were not necessarily NEFA inventions – techniques had been evolving in Australian forests since 1979 as a consequence of Terania. However NEFA refined many techniques while adding their own innovations and unfortunately the scope of this thesis does not allow for a discussion of the many and varied ingenious techniques developed. Many of these techniques have been described in the aforementioned works of Ricketts, Cohen and Branagan.

Blockading was only half of the NEFA strategy – while activists attempted to halt the destruction of forests, the NEFA legal team were busy in the Land and Environment Court

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<sup>268</sup> Interview with Sean O'Shannessy, Toonumbah, 21 December 2008, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>269</sup> Janet Hawley, 'Tree amigos', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 June 2003, p. 22.

<sup>270</sup> Interview with Tim Thorncraft, Toonumbah, 21 December 2008, transcript in possession of author.

challenging the legality of the Forestry Commission's actions. Chaelundi was eventually won, as were many other areas of rainforest and old growth forest across north east NSW. The scope of NEFA's successes are more than impressive. Pugh summarises:

Overall, in the past 15 years NEFA has been primarily responsible for 881,849 hectares being added to the reserve system in north-east NSW, as well as 310,000 hectares of State Forests being included in Special Management Zones which are protected from logging under the *Forestry Act 1916*... Along the way we helped define old growth forest and redefine rainforest and ensured their protection, along with wilderness, on public lands. We forced the introduction of controls on logging operations on public lands for threatened species and improved erosion control. We played a significant role in shaping state and national policies. We forced the introduction of threatened species legislation into NSW. And we played a significant role in shaping Governments, particularly the downfall of the Greiner Government and the rise of the Carr Government.<sup>271</sup>

NEFA activists are 'recognised as some of the most skilled in the country'.<sup>272</sup> They have conducted training workshops for activist groups and students, been called upon to assist blockades across the country and have been involved in the development of university courses.<sup>273</sup> The techniques developed and refined by NEFA were recorded one night around a campfire, in 'embarrassingly joking bloody language'<sup>274</sup>, in the *Intercontinental Deluxe Guide to Blockading*.<sup>275</sup> The guide has since been shared with Australia and the world. In direct contrast to the importation of protest culture and technique, Terania Creek and consequently NEFA have exported techniques that have been taken up and employed by activist groups across the planet in defence of the earth.

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<sup>271</sup> Dailan Pugh, 'My involvement in forest campaigns'.

<sup>272</sup> Parks, *Environmental Protest Songs*, p. 12.

<sup>273</sup> Ricketts, 'Om Gaia Dudes', p. 76.

<sup>274</sup> Interview with Tim Thorncraft, Toonumbah, 21 December 2008, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>275</sup> North East Forest Alliance, *The Intercontinental Deluxe Guide to Blockading*, circa. early 1990s.

Uniquely Australian ideas, in uniquely Australian language ('dodgy', 'dope' and 'deep shit' to name a few) were absorbed by Earth First! in the US. Thorncraft recalls, 'at one stage Earth First! in the States were distributing (the Intercontinental Deluxe Guide) for a dollar a copy'.<sup>276</sup> The notion of Australian influence abroad is not just a construction of proud activists – international sources support these claims and acknowledge Australian ingenuity. Derek Walls' *Earth First! and the Anti-Roads Movement: Radical Environmentalism and Comparative Social Movements* looks at the Earth First! movement in Britain, making reference to the humble NEFA guide and acknowledging that it 'had directly influenced tactics used at the M11 and M65 anti-road actions'.<sup>277</sup> The first tripod used in protest in the US appears to have occurred in 1992,<sup>278</sup> and George McKay recognises that tripods were used in the Australian forests before they became widely used in Britain but claims that it was the British who first constructed them with steel.<sup>279</sup> (Australian sources however claim that the first tripod constructed in Australia was in 1989 – and it was made of steel.<sup>280</sup>) Marshall, who as mentioned had spent time in Australia under the influence of Seed, has noted, '(p)eople were using tactics that it took years for people to start doing here in Britain, like burying themselves in the road chained to blocks of concrete. All of this kind of thing was happening in Australia.'<sup>281</sup> Branagan argues that British environmentalists developed their own unique techniques such as tunnelling,<sup>282</sup> however Wall still gives credit to Australia; 'the tunnelling tactics used on the A30 and at Manchester airport protests have their origin in the rainforests of NSW'.<sup>283</sup> Furthermore the daring precariousness of Australian blockade structures have been recognised as influencing both US and British protest techniques.<sup>284</sup> In direct contrast to Australian protests which took issue with international causes in the 60s such as the Civil Rights movement, in November 1991 British activists dropped a banner from Australia House in London in protest against the logging of

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<sup>276</sup> Interview with Tim Thorncraft, Toonumbah, 21 December 2008, transcript in possession of author.

<sup>277</sup> Wall, *Earth First! and the Anti-Roads Movement*, p. 17.

<sup>278</sup> Restless, R. 'First American tripod is constructed in Cove/Mallard, 1992.' *Earth First! Journal*, 2000.

<sup>279</sup> George McKay, *DiY Culture: Parties and Protest in Nineties Britain*, London, 1998, p. 286.

<sup>280</sup> Nicole Rogers, 'Law, Order and Green Extremists' in *Green Paradigms and The Law*, ed. Nicole Rogers, Lismore, 1998, pp. 166-167.

<sup>281</sup> Wall, *Earth First! and the Anti-Roads Movement*, p. 174.

<sup>282</sup> Branagan, *We Shall Never Be Moved*, p. 236.

<sup>283</sup> Wall, *Earth First! and the Anti-Roads Movement*, p. 172.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

Australian forests.<sup>285</sup> While some have criticised the early Australian preoccupation with international issues, this act of British solidarity seems only to reinforce the strength and influence of Australian activism.

US activist Rik Scarce acknowledges that Terania occurred ‘nearly four years before the first comparable Earth First! action in the US’<sup>286</sup>, however Susan Zakin claims that Australian protests have been far larger than Earth First! US ‘could even dream about’.<sup>287</sup> US activists were aware that Australian environmentalists had scaled trees to prevent logging<sup>288</sup> and the first instance of tree-sitting in America occurred in 1985.<sup>289</sup> Earth First! grew to become an international organisation well-known for their radical techniques such as ecotage and are far more recognisable around the globe (and probably within Australia) than either Terania or NEFA. Dave Foreman, author of seminal work *Ecodefense: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching*<sup>290</sup> and founding member of Earth First! has suggested that the Western world take note of Australian innovation:

Instead of North America and Europe teaching the rest of the world how to live, we need some Australian aborigines and bushmen... I think too often the American environmental movement thinks that since we started environmentalism we know how to do it and every other environmental group in the world needs to learn from us. Well, I think we can learn from the Australian Conservation Federation [sic] and the Australian Wilderness Society... which have practiced nonviolent civil disobedience to stop dams.<sup>291</sup>

Not only does this demonstrate a reverse flow of knowledge in contrast to earlier criticisms; Foreman is specifically instructing America and Europe to seek Australian expertise. The world has learnt much from us. Teranian influence is easily recognisable around Australia and in Britain and the US, the Rainforest Information Centre has worked throughout Asia and South America and there are doubtless many more unrecognised cultural exports – Branagan

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<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>286</sup> Rik Scarce *Eco-Warriors: Understanding the Radical Environmental Movement*, California, 2006, p. 227.

<sup>287</sup> Susan Zakin, *Coyotes and Town Dogs: Earth First! and the Environmental Movement*, New York, 1993, p. 249

<sup>288</sup> Manes, *Green Rage*, p. 100; Wall, *Earth First! and the Anti-Roads Movement*, p. 171.

<sup>289</sup> Scarce, *Eco-Warriors*, p. 175.

<sup>290</sup> Dave Foreman, *Ecodefense: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching*, Tucson, 1985.

<sup>291</sup> Zakin, *Coyotes and Town Dogs*, p. 398.

mentions that NEFA activist Marita travelled to Ireland when activists were protesting deforestation for road development to 'give 'em a few more ideas', while Branagan himself has taken information on ecotage to the rainforests of Borneo.<sup>292</sup>

Again in contrast to international influences, Australian protest songs have been another export of forest culture. While 1960s Sydney University students adopted US folk songs for protest,<sup>293</sup> Australian songs are now sung in US forests.<sup>294</sup> Possibly another cultural export, Ricketts argues that NEFA were central to the creation of the 'feral' subculture which first developed during the five-month long Chaelundi campaign.<sup>295</sup> A combination of old-style hippie and anarchist punk, the forest ferals are now a fact of Australian forest protest culture. Quite possibly an imitation of the Australian model, a group of British ferals formed the core of the anti-roads protests in Britain in the mid 1990s.<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>292</sup> Branagan, *We Shall Never Be Moved*, p. 318.

<sup>293</sup> Scalmer, *Dissent Events*, p. 14.

<sup>294</sup> Ian Cohen quoted in Parks, *Environmental Protest Songs*, p. 13; Cohen, *Green Fire*, p. 27.

<sup>295</sup> Ricketts, 'Om Gaia Dudes', pp. 136-138.

<sup>296</sup> Evans, *Copse: The Cartoon Book of Tree Protesting*.

## Conclusion

*History will rarely ever record that it was bold and unlawful actions that brought an issue to the point of political solution; official histories most usually credit politicians and professional lobbyists with these achievements.*

Aidan Ricketts<sup>297</sup>

While Ricketts' assessment may be true of many histories, this history hopes to amend that unfortunate observation. It was neither politicians nor professional lobbyists who spoke on behalf of the forests of Terania - when both groups failed to intervene, the residents of Terania Creek and the surrounding valleys stood up and created an avenue to do so where previously there had been none. They brought to realisation the possibility that individuals could use direct action to affect government policy and to achieve success when hope is all but lost, and many more forests beyond Terania are safe today because of this realisation.

Despite an initial reliance on inspiration from abroad, the Australian protest movement has long surpassed external influence, playing a major role in the cultural exchange of protest methods and tactics. Terania was strengthened by the very epicentre of alternative Australia, and it is likely that the world-changing protest would never have occurred were it not for the local community. While the back to the land movement was instrumental to the influx of counterculture, it was Terania that brought the community together and acted as a training ground for activism, and the Rainbow Region continues to strongly support and promote protest culture. Unique to the very land itself, the Australian movement has grown from an uneasy beginning to a world-leading power.

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<sup>297</sup> Ricketts, Theatre of Protest: The Magnifying Effects of Theatre in Direct Action', p. 84.



With no plans or precedent, the Teranians were thrown into an entirely new situation and tactics that are familiar today arose from necessity and ingenuity. A melting-pot of ideas, principles such as nonviolence and consensus decision making aided the month-long collaboration of knowledge and resistance. Tree-sitting, bulldozer and road obstruction, 'black wallabying', intelligent media campaigns, police liaisoning, camp organisation and possibly even ecotage; activists around the world today who draw on such knowledge and techniques in the fight for the forests owe no small degree of thanks to the Teranian pioneers.

While in the short term the success of Terania led to the protection of Mt Nardi, the establishment of the Nightcap National Park and the historical decision to end rainforest logging in NSW, many of the protesters themselves gained an experience that would impact on the rest of their lives. One such protester was Neil Pike;

Every once in a while..., a rogue "historical" event slips past the guardians of public perception and sits there for all to see amongst the usual battleships, regime changes and economic collapses. Unkempt and decidedly disrespectful, these events just won't go away. They walk in, put their feet up on the table, burp a few times and keep asking "Oy mate, what's for lunch". The Terania Forest blockade is a good case in point. <sup>298</sup>

Protester Neil Pike's observation aptly highlights a few key points about Terania. Like Neil's description, Terania was a typically Australian occurrence. Witty and powerful yet laid back and naturally evolving, these aspects of Terania have become reminiscent of a powerful and successful Australian forest protest movement that continues to this day. As Neil also points out, Terania hasn't 'just gone away'. Despite the fact that the protesters were branded as nothing more than 'hippies' and 'ferals', (which no doubt many proudly called themselves), and despite predictions that the action would be ineffective and short-lived, Terania has proven to be anything but. While the protest itself has managed to slip by without much recognition, the shockwaves of Terania are visible the world over and through its dissemination, continue to have a transforming effect.

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<sup>298</sup> Neil Pike, 'Terania and all that', 2009.

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