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**TERANIA CREEK
AND THE FORGING
OF MODERN
ENVIRONMENTAL
ACTIVISM**

Vanessa Bible



Palgrave Studies in World Environmental History

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The widespread perception of a global environmental crisis has stimulated the burgeoning interest in environmental studies and has encouraged a range of scholars, including historians, to place the environment at the heart of their analytical and conceptual explorations. An understanding of the history of human interactions with all parts of the cultivated and non-cultivated surface of the earth and with living organisms and other physical phenomena is increasingly seen as an essential aspect both of historical scholarship and in adjacent fields, such as the history of science, anthropology, geography and sociology. Environmental history can be of considerable assistance in efforts to comprehend the traumatic environmental difficulties facing us today, while making us reconsider the bounds of possibility open to humans over time and space in their interaction with different environments. This series explores these interactions in studies that together touch on all parts of the globe and all manner of environments including the built environment. Books in the series come from a wide range of fields of scholarship, from the sciences, social sciences and humanities. The series particularly encourages interdisciplinary projects that emphasize historical engagement with science and other fields of study.

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Terania Creek and the Forging of Modern Environmental Activism

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Dedicated to the Aquarians and the Teranians, in thanks.

PREFACE

The Rainbow Region is a remarkable place. A cultural entity rather than a location defined by physical boundaries, this collection of communities within the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales has been at the centre of Australian counterculture since the late 1960s. The Aquarius Festival, held in Nimbin in 1973, kindled a spirit that burns brightly to this day. The region has led the way in cultivating a vast number of innovative and ecologically sustainable practices, in enacting and mainstreaming countercultural values, in green politics, and in protest culture.

I visit there every chance I can. It is a special place, and my heart is always at peace when I am there. There is a magic in the land, locals say, and it is a magic that I feel too. Part of the magic is in the rainforest that graces the mountains and valleys; ancient, verdant, fertile, these magnificent Gondwanan remnants are 200,000 years in the making. But were it not for a collective of new settlers who stood in defence of the forest in 1979, it might well all have been reduced to cattle pasture and banana groves, much like the fate of 98 % of the original 'Big Scrub'.

In 2008, I had not yet visited one such precious stand of rainforest, known by the suitably euphonic name of Terania Creek. As someone who considered themselves familiar with the great historical watersheds of the Australian environment movement, and as an environmentalist myself, I was very surprised when I happened across a certain display at the Lismore Information Centre. There I saw a presentation of articles, photos and newspaper clippings, detailing an anti-logging blockade at Terania Creek. When I saw the date—1979—I immediately knew that this was highly significant. It was potentially the earliest known example of a successful

forest blockade—certainly in Australia, and perhaps even the world. After conducting deeper research, I found that the same techniques pioneered spontaneously and organically on site during the four-week blockade were so innovative and influential that they are now employed by the environment movement across the globe. The story is very well known locally, and, in fact, it is such a strong part of local culture that a waterfall at Terania Creek was officially named Protesters Falls. I was amazed that this story was not part of the annals of Australian history, where it rightfully belongs, and so I set about correcting that.

This book started as a thesis by the name of ‘Aquarius Rising: Terania Creek and the Australian Forest Protest Movement’, undertaken at the University of New England, Armidale. Here I present a redevelopment of this thesis, drawing more on the wonderfully detailed oral history accounts that so richly informed my original work. My motivation is to share the story of Terania, through the words of the protesters themselves, in the hope of inspiring others as I have been inspired. We need such inspiration to confront the environmental challenges facing us, now more than ever before.

Stories such as this need to be told, and remembered.

For the Earth.

Armidale, NSW

Vanessa Bible

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As this book is based largely on my Honours thesis, it is appropriate to again thank those who supported me during my original work. First and foremost, I must acknowledge my Honours supervisor Professor Jennifer Clark, without whose support and belief in my ability, I may never have pursued a career in academia. Similarly, I must also thank the University of New England, and particularly Dr Bert Jenkins, Dr Marty Branagan, Dr Erin Ihde and Dr Nathan Wise, as well as Dr Rob Garbutt of Southern Cross University, for their further support and encouragement since that time.

I would also like to acknowledge the interviewees of my original oral history research, as well as some participants of more recent interviews conducted as part of my PhD research on which this book also draws. A number of people whom I had discussions with, but did not formally interview, must also be acknowledged. This list includes Elissa Caldwell, John Corkhill, Kim Curtis, Rhonda Ellis, Graham Irvine, Bert Jenkins, Paul Joseph, Dudley Leggett, Louise Mathieson, Maxx Maxstead, Nan & Hugh Nicholson, Meg Nielsen, Sean O'Shannessy, Peter Pedals, Neil Pike, Dailan Pugh, Aidan Ricketts, Pat Schultz, John Seed, Tim Thorncraft and Benny Zable. Further thanks to Rhonda Ellis and Graham Irvine for allowing me access to the Aquarius Archives at Southern Cross University, and special thanks to David Kemp for permission to reproduce some of his wonderful photos of the Terania Creek blockade. And, of course, I must express my gratitude to every person who took part at Terania Creek. Your actions not only directly saved Terania, but have indirectly resulted in the protection of many other ecosystems across the globe, as this work documents.

Thank you to the Bush Retreat for Eco-Writers (BREW) Network (and particularly to Sandra Sewell) for the opportunity to take up a ten-day writing retreat at Tamborine Mountain, allowing me to make significant writing progress. I must also thank Tom Fisher and Emmaline Gallagher for commenting on drafts and offering supportive feedback. Thanks to my brother, Ben Bible, for helping me put a map together at the last minute! And to my thirteen-year-old daughter, Audrey Bible, who all of this is for.

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Introduction

Abstract The introductory chapter explains the significance of this work as an account of the first-known successful forest blockade in history. It engages with arguments that the Australian protest movement merely represents a mimicking of the international scene, offering the alternative argument that the Australian environment movement has in fact been an activist pioneer of global influence. The United States looks to Earth First! as an example of radical environmental activism, while Britain is well known for its hard-hitting anti-roads campaigns. Yet, without the influence of Terania Creek, these events and organisations arguably would not have achieved the level of success and recognition that they have. The remarkable story of Terania Creek and its consequent influence deserve to be recognised in the annals of history.

Keywords Terania Creek • Global influence • Australian environment movement

The Northern Rivers region of New South Wales (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 25 million years ago, leaving a caldera of rich volcanic soil that nurtured the ancient Gondwana rainforest that once covered much of the Australian

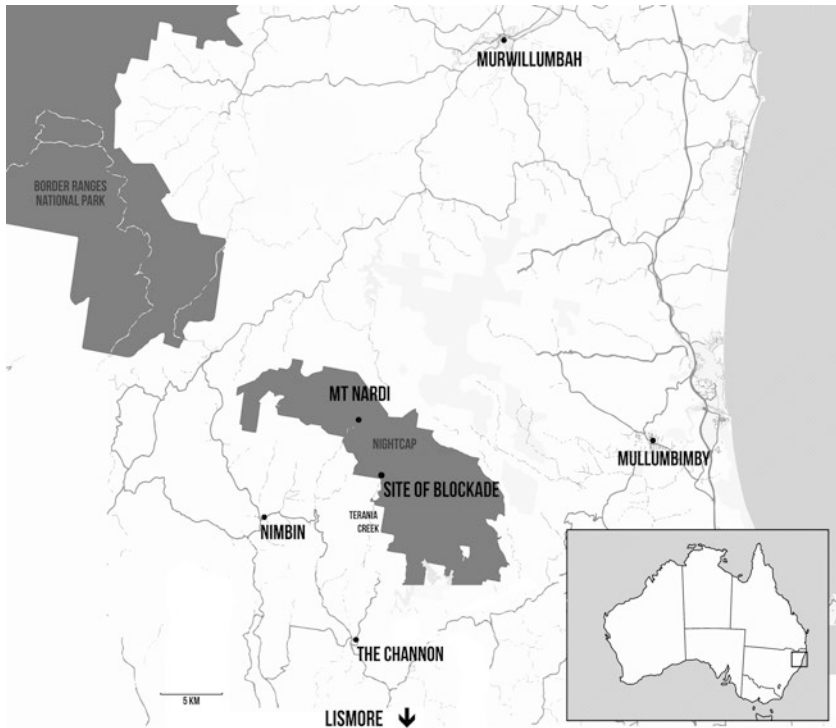


Fig. 1.1 The Rainbow Region

continent. The Widjabul people of the Bundjalung nation resided in these rainforests. The trees provided food and medicine, and supported their recreational, ceremonial and spiritual culture. The land was imbued with lore, 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’.

After thousands of years, the process of British colonisation inscribed new names upon these sacred sites, as well as new understandings and new values. Wollumbin became known as Mount Warning, and the rainforest became the Big Scrub. The rainforest nurtured valuable timber varieties such as Cedar, Beech, Brushbox, Rosewood, Teak and Coachwood. The forest remained undisturbed for a considerable time after the

establishment of the NSW colony in 1788; settlers believed it to be impenetrable, but in 1842, the first cedar cutters arrived. The clearing of the Big Scrub was intended to strip the forest of valuable timber, especially Red Cedar, while at the same time clearing the land for agricultural use, particularly dairy farms. By the turn of the century, most of the rainforest was gone.

The clearing of the Big Scrub continued throughout the twentieth century, near-unchallenged, until a third demographic shift brought with it a different set of values and understandings. In 1974, new settlers to the area learned of the New South Wales 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 the conservation movement was starting to understand the importance of rainforest. Supported by large numbers of new inhabitants determined to fight for this rare ecosystem, there followed a five-year campaign that culminated in 1979 with the world's first successful standoff between people and machinery in defence of a forest. The spirit and innovation of the protest, inspired in no small part by countercultural values, led to a spontaneous blockade in a style and at a scale never witnessed in the forests. Tactics and strategy that were forged there, on the ground, in the crucible of passion, confrontation, and determination, are the very same employed in forest activism globally today. Terania Creek has since echoed around the country and across the world, forever changing the nature of environmental campaigning, and empowering people to challenge the destruction of forests on a global scale.

Terania Creek was a momentous, unprecedented and highly influential protest of great global importance, 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 Green Bans, the Franklin, the Daintree—but in the vast majority of these discussions, Terania Creek is either completely omitted or, at best, briefly referred to as the first successful attempt to use direct action to halt environmental destruction, and then left at that, as though—inexplicably—it is somehow not of great historical significance. Terania Creek stands as the unacknowledged source of a great deal of activist techniques that have been passed down not only through the Australian environment movement, but onto the global movement as well. The protest pioneers of Terania Creek were not familiar with the now common images associated with a forest blockade, such as tree-sitting and bulldozer obstruction—rather, these were techniques of their own creation.

With no idea as to how things would unfold, the Terania Native Forest Action Group was formed in 1974 and for five years challenged the New South Wales Forestry Commission's plans for Terania Creek in any conceivable way that it could. But five years of 'polite' campaigning, lobbying and appealing to the NSW State Labor Government led by Neville Wran failed to save the forest, and logging was scheduled 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. Nonviolent direct action was not new, and it was a common concept for many of the protesters; what *was* new was the use of direct action in a forest setting, waged in defence of the trees.

A very significant factor in the success of the Terania Creek blockade was the fact that it occurred 'within walking distance of the largest alternative community in Australia' (Cohen 1996, 42). The Aquarius Festival of 1973 was held in the near-abandoned dairy village of Nimbin. An event that brought at least 5000 young people to the region, this ten-day countercultural arts festival inspired many to stay on in the area, boosting the growing numbers of new settlers seeking solace in the green hills of the Northern Rivers. The number of intentional communities in the region rose dramatically, and the widespread social change and growing awareness of environmental issues that was born of the 1960s spirit became part of the culture of the 'Rainbow Region' itself, as the area would become known.

Terania was, therefore, largely carried by alternative settlers influenced by the new ideas that a revolutionary era brought with it. Protest techniques such as sit-ins and moratoria were adopted primarily from Britain and the United States, both of which exerted a strong influence on Australian protest movements (see for example Gordon and Osmond 1970; Horne 1980, 52; Gerster and Bassett 1991; Scalmer 2002). Sean Scalmer's *Dissent Events* (Scalmer 2002) analyses the Australian protest movement and argues that it was based on the interpretation and extension of the imported concept of the 'political gimmick'. He concludes that Australians appropriated protest techniques to suit their own movement and imbued these techniques with their own culture. Absent from *Dissent Events* is any mention of Australia's environment movement. Contrary to his theory of importation, Australian forest protest is, in fact, an export—Scalmer does not consider the reverse process, but he does acknowledge that his work is an incomplete history (Scalmer 2002, 8).

Contrary to claims that Australian protest culture is merely an international import, the Australian forest protest movement is quite the opposite. From 1979 onwards, innovative 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 the Australian environment movement and has helped to create and shape protest techniques that have resonated around the world. While Terania Creek itself signalled the start of something new, tactics and techniques were further refined by a significant number of individuals who found themselves so transformed by the event that their lives were forever changed.

This book is an attempt to set the record straight. Leena Rossi argues that oral history is ‘irreplaceable’ as an environmental history methodology, as it allows direct access to the individual’s experience of the natural environment (Rossi 2011, 153). Drawing on the voices of protesters themselves, the inspiring story of Terania Creek comes to life through a combination of memories, first-hand accounts, and photographs. Starting with an outline of the conditions under which something like Terania could occur, Chapter 2 focuses on the context of the 1960s and the emerging Australian environment movement. In particular, it details the establishment of Northern NSW as a countercultural hub from the late 1960s. This chapter then considers the critical importance of the blockade’s local context, situated in the heart of a region that hosted the largest concentration of countercultural intentional communities (more derogatorily known as ‘communes’) in the Southern hemisphere at the time.

Chapter 3 traces the events in the lead-up to the protest, including the formation of the Terania Native Forest Action Group (TNFAG) and the details of its five-year campaign. Between 1974, when locals first learned of plans to log the Terania Creek basin, and 1979, when the blockade occurred, TNFAG tried all manner of ‘polite’ forms of protest, including letter-writing, lobbying and appealing to well-established conservation groups for advocacy. While the group’s campaigning remained within the confines of conventional protest techniques, it pushed the boundaries in terms of its approach. TNFAG drew on the skills of the highly educated countercultural community and pioneered innovative methods such as the production of a television commercial, the colourful and entertaining use of the arts to engage with senior politicians, and the original use of what we now call ‘citizen science’, conducting transect surveys of the forest and disseminating information about ‘rain forest’, an only recently distinguished and little-known category at the time.

Despite TNFAG's extensive efforts, the Forestry Commission maintained its determination to log Terania Creek, due to commence in August 1979. Chapter 4 documents the blockade: when all else failed, a mass demonstration spontaneously evolved into a month-long protest, which saw the pioneering of many now well-known activist tactics, including tree-sits, bulldozer obstruction, road sabotage, theatrical protest and 'black wallabying'. This chapter details these events, including the establishment of the camp and the principles of consensus decision-making on which it was formed, the strict adherence to nonviolence and the evolution of organic protest techniques. It also details the police reaction, the response of the media and the eventual intervention of politicians, bringing an end to the blockade and resulting in the protection of the forest, and all rainforest in NSW, in 1983.

Chapter 5 assesses the influence and dissemination of Terania Creek's repercussions on an individual, national and international scale. A great many of the Terania Creek protesters found themselves 'transformed'. They took their new-found knowledge and spirit of success, and went on to advocate for the environment in a variety of ways. Some continued down the activist path by attending future protests and training activists in nonviolent direct action. Others, inspired by the rapidly increasing awareness of the significance of rainforest, took this knowledge overseas, became environmental educators or established rainforest regeneration nurseries. The protest also led to the direct establishment of other environmental organisations, including the Nomadic Action Group (which campaigned at the renowned Franklin River blockade in Tasmania in 1982/3), the North East Forest Alliance (which protected over a million hectares of rainforest and old growth forest in NSW alone) and the Rainforest Information Centre (which toured the Americas, and provided instruction to US-based Earth First!). This chapter also demonstrates how techniques invented at Terania have been employed by Earth First!, the British anti-roads movement, Irish forest campaigners, rainforest advocates in Borneo and, more recently, by the global anti-fracking movement. It ends with a discussion of the Bentley Blockade, the most significant protest event to occur in the region since Terania Creek.

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' (Doyle 2000, xvii). The Australian environment movement is often given such credit, yet without the recognition of Terania Creek and the innovations

that would follow, the history of this ‘powerful dissenting social movement’ is incomplete. Terania deserves to be remembered with at least the same prestige as the world-famous Franklin River campaign; 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 victory that was seemingly small on a global scale, their actions had far wider consequences and brought much more success than they could have ever imagined.

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Australian Counterculture

Abstract This chapter outlines the conditions under which the Terania Creek blockade occurred, including the context of the 1960s, the significance of the Rainbow Region and the emerging Australian environment movement. In particular, it details the establishment of Northern New South Wales as a countercultural hub in the early 1970s. This, too, is an area of scholarship that has received little attention. The chapter details the critical importance of the blockade's local context, happening as it did within the largest concentration of countercultural communities in the Southern hemisphere at the time, the same place that was home to Nimbin and the 1973 Aquarius Festival.

Keywords Counterculture • Aquarius Festival • Rainbow Region • Nimbin • Intentional communities

Terania Creek signified the beginning of a completely new repertoire of environmental activist techniques and tactics, but the event did not spring from obscurity. There are two critical elements underlying the conditions in which the first spontaneous blockade in defence of a forest would occur. Firstly, the campaign to save Terania Creek commenced in 1974. While this date falls outside the temporal boundary of the 1960s, Australia was a little slower to embrace that seminal era—the 1960s did not really arrive

there until late in the decade, and the true spirit of the times only came to the fore in the early 1970s. Terania, then, was heavily influenced and informed by the counterculture, as well as the new wave of ecological understanding that belongs to the era. Secondly, Terania Creek was situated in the very heart of the Australian incarnation of the 1960s counterculture. While Australia may have been slower to embrace the 1960s and cultivate its own movements, the Australian environment movement represents an organic and innovative response to the country's own history and culture. It was a reaction 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 remained in Australia isolated pockets of an ancient environment that was still rapidly disappearing, and the rainforest basin of Terania Creek represented one of these remnants.

THE 1960S IN AUSTRALIA

Terania cannot be looked at in isolation from the wider context of the 1960s. Its key elements—the concept of protest as an effective political tool, countercultural values and environmental concern—owe much to their development and influence during the 60s era. The 1960s marked the 'dawning of the Age of Aquarius'. Empowering individuals to challenge the status quo, protest exploded across the United States, Britain, and wider Europe over all manner of social injustices including, war, racism and sexism, as part of a worldwide transformation of thought on such issues (Reich 1970; Gerster and Bassett 1991; Burgmann 1993). The Vietnam War, in particular, was one of the most important issues of the 1960s, and millions of people took to the streets in protest. The anti-war protests became a 'symbol of dissent' (Gerster and Bassett 1991, 34). 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 (Isserman and Kazin 1989, 213).

American and British protest culture was a strong source of inspiration for the Australian movement—so much so that Australia has been accused of merely mimicking international models of protest. It has been argued that it was not until the late 1960s and early 1970s that the 'radicalisation' of society would reach Australian shores (Burgmann 1993, 189–190) and when it did, it was largely in the shadow of American student political

action (Gordon and Osmond 1970; Munro-Clark 1986; Scalmer 2002, 14). 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 protests themselves. Scalmer (2002, 13) demonstrates that causes taken up by Australian students were characteristically international in focus. While the burning of the draft cards that commanded young men to fight for their country in Vietnam was an imported protest action 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. Australia faced embarrassing criticism from American news outlets and student groups for holding a Civil Rights solidarity rally while ignoring the nation's own appalling treatment of Aboriginal people and migrants (Scalmer 2002, 18). The result was a painful lesson in humility. African-American student activist Charlie Pyatt II commented:

News of your sympathy demonstrations reaching our shores caused America to look with silent embarrassment [...] I ask you most humbly, most appreciatively, can you find the sympathy in your hearts and consciences to conduct PEACEFUL demonstrations against these laws in your own country? (cited in Scalmer 2002, 18)

Sufficiently rebuked, students at the University of Sydney established Student Action for Aborigines, leading to the Freedom Ride of 1965—a daring bus tour of rural New South Wales (NSW) that shone a spotlight on Australia's own informal apartheid (Curthoys 2002).

The Freedom Ride represented a home-grown political cause and an appropriate response, marking a maturation of the Australian movement. The strong influence of American culture continued to exert itself, however; Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) led the way for student activism in the United States, and so Australian students 'faithfully followed [their] American brother' and looked to the SDS for inspiration (O'Brien 1970, 227). Radical American critiques and techniques such as sit-ins, talk-ins, and moratoria were directly imported (Alomes 1988, 193). Horne (1980, 52) notes that

in 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.

Gerster and Bassett (1991, 34) 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’. Australia’s very involvement in Vietnam was dependent on the nation’s alliance with the United States. Gerster and Bassett also claim that American 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’ (1991, 34). Australian protest culture was yet to earn its independence from its parent cultures.

ECOLOGICAL AWARENESS

The conservation movement, which had been gradually developing since the mid-nineteenth century, also faced significant upheaval as a result of its collision with the 1960s. The conservation ethic had focused more on preserving the planet’s economic resources and our anthropocentric right to enjoy recreational areas. In the 1960s, much of 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, in our food [and] in Vietnam’ (Jamison 2001, 2). The 1960s could really be considered to have arrived in Australia with the election of the left-wing Whitlam Labor government in 1972. Gough Whitlam embodied many of the 1960s values—refreshingly progressive and concerned about environmental issues, Whitlam’s reforms also sought to address social inequities, including Aboriginal rights, health, education, welfare and gender equality. Furthermore, his prime minister-ship brought an end to Australia’s involvement in Vietnam (see, for example, Rann 2014, 599–600).

While the Civil Rights Movement marked the start of the ‘radicalisation’ of American society, the Vietnam War was a major catalyst for dissent in Australia (O’Brien 1970, 229). It was a war that, for many, created an awareness of environmental destruction, with images of napalm-ravaged rainforests beamed directly into people’s living rooms (Cole 1975, 130–133; Hutton 1987, 1). Renowned environmental activist and Nimbin resident Benny Zable (2012) recalls:

You could see graphically during the Vietnam War, what it was doing on television, you know. That really woke up a lot of people. They could see what war is and what it’s doing. And also the destruction of the environment was filtering through to the mainstream through the media.

The ecology movement also had its roots in Europe and the United States, and it had exerted significant influence on a number of Australians who would go on to be involved at Terania Creek. While the science of ecology was conceived of in 1866 by German biologist Ernst Haeckel (Knight 2013, 400), it was not until the 1960s that it was mainstreamed into a household concept. In the wake of the post-war explosion of industry and affluence, several highly influential works were published, such as Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* (1968), Barry Commoner's *The Closing Circle* (1971) and the Club of Rome's *The Limits to Growth* (1972). These texts were absorbed by many of the Terania Creek protesters. For example, like many others, Rhonda Ellis had 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 (2010) had read *Silent Spring* and assumes that many others who were fleeing the city were also familiar with Rachel Carson's work. For Nan Nicholson (2010), Paul Ehrlich, who visited Australia in 1971 and appeared on national television, was a hero. With her partner and their two children, Nan moved to the end of Terania Creek Road from Melbourne, to 'live it, rather than talk it'. Dudley Leggett (1987, 221) had spent time in California with people who described themselves as belonging to 'flower power' culture. In 1972, Dudley and his wife Carol bought a property on Terania Creek Road, with the intention of seeking an alternative and sustainable way of life (Leggett 2010). It led to the foundation of one of the earliest intentional communities that the area would become famous for—Dharmananda, a community that exists to this day.

As this suggests, the counterculture in Australia was 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 echoed across the world (Monk 1998, 31). Dennis Altman (2010) has equated the 1969 Australian debut of American rock musical *Hair* as the epitome of 1960s counterculture, condensed into one performance and unleashed upon an Australian audience hungry for such material. Intentional communities represent another very significant element of the alternative scene; frequently based on the principles of environmentalism and cultural radicalism, they had become part of an established social movement in North America and Europe before they were trialled in Australia (Pepper et al. 1984, 18; Munro-Clark 1986, 53). Johnny Allen, co-organiser of the Nimbin Aquarius Festival of May 1973, describes the early counterculture ideals as an 'American pipe dream'. However, Allen (1975, 28) continues:

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.¹

While, up to this point, the counterculture was undoubtedly an international import, the Aquarius Festival ‘changed all that’.

CREATING THE RAINBOW REGION

The mighty volcano that once dominated the region, Wollumbin is still very much part of the landscape today, clearly etched upon the land. The sheer size of the caldera is visible when looking at a topographic map—its remnant edges encompass an area from the Border Ranges in the north and west, south to the Nightcap range (from which Terania Creek flows), while the eastern edge, less discernible, has eroded away near the coastline. The full extent of the shield volcano, however, can also be made out by the foothills of the remnant ranges that demarcate Wollumbin’s original extent; spanning an area 100 km across, Wollumbin stretched from Mt Tamborine in the north, south to Lismore, east to the coastline and west to Toonumbar (National Parks and Wildlife Service 1985, 14–15). This is the Rainbow Region. Whether the name was inspired by colonial explorer James Henry Rous’ ship *The Rainbow*, the great number of rainbows that grace this high-rainfall region, or as a result of the rainbow being a ‘hippie’ symbol, the name is synonymous with the unique character of the Northern Rivers region of NSW (Conway Herron 2003, 168; Wilson 2003, 2).

The rainforest that was cultivated by Wollumbin’s fertile remnants was given the name the Big Scrub by Europeans, revealing something of their attitude towards it. It was considered impenetrable—a tangled knot of dense jungle. But when ‘red gold’ was discovered there in 1842, the region was rapidly and dramatically opened up to resource exploitation and colonisation (McCurdy 1958; Daley 2011). Red cedar had nearly disappeared from the landscape by the turn of the century, along with other valuable exotic timbers. The land that became available as a result of the clearing of the Big Scrub was taken up by squatters and settlers, who eventually settled on dairy, bananas and sugarcane as those agricultural industries best suited to the region’s humid and fertile climate (Cousins 1933, 51–63; Daley 2011, 110). By the mid-twentieth century, however, the dairy industry was in serious decline, villages were losing a significant proportion of their pop-

ulation, and farmers were selling degraded farms at very low prices. 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 heart of Australian counterculture.

While Nimbin is commonly considered to be the countercultural centre from which the vibrant alternative communities it is known for grew, it must be noted that from the late 1960s, up to a hundred alternative settlers had been busy populating the hills behind Mullumbimby, on the opposite side of the Nightcap Range to Nimbin (Joseph 2008). While the dairy industry was failing in Nimbin, Mullumbimby was faced with the failure of the banana industry, resulting in extremely cheap land; new settlers could live for \$2 AUD a week, or, in some cases, for nothing, in abandoned farmhouses and banana sheds at Main Arm and Upper Main Arm (Joseph and Irvine 2010; Ellis 2012). One of these new settlers was Paul Joseph, who recalls:

My idea was that we'd have a little fair [...] and invite all the local people to come and see that we weren't some radical ratbags, or a threat to the local population [...] Because it was very hard for country people to understand us, because we'd come from the city, we were young, men were mostly long-haired and bearded, we didn't mind taking our clothes off, you know. It was the days of acid and experimentation with all kinds of things, and this was confronting to people. They didn't understand us [...] So [my] idea [...] was that we have a fair where we show that we were craftspeople, and artists, and we had a vision and we wanted to be part of the fabric of the place. And one night there was a knock on the door, and here's these people from the Australian Union of Students, saying that they wanted to have a festival in the country, around Mullumbimby. And would I help them and get involved, which to me was like the angels sending some ... [*laughs*] (Joseph and Irvine 2010).

Nimbin Aquarius

The biennial Aquarius Festival was promoted and staged by the Australian Union of Students (AUS, now the 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 was inspired by the back-to-the-land concept and decided to find a rural location to promote these ideals (Dunstan 1975, 20). The Nimbin Progress Association was approached, and committee members were only too happy to have the festival held in their struggling village, in the hope

that it would revitalise their home. The Aquarius Festival certainly achieved that but perhaps not in the way that the locals had intended. Paul Joseph explains:

Nimbin was the centre of Terania Shire [...] But it had died because of the decline of the dairy industry first, and then that got rid of the people. The timber industry was pretty much finished, dribs and drabs of it in those days. But the cattle industry, which kept a lot of the land afloat, went through a deep depression in the early 70s. So as a result of that, Nimbin was typical of much of the countryside, in deep decline. And there were lots of empty houses everywhere [...] a guy called Colin James who was an Architecture Lecturer at Sydney Uni, said, why don't we recycle a town? So that led us to find Nimbin [...] We found Nimbin a deserted town. Like a ghost town. Shutters on the windows, empty buildings. In early 1973, we had a meeting with the Town Progress Association [...] Nimbin was very, very happy for us to have the festival there. I have a letter [...] written by the town policeman at the time, who we'd gone to, to say 'this is what we want to do', and he was urging this meeting to accept our offer for the festival [...] And we were able to buy some of the buildings in town. The first one we bought was the RSL Club [...] we bought that for \$500. And we bought the town General Store, which is now the Hemp Embassy, it was \$1000 [...] we called it the Tomato Sauce for a long time. And we bought what's now the Rainbow Cafe, and that other little shop. That cost us \$1000 but we had to do a special deal there, there were lots of special deals done in the sense of old fashioned, country relationships. Everything was done on a handshake (Joseph and Irvine 2010).

The ten-day festival represented the very expression of the Australian counterculture—co-organiser Graeme Dunstan (1975, 19) envisioned the Aquarius Festival as 'a total counter cultural happening'. Complete with all the recognised symbols of the counterculture—drugs, music and 'free love'—Nimbin is still 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' (Lismore City Council 1996). However, while Woodstock revellers dissipated afterwards and people returned to their homes—the locals were actually adamant that the 'hippies' must return to their own homes afterwards (Israel 2009)—many Aquarians were so inspired by what they had created that they decided to attempt to keep the spirit of the festival alive. People bought up the remaining cheap land, 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 co-operative in Australia, creating

legal history. Paul Joseph was central to the creation of the Tuntable community:

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. We created this co-op, and then went to the local council who were a council of farmers, Terania Shire, and they said 'Yeah, that's a good idea, and it will help bring the life back into the area', and before you knew it, we were up and away (Joseph and Irvine 2010).

This historic legal precedent opened up the concept of multiple occupancy properties, strengthening the intentional community movement. As noted earlier, such communities had been a central expression of the counterculture in Europe and the United States before they were attempted in Australia. In 1971, an intentional community named Kohinur was established at Upper Main Arm, near Mullumbimby (Joseph and Irvine 2010), and Dudley Leggett's community, Dharmananda, had been established in 1972 (Leggett 2010). By 1975, there were a thousand alternative settlers in Tuntable and the surrounding valleys (Allen 1975, 28). 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' (Irvine 2003, 63). They were more successful than many other communities because they were concentrated in one small area, and therefore had the advantage of support, rather than the 'abrasive rural resistance' which was a common issue for other communities internationally (Wingham 1975, 32). Graham Irvine was one of the original Aquarians, travelling to Nimbin in 1973 with the specific intent of establishing an intentional community (Wingham 1975, 32). Graham believes that

those 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 (Joseph and Irvine 2010).

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 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 (Australian Greens 2010). A local to the region, Andy Parks (1999, 15) has pointed out that the festival's 'May Manifesto' promoted a desire for it to be 'an experience in living in harmony with the natural environment'. The organisers had deliberately sought a rural location, embracing the back-to-the-land philosophy. Additionally, it led to the establishment of intentional communities, many of which were based on environmental principles, such as permaculture and sustainability. While the region's intentional communities were not necessarily full of individuals who would describe themselves as environmentalists, many, if not all, had a strong environmental focus and actively considered their impact on the surrounding natural environment (Taylor 1981; Joseph and Irvine 2010).

The back-to-the-land convergence on Northern NSW was diverse; along with countercultural adherents, couples and families escaping city life also migrated (Wingham 1975, 32; Metcalf 1984, 67). Nan and Hugh Nicholson were among those who were more reluctant to identify themselves as 'hippies'; while Nan expresses a keen interest in many of the values held by their more radical neighbours, Hugh responds thus to the question of whether they had been involved with the Aquarius Festival:

No [*laughs*], no we were out there looking for land in all our innocence. And all of a sudden this Aquarius Festival happened in Nimbin and land prices just took off, and we were appalled! [*laughs*] So we were—well, relatively straight and hadn't really heard of the counterculture and all that very much (Nicholson and Nicholson 2010).

The back-to-the-land movement was indisputably environmental in focus, but there was also an element of survival—many were fleeing the possibility of nuclear war, confronted as they were with new colour televisions relaying images from Vietnam (Joseph and Irvine 2010). Rhonda Ellis believes that many of the new settlers were well educated and informed, and were familiar with the wealth of alarming new information on environmental degradation espoused by scientists and ecologists such as

Rachel Carson, Paul Ehrlich and Barry Commoner (Ellis 2010). Rhonda 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 [...] And some people were quite sophisticated and had scientific knowledge about farming methods [...] I know it was thirty odd years ago, but we were not naive about those things (Ellis 2010).

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’ (Turvey 2006) that would stand in defence of the rainforests had come together, although they were not yet aware of it. Reminiscing on the thirtieth anniversary of Terania, Nan Nicholson (2009) 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.’

AUSTRALIA’S ENVIRONMENT MOVEMENT

The Rainbow Region asserted itself as a uniquely Australian countercultural development, influenced by the international scene, yet independent and influential in its own right. While the Australian counterculture represents a gradual maturation towards autonomy, the *environment* movement is a different story. It has been argued that Australia’s dependence on inspiration from outside sources was a hindrance, rendering the nation incapable of creating its own distinct 1960s culture (Gordon and Osmond 1970, 3–39; Morgan 1973, 726–731; Munro-Clark 1986, 57). This accusation, coupled with Australia’s renowned ‘cultural cringe’, had led to the argument that Australian radicalism was ‘weak’ (Gordon and Osmond 1970, 3–4). Political commentator Patrick Morgan wrote in 1973:

[I]mitation 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 (Morgan 1973, 727).

Theodore Roszak's *The Making of a Counter Culture* (1969, xii) 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.' Given that white Australia had only a short history at the time, it might be fair to say that it had *less* to counter, although it should be noted that the cultural baggage of conservative European values and institutions was also carried into Australia. More significantly, however, there was one crucially important issue in desperate need of countering. Perhaps not yet apparent to all in 1973 was the rapid, widespread and severe destruction of the Australian environment.

Australian environmental historian Tom Griffiths argues that the Australian environment suffered the fate of the dual impact of colonisation and industrialisation at the same time (Griffiths 1997, 4); for much of Australian colonial history, and up until the 1960s, the significance of this 'compressed, double revolution' was not understood. The ancient and powerful Australian landscape, indeed the oldest landscape on earth (Vergano 2014), was frighteningly unfamiliar to many European settlers, who characterised it as unattractive, desolate, 'gloomy and weird' (Read 1996, 139). In 1822, lawyer Barron Field declared: '[t]here 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' (Angel 2008, 33). 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. Tim Flannery (2002) explains:

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.

What Australia lacked in industrial 'development' and 'progress', given the settlers' short time in an alien land, it soon made up for by logging, clearing,

mining, killing (both native animals and people alike) and ‘conquering’ the landscape (see, for example, Bolton 1981; Papadakis 1993, 45–69). A long-time CSIRO (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation) 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; ‘[b]efore the early 1960s, Australia distinguished herself among all nations by knocking [the] hell out of the place so rapidly’ (cited in Brouwer 1979, 15).

Just as the 1960s were influenced from outside, so too were white Australians’ mental images of place. Echoing critics of Australian protest imports, Ken Johnson (1994, 42) 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.

It was only when white Australians started to settle into the landscape that the damage perpetrated against the natural environment started to cause alarm. The conservation movement, the forerunner of Australia’s powerful and influential environment movement, was initially more concerned with preserving the earth’s ‘resources’ than preserving life itself (Pearce 1961; Price 1982, 38; Koppes 1988, 251). While conservation—ecology’s older and somewhat more anthropocentric relative—had a different focus, it created a space for Australians to start questioning the ‘value’ of land, and, indeed, 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 the country’s national identity and conscience (Lines 2006, 58), and in 1965 the Australian Conservation Foundation was established. In the late 1960s, the Colong Committee was founded, initially for the sake of campaigning to save the Colong Caves in the (now World Heritage) Blue Mountains from their proposed fate as a limestone mine. However after their success, the committee expanded their conservation campaigns to other regions, including the rainforests of the Border Ranges (Colong Committee 1983; Meredith 1999, 7). At the same time, in 1969, the Save Our Bushlands Action

Committee successfully campaigned to protect the Little Desert in Western Victoria (Robin 1998; Hamilton 2016, 157). In 1971, the Fraser Island Defence Organisation launched a campaign to prevent sand-mining on Fraser Island (Hutton and Connors 1999, 146–149), now also a World Heritage Site and a major tourist destination. Bill Lines' *Patriots* argues that increasing numbers of Australians felt a strong connection to the land, and that their sense of belonging propelled the conservation movement. This growing relationship with the Australian landscape, argues Lines (2006, 74), was one of the building blocks of the national culture.

Far from an importation, the environment movement emerged as a consequence of white Australia settling into the landscape. It was a unique combination of the realisation that the Australian environment had been largely devastated by white colonisation, and the developing sense of attachment that Australians started to feel for their homeland (Read 2000). It must be acknowledged that this has had a deep impact on Aboriginal Australia. It was only through the dispossession of Aboriginal land that white Australians were able to develop a sense of belonging. Peter Read's *Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership* (2000) is one of the most important works in this area, while Rob Garbutt's *The Locals: Identity, Place and Belonging in Australia and Beyond* (2011) is another important work that is coincidentally largely situated in the Northern Rivers region.

It is commonly accepted that Australia only 'came of age' when confronted with war, and the nation's identity and culture developed a distinctive flavour once it had to fight to protect the homeland (see for example Curthoys 1997, 29). 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 (2006) evokes a concept of Australian environmentalists as war heroes. The language used by people recalling memories of Terania supports this—we encounter 'fighting', 'guerilla' (Nicholson and Nicholson 2010), 'battle' (Joseph and Irvine 2010), 'It was like hearing deaths ... it just seemed like the forest was screaming' (Ellis 2010) and 'it was like being suddenly in a war. A warzone' (Leggett 2010). Judith Wright (1980, 27–31) posits that Terania Creek aroused an unprecedented patriotism in Australians who fought for *this* land. Milo Dunphy (1979b, 11–13) asks if Terania Creek was 'the Eureka Stockade of Australia's forests', drawing not on international influences but on Australia's own culture of resistance. The Eureka Stockade was one of the nation's first acts of rebellious uprising against the

colonial powers in 1854, just as Terania Creek was the first act of rebellion in defence of forests. 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, a group of suburban housewives known as the ‘Battlers for Kelly’s Bush’ joined forces with the NSW Builders Labourers Federation (BLF) to preserve one of the last remaining pieces of forest in the suburbs of Sydney, on the Parramatta River at Hunters Hill (Kalajzich 1996; Burgmann and Burgmann 1998). The result was the establishment of the Green Bans: an agreement put in place by the BLF that they would order their members to strike against any development that would harm Sydney’s environmental or built heritage. The Green Bans continued over several years and successfully halted unwanted development, preserved parklands and saved historic buildings (including some of the oldest remnants of old Sydney Town, The Rocks). Jack Munday, leader of the BLF and one of the central figures behind the Green Bans, argues that the movement ‘was unique and attracted the attention of environmentalists the world over’ (Munday 1987, 109). Interestingly, Scalmer’s single mention of the environment movement 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’ (2002, 100–101).

The Green Bans were not the only instance of innovative activism to emerge in the 1970s. In 1972, the Lake Pedder Action Committee (LPAC) was formed in an attempt to prevent the Tasmanian Hydro-electric Committee’s 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 establishment of the first ‘Green’ political party in world history—the United Tasmania Group (Walker 1989, 163). It was in the wake of Lake Pedder that Whitlam established the National Estate, for the first time recognising the natural environment as an integral part of Australia’s heritage. Thus, it is evident that even before Terania and the recognised symbolic actions of the movement such as the Franklin campaign, Australia was already forging new approaches in the battle against environmental destruction—independent of aid or instruction from international activists or movements.

Aboriginal Land (Always Was, Always Will Be)

Another significant factor that has helped shape a uniquely Australian counterculture is its recognition of the Indigeneity of Country, or the inherent Aboriginal nature of the Australian landscape. Australian Aboriginal people belong to the oldest, longest surviving culture on Earth (Sveiby and Skuthorpe 2006). Aboriginal lore 60,000 years in the making can still be recalled, despite a long and bloody colonial legacy and the structural violence that still perpetuates this legacy today. The counterculture sought to question the previously near-unchallenged shadows of racism and social inequality. While not a perfect effort displaying linear progress, social activists, starting with the Freedom Ride and reinforced by the environment movement, have deliberately sought interaction with the land's traditional owners. There has been a strong connection between the environment movement and the Aboriginal rights movement, both fighting to preserve the country for an ancient people and awe-inspired newcomers alike.

Paul Joseph recounts what happened when the Aquarius Festival organisers heard that Nimbin was a men's initiation ground for the Bundjalung people and that women 'couldn't survive there' (Joseph and Irvine 2010). 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 Pitjantjara, 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 (Joseph and Irvine 2010).

Terania was of tremendous importance for the coming together of Aboriginal and white Australia; the campaign has been 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 (Norst 1999, 44). Elders were approached during the campaign, which is now common practice within the environment movement (Nicholson 2009; pers. obs.). 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 there (Kendell and Buivids 1987, 41–42; Foley 1999, 29). 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 felt with the land; white Australians had behaved like the Aboriginal people, in fierce defence of the environment (Dunphy 1979b, 5). Nan Nicholson (2010) extrapolates:

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.



Fig. 2.1 Burnum Burnum addresses a crowd of 2000 at Terania Creek, 1979 (Photo Credit: David Kemp)

While Terania was the first successful anti-logging blockade, indigenous Australians had been attempting, unsuccessfully, to halt the destruction of the very same land for hundreds of years. Len Webb (1999) commented during the twentieth anniversary celebrations of Terania Creek: ‘physical confrontation to defend land, in which people have deep emotional and special religious roots, is of course not new in Australia’. While the invasion and takeover of Aboriginal land occurred across the continent, the Bundjalung people in particular were known to have directly resisted invasion (Nicholson 2009; Kijas 2003, 27).

Bundjalung woman Ruby Langford Ginibi (2003, 15) has a theory about why the alternative settlers were drawn to the ‘magic of the land’:

Nimbin had an invasion from down south. All the hippie-type people landed looking for spirituality in places like the Rainbow Café. The spirituality these people were looking for was Aboriginal spirituality: Nimbin is a very sacred place to my people, the Bundjalung tribes, because the Nimbin Rocks was the place where our clever men (we-angali) were buried.

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 provided guidance in the Australian environmental experience. Terania Creek had ‘inspired something new’, believes former Greens member of NSW Parliament Ian Cohen (1996, 16); there was ‘an irresistible drive to protect’. 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’ (Seed 2008). 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’ (Norst 1999, 44). Nan Nicholson (2010) comments:

Aboriginal friends of ours in town now said to us once, this is Auntie June Gordon, and her husband, Uncle Roy [...] ‘Oh it was great when you hippies came along, because it took all the pressure off us!’ They were really aware. I didn’t know them at the time (of the campaign), I wish I had known them. They were really fantastic people. And 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. If you haven’t got that connection, it’s—I feel extreme enough to say it’s hard for us to be human if you don’t have land.

Belonging

It is now widely recognised that emotional attachment to the environment can be just as strong for those whom the environment movement perceives as being adverse to the best interests of the land, such as loggers, miners and farmers. Forests, for example, have provided livelihoods for loggers and often, a deep reverence for forest exists within those who toil in it. The issue of conflict over forests, arising as a result of competing land ethics, was also a very important element of the struggle at Terania Creek. This issue is explored in detail by both Watson (1990) and Turvey (2006).

A particularly strong source of resentment arose from the feeling that the new migrants to the area, being ‘non-local’, did not have the authority to speak for the place, the community or the forests. Local newspaper the *Northern Star* was particularly critical of the protesters, and, since the Aquarius Festival, it had featured a high volume of negative stories about these radical non-locals (for a discussion on the anti-counterculture stance of the *Northern Star* during this era, see Martin and Ellis 2003). However, Russell Kelly (2003, 113) posits that there were actually a significant number of local residents who had been ‘quietly arguing’ with authorities over environmental concerns, who were consequently empowered by the arrival of the new settlers and willing to speak out in more explicit ways. An ABC Radio program also recalls the attitudes of long-term locals, stating that ‘the Stewarts and Nowlans were relaxed about the “hippies” stopping the logging’ because the loggers were ‘outsiders’ coming to destroy the valley (McGee 2014).

Given the country’s history, culture and legal system, the Australian experience is unique. From uncertain beginnings, the Australian environment movement has evolved into a formidable force. While British anti-roads campaigners, starting in the early 1990s (Evans 1998), concerned themselves with protecting trees ‘some of which are over 200 years old!’ (Eco-action 1999), trees in Australian old growth forests are many times older—some species, such as Red Cedar and Antarctic Beech, commonly live for 2000 years. A protester at the Franklin River campaign in 1983 wrote a ‘communiqué from the blockade’ to the *Nimbin News* (1983, 5):

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.

Another very important element of the success of forest protest in Australia is the fact that the country's laws leave some space for dissent and protest (however, this is changing over time in response to significant levels of successful activist campaigning). In many other nations, such action would not even be attempted for fear of one's life in the repercussions (Cohen 1996, 28; O'Shannessy 2008). For example, in Brazil in 2005, a nun was murdered for her efforts to save the rainforest (Myers 2007, 211). In Australia, the worst that can happen is arrest, and many activists make the informed decision to take this risk. Additionally, state forests are state-owned, making access much easier. In the United States, on the other hand, forests are privately owned, making blockading a much more serious offence (O'Shannessy 2008). Nan Nicholson (2010) 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.'

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 thriving haven of counterculture, and the Australian environment movement found inspiration in a country that it could look upon with new and promising vision. These are the conditions in which the Terania Creek protest was cultivated, grown organically upon rainforest soil deliberately sought out by a uniquely Australian counterculture.

NOTE

1. Allen's 'Double Dissolution' comment refers to the infamous expulsion of Gough Whitlam and his Government under the archaic Australian Constitutional procedure which allows for both Houses of Parliament to be dissolved in the event of a deadlock. As for the Great Irish Prawn Conspiracy, its origin is unknown, but given the character of the region and its inhabitants there is a strong likelihood that it is a local oddity reflecting absurdist Australian humour, and perhaps it was even designed specifically to have people scratching their heads in confusion.

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The Terania Native Forest Action Group

Abstract This chapter focuses on the formation of the Terania Native Forest Action Group (TNFAG) and the details of its five-year campaign. TNFAG first tried ‘polite’ protest, including letter-writing, lobbying and appealing to well-established conservation groups. While the group’s campaigning remained within the confines of conventional protest techniques, it pushed the boundaries in terms of approach. TNFAG drew on the skills of an educated countercultural community and pioneered innovative methods, such as the production of a television commercial and ‘citizen science’, conducting transects of the forest and disseminating information about ‘rain forest’—an only recently distinguished and little-known category of forest at the time. The chapter also details the establishment of the blockade camp and the centrality of the principles of consensus decision-making to the campaign.

Keywords Terania Native Forest Action Group • Conservation • Forestry Commission • Consensus decision-making

In the 1970s, logging was one of the most important industries in New South Wales (NSW), and the Northern Rivers region was no exception. After plans to log the Terania Creek basin became known to residents of Terania Creek Road in 1974, a group of concerned citizens, who had

deliberately moved to the area to be close to the forest, banded together to establish the Terania Native Forest Action Group (TNFAG). Larger conservation groups were already campaigning for other areas deemed more significant, and so the action group had to forge its own way. What followed was a five-year campaign, during which time the group learnt a great deal about campaigning, politics, rainforest and the NSW Forestry Commission.

The TNFAG was formed in 1974 when Hugh Nicholson inadvertently learnt 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. Nan and Hugh Nicholson had bought a property at the very end of Terania Creek Road—the last property before the rainforest. The story is well-known locally; on one fateful day, Hugh heard a vehicle up in the forest and went to investigate.

I headed off up there and found Mackay's Road and followed it up, and came across some forestry fellows with their truck and they were just cleaning out the drains on the side of the road. And I asked them 'What are you doing?' and they said 'Well, we're just maintaining the road for when we come in to log'. And I said, 'log?!' [...] we contacted the forestry office in Murwillumbah and in their innocence, they told us what their plan was, which was to come in, at that time they were converting 500 acres a year of rainforest to Eucalypt plantation. That was what they were doing all through Whian Whian, and that was what was to happen with Terania Creek. They were going to log it, clear it, burn it, and replant it with Eucalypts (Nicholson and Nicholson 2010).

While the Nicholsons are very humble about their role at Terania and are quick to explain that the blockade was the joint effort of many individuals coming together, the fact remains that if Hugh had decided against investigating the vehicle in the rainforest that day, the forest may well not be standing now.

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 against this plan. 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 who happened to share their valley and were prepared to fight for the forest. 'And so we [met]—the meetings ended up with



Fig. 3.1 Terania Creek in the 1970s (Photo Credit: David Kemp)

“Well, what can we do to muck up forestry?” (Nicholson and Nicholson 2010). Dharmananda was just down the road, and Dudley Leggett (2010) got involved:

When 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.

By the mid-1970s, the conservation movement was in full-swing, mounting campaigns to protect forest across Australia. The Border Ranges, a vast area of rainforest sitting on the northern edge of the NSW border, represented a significant biodiversity hotspot. The most biologically diverse area in NSW, it includes subtropical rainforest, wet sclerophyll forest, mountain headlands, rocky outcrops and transition zones between forests, with a high diversity of endemic species (Border Rivers Gwydir Catchment Management Authority 2010, 12). Much of this knowledge, however, was only just coming to light at the time. Conservationist Jim Somerville (1999, 8) recalls: ‘Apart from those involved in forestry, the word “rainforest” was virtually unknown. Even in the embryonic conservation movement there was no public awareness in the early 1970s.’ The area was still being logged, and in 1972 a group of locals established the Border Ranges Preservation Society (Somerville 1999, 14; Lines 2006, 150). When the Colong Committee heard of the campaign, they too got involved, as did the National Parks Association and the Nature Conservation Council—due to the significance of the forest, the local cause received substantial support from city-based environmentalists (Hutton and Connors 1999, 150; Meredith 1999, 268).

Terania Creek was not very far away. Prior to the zeal of colonial ‘improvement’, both areas were originally part of the same vast forest, but the area TNFAG was concerned about was much smaller. The big conservation groups were reluctant to divert energy away from their campaign for the sake of what they considered to be a relatively unimportant patch of forest, and would not get involved over such a seemingly insignificant remnant (Colong Committee 1983; Nicholson and Nicholson 2010). Nan Nicholson (2010) explains:

We were in danger of taking a lot of the importance away from [the Border Ranges] by fighting for this small area, and they had a point, too. Because if

we fought for this tiny little rainforest and ended up with that stuff out there getting logged, and that would have been appalling. We were worried about that. But we just in the end felt OK, you've just gotta fight for what you can. And you can fight for your own backyard more than you can fight for anything else. You can fight more intensively for that. So we decided to go for it.

The lack of support from larger conservation groups meant that TNFAG was left to forge a campaign on its own, and to acquire vital knowledge in the process.

FORGING A CAMPAIGN

The techniques and tactics that had been employed by the Australian conservation movement prior to the 1970s could be described as 'polite'. While conservationists were challenging the status quo, they still did so with respect for authority. Their conduct can be understood in terms of E.P. Thompson's concept of 'moral economy' (1971). Thompson famously put forward the idea that there exists a social recognition of the rights of the masses to question authority, based on a reciprocity of norms and values between the ruling elite and the people. Such a notion is reflected in the values and behaviour of the conservation movement. Conservationists acted within the boundaries of perceived social norms, using 'legitimate' social practices—they campaigned according to certain perceived protocols and understandings of rights, in the hope that respectful conduct would be met with a respectful response. Acting within the system, conservationists utilised the methods of political lobbying, letter-writing, raising public awareness, attending meetings and penning submissions. Such an approach was employed by Myles Dunphy and the Sydney Bushwalkers Club from the 1930s (Meredith 1999). Dunphy was the leading figure; fellow Bushwalking conservationist Enid Rigby recalls, 'we all called him "The Father of Conservation"' (Borschmann 1999, 229). For the next few decades and up to the 1970s, the conservation movement continued campaigning 'within the system' (Meredith 1999, 6), using the polite, 'almost genteel' methods of Dunphy and Alan Rigby (Borschmann 1999, 229). This included Myles' son, Milo Dunphy, who would become a prolific conservationist in his own right, and while more radical than his father, he nonetheless adhered to 'polite' methods (for a comprehensive discussion of father and son, see Peter Meredith's 1999 work *Myles and Milo*).

TNFAG's approach marked a departure from such a style of campaigning. Tension would later arise during the blockade; key environmentalist Dailan Pugh (2010) recalls that protesters 'felt quite frustrated by the Sydney groups, who didn't support them taking direct action. They wanted just to resolve it politically at a Sydney level.' But even during the five years of campaigning that preceded the blockade, TNFAG pushed the boundaries and forged new tactics. Nan Nicholson (2010) relates:

There was probably a core group of about seven to ten [...] 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.

With no experience in running an environmental campaign, the group fortuitously included people with a range of different skills. It had a teacher, an advertising executive, an architect, an engineer, people with knowledge of environmental science, musicians and entertainers, and someone who knew how to sustain a community through such methods as consensus decision-making. Their academic skills put them in a good position to liaise with politicians and write letters and submissions. Foley's case study on Terania Creek looks at Terania as an example of on-the-ground learning, or 'learning in the struggle' (Foley 1999, 39). Foley demonstrates how the group learnt and acquired skills as it went, and notes that 'the experience of the campaign challenged and significantly altered the campaigners understanding of the world' (Foley 1999, 39). But, first and foremost, it brought a *different* understanding to the campaign. Peter Pedals was another core TNFAG member. Pedals is not Peter's surname by birth, but it is the name he is known by; passionate about alternative energy and all things pedal powered, he is also the founder of the first commercial solar company in Australia—the renowned Rainbow Power Company in Nimbin (see Pedals 1996, 68–71). Pedals (2012) explains the innovative nature of the TNFAG collective:

We had group meetings. I can't remember who—It might have been Nan to start with who said 'let's all get together [...] let's all try to come up with some ideas.' So we would then discuss what actions we needed to take and how we'd go about it. So these ideas developed from group sessions [...] it wasn't based on previous (activism). This kind of activism had never been done before, you know? So we worked out the process ourselves as we went along.

A New Approach

From the start of the campaign, the motivations expressed by TNFAG marked a contrast with most previous conservation campaigns, with the possible exception of the Border Ranges. While aesthetics certainly played a major role, there was also an expression of ecocentric values, including the ‘ethical or spiritual’ notion that flora and fauna have an inherent right to exist. Also expressed was an often undefinable emotional connection to the natural world (Webb 1987, 11). Dailan Pugh (2012) explains his desire to protect the rainforest:

Why? Because it’s magnificent and complex and has a right to exist and we need to protect it for its own sake. And to try and provide it [with] a viable future. I have an attraction to the natural environment that is in part inspired by aesthetics, but it’s also inspired by—I dunno, it’s just a feeling, I think, but I just love it.

Commenting on the contrast between the formidable Dunphys and TNFAG, Meredith argues that the notion of saving rainforest ‘for its own sake’ marked a new direction for environmentalism. Meredith also points out that ‘Sydney conservationists were deeply impressed by the strength of feeling, not to mention the organisational skill, of the Terania protesters’ (Meredith 1999, 268). Rhonda Ellis believes that the wider communities of the Rainbow Region provided opportunities for people to gain environmental knowledge by virtue of the high concentration of ecologically minded citizens: ‘if you weren’t educated around the environment, you got educated’ (Ellis 2012).

Such education included learning about the NSW Forestry Commission. 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 Terania Creek Basin, the Forestry Commission intended to burn the remaining scrub and establish a Eucalypt plantation in its place. 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 was that much of the forest had been over-logged, and the logging industry was exhausting its timber supply, with disastrous consequences for native forests.

The nature of the Forestry Commission had been changing under various pressures during the preceding decades. A policy to protect the Nightcap Forest, which is now part of the same National Park as Terania Creek, was nearly enacted by the NSW State Parliament in the 1930s. However, with the outbreak of the Second World War, plans were put on hold (Nightcap Action Group 1982, 4). Rather than resuming the proposal, from the mid-1940s, the Forestry Commission increased its logging operations, and several sawmills were established in the Nightcap Forest (Commonwealth of Australia & State of New South Wales 2000, 5). From the 1950s, the forestry industry was subject to increasing mechanisation. Hutton and Connors (1999, 149) argue that forestry commissions throughout Australia were ‘captured by the industry they were supposed to be regulating, [and] rapid changes in technology, industry organisation and forestry policy were ensuring that vast changes were occurring’ in the forests, blurring the line between government and industry. This change in the attitude of the forestry industry is evidenced by the dismay displayed by some foresters, who lamented that the industry was not what it used to be; they started to question the wisdom of the ‘captured’ Forestry Commission (Brown 1976, 14; Hutton and Connors 1999, 202).

The first of many firsts, TNFAG openly challenged the authority of the Forestry Commission, which was considered by some to be bipartisan to the interests of logging and conservation alike (Taplin 1992, 171; Lines 2006, 150–151). After all, the NSW Forestry Commission represented the ‘experts’, comments Gregg Borschmann (1999, 111) in his study of attitudes towards the Australian bush. In order to save the rainforest, TNFAG had to learn what rainforest *was*—the Forestry Commission contended that Terania was in fact not rainforest at all. TNFAG initially lacked the knowledge required to make such assumptions, as did the Forestry Commission itself, the group later discovered (Leggett 2010). TNFAG enlisted the help of a prominent rainforest ecologist:

We knew practically nothing. We only had what State Forests would tell us about rainforest. We actually wrote to Len Webb and said, ‘Is what they’re telling us true? This stuff isn’t rainforest? Brushbox forest?’ And that’s what got him involved (Nicholson and Nicholson 2010).

Consequently, Webb became a central part of the campaign to save Terania.

TNFAG was also in contact with and aided by botanist Alex Floyd, who worked as a rainforest expert for the Forestry Commission itself. Floyd,

who would become one of Australia's foremost rainforest experts, started his career with the Commission in 1951 and was assigned to the forests of the North Coast (Northern Rivers) in 1956. He recalls: 'you could come up with ideas but if they were more expensive and if they reduced the amount of timber available for harvesting, then you were creating problems' (Floyd, cited in Borschmann 1999, 100). Nan Nicholson (2010) explains Floyd's involvement:

I remember early on, we wanted to check one of the bits of the forest that was going to be logged, and so we did a transect. Which just means a long line from one part of the forest to another, and you identify every tree on that line [...] and we didn't know what any of them were. So we chopped down bits of the leaf and sent them off to Alex Floyd, and he was the State Forests rainforest expert, he told us what they were.

TNFAG's then innovative idea to conduct their own transect survey is an example of what is known today as 'citizen science'—that is, when the general community take part in (and often initiate) scientific research in order to gather missing scientific data, usually to further an environmental cause. The use of participatory citizen science is a strategy that is found widely across the environment movement, and is considered an important element of grassroots activism (Poelina 2013; Williams 2013). However, such a strategy was not widely practiced in the 1970s; TNFAG's use of citizen science to reinforce an environmental campaign may well be one of many approaches pioneered on the ground at Terania Creek. Many recall how Terania was their first experience with rainforest, and they came to learn of its significance (Leggett 2010; Nicholson and Nicholson 2010; Pugh 2010). Musician and activist Lisa Yeates remembers, 'when 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' (cited in Parks 1999, 47), while long-time activist and deep ecologist John Seed (2008) comments, 'in the process of finding reasons to protect Terania, we discovered what rainforest was.'

TNFAG sent its transect report to the Forestry Commission, with an explanation that the group was concerned that the Commission lacked sufficient knowledge of rainforest to be destroying it unknowingly (Leggett 2010; Nicholson and Nicholson 2010). The correctness of this general principle of caution was later strikingly vindicated. In the year 2000, forest ecologist Robert Kooyman discovered the Nightcap Oak, a

critically endangered and ancient Gondwana descendant previously unknown to science, which would perhaps have passed forever unknown to human knowledge had Terania and the surrounding forests been logged (Weston and Kooyman 2002). Dudley Leggett (2010) explains the Commission's response to TNFAG's transect survey:

The Forestry Commission really didn't have much information about that kind of forest we were told, so we did this basic research and sent them the report on that, and asked for a full study to be carried out before they went ahead, a full proper environmental study, that's all we ever asked for, and we got no response. After about 2 years I think, we insisted on getting a response, and then they told us they'd lost our report, our study, so they couldn't do anything about it. So we then went through the whole process again, did an update on the study, did the complete research again and then submitted that, and finally they decided—the word was no, but they would make some adjustments.

A compromise was reached between TNFAG and the Forestry Commission; only the Brushbox and Blackbutt would be logged, and the rest of the rainforest would be 'safe'. Although seemingly a victory at first, TNFAG had learnt enough about rainforest during the campaign to feel that the compromise was unacceptable. Local biologist Norm Mackay (1976) argued, 'this is equivalent to saying "ok, you can keep your heart, but we're going to take your lungs and kidneys".' TNFAG feared that it was impossible to remove centuries-old rainforest giants without inflicting irreparable damage to the rainforest canopy and the very integrity of the forest itself. Much of the logging was scheduled to take place on steep slopes, and the process of felling one tree could potentially bring down everything in its path lower down the slope. Such practices denude rainforest and facilitate the spread of invasive species; parts of Terania had been logged before, and lantana (*Lantana camara*, one of Australia's most invasive and ecologically destructive weeds) was rife (David Kemp 2017, pers. comm.). Selective logging had already been inflicting 'massive damage' upon the Big Scrub since colonial times; narrow tracks were forced open by bullock teams, leaving wheel ruts and trampled earth behind them, while the snagging of logs took delicate loose soil with them, leading to erosion when it rained (Hoff 2006, 31). The same practices, conducted in the 1970s with bulldozers, were even more destructive.

The group called for an environmental impact statement (EIS), but it was refused on the basis that this would cost the Commission too much money—although the costs associated with denying the protesters their



Fig. 3.2 Damage caused by logging at Terania, during the blockade (Photo Credit: David Kemp)

EIS would eventually accumulate to a far greater amount than the EIS itself (Leggett [2010](#)). The State Pollution and Control Commission (SPCC) also ignored TNFAG's request for an EIS, and the government body recommended that logging proceed (Somerville [1999](#), 61).

Creative Activism

Aided by the creativity of the counterculture, music, song, dance and theatre were a strong part of the campaign. Central to this was Paul Joseph, the 'pied piper' of the Aquarius Festival, who had earned his title during the Festival after leading an early morning procession through the camp each day, with a trail of singers behind him (Pedals [2012](#)). Maxx Maxstead, who had moved to the Channon in 1977, recalls his strongest memory of the Terania campaign:

The healing and magically cohesing [*sic*] power of music. Paul Joseph [*sings...*] that was one of the strongest impressions I have of the whole thing. We had a connection through song. Through the emotive release through song (Maxstead [2012](#)).

Joseph composed songs for the Terania campaign that would also be used at later environmental actions (Parks 1999). One of these songs was ‘Let’s Go Down to The Forest’. In 1976, Joseph had an idea:

I went to [my] first meeting which was in this little house up at Terania, with the idea that this would be a way of us getting our message out. An emotional way, rather than shouting, or whatever. And having no experience in making movies, but plenty of enthusiasm, I played the song, and everyone said ‘this is terrific, we should do that!’. And a guy got up and said, ‘Well I’m a producer and I can help you’. Another guy got up and said, ‘I’m a cameraman and I’ve got my own camera’. Suddenly we had a film company.

This was the start of another highly innovative action; TNFAG produced its own television advertisement. Nan Nicholson (2010) recalls:

We 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.

Again, TNFAG was creating history. Ian Cohen has argued that this was possibly the first instance of an environmental group producing a television advertisement, and TNFAG did so without the aid and finance available to larger conservation groups (Cohen 1996, 18).

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 members wrote 150 letters to politicians, including the State Premier Neville Wran and every relevant cabinet member; they wrote to the foresters in charge at Murwillumbah and Casino; they churned out press releases and information kits; they attempted to liaise with politicians, and they gathered the scientific knowledge lacking on both sides of the debate (Turvey 2006, 49–50; Nicholson and Nicholson 2010). Nigel Turvey states that ‘the numerous carbon copies distributed within the public service ensured that the name “Terania Creek” resonated throughout the Government’s hierarchy’ (2006, 50). Few politicians, however,

were open to TNFAG's requests. Lin Gordon, NSW Minister for Conservation and Forestry, left no doubt as to on which side of the debate his sympathies lay. He was openly hostile to TNFAG, later referring to them as 'filthy hippies' (Lines 2006, 174). In 1979, it was declared that logging would commence.

SETTING UP CAMP

Even at this late stage, direct action had not been a consideration. Nan Nicholson explains:

We 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. But we had never thought we'd get to that stage, because we felt sure we had such a case that we couldn't possibly lose, that everybody could see it was obvious that we shouldn't be logging the last of the [forest]. So when it came to the crunch, we couldn't believe it (Nicholson and Nicholson 2010).

Contemporaneous local alternative media supports Nan's statement—the *Nimbin News* reveals the sentiment after the decision was made, and before the logging started. What it shows is that Terania truly was a spontaneous action. In a story titled 'The loggers are coming', Bren Claridge announces, '[we] seem to have run out of ideas' (1979, 2). Hugh Nicholson responds to the question of how the direct action was initiated:

I can't even—it just happened by default. We'd been fighting for five years with letters and submissions and lobbying—and when it got to the stage that they were talking about coming in in a couple of days' time, we put out the word [...] that they were coming. And if anybody wants to come and stop them, they'd be very welcome (Nicholson and Nicholson 2010).

TNFAG called on people to come to the Nicholsons' property, the last house 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 sympathetic politician Paul Landa, NSW State Minister for Planning and the Environment, that if it wanted the government to act it needed to prove widespread opposition to the logging. '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' (Claridge 1979, 2).

The Channon Market, a legacy 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 movement. Bren was one of the core members of TNFAG, and he was also the market coordinator (Joseph and Irvine 2010). 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 operations and there was a large concentration of people present sympathetic to the cause. Hugh Nicholson (2010) recounts:

We 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.

The organisation of the camp on the Nicholsons’ property is a central aspect of discussions about Terania. Several people commented on its ‘festival’ atmosphere (Hayes 1979, 775; Pike 2009)—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 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 (Nicholson and Nicholson 2010).

It is evident that even those participating at Terania were surprised 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.



Fig. 3.3 The camp at the end of Terania Creek Road (Photo Credit: David Kemp)

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 group's role. Some of the various groups, or 'details', included those tasked with overseeing food, first aid, labour, 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. Dudley recalls:

We were just learning what to do on the run. But someone came up with this brilliant idea that we needed different jobs to be done [...] Someone had some rainbow cloth, so we found, we just cut the cloth along the colours, we could make these strips of red, and blue, and green and so on. So each group, people would be asked when they came, 'what do you wanna help with?' You know, 'you're a driver, can you drive a vehicle?' Then they would get whatever colour it was, I think it was red, or blue [...] they would tie that around their arm. Another person would get green, which was I think the healing group, for people that were first aid, and so on, they would get that [...] so if you needed something you would just look for someone with that

colour and you'd grab a person with a green armband if someone was hurt, or you'd grab someone with a transport colour to get something moved somewhere. So it was a very simple way of organising people. It gave people a choice as to what they did, and then they would network with that group of people (Leggett 2010).

The colour-coding of roles for easy identification is a feature found at modern environmental events, including the annual Students of Sustainability (SoS) conference. While it cannot be ascertained that this innovation is a direct outcome of Terania, it was an ingenious development that may well have been passed on by the many Teranians that continued the fight for the Earth. Possibly coincidentally, the Nicholsons' daughter helped in the organisation of SoS in Newcastle, NSW, in 2001, and in 1996 when SoS was held at Southern Cross University in Lismore, a group of students travelled to Terania Creek, and were led through the rainforest by the Nicholsons (Nicholson and Nicholson 2010).

Several intentional communities also played an important role in the camp organisation. It was the Tunttable Falls Community, from the other side of the mountain ridge, that organised the camp kitchen and produced food, which most agree was 'brilliant' (Hayes 1979, 775). People donated money when needed and the food group would travel to town to restock. Ellis (2010) explains:

The place where we were doing the food was on a slope. And we had a very interesting water supply system. There were plastic pipes running down the hill. I don't know where they started, probably a dam belonging to Hugh and Nan, and they were a gravity fed system [...] All you had to do was lower the end of the pipe and fill the copper and put the end of the pipe back up and it stopped. And I thought it was really clever [...] there was pretty much no oil being used, whatever plates we were using were pretty clean because it was just basically vegetables. And the food was excellent actually, I think I had to throw in, chucked in a dollar or two, and someone went off and bought masses of vegetables and grits and beans etcetera, and we were well fed.

The intentional communities offered 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 also played a key part in the story of Terania. Leggett (2010) was a strong believer in nonviolence and consensus decision-making:

Consensus decision making was something I was absolutely committed to [...] That was fundamental to our success, I believe [...] Right from the very beginning actually, because [...] it took a few days before they actually came in. Which gave us a little time to get organised and set up the camp [...] And initially [...] TNFAG set up a stage, and all the chairs looking at the stage, and all the people that were the knowing people, that had been involved a long time, went up on the stage to tell everybody what it was all about. But I said, 'this is not the way to set the thing up, we shouldn't do it like this. It needs to be in a circle so that everybody can look at everybody equally.' But they set up this audience, or performance and participants and audience sort of situation, and they said 'oh, look you know, this is the way we're gonna do it'. So they did it, and I just sat in the audience and I didn't participate. And then gradually they said all they had to say, and people started to drift away from the audience, to go and get their camp set up or do something else. And suddenly Bren [...] came over to me and said, 'It's not working, what should we do? You said that this wasn't gonna work. And it looks like you're right!' [...] And I said 'look I've gotta get everybody back together again.' And we've gotta get away from this situation, so I said, 'I can't get everybody together but I know who can, and that's Graeme Dunstan.'

Dunstan, a peace activist, had been one of the crucial figures in the Aquarius Festival. Leggett continues:

I don't know what his skill is but he can get out there and get people emotionally energised and bring them together. So I said 'Look, if you can get Graeme, I'm sure he can get everybody together and then I'll take it from there'. So that's what happened. Graeme went around and rallied everybody and got them all to come down in a procession sort of thing down to the flat ground, so we got everyone down there and I just got everyone to sit in a big circle and we started from there. We said 'look, you know, we've got this problem, and we've gotta solve it, and who's got an idea as to how we can do it?' And so that's when the whole circle idea started. Everybody having an input, feeling like they were equal and then coming to an agreement that we could all live with by consensus. And that's what to me, made the whole thing work. It took off from that point. All these ideas came and people committed to doing their ideas, so action happened [...] we were taking on this impossible task to stop the government logging the rainforest, and there they were with all their machinery and all their police and all the force, and it was like—you know, this David and Goliath sort of situation. People dropped their ego, basically. This thing of 'well I know best', or 'I want this or that little petty story', or whatever it was, disappeared (Leggett 2010).

Drawing on the expertise of individuals' knowledge, Terania was undoubtedly 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's belief in, and insistence on, consensus decision-making may well have changed the game; consensus models have become an important operational feature of many environmental campaigns and actions globally (Branagan 2013, 101, 220–221; Hungerford 2013, 30–34). Hutton and Connors (1999), 154) 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.

As the protest endured, support would gather from far and wide. Joseph recalls that alternative networks throughout the region and the country, particularly the Down to Earth network, provided a 'very strong means'



Fig. 3.4 Consensus circle (Photo credit: David Kemp)

of support and interest (Joseph and Irvine 2010). The Down to Earth network, still active today, had been established in 1976 by Deputy Prime Minister to the Whitlam Government, Dr Jim Cairns. While Sydney-based conservation groups were still reluctant to get involved, ‘fearing extremism more than forest destruction’ (Cohen 1996, 17), 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.

On 14 August 1979, the bulldozers rumbled up Terania Creek Road. It was in this moment, when the people stood ready to challenge the loggers, that the Terania protesters would make history, changing the very nature of environmental activism.

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The Blockade

Abstract Despite TNFAG's extensive efforts, the Forestry Commission maintained its determination to log Terania Creek, due to proceed in August 1979. This chapter documents the blockade: when all else failed, a mass demonstration spontaneously evolved into a month-long protest, which saw the pioneering of many now well-known activist tactics including tree-sits, bulldozer obstruction, road sabotage, theatrical protest and 'black wallabying'. It also outlines the strict adherence to nonviolence and the evolution of organic protest techniques. The chapter details the police reaction, the response of the media and the eventual intervention of politicians, bringing an end to the blockade and resulting in the eventual protection of the forest, and all rainforest in New South Wales, in 1983.

Keywords Blockade • Tree-sit • Obstruction • Civil disobedience • 'Black wallaby'

Terania Creek marked the passage from conventional environmental politics to grassroots direct action. International groups such as Greenpeace had already adopted direct action methods in defence of the natural environment (Brown and May 1991), but there was no protocol for forest blockading. While the conservation movement was 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. Graeme Dunstan remarked, '[i]t has the Aquarian touch—light, forward-looking, innovative, portentous, real and relevant to the times' (cited in Kendell and Buivids 1987, 48). 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' (cited in Parks 1999, 47). The Teranians had first attempted the polite methods; for five years, they persevered. But when their efforts had failed, a mass of new settlers with an ecological conscience moved in to actively and physically stop the loggers. There was no precedent for what occurred on 14 August 1979; it was a spontaneous response to a government that had failed to act. From that date onwards, forest protest methods had changed forever, and the Teranians had unwittingly created history.

DAY ONE

The camp had a few days to set up and prepare, and by the Tuesday there was a mass of people at the Nicholsons' property. Dudley Leggett's memory of the event demonstrates perfectly the spontaneous nature of the 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 (Leggett 2010).

From that first moment of impulsive action, the Terania Creek activists realised their new power.

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:

All 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 (Jenkins 2010).

Bert was not the only person who found the protest ‘bizarre’. The media, loggers, police and government were unprepared—nothing like Terania had ever happened before and the authorities did not know how to react. Viewers at home found the images on television and in the newspaper ‘unexpected and startling’ (Turvey 2006, 21). 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’ (Hayes 1979, 775) and ‘the scene was set for one of the most bizarre, futile and worrying confrontations’ (McGregor 1979, 7). 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 (*Northern Star*, 16 August 1979, 8) 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’ (5 September 1979, 2). The Teranians were pushing an issue that none had dare challenge before in such a confrontational manner, and they were doing so in the face of much opposition.

When forest workers first encountered the blockade, they too were not sure how to respond. Turvey (2006, 11) 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?

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 were moved out (Brien 1979, 42)—after all, no one had ever dared confront the authority of the Forestry Commission in such a way. The government

was also caught completely off guard (Colong Committee 1983, 21). Member of NSW Parliament Tim Fischer addressed the Legislative Assembly on 15 August, the day after the initial blockade (1979, 207): '[T]he situation has now almost reached a state of confrontation with the possibility that some people might be injured and there might even be some loss of life.'

FORGING A FOREST BLOCKADE

Four days after the first blockade, the loggers returned, escorted by thirty-eight police vehicles and 108 officers (Hamilton 2016, 164). Just as Dudley recounts, protesters did indeed follow through with plans to use cars as a part of their physical blockade. A convoy of kombis had been parked on Mackays Road, the alternative access route to the Terania Creek basin, but their wheels had been removed so that they could not be driven away. Police responded by using tow trucks to drag the kombis off the road, ruining many a precious hippie home in the process (Ian Gaillard cited in Foley 1999, 33; David Kemp 2017, pers. comm.).

Innovation

Ideas and techniques developed rapidly, and tactics were formulated in response to what each day would bring. This history in the making was captured in *Give Trees a Chance* (1980), a short film by two of the protesters. Jeni Kendell 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 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.

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

Many of the techniques that were devised at Terania are commonly found in forest and other environmental actions around the world today, including road blockades and the use of old cars as blockading instruments. People and cars were not the only road obstructions; dead trees and boulders were also dragged onto the roads at Terania (Bonyhady 1993, 48; Somerville 2005, 65). *Give Trees a Chance* (1980) 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 flooded the road (Bonyhady 1993, 48). Rhonda Ellis (2010) had already decided before she got to the protest that she would dig up the road:

We were greeted by people who said, ‘What detail do you want to be on?’ And we said ‘Well, we want to dig up the road’. And they said ‘Well we haven’t got a detail for that, we’ve got a food detail and a clothes detail, and a music detail’[...] And we said, ‘No no. We want to dig up the road [...] We want to stop this protest in a physical way [...] 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 [...] And then, after my arrest, and I wasn’t the only person arrested, there were quite a few, we were taken back along the road. And what had happened, was that although the police had paddy wagons ready to stash people in them, they couldn’t actually drive the paddy wagons down across where we’d dug the hole.

Tree-sitting made its first official appearance too—protesters climbed small trees that were in the path of larger trees scheduled to be logged, 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’ (Dunstan cited in Kendell and Buivids 1987, 51; Nicholson and Nicholson 2010). Some stayed in hammocks for days at a time, trusting that loggers would place enough value on protesters’ lives to not endanger them (Foley 1999, 34). 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, hoping that the loggers would cease their work for safety’s sake (Dunstan

Fig. 4.1 Tree-sitting
(Photo Credit: David Kemp)



cited in Kendell and Buivids 1987, 51). Techniques such as this were used at the Mt Nardi protests in 1982 (Cohen 1996, 41–58), the Daintree protests in 1983 (Tim Doyle 2000, 58) and North East Forest Alliance (NEFA) activists later refined the tactic, naming it ‘black wallaby’, and exported it to the world via the *Intercontinental Deluxe Guide to Blockading* (NEFA c. early 1990s; Thorncraft 2008). Branagan 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’ (2008, 231). Steel cable was used to wire trees together, risking the rainforest canopy in the hopes that the loggers would stop—if they continued, they would pull down not only the

intended tree but the whole web of cable, and the canopy with it (Manes 1990, 18; Cohen 1996, 21). This too, was a tactic employed at later protests, including the Chaelundi forest protest in 1991 (Cohen 1996, 198). Graeme Dunstan reported in the *Nimbin News*, ‘the tree people court death and invite the police to do likewise’ (Cited in Kendell and Buivids 1987, 51). The protesters were well aware of the risks, but the task at hand was more important. Dailan Pugh (cited in Borschmann 1999, 212) felt that Terania Creek was a very special place and that he could not possibly let them devastate it; ‘it would be over my dead body, literally.’

Civil disobedience was an important theoretical concept underpinning many of these Teranian tactics. It was, of course, no new idea—civil disobedience had been espoused by Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and seminal environmentalist Henry David Thoreau. Many of the Teranians were undoubtedly familiar with such ideas, including Leggett (2010). The only other known use of direct action in defence of trees is the Chipko movement in India in the early 1970s, in which women hugged individual trees to prevent them from being cut down (see Guha 1990, 152–184; Rangan 2000). This too may have been of influence: India was a significant pilgrimage site for many ‘hippies’, including Leggett (2010) and Peter Pedals (2012). Along with his insistence on consensus decision-making, Dudley was a strong advocate for nonviolence, having received nonviolence training as part of his involvement in the peace movement.

Peace, or nonviolence, was a critical part of Terania. I could see that nonviolence and democratic processes, consensus processes are critical to sustainability [...] to life on earth [...] We had to confront this destruction of the natural environment but we needed to do it in the proper way. Otherwise it would be counterproductive. And so whether it’s directly violence against the environment or it’s violence against one another, it’s all the same story [...] the most important thing for us to survive on this planet, is to treat each other and all things as sacred. With respect for all things. And there’ll be no more war and there’ll be no more damage to the environment and to other creatures (Leggett 2010).

While the principles of civil disobedience were well known, what was new was the use of civil disobedience in a forest setting. Again, while such tactics are used around the world today, they were tried and tested for the first time at Terania Creek. Protesters used their bodies as blockading instruments, standing in the path of bulldozers while others laid down (Hayes 1979, 775). Protesters linked arms, forming a chain across the

road in front of an advancing bulldozer. They refused to move when ordered off the road by police (Hamilton 2016, 164). Lisa Yeates voices the feelings from around the camp—despite the controversy of these radical new techniques, the Teranians did not perceive 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 (cited in Parks 1999, 45).

The police, however, disagreed—many protesters were arrested and charged with 'obstructing the passage of a vehicle' (Ellis 2010). Forty-three people were arrested in total over the four-week blockade—obstructing bulldozers was one of the more popular tactics (Pugh n.d.). Despite the arrests, spirits remained high. Geoff Box recalls how he earned the nickname 'Smokey': 'I usually carried six [joints] in either shoe. And when they chucked me into jail we started smoking' (cited in Turvey 2006, 20). Ellis was also in good spirits:

We were driven to Lismore police station [...] I remember that come lunch time they delivered some Kentucky Fried Chicken, which horrified most—I realised that most of the people who were at this protest were true hippies in terms of they were vegetarians, they were pacifists; I was neither of those things. I happily ate my Kentucky Fried Chicken, and probably theirs, too.

The Mullumbimby crew were rougher than the Teranians, and Ellis did not identify with the 'peace, love and brown rice brigade' (Ellis 2010, personal communication). She recalls her attitude towards the police:

They put me in the back of the van. And as I'm one who never gives up, the police then went off to arrest more people I presume. Although it's not possible to get out of the back of a paddy wagon, it's not difficult to get out of the back of this van. I just slid open the window and got out. Police grabbed me again and put me in again, and I got out again [...] the third time I got out of the van, the police got quite annoyed with this and decided that they wouldn't put me back in this van, that they would walk me back down the road. Now I remembered that there was a clothes detail. So I wasn't worried about getting wet. And as we walked, a copper each side both had hold of my arms and we were walking down this road. There'd been rain, and when we got to—it was either a creek or it could have been the ditch that we dug, but it was probably a creek, I waited 'til we got into the middle of this creek and then I totally threw a wobbly. Knowing that I was going to fall over and



Fig. 4.2 Bulldozer obstruction (Photo credit: David Kemp)

get wet, but that I would be able to get some dry clothes and they wouldn't. So I did that. My attitude was still to make it as difficult as possible for the police, so I threw the wobbly, we all fell over in the water, they got all their blue serge wet, and eventually they got me down and put me into a paddy wagon down near the opening of the forest [...] And of course the food detail turned up, the clothes detail turned up, and somehow or rather they got me clean gear, clean food and everything, I was totally comfortable. And then I think they must have turned up with other arrestees and that's when we went off and the Kentucky Fried Chicken incident occurred (Ellis 2010).

While Ellis displays some irreverence for police authority—certainly a significant countercultural trait—an understanding of the need to show respect to police and forestry workers was yet another significant feature of Terania that would be adopted in later campaigns and actions.

Establishing Common Ground

Leggett's insightful approach to environmental activism focused on the need to both maintain and build peace. This is not to ignore the conflict that arose—the protest led to bitter disputes between protesters, the forestry industry and communities, particularly those of the more conservative towns of Lismore and Murwillumbah, who were dependent upon logging. This is well-documented by both Watson (1990) and Turvey (2006). In keeping with their commitment to peace, the protesters at Terania Creek intuitively understood the need to reach out and establish common ground. Despite their resentment towards the loggers' activities, many did not hold the same level of resentment towards the loggers themselves (Ellis 2010; Leggett 2010; Nicholson and Nicholson 2010). Nan Nicholson's experience led to a powerful and vital understanding:

I find with all these people, when I'm in a sort of confrontational situation with loggers or police [...] mostly they're not listened to nearly enough, so if you're actually willing to listen—be quiet and listen to what they want to say, you can get a long way. More often what you find is you both have a similar point of view. And I've spoken to many loggers who have said 'We're just the meat in the sandwich. We know this stuff won't last but I've got a family to maintain, so I've gotta keep logging this. But I know it sucks...' I have a lot of sympathy for these people. And mostly when you talk to just about anyone, including the most vehement opposition, you can see their point of view is pretty much similar to your own in lots of ways, same sort of elements that are important for each person (Nicholson and Nicholson 2010).

The protesters did their best to avoid judging the other parties involved, understanding the critical importance of maintaining peace at environmental actions.

Also of critical importance was the need to maintain peaceful communication between protesters and police. The experience was not only new for the protesters; the police had never before had to deal with a situation such as this. In keeping with their commitment to nonviolence, the protesters decided that despite the obvious clash of interests in the forest, they would act with respect:

That was one of our main concerns, was to treat people as people. Not to treat people as roles. Whether they were forestry workers, or the police, we recognised that they were—as they would always say—just doing their job (Leggett 2010).

Again, TNFAG intuitively understood this. Today, the role of police liaison has become an essential element of any protest or action and in fact, there is strong evidence that this core role came about as a result of the Terania Creek campaign—it was a role passed down through the Nightcap Action Group, then to the North East Forest Alliance and out to the global activist community. The protesters made efforts to calmly explain their actions to police and why they felt the need to protest. They also talked about shared interests such as children and family in an attempt to establish common ground, and some protesters offered massages. Perhaps the most famous image of the protest is a young woman massaging a policeman as part of their ‘kiss a cop’ campaign. Ellis (2010) recalls:

One 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.

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

Just as conversations with loggers can reveal shared interests, values and concerns, so too can conversations with police. Nan Nicholson recalls an incident in which she was travelling in a vehicle with Ian Cohen at another forest protest:

It was at Mt Marsh, which was a Eucalypt forest south west of Lismore, blockading. And at one stage I was coming out of the forest with Ian Cohen, the Greens MP, and a cop flagged us down and I thought ‘Oh no, we’re in trouble’. And he just leaned in and said to Ian, ‘Are you Ian Cohen?’ in an awestruck voice. And Ian said ‘Yes’, and the cop said ‘Well I just want you to know, I’m a member of Greenpeace. And I’m on your side’. And he’d been there specifically to try and stop us. So I was really touched, and I just wondered how many other cops there are like that, that really didn’t want to be known as bastards (Nicholson 2010).



Fig. 4.3 ‘Kiss a Cop’ (Photo Credit: David Kemp)

Establishing the common ground in the face of competing and conflicting values is a valuable way of maintaining peace at environmental actions, yet again demonstrating the exemplary nature of Terania Creek and its advocates.

Media and Communication

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 (this dual-campaigning was another core feature of later NEFA actions). Ellis (2003, 11) 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.

The people of the Rainbow Region have historically been very good at producing independent media that tell the stories that the mainstream media overlook or distort (Martin and Ellis 2003, 179–205). The Teranians were no exception. With their own printing press (Kelly 2003, 111) and the expertise of advertising executive Bren Claridge and an ex-ABC film crew, TNFAG could wage a campaign—as the Sydney newspapers described it—‘equal to anything any major advertising or PR house could mount’ (Hayes 1979, 775). Peter Pedals was a core member of TNFAG, and as soon as he heard of the blockade, he packed up and made his way to Terania Creek:

That’s when I thought I’d put all the printing stuff, which was just a hand-operated gestetner, on the back of this tricycle that I’d built myself, with an umbrella over it and a windscreen made out of plastic round the front. And cycled all that gear over to Terania Creek and set up in Hugh and Nan Nicholson’s verandah. Where I was then printing out press releases and Nimbin News and stuff from that location for the next few weeks (Pedals 2012).

Ellis (2010) explains the importance of the media team:

Now I don’t know that actually sitting in trees and chaining yourself to them, and the kinds of protests that we did, standing in front of bulldozers etc., would have worked alone. In fact I’m quite convinced that it wouldn’t have worked alone, because in the forest nobody sees you. But in Hugh and Nan’s house there was a fabulous group of people who were the media team. Some were experienced media people, some I knew from Mullumbimby, had worked in Canberra. They knew who to contact in terms of media, in terms of politicians, they knew the kinds of things to say and they publicised the action.

Ellis (2010) goes on to note 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.

Also of relevance to the originality and ingenuity of Terania was the protesters’ instinctual exploitation of the mainstream media. Leggett (2010) comments:

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, three nights in a row. And that's never been done by any group of people before as far as I know.

The novel ideas of tree-sitting and bulldozer 'obstruction' were beamed into people's lounge rooms alongside colourful and creative displays of theatre, puppetry and song. There were several talented musicians at Terania who wrote songs specifically for the cause; while Paul Joseph had penned the song that was used in TNFAG's television commercial, Mookx Hanley, Lisa Yeates and Brenda Liddiard also contributed their musical talent. Leggett (2010) recalls one television opportunity, where they captured the cameras and hopefully the public with song:

Only the public alone had the right, if you like, and the power to affect the government to the point where the government could stop it. Because it was all coming from the government. It was all government policy. So that's what we were trying to do, so anything we could do to get the TV channels to cover what we were doing was going to be productive, providing it was nonviolent and it put us in a positive light and could communicate our message [...] So we said 'we'll just do this one action, sing the song,' we got this great media coverage that the bulldozer actually stopped. It was seen on TV that we were being effective, we stopped them for a short time, we were able to stop this whole process in its tracks. And sing this very interesting song which got the whole message across.

TNFAG achieved success in earning the public's attention and winning them over; as *Give Trees a Chance* (1980) notes, 'scientific, Aboriginal and conservation groups, with memberships totalling well over 100 000 people, had come out in support of the protesters at Terania Creek.' Minister for Forests Lin Gordon publicly implied that TNFAG had only called for an EIS as a means of trying to undermine the government. Major conservation groups, which had until this point remained on the sidelines, countered him by immediately releasing a statement calling for an EIS. Authored by Milo Dunphy, it was supported by the National Parks Association, the Australian Conservation Foundation, the Total Environment Centre, the National Trust, Friends of the Earth, the Wildlife Preservation Society and the Colong Committee (Somerville 2005, 63–64).

Communication with the media was important, but so too was communication within the group. 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 (Hayes 1979, 775). Later NEFA actions are well known for having

exceptional communication networks such as this. 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 (Nicholson and Nicholson 2010). While they stood their ground, the bulldozers and logging trucks still managed to fell some forest patriarchs,

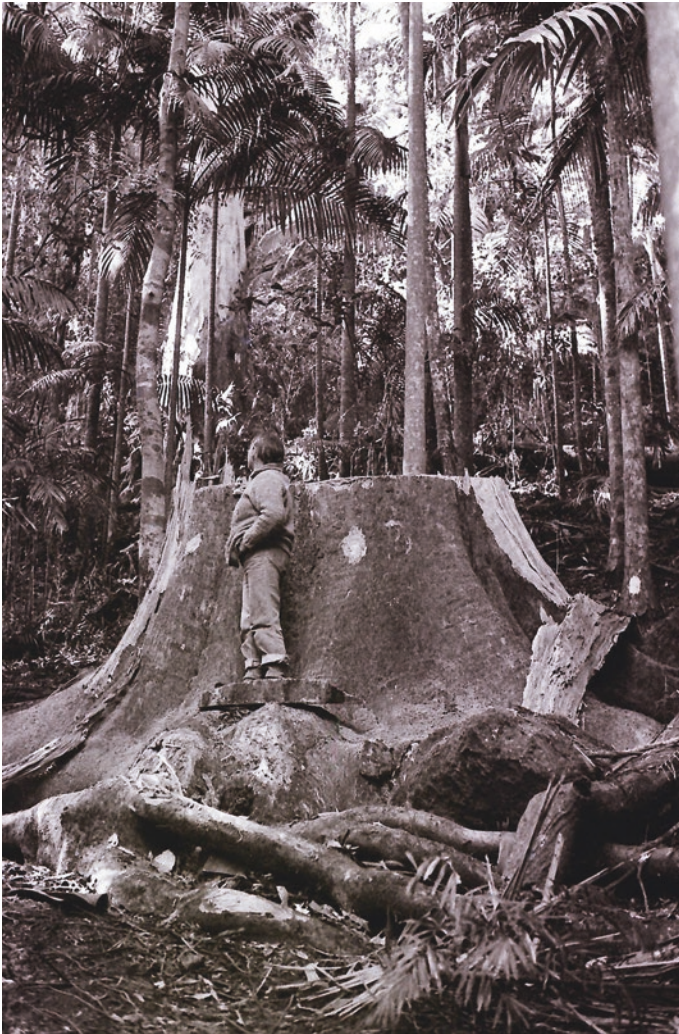


Fig. 4.4 Felled brushbox (Photo Credit: Davis Kemp)

including giant brushboxes. Christopher Manes, writing on Earth First! in the United States, recognises the unprecedented nature of Terania: '[I]t presaged the kind of militarisation of the wilderness that the United States and other countries would eventually experience' (Manes 1990, 118).

SABOTAGE

While consensus decision-making allowed all voices to be heard, no matter how radical, Terania Creek was based strictly on nonviolence. But not all at Terania were committed to this concept. Rhonda's 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 (Ellis 2010).

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*, had been published in 1975 but was not available in Australia until 1978 (Bonyhady 1993, 41). While it was fictional, the book is known to be the first reference to 'ecotage', or sabotage for environmental causes. Rhonda had never heard of monkey-wrenching; her brand of sabotage dated from her days in the Builders Labourers Federation and her involvement in the Green Bans (Ellis 2010). 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 [...] I expressed my desires at this meeting. They were not met with any great joy. The people at the meeting—well it was obvious that they didn't want me to do that. And when we left the meeting we went down to the bulldozer, it was later afternoon, evening, and it was August, cold. And so lots of other people gathered on, another half a dozen odd people gathered with me, and possibly some of my Mullumbimby colleagues at the bulldozer. And we sat on a log, and we spent practically the whole night discussing the issue of sabotage. Their attitude was that you didn't sabotage, that that was always going to be bad publicity. So my argument was, well what else do you do? And they seemed to think that just their presence there would make all this happen. I didn't believe it, I thought they were wasting their time, but I didn't defy them. But I was pretty annoyed that they wouldn't let me do this (Ellis 2010).

Rhonda was not influenced by American actions or ideas—her knowledge of sabotage was an Australian product. But while Rhonda and her Mullumbimby colleagues had come to the protest ‘thinking that we would teach the hippies about obstruction tactics’ (2003, 11), Terania Creek changed her initial attitudes, and she confesses, ‘I softened a bit in the bush’ (2010). As the protest stretched into weeks, many attitudes were transformed, including that of Rhonda:

Living 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 (Ellis 2010).

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 spiked in what Bonyhady (1993, 48) describes as ‘perhaps the first instance of tree-spiking in the world.’ 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. Earth First! are most often associated with these sorts of ecotage techniques. Rhonda had been told by a friend that he had heard of tree-spiking being done elsewhere previously (Ellis 2010), so it is possible that Bonyhady is incorrect, but there appears to be no documentation of earlier tree-spikings.

Nearly everyone at Terania was unsure as to whether the spiking had actually occurred, or if the trees were only marked as ‘spiked’—just the possibility of tree-spiking was enough to prevent the loggers from felling marked trees. There is, however, one existing account of the possible events that night. Activist Jim Somerville (2005, 64) claims that two young students entered the forest under cover of darkness, sought out the trees marked ‘SS’ (Standard Sawmilling—the Murwillumbah mill), and using spiked boots and a belt, climbed up twenty trees, driving twelve-inch nails into them. The whole process, claims Somerville, took five hours, and an additional hour to saw up the already felled logs. Warning notes were also left. This may well be a true record of events; as an insider to the activist movement, Somerville could be privy to such secrets.

The action was widely condemned by TNFAG, 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 Labor Premier Neville Wran ordered that the logging be stopped and an inquiry established. Nan Nicholson recalls:

The feeling at the camp was, ‘Well they said they weren’t gonna log them and they went and stepped on it, so they’ve been spiked to make sure they don’t get logged.’ And whatever your views on the thing, they couldn’t log it, because they had these big marks saying they’d been spiked [...] another controversial issue was the cutting up of the logs into two-metre lengths, of some of the trees that had been felled. And even though at the time we—it was a terrible thing, that overnight the trees that had been felled had been cut into such small and unusable pieces. And despite the fact that the next day we said this is terrible publicly, we all know that it saved the day (Nicholson and Nicholson 2010).

By the time the four-week blockade came to an end, over three hundred protesters had gathered at Terania Creek. Tensions were flaring—Bruce Duncan (1979, 633) the State Member for Lismore addressed Parliament:

In recent weeks we have seen a protesting element in the community involved in the Terania Creek area that has not been willing to accept the decision. I do not propose to deal at length with the capers, antics or tactics in which they have indulged, but I say that they have alienated much of the support they may have won from genuine conservationists by engaging in what I would describe as childish, irresponsible and repulsive actions that are quite foreign to the hard-working citizens who have lived and worked adjacent to the forest over a long period.

Ian Cohen (1996, 22) argues that according to Deputy Premier Jack Ferguson, the issue of tree-spiking gave Neville Wran the ability to push through and take action on the issue. The opposition were angry and antagonistic towards the Premier, and even members of his own cabinet, particularly Lin Gordon, were against him. Nonetheless, Wran (1979, 1014; 1300) announced:

This morning it was decided that members of the Government parliamentary party will go to Terania Creek in addition to the Ministers who have already visited the area [...] When the Government made its policy decision in relation to Terania Creek it was of the view, on the material that had been

furnished to it, that this was an unimportant stand of trees. Second, it was of the view, again on the material that had been furnished, that there was no prospect of any damage to the rain forest. Third, the principal conservation organisations had done nothing to show any interest in what was happening at Terania Creek and therefore there was no issue at all [...] In the result, the Government made a mistake in not sticking with its policy of having an environmental impact study.

It was a victory for TNFAG—logging was not yet off the table, but a committee would visit Terania Creek, and there was hope of an EIS after all.

THE GOVERNMENT RESPONDS

Wran's committee was stacked with progressive politicians who were open to saving the rainforest (Cohen 1996, 23). Additionally, and fortuitously, one of TNFAG's most influential members had a seat booked on the same flight as the parliamentary party. Hugh Nicholson recounts:

We had a lovely coup during the Terania time where the politicians were coming up, and John Seed happened to be coming up on the same flight. And we couriered down overnight to him a whole mass of information which he put together in folders. And on the plane, he went around and gave each politician a folder of the latest updated information, so on the two hour flight up here, all they had to look at was this hot off the press stuff from our point of view (Nicholson and Nicholson 2010).

One of those on the subcommittee, Jack Hallam, was particularly sympathetic to the campaign. He recollects:

When we arrived there was a fantastic atmosphere in the protest community. The meeting in the forest had an enormous impact on most of the politicians present. The articulate presentation of the leaders portrayed a deep emotional commitment. We came away from this meeting believing that the rainforest should not be logged (Cited in Cohen 1996, 23).

Jack would go on to become Minister for Forests. Terania Creek would be spared, pending an inquiry. But, as Lester Brien reported in *Rolling Stone*, 'the fight had not ended but only just begun' (1979, 45).

The result was an inquiry in to the logging of Terania Creek under the authority of retired Judge of the Supreme Court, Simon Isaacs. This, too, was a unique outcome of Terania—both Roslyn Taplin (1992, 156) and

Tim Doyle (2000, 128) credit the Terania Creek Inquiry as the start of environmentalist participation in the legal system. The inquiry dragged on for two years under ‘appallingly biased’ conditions. Lawyer Nicole Rogers (2008, 251–254) argues that Isaacs was extremely conservative and more concerned with authority than truth, and he weighed the scientific knowledge of ecologists as equal with that of the foresters. She states that Isaacs possessed ‘a rudimentary understanding of relevant scientific issues and scientific terminology, and reportedly asked during the inquiry whether taxonomy was somehow connected to the Taxation Department’ (2008, 253). TNFAG were equally unimpressed. Hugh Nicholson explains:

[It] was awful, having to go down there and sit through this stuff with an appallingly biased judge, and with Forestry who should in theory, be speaking for the people of NSW, but in fact speaking for the logging industry. And so it was just us little people, having to pay our fares to get to Sydney and sit there away from our home environment, for months. And it was really hard work. It was awful. And then knowing that we were losing, because the whole thing was biased against us [...] So there was no stage of feeling as though we’d won, except for briefly when the politicians said ‘Ok, stop logging, there’ll be an inquiry’ (Nicholson and Nicholson 2010).

The inquiry reportedly cost the public \$1 million (Cohen 1996, 24). In the end, Isaacs recommended that logging proceed, as the impacts on the rainforest would be ‘minimal’.

NIGHTCAP

The official inquiry may have been in favour of logging. However, after Terania, the protesters did not retire—as a direct consequence of the realisation that the kind of tactics employed at Terania could be successful, a group known as the Nightcap Action Group (NAG) was formed. When loggers moved to Mt Nardi, just north of Terania Creek, NAG continued the fight for the adjoining Terania rainforest. Gummy, one of the central NAG activists, addressed the group one night: ‘While they are not logging Terania, they are taking everything else [...] You all know what you are dealing with here. The only choice we have is to put our bodies on the line’ (cited in Ferguson 2013, 60).

While building on techniques developed at Terania, NAG were much less committed to nonviolence. Neil Pike (2009) relates:

[The] Mt Nardi blockade was a much more brutal and hard-fought business ... tempers were raised, cars were burnt, punches were thrown. The Tuntable crew had a much bigger hand in the strategizing of Mt Nardi and (perhaps reflecting the difference in class demographics between Nimbin and the Channon at the time) were a lot less polite and a lot more pragmatic than at Terania. While the more presentable types lobbied politicians and the media, a hard-core bunch of monkey-wrenchers waged secret war in the forest.

A member of NAG himself, Cohen also reveals the more confrontational nature of the Nightcap action in his excellent first-hand account, recorded in *Green Fire* (1997, 41–58). However, a number of people were wary of NAG tactics and would continue to campaign for forests using other means, including Dailan Pugh (2010):

They didn't believe in nonviolence, from what they tell me. They had some quite radical attitudes and actions there, I think. I think that was the closest you could ever come to a forest war, really.

The Nightcap Action lasted from June to October 1982. Tactics aside, NAG ensured that the issue of rainforests and radical images of direct action remained in the spotlight while government processes were still underway. Leggett (who was not a member of NAG due to their more radical brand of activism) explains:

Again it was one of those [situations of] lobbying endlessly with the government to make that final commitment to step over the line and say 'yes it is'. And we got so fed up with waiting for them to do it, we decided we would simply do it ourselves. So We the People actually declared it the Nightcap National Park. And I was asked to do the actual speaking, and it all went on TV, and they came, lots of TV crews up there and we had a big sign someone had made up, 'Nightcap National Park'. And it was stuck in the ground and we said ... 'Now we declare on behalf of the people of NSW the opening of the Nightcap National Park'. And about a month later, the government decided they'd better do it. So they came in, and we actually opened it twice, it's a funny story. Because we'd just done it with two or three TV channels, and we'd just finished everything and another TV channel [...] arrived. So we said, 'Oh never mind, we'll do it again'. So we did it again (Leggett 2010).

In 1983, Neville Wran finally ‘had the numbers’ to make his move. The premier made the landmark decision to end all rainforest logging in NSW, and both Terania Creek and Mt Nardi became a part of the World Heritage-listed Nightcap National Park. Wran addressed the NSW State Conference in May 1983, proudly announcing that saving the rainforests was the most significant contribution of the State Labor Government of the twentieth century, and declaring his hope that this is what history will best remember him for. At last, Terania Creek was safe. As Hugh Nicholson explains, the protest initiated the process, but more was needed for Terania’s ultimate protection:

Terania Creek threw it off this edifice, but it wasn’t enough, and the inquiry went against us in the end, but when it cropped up again at Mt Nardi, that’s when Neville Wran finally had the numbers and said ‘right, stop logging rainforest’. So it was that final part.

But for many, it was not the final part. Deeply inspired and transformed by the experience, the Terania Creek protesters took their new-found passion and their discovery of the power of grassroots activism, and continued to campaign. In time, the techniques pioneered at Terania Creek would be employed by the global environmental activist movement. Ultimately, the success of Terania saved not just the small patch of rainforest remnant in the Terania Creek basin but helped rescue the Nightcap ranges surrounding it, all rainforest in NSW, other forests across Australia, and forests, woods and jungles right across the Earth.

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The Spirit of Terania

Abstract This chapter assesses the influence and dissemination of the effects of Terania Creek on an individual, national and international scale. The protest led to the direct establishment of other environmental organisations, most notably the Nomadic Action Group, the North East Forest Alliance and the Rainforest Information Centre. This chapter will also demonstrate how techniques pioneered at Terania Creek have been directly employed by Earth First!, the British anti-roads movement, Irish forest campaigners, rainforest advocates in Borneo and, more recently, the global anti-fracking movement. It will end with a discussion of the Bentley Blockade, the most significant protest event to occur in the region since Terania Creek.

Keywords Nightcap • Nomadic Action Group • North East Forest Alliance • John Seed • Earth First! • Activist techniques

The first sign of the significance of Terania Creek was its ultimate success, but the blockade would also emerge as one of the most significant 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. They had discovered that they had the power to do

something about the destruction of Terania Creek; other forests and natural environments around Australia and the world were also facing destruction, and something could be done about that as well. As Ian Cohen (1996, 17) so eloquently expresses, ‘the spirit of Terania lives on. People move across the face of the earth spreading the message of that birthplace of Australian eco-activism [...] Terania had lit a green fire’. The ‘fire’ lit in the hearts of Teranians ignited forest protests elsewhere, led to the establishment of other environmental organisations and inspired individuals who were forever changed by Terania Creek. Activists from Terania went on to campaign at Mt Nardi, the Franklin in Tasmania, the Daintree in Queensland, 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 what happened at Terania Creek—a fact that seems to have passed largely unrecognised in the many discussions of the world-famous Franklin campaign. NEFA, a direct descendant of Terania, has been an amazing source of success and influence in its own right. Furthermore, international movements, which had encouraged and inspired Australians in the 1960s, learnt a great deal from the pioneering efforts of Australian forest activists: the cultural interchange had come full-circle.

As a result of the blockade, rainforest entered the national consciousness, direct from the rainforest itself to televisions across the country. The Teranians succeeded in making rainforest conservation a national issue, something that conservation groups had failed to achieve despite several years of trying (Dunphy 1979, 13). Saving the rainforest was now an attainable goal—the Colong Committee, which was at first hesitant to align itself with ‘radicals’, was 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’ (cited in de Blas 1999).

INDIVIDUAL TRANSFORMATIONS

It was not only the forest that benefitted from the successful outcome. For many individuals, Terania Creek marked the start of a literal life transformation. The following is a chorus of protesters’ memories, the many

voices serving as testimony to the life-changing effect that Terania Creek had on people's lives.

The lessons I learnt at Terania were quite significant (Ellis 2010).

I look at the Nightcap [National Park] and I think [...] that's something that I actually had a share in achieving (Pike cited in Turvey 2006, 156).

It started me off on a green path (Jenkins 2010).

It really played an important part of how my life and thinking starts, [in relation] to the world around me (Box cited in Turvey 2006, 155).

It changed my consciousness completely [...] I lost my ignorance (Grebner cited in de Blas 1999).

That's where my spiritual awakening started (Liddiard cited in Turvey 2006, 161).

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 (Joseph and Irvine 2010).

It was like fulfilment of the dream (Leggett 2010).

So this led to a whole change of life for us (Nicholson and Nicholson 2010).

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 (Claridge cited in Turvey 2006, 156).

Being involved in the rainforest struggle was one of the most worthwhile things I've done in my life (Saulwick cited in Turvey 2006, 156).

I've just never been able to have anything happen in my life that was as uplifting and as fulfilling as that (Lee cited in Watson 1990, 88).

I just found myself so captivated, transformed, excited by what I came to understand (Seed 2008).

But I think what Terania gave me the most, was the belief that it was worth putting the effort in, because you could achieve results if you did so (Pugh 2010).



Fig. 5.1 Standing together (Photo Credit: David Kemp)

While this represents only a small number of those involved, there are surely many more who felt the effects of Terania; as 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!"' (Nicholson and Nicholson 2010).

The protesters have not been the only ones to reflect on the enduring legacy of the blockade. During the 1999 celebrations of Terania's twentieth anniversary, Neville Wran (1999) 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.

Terania certainly did help to shape the views of government—Jack Hallam was a junior minister of the NSW Wran government at the time. He notes that 'the impact of that protest went well beyond Terania Creek and the bounds of government bureaucracy ... in retrospect it was a dawning of an awareness of the damage we are doing to the planet' (cited in Cohen 1996, 24). Likewise, Alan Stewart, who led a parliamentary

fact-finding mission at Terania Creek, noted in his biography, *A Hard Row to Hoe*: ‘The two days we spent in the rainforest at Terania Creek were the highlight of my career as a Member of Parliament’ (cited in Somerville 2005, 68). The Forestry Commission, too, was changed by the event and consequent future actions, although perhaps not in a way that it would deem positive. Dailan Pugh (2010) notes:

One thing that’s become very apparent to me over the years is that one good blockade scares the shit out of ... the Forestry Commission [...] and that lasts for years. That certainly happened with the North East Forest Alliance. When we had a couple of good blockades, that scared them like nothing else and so they were less willing to take us on again. So in the case of Horseshoe Creek in the Border Ranges, just a threat of a blockade by a number of local people was enough to scare them off and they didn’t try to go in there.

While it would be impossible to measure the precise extent of Terania’s influence worldwide, there are obvious examples of the blockade’s transmission through individuals. Hugh and Nan Nicholson’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 already been destroyed. Nan Nicholson explains:

The landscape has been so degraded, the forest needs to be put back. And we need to start doing that. So that’s when Hugh started his career in roadside crawling, looking at trees on farmer’s paddocks, which is where you get the seed from of course, not the forest ... And we started writing books (Nicholson and Nicholson 2010).

The Nicholsons’ rainforest nursery, still situated at the end of Terania Creek Road, continues to supply Eastern Australia with valuable rainforest species.

Dr Bert Jenkins, who initially went to Terania to have a ‘sticky-beak’, also 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 (Jenkins 2010).

Jenkins has since turned to academia in order to research, publish and lecture across a range of environmental fields, including ecology, social ecology and environmental peace.

Terania Creek also inspired and transformed people who were not even present at the blockade, including Ian Cohen: ‘Knowing that I had missed an important historic event, I made a commitment to protect the forests by opposing the continuing destruction’ (Cohen 1996, 42). Cohen has since attended many major environmental protests throughout Australia and was the first Greens member to win a seat in the NSW State Parliament in 1995.

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 [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 (Leggett 2010).

BLOCKADING AS AN EXPORT

Dudley was not the only Teranian to share his expertise at future blockades. Various blockading styles were exported out of the Rainbow Region. The Nightcap Action Group had come together in response to Terania, knowing that there was still work to do. After its spectacular, attention-grabbing blockade at Mt Nardi in 1982, the ‘N’ for Nightcap became ‘N’ for Nomadic, and the nomads ventured out to save other ecosystems as well. In 1984, the Nomadic Action Group visited Canberra, by which time it had earned a reputation. Local media reported:

Members of NAG have had plenty of experience in the organising of rallies. Born out of the 1979 logging protests in Nightcap, NSW, the group changed its name to NAG before heading off to the Franklin River protest in Tasmania. The nation-wide group is also involved in demonstrations at Pine Gap and Roxby Downs. While its members object to being labelled ‘professional demonstrators’, they admit to having picked up many publicity gaining gimmicks along their protest paths (Evans 1984, 1).

NAG also travelled south to the Franklin and north to the Daintree, where it maintained the notion of consensus decision-making first employed at

Terania (Doyle 2000, 54). John Seed, Brenda Liddiard, Lisa Yeates and Benny Zable (who was not at Terania but was a key figure in the Nimbin scene) also trained protesters at the Franklin, the Daintree and at Errinundra in East Gippsland (Turvey 2006, 155).

The Franklin River blockade has been at the very centre of discussions of the Australian environment movement, and with good reason—well over a thousand people were willingly arrested and hundreds jailed in the process of successfully preventing the damming of the magnificent Franklin in the heart of the Tasmanian wilderness (see for example Gee 2001; Law 2008; Buckman 2008; Hungerford 2013). 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 ‘polite’ forms of campaigning, including engaging in politics and bureaucracy. In 1983, Nick Lenore reported in *The Bulletin*: ‘The Hobart greenies are different to the Terania Creek greenies’ (Lenore 1983, 23). Tension arose between NAG and the Wilderness Society, which was not comfortable with the more radical ‘ferals’ from the north. 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 (Cited in Parks 1999, 39).

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

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 (Gee 2001, 84).

While many individuals have demonstrated the significance of the blockade’s legacy, the work of John Seed alone would be enough to exemplify the influence of Terania. Seed 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' (Seed 2008). The first action he 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 (Seed 2000). The organisation is well respected internationally, and 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' (see [Rainforest Information Centre](#)).

Seed was also central to the exportation of Teranian techniques elsewhere. He toured Australia and the world in the early 1980s, screening *Give Trees a Chance* for a global audience. *Nimbin News* (1987) reported: 'Wherever it went it inspired people & raised money to help save the rainforest.' John also took the film to the United States, sharing Australian knowledge with the newly established Earth First! (Joseph and Irvine 2010). Nan Nicholson recounts:

I remember at the time, John Seed coming back with reports from The States that he was exporting it over there, and they were amazed at what we were doing, and even said that Australia's probably the leader in the world now (Nicholson and Nicholson 2010).

Seed took part in early Earth First! actions and was responsible for raising awareness of rainforest issues within the organisation (Manes 1990, 119). Christopher Rootes (2015, 429) notes that a Nomadic Action Group was established in the United States in 1983, and one member reported, 'we even learned to sing the songs from Seed's cassette tape.' Seed has also been given credit by British politician Derek Wall (1999, 47) for establishing rainforest preservation 'as a priority for many Earth First!ers.' The prolific campaigner also influenced the British movement—British activist George Marshall (Wall 1999, 21) 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 there based on Seed's methods and actions.

Like John Seed, Dailan Pugh has also been responsible for the creation of an organisation dedicated to saving the forests. Pugh explains that Terania was 'a catalyst to my devotion to forest protection, starting first

with rainforests further west, expanding to include the fight for old growth eucalypt forests, and culminating with the establishment of the North East Forest Alliance' (Pugh 1999). NEFA is a product of the same culture that produced Terania and has contributed in its own right to forest protest techniques around Australia and the world. Established in 1989 and still active today, NEFA has been a highly successful and powerful group that, like Terania, deserves more recognition. Aidan Ricketts (2003, 2006, 77–90), Marty Branagan (2008) and Ian Cohen (1996), 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 its role as a pioneering force.

NEFA's first (and successful) campaign took place at Washpool in Northern NSW from 1989, but its first major success was at Chaelundi, to the south of Washpool, in 1991. There are estimates that as many as 5000 people took part in the Chaelundi protests (Wilson 2003, 6), but it must be noted that NEFA has co-operated with local and national groups for many of its 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 Pat Shultz, who speaks of a friend who was at Washpool and Chaelundi, and who was also present 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' (Schultz 2010). Protest techniques were not imported or based on international models; they were informed by local knowledge, experience and expertise—with Terania being the primary source. Chaelundi, for Cohen (1996, 182), 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.

Like the Teranians, NEFA activists demonstrated deep, long-term commitment to the cause, employed techniques that deliberately put their bodies on the line, and waged campaigns that had a significant impact on the state government. While NEFA tactics differed from those pioneered

at Terania, the group still adhered to nonviolence—the key difference was that NEFA crafted new techniques of its own devising. NEFA activists, unlike the earlier Teranian consensus model, were free to ‘pursue strategies of their own choosing’ (Ricketts 2003, 138). This allowed for an organic and spontaneous creation of a new repertoire of techniques. Like Terania, these techniques were often born out of the Australian landscape itself. NEFA activists frequently utilised the natural lay of the land and the materials available to them. Blockades were often strategically constructed on cutting roads and bridges in order to maximise the efficiency of the blockade by making the road impassable. Sean O’Shannessy (2008) 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 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.

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 thus resulting in a highly efficient blockade. Ricketts recalls that ‘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’ (cited in Hawley 2003, 22). The Chaelundi blockade held for ten days; activists reconstructed the blockade each night, while the police came by day to dismantle their efforts (this would become common at NEFA blockades). 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 (2010) describes, it was an ‘arms race’. Tim Thorncraft (2008) 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.

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 its own innovations. 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, 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 Northeast NSW. The scope of NEFA's successes is much more significant than what they have been given credit for in mainstream society. Pugh (n.d.) 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 re-define 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.

NEFA activists are 'recognised as some of the most skilled in the country' (Parks 1999, 12). They have conducted training workshops for activist groups and students, they have been called upon to assist blockades across the country and they have been involved in the development of university courses (Ricketts 2003, 76). The techniques developed and refined by NEFA were recorded one night around a campfire, in 'embarrassingly joking bloody language' (Thorncraft 2008), in the *Intercontinental Deluxe Guide to Blockading*. This document has since been shared across Australia and the world. Pugh states that 'it got put online, so it should have been easy to obtain [...] it was aimed at helping, assisting other groups with different blockading techniques' (Pugh 2010). Australian techniques, conveyed complete with jocular and irreverent Australian slang ('dodgy', 'dope', 'deep shit' and 'truck fuckers' to list a few terms), were absorbed

by Earth First! in the United States, among others. Thorncraft (2008) recalls that ‘at one stage Earth First! in the States were distributing [the *Intercontinental Deluxe Guide*] for a dollar a copy.’ In direct contrast to the assumptions around the importation of protest culture and technique into Australia, Terania Creek, and consequently NEFA, have exported techniques that have been adopted by activist groups across the planet in defence of the Earth.

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’ (1999, 17). The first tripod used in protest in the United States appears to have occurred in 1992 (Restless 2000), and George McKay (1998, 286) recognises that tripods were used in the Australian forests before they came to be widely used in Britain but claims that it was the British who first constructed them with steel. Australian sources, however, claim that the first tripod constructed in Australia was in 1989—and that it was made of steel (Rogers 1998, 166–167). Marshall, who as mentioned had spent time in Australia under the influence of Seed, has noted that

people 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 (Cited in Wall 1999, 174).

Branagan (2008, 236) argues that British environmentalists developed their own unique techniques such as tunnelling. However, Wall (1999, 172) 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’. Furthermore, Wall (1999, 163) acknowledges that the daring precariousness of Australian blockade structures have influenced both American and British protest techniques. In direct contrast to Australian protests that took up international causes in the 1960s 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 Australian forests (Wall 1999, 51). 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 elsewhere in the world.

American activist Rik Scarce (2006, 227) acknowledges that Terania occurred ‘nearly four years before the first comparable Earth First! action in the US.’ Yet, Susan Zakin (1993, 249) claims that Australian protests have been far larger than Earth First! USA ‘could even dream about.’ American activists were aware that Australian environmentalists had scaled trees to prevent logging, and the first recorded instance of tree-sitting in America occurred in 1985 (Manes 1990, 100; Wall 1999, 171; Scarce 2006, 175). Earth First! grew to become an international organisation well known for its radical techniques such as ecotage, and is far more notorious around the globe (and probably even within Australia) than either the Terania blockade or NEFA. Dave Foreman, author of seminal work *Ecodefense: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching* (1985) 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 [*sic*] 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 (Cited in Zakin 1993, 398).

Not only does this demonstrate a reverse flow of knowledge in contrast to earlier criticism; Foreman is specifically instructing the United States and Europe to seek Australian expertise. As noted, Teranian influence is easily recognisable around Australia as well as in Britain and the United States. In addition, the RIC has worked throughout Asia and South America, and there are doubtless many more unrecognised cultural exports—Branagan recounts how NEFA activist Marita travelled to Ireland when activists were protesting deforestation for road development there to ‘give ’em a few more ideas’, while Branagan himself has taken information on ecotage to the rainforests of Borneo, at significant personal risk (2008, 318; personal communication).

Again in contrast to the usual importance given to international influences, Australian protest songs have been another export of forest protest culture. While in the 1960s Sydney University students adopted American

folk songs for protest (Scalmer 2002, 14), a few years after Terania Australian forest songs were sung in American forests (Cohen 1996, 27). Regarding another possible cultural export, Ricketts (2003, 136–138) argues that NEFA was central to the creation of the ‘feral’ subculture that first developed during the five-month long Chaelundi campaign. A combination of countercultural and anarcho-punk identities, the forest ferals are now a fact of Australian forest protest culture, and can still be found in the forests of Tasmania. 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 (Evans 1998).

THE TERANIAN INFLUENCE TODAY

Perhaps the most obvious legacy of Terania Creek is its enduring influence upon both the inhabitants and the wider culture of the Rainbow Region. The blockade sits proudly at the heart of local identity; while this remarkable event has received very little attention in academic discourse, there is no doubt that locals are proudly aware of the significance of Terania. Many of the innovative environmental approaches in the direction of sustainability and activism developed by the local counterculture and the activist community have now become part of mainstream culture. Local academic Helen Wilson (2003, 4) argues that ‘the term “alternative” no longer applies in a binary opposition to the mainstream.’ Benny Zable (2012) reflects on what he considers to be the most important outcome of the Aquarius Festival:

We were able to tune into this area as a community of people to develop alternatives or new ideas, to develop ideas, to have the world we want to have, you know? And so we boogied around that [...] oppose[d] the bad things, and demonstrate[d] against them, and [kept] on pushing the alternatives, which are now mainstream.

The Rainbow Region continues to lead the way in innovative and influential environmental activism. The most obvious expression of this activism was the Bentley Blockade, the largest and most significant protest event in the region since Terania Creek, which occurred from January to April 2014. And like Terania, it has echoed across Australia and around the globe.

The Bentley Blockade was mounted in response to the threat of unconventional gas mining on farmland, fourteen kilometres west of Lismore.

The petroleum exploration license (PEL) had been bought by gas company Metgasco, and the process would almost certainly require hydraulic fracturing, or ‘fracking’, in order to release the tight sands gas. Fracking is the practice of injecting a high-pressure combination of water, sand and (often extremely dangerous) chemicals deep into the earth to fracture a coal seam or tight gas sands in order to release gas reserves. The approach is highly contentious and has been linked to many negative effects, including the release of toxic and carcinogenic chemicals; increased incidence of earthquakes; subsidence of water tables and the contamination of aquifers; the release of dangerous levels of methane, a potent greenhouse gas, along with other significant environmental impacts (Howarth et al. 2011).

The communities of the Rainbow Region had been leading a strong anti-unconventional gas campaign for the previous two years, mounting blockades at nearby Doubtful Creek and Glenugie. While these campaigns were unsuccessful, some of the protest techniques and innovative approaches taken were again adopted by the international anti-fracking movement. The Knitting Nannas Against Gas were established in Lismore as a group of seemingly innocuous senior citizens who would sip tea and knit at protest sites and outside politicians’ offices, challenging the notion that only young radicals take to environmental protest. Their characteristic yellow-and-black creations (the colours of danger, and the colours of the local triangular ‘no gas’ signs) can now be found across Australia, throughout Britain, and in Iowa and Virginia, United States (Knitting Nannas Against Gas 2017). UK group Talk Fracking (2016) states that the Knitting Nannas ‘have been an inspiration to communities and groups fighting extreme energy globally, including our own frack-fighting Nanas here in the UK.’

The Bentley Blockade was built on the foundations of decades of experience in honing protest techniques to a fine art. Terania veterans including the Nicholsons, Paul Joseph, Dudley Leggett and Mookx Hanley took part. Echoes of Terania could be seen in the camp organisation, use of the arts, police liaison, a television advertisement and strict adherence to non-violent direct action. And just as Terania had, the blockade drew together an impressive set of collaborative skills—local activists played a major role on the blockade, constructing a formidable tangle of obstacles at the access gates of the proposed site and risking their safety by climbing blockade structures. Community leaders knowledgeable in sustaining community, logistics and communication put great effort into the running of ‘Camp Liberty’—the basecamp for the blockade that saw thousands of

‘protectors’ come and go over the months. Well-spoken farmers and anti-fracking representatives worked hard lobbying politicians, and Bundjalung Elders imparted knowledge of local sacred sites and explained the Aboriginal cultural significance of land and water to the camp. Unlike Terania, however, the blockade also garnered widespread community support, again reinforcing the influence of the original protest movement and the mainstreaming of activist principles. Many in the wider community offered whatever support they could, donating food and other resources, and informing the camp of any developments in relation to police movements, or large bookings for accommodation or catering services that could indicate an amassing police presence.

After months of tense blockading and multiple threats to send in 800 riot police, early one morning an announcement came that Metgasco’s license had been suspended, pending an inquiry into the company’s seemingly inadequate community consultation process. More than eighteen months later, after argument, court appeals, threatening rhetoric from Metgasco and the fall of a strong Nationals (conservative country party) seat to the Greens at the state election, the NSW Government bought back the company’s PEL in November 2015 (Jeffery 2015).

The Bentley victory has emboldened communities across Australia and the world, and likely has been responsible for increased pressure on coal seam gas companies in NSW—not only has the Northern Rivers been declared ‘gasfield free’, but other companies have also withdrawn across the state, including major company AGL Energy. Santos is now the last big gas company remaining in NSW and is based in the Pilliga Scrub, the largest stretch of semi-arid woodland left in the state (Smith 2016; Thomas 2011). In the aftermath of Bentley a number of protesters including Benny Zable relocated to the ‘Pilliga Push’ camp, along with a shipping container full of resources from Camp Liberty. In Rainbow Region fashion, activists have once again taken their innovation and expertise on the road to wage peace for the environment. Meg Nielsen, local farmer and blockader, believes that the answer to confronting the environmental challenges of the present and future is simple—it is based on

exactly what we are doing here. I think if we can maintain this wonderful connection with community and spread out in the ripple effect, I think we can change the world (Nielsen 2014).

The Bentley Blockade, born of the Spirit of Terania, once again exemplifies the power of Rainbow Region activism and reinforces the importance

of the Australian environment movement on a global scale. During the blockade, messages of solidarity poured in from Britain and the United States. Talk Fracking assert that ‘Australia’s Bentley Blockade action [...] sent ripples that were felt across the world and enlightened many to the cold hard facts about the extreme energy industry and its deadly practices’ (Talk Fracking 2016). A film documenting the blockade, *The Bentley Effect*, was crowdfunded and completed in 2016. Produced with the intention of inspiring hope, the director, Brendan Shoebridge (2016), explains that ‘[successful US film] Gasland showed us the problem—The Bentley Effect shows us the solution.’ The film won first place at the locally held Byron Bay International Film Festival in 2016, as well as Best Documentary Feature Film in the Barcelona Film Festival of March 2017 (Shoebridge 2016; Coyne 2017). Anti-fracking protesters in Britain called out to the film’s producers, explaining: ‘We NEED the movie showing now here ASAP to educate and inspire as many as possible locally. It is so time sensitive—do you know when this could be possible?’ (Frack Off London 2017). In response, *The Bentley Effect* was part of a five-week travelling roadshow around Britain in May 2017, harking back to John Seed’s American tour of *Give Trees a Chance*. In addition to screening the film, Bentley activists contributed to strategic planning and nonviolent direct action training with their British anti-fracking counterparts (Shoebridge 2016).

When, out of desperation, a crowd of people first rushed onto the road in the path of a bulldozer in 1979, no one could have imagined the significance of that moment. The victory at Terania Creek has had a ripple effect, affecting not only Australia but the global community. The Rainbow Region stands in defiance of claims that the Australian protest movement has been a mere mimicry of the international scene. The citizens of this unique region are pioneers in their own right. To this day, the Spirit of Terania lingers. It is hard to estimate the consequences for the global environment if the Terania Creek blockade and all subsequent environmental activism did not occur, but it is safe to say that there would be even fewer of our precious forests left on Earth.

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Conclusion

Could you imagine ... they would take bulldozers into places like Terania Creek and chop down the trees and say 'Oh we need the timber.' How naïve was that! Could you imagine them putting a bulldozer in Terania Creek now? That's how foresighted Hugh and Nan and their group of protectors were back then.

Not protesters, they were protectors.

Kim Curtis (2014), Rainbow Region local

Abstract The impact and influence that the Terania Creek campaign has had on a global scale is highly significant. Yet, to date, this remarkable series of events has been little recognised. While the argument has been made that Australian activism has imitated international movements, Terania Creek demonstrates that this is not only an unfair suggestion, but that in the case of environmental activism, the reverse is actually true. Dozens of individuals involved in the campaign went forth into the world after 1979, directly contributing to the burgeoning environment movement in a number of tangible, measurable ways. Of great significance to scholarship is the importance of Terania Creek as a pioneer of techniques and tactics, rather than an imitation of American and British protests.

Keywords Terania Creek • Environmental activism • International influence

Terania Creek still stands, even more beautiful now than it was in the 1970s. Areas that were previously selectively logged, patchy and weed covered have been significantly regenerated under the care of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. Today, visitors make the 17 km journey along a narrow dirt road to the Terania Creek basin. At the end, a small car park occupies a cleared area in the forest where the police camp was stationed during the blockade. A display sign informs tourists that they have arrived at the site of the ‘historic Terania Creek protest’. A path winds through the trees, allowing visitors to marvel at the beauty of rainforest giants and delicate ferns, and to see Bat Cave Creek, the water cascading down a sheer rock face as Protester’s Falls, before it tumbles down a series of pools through the rainforest valley to Terania Creek proper. It is a very special place.

Aidan Ricketts (2006, 84) says of environmental activism:

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.

While such an assessment may be true of many histories, this one hopes to amend that unfortunate observation. It was neither politicians nor professional lobbyists who spoke on behalf of the forest 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, organising collectively, 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 action.

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. The Terania campaign was supported to no small degree by its location in the very heart of alternative Australia, and it is likely that this 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 force.

With no plans or precedent, the Teranians were thrown into an entirely new situation and tactics that are now familiar and commonplace arose from necessity, initiative and ingenuity. In that melting-pot of ideas, principles such as nonviolence and consensus decision-making informed a month-long collaboration of knowledge and resistance. Tree-sitting, bulldozer and road obstruction, ‘black wallabying’, intelligent media campaigns, policeliaising, camp organisation and possibly even ecotage—activists around the world today who draw on such knowledge and techniques in the fight for the forests are ideological descendants of 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 gained an experience that would impact on the rest of their lives. One such was Neil Pike (2009):

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.

Pike’s observation aptly highlights a few key points about Terania. Like his description, Terania was a typically Australian occurrence. Forceful yet irreverent, these aspects of Terania are redolent of the Australian environmental protest juggernaut that continues to this day. As Pike also points out, Terania has not ‘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 managed to slip by without much recognition outside the local area, the shockwaves of Terania are visible the world over and through the dissemination of its ideas, continue to have a transforming effect.

Other stories related to Terania Creek also need to be told. The Aquarius Festival, the Nomadic Action Group, the North East Forest Alliance—each in turn has had a significant impact on Australian culture, the environment movement and global activist knowledge. It is particularly important to record these stories while it is still possible. Paul Joseph

passed away in 2015 but not before leaving behind him a long legacy of activism and social change, as he reflects here:

Terania was a fulfilment of a dream, really. 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. To see that together, we are capable of amazing change. That together, we can batter away at each other and get down to the real crux of the matter. And we were very good at that, through the whole process. Particularly when we were all camped together, we worked and acted as a real tribe. And there were leaders who stood up and took us in certain directions, but we kept coming back to the core. And it was democracy on display, at its most beautiful, really. And incredible to share a sense of care for the planet with so many people who were prepared to put themselves out to an incredible degree, risk their lives, even. These were real soldiers, you know on the path of the real war, which is the change within our species, bad habits, and we've gotta figure out why we went so wrong when we invented the bow and arrow. We've destroyed the planet to such an obvious degree [...] but the good thing that I got out of Terania was connecting with a bunch of other people who did feel the same, and by joining together, transformed into something truly marvellous.

Such stories can inspire us and help us to see the way forward when confronted with the overwhelming ecological challenges of the Anthropocene, this era of human-induced global environmental change that we inhabit. In addition to the remarkable elements evident in Joseph's recollection—the power of the collaboration and co-operation, compromise and leadership of a participatory society, fertilised by countercultural philosophy—another important lesson emerges from Terania Creek. Occurring during the Anthropocene but before its being framed as a clearly defined epoch, the environmentalism of the counterculture can be interpreted as an *embodied response* to the Anthropocene. The very concept of the Anthropocene forces a revaluation and reconsideration of our actions and approach to environmental change. It does not allow for the illusion that we are separate; engaging with the Anthropocene necessitates an understanding that we, as part of the environment, are impacting upon and altering the natural environment on a global scale. Many of the Rainbow Region counterculturalists were acutely aware of this, giving up city lives to seek out a more harmonious existence with the Earth. The back-to-the-land movement, in particular, represents a reaction against the nature/culture divide, demonstrating a yearning for a closer relationship to the natural environment.

The lived, embodied experience of many of these activist pioneers caused them to be so aware of the environmental destruction around them that they made life-altering decisions and offered their very bodies in defence of the forest.

Countercultural thinking has become central to modern-day understandings of environmental issues, both intellectually and practically. There is much more engagement today with ideas and practices once deemed ‘alternative’: the counterculture has led the way in an uncertain environment. Environmental activism generated at the grassroots level continues to be one of the most powerful ways in which we can face the Anthropocene, particularly when we stand together as communities. The story of Terania, and the power of the movement generated since then, is testament to the importance and the power of grassroots action.

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ACRONYMS

ALP	Australian Labor Party
AUS	Australian Union of Students
BLF	Builders Labourers Federation
EIS	Environmental impact statement
HEC	Hydro-Electric Commission
LPAC	Lake Pedder Action Committee
NAG	Nightcap Action Group, later known as the Nomadic Action Group after the successful Nightcap action in 1982.
NEFA	North East Forest Alliance
NSW	New South Wales
NUS	National Union of Students
SoS	Students of Sustainability
SPCC	State Pollution Control Commission
TNFAG	Terania Native Forest Action Group

GLOSSARY

Biodiversity hotspot A region of very high ecological diversity that is under threat.

Caldera The remnants of a collapsed volcano that form a crater.

Counterculture A set of values, beliefs and practices that are often contrary to prevailing social norms and challenge the status quo. Counterculture most often refers to the New Left youth culture of the 1960s.

Endemic Native to a particular area.

Environmental Impact Statement Australian law requires that any development that may impact upon the natural environment undergo a survey of potential environmental impacts.

Intentional Community a community of people who deliberately enter into a collective living arrangement, often sharing land and resources, and common values.

Moratorium usually refers to a temporary suspension of an activity, but in the context of the Vietnam War Moratoriums the term refers to a series of very large public rallies against the War. In Australia, over 200,000 people attended the first Vietnam War Moratoriums across the country on 8 May 1970.

Snigging The process of felling trees and dragging them out of the forest with the use of ropes or chains.

Transect survey A flora or fauna survey in which a straight line is plotted through an ecosystem, and all species on the line are recorded in order to produce a representative sample of the ecosystem under study.

Tree-sit To literally sit in a tree in order to prevent it from being cut down.

Tripod a three-legged structure, like a stool, used in blockading—a brave volunteer sits at the apex, where the three legs meet, high up off the ground.

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