

Hippies vs. Hairies:

The Early Australian Counter-Culture in Kuranda North Queensland

Rohan Lloyd
Honours,
James Cook University

On a late September night in 1971, two Cairns based police officers, Senior Const. Priest and Constable Summers, drove up to Kuranda in response to calls for police assistance by the Kuranda police officer 'on several occasions because of the conduct of members of a hippie commune there'.

The two police officers found three young people (two male, one female) walking alongside the Barron Falls Road. As the patrol car pulled up beside the three one male jumped into the bushes. The other male, Brett James Thomas, a nineteen year old labourer, was questioned at the scene by the officers as to his name, address and the name of the person who fled into the scrub. 'He denied having been accompanied by another male or that anyone had run into the scrub'. When asked about his way of life he said 'that he was not in possession of any money or prospects of earning any money in the immediate future nor was he registered for unemployment benefits'. In response to questions about this lifestyle he said, 'I don't have to have a reason to live the way I want to'. The young man was given seven days imprisonment at the Cairns Watch-house on vagrancy charges. Det. Sgt. Bidner said the conduct of members of the commune had been such that the officer at Kuranda had asked for police assistance a number of times. 'This person ... and others appear to feel that they have the right to take anyone's property', he said.¹

Kuranda is a small town nestled within National Park rainforests about 25km northwest of Cairns. Today it is a major tourist destination and an outer suburb of Cairns, but from 1970 to 1972 it was the hippy capital of Australia. This brief episode gave Kuranda a short stint in the national spotlight as a destination for hippies and alternative life-stylers. Kuranda attracted counter-culturalists from across Australia and around the world. Consequently, it aroused the ire of and negative attention from the local conservative media, law enforcement, and government. By 1973, other locations in Australia (namely Nimbin and its surrounding region) had eclipsed Kuranda as

¹ 'Two Hippies Jailed for Vagrancy,' *Cairns Post*, 18 September 1971, 3.

the major hippy hub, but Kuranda's identity as a counter-culture community lingered as some of the hippies who settled in Kuranda remained and formed part of the local community.

This article discusses those hippies who arrived in Kuranda in the early 1970s, and the subsequent reactions from local government and media. As part of that discussion, I highlight the tensions between two different groups within the Kuranda counter-culture community: the transient teenage drop-outs, and the older, more serious alternative life-stylers. Importantly, these distinctions within the counter-culture community—between 'hippies' and 'hairies', respectively—were only recognised from within the community itself. The internal divide was borne out of not only a generational difference, but also an economic divide. From their previous lives in the southern cities, the 'hairies' had life experiences, built up savings, and the skills necessary to successfully live an alternative life-style based on ideas of self-sufficiency and individuality. The 'hippies', who were generally reliant upon government welfare payments and family care packages, were not as aptly suited to the same life-style. The broader public, including Kuranda locals, apart from a single article in the local newspaper, referred to the counter-culturalists collectively as 'hippies'.² In this essay, the terms 'hippy' and 'hippies' will refer to the entirety of the Kuranda counter-culture community, unless otherwise stated.

The division within the counter-culture community emerged in parallel with the increased attention it received from local authorities and media. Through the media, the local Council and police positioned the Kuranda hippies as a dangerous 'other'. The media was also instrumental in representing Cairns as a major drug hub of Australia, and portrayed the Kuranda hippies as significant contributors to it.³ The media's negative portrayal of the hippies and the attention from the local authorities contributed to the internal divisions within the hippy community between those who aspired to live long-term in Kuranda and the more transient element of the Kuranda counter-cultural community. This internal division also served to distance the Kuranda hippy movement from the broader Australian counter-culture.

Contemporary literature on the Australian counter-culture fails to position the Kuranda hippy movement accurately within the broader context. Rosita Henry's *Practising place, performing memory: identity politics in an Australian town, the 'Village in the Rainforest'* provides the most significant study of the Kuranda hippy community.⁴ Excluding Henry's work, there is a lack of scholarly material on the history of the Kuranda hippy invasion. For the most part, Australian histories of the counter-culture focus on the Nimbin communes, the Aquarius festival, Cedar Bay and the urban student movements of the southern capital cities both before and after 1970. Kuranda, despite predating the Nimbin events and being one of the first country commune settlements, receives only token reference in the larger academic histories of the Australian counter-culture, and in some cases none at all. Henry provides an oral history account of the arrival of the hippies to the town of Kuranda. The oral history account comes largely from the

² 'Kuranda outcry to ban hippies,' *Cairns Post*, 22 June 1972, 1.

³ For example see *Cairns Post*: 'Drug Charges in far North,' 19 January 1971, 3; 'Left Melbourne for Hippie Life,' 23 February 1971, 1; 'Drug Addiction is High in District,' 28 May 1971, 2; 'Eighth of State drug arrests are in Cairns,' 9 November 1971, 1; 'Kuranda's Hippies Await Rain to Bring on the Mushrooms,' 12 November 1971, 1; 'Marijuana plantation destroyed,' 19 January 1972, 1.

⁴ This thesis was published in 2012 as *Performing Place, Practising Memories: Aboriginal Australians, Hippies and the State*. I extracted the referenced material from the thesis, some of which is absent from the subsequently published version. I therefore have continued to use the thesis and my footnotes reflect this.

perspective of 'hairies' who remained in the village. The testimony from the 'hairies' provides valuable insight into their own perceptions and position within the counter-culture. The historical record, however, would benefit from gaining an idea of how both the local community and the broader Australian counter-cultural community perceived the Kuranda hippy movement. This assessment, along with a better understanding of the Kuranda hippy movement, will allow Kuranda to be more appropriately placed within the Australian counter-culture.

The Counter-Culture

Before discussing the events that took place in Kuranda, it is necessary to discuss and describe the counter-culture of the 1960s and 1970s, and the events that led to an establishment of a hippy community at Kuranda. This discussion provides the context for the remaining arguments that seek to position Kuranda and its relevance within the broader counter-cultural movement.

Defining counter-culture is as inherently problematic as defining culture. Cultures and counter-cultures do not lend themselves easily to definitive parameters of time, place, ethnicity, age or gender. Theodore Roszak argued in *The Making of a Counter Culture* that a counter-culture is 'a culture so radically disaffiliated from the mainstream assumptions of our society that it scarcely looks to many as a culture at all, but takes on the alarming appearance of a barbaric intrusion.'⁵ However, this definition allows any group differing from the mainstream to be included, or labelled, as a counter-culture. Ken Goffman suggested a more restrictive concept of counter-culture, arguing that three attributes define all counter-cultures: they are anti-authoritarian or non-authoritarian, they assert primacy to individuality, and they embrace individual and social change.⁶ The embracing, or even creating, of broad social change is perhaps one of the more significant components theorists look for in a counter-culture.

Umberto Eco, the Italian philosopher, gives three broad but interrelated definitions of culture based on aesthetics, ethics and anthropology and a counter-culture for each. Eco's argument regarding the anthropology of culture and the inability for a distinct counter to this to exist provides a philosophical perspective upon some of the reasons for the practical difficulties realised, not just at Kuranda, by counter-culturalists generally. Eco argued that the anthropological characteristics of culture, the institutions, myths, laws, beliefs, codes of everyday behaviour and values, exist and function without the members of that culture being made explicitly aware of them. He argued that they are not made aware until confronted with a critical analysis of the way it functions or when a competing model arises.⁷ Against this definition, Eco argued, there is no counter-culture, only 'other' cultural models that either succeed or fail at becoming absorbed into the dominant cultural model. However, Eco's work did not preclude the existence of counter-cultures. Rather, a counter-culture's existence is dependent upon the dominant cultural model, and unless this is recognised and a complete and new cultural model is constructed in order to replace the existing cultural paradigm, the counter-culture can only ever exist as a dependent 'other' culture.⁸

5 Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and its Youthful Opposition*, (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1969), 42.

6 Ken Goffman, *Counterculture: Through the Ages: From Abraham to Acid House*, (New York: Villard, 2004), 29.

7 Umberto Eco, *Apocalypse Postponed*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 119.

8 Ibid., 123.

There was a clear counter-culture in 1960s and 1970s Australia that expressed libertarian ideals; the participants sought alternative patterns of social interaction and self-expression, and voiced and developed distinctive economic and political outlooks. It was a diverse movement with a variety of expressions which grew largely out of the urban, educated, middle-class youth.⁹ However, the counter-culture was not exclusively for the young: it included adult members who became symbols and leaders of the movement.¹⁰ The counter-cultural ranks would also at times become affiliated with elements of radical Blacks, bikies, liberal youth, and extreme political organisations such as young Marxists, but these groups did not form part of the counter-culture.¹¹ The counter-culture was committed to creating a world both humane and joyful and was largely open to accept all those who desired to form part of the movement.¹²

Yet despite the diversity of its group members the counter-culture was united by a common enemy and the acknowledgement of a similar feeling of alienation and yearning for change.¹³ Theodore Roszak argued that the counter-culture was united against the 'technocratic state', which referred to a society that has reached the ultimate of its organisational structure.¹⁴ Essentially the human organisation has become a mechanistic utility run by authoritative, specially trained experts and every aspect of human life aspires to become technical and integration a matter for professional attention. Umberto Eco argued that the elements of a counter-culture that did manifest were a rebellion against the aesthetic and ethical cultures which had been cultivated through established and dominant structures, which had maintained a status quo of class and cultural power.¹⁵ Julia Stephens suggested that in response to the rigid political structures in the Western world the counter-culture, the New Left and radicals of the 1960s expressed an 'anti-disciplinary politics' in which they rejected the planning, obedience, tactics, aims, order, bureaucracy and organisation present within traditional disciplined politics.¹⁶ Stephens argued that the counter-culture aimed to redefine the character of politics, where rigid politics exemplified by traditional bureaucratic systems would be replaced by more playful and theatrical structures, drawn from the sphere of popular culture. This assessment also aligns with Doug Rossinow's argument. Rossinow suggested the counter-culture was based on the idea of transgression of power. The traditional bureaucratic and political structures that dominated society could be transcended and replaced with new values and systems based on love and co-operation. These ideas they believed had been repressed by the traditional systems.¹⁷ What is clear is that the counter-culture, at its core, demonstrated a rejection of the traditional forms in which society was organised.

The Australian and American counter-culture movements were closely aligned. Peter Cock argued that in Australia the counter-culture opposed the 'corporate state', an idea that does not differ

9 Peter Cock, *Alternative Australia: Communes of the Future?*, (Melbourne: Quartet Books, 1979), 18.

10 Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, xii.

11 Ibid., xii and Goffman, *Counter Culture*, 276-277.

12 Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, xii.

13 Ibid., 56.

14 Umberto Eco, *Apocalypse Postponed*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 3-4.

15 Eco, *Apocalypse Postponed*, 117-119.

16 Julie Stephens, *An Anti-Disciplinary Politics: Sixties Radicalism and Postmodernism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 25.

17 Doug Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 249-250.

significantly from Roszak's 'technocratic state'.¹⁸ Indeed, the influence of the American counter-culture upon Australia has led some to critique the authenticity of the Australian counter-cultural movement. Robin Gerster and Jan Basset recognised that the political protests of the counter-culture in Australia were fuelled by the strong cultural relationship Australia developed with the United States during World War II, and that the Australian counter-culture also reflected its American counterpart in forms of protest.¹⁹ Stephens similarly suggested that Australian counter-culture was essentially an American export.²⁰ As Frank Crowley noted, the Australian counter-culture movement reflected its American counterpart in ideas, behaviour and fashion.²¹ They both expressed opposition to the war in Vietnam, racism, censorship, and other human rights infringements. This was coupled with a broader agenda to end the oppressive nature of a modern society too focused on economic development. The counter-culture rejected a social fabric, in which they perceived communities had lost their significance and the individual's identity had been swept away by a wave of commercialisation.

The commune concept was the counter-culture's most ambitious attempt to address the ills of society and to demonstrate an alternative social model. At the heart of the commune idea was a challenge to the concept of the 'nuclear family'. Peter Cock argued that the commune movement challenged the alienation, patriarchy and restrictiveness of the 'family', whilst also attacking its isolation and its dependence on the outside world.²² Cock argued that the family had been turned into a single unit, a commodity, which was isolated to its own house but which was still dependent upon the materialised world beyond the suburban home. Cock's assertion was that alternative life-style and the counter-culture communes were aimed at stripping away this isolation and the reliance upon the broader material world.²³ The commune dwellers relied upon one another for food and income, and all necessary work was shared, challenging traditional concepts of work and wealth. They attempted to escape the manufactured environments of the cities, and to re-engage and to enjoy an experiential relationship with nature. However, despite the collective ideals, an individualistic agenda was central to communal living. Typically commune dwellers were seeking not only a revolution of the social order but a revolution of the self. Self-expression, self-fulfilment, and the exploring of one's own 'inner realm' were a major part of the commune experience, and were reflected in the hippies' artistic pursuits, perspective on 'love', and use of drugs. This conflict between group and commune orientated life and self-expression and fulfilment played out in the Kuranda hippy community and was one of the major reasons that the Kuranda hippy movement fell into decline.

The Kuranda hippy movement began with a settlement at Holloways Beach, north of Cairns, around 1967. The development and decline of the Holloways Beach camp was later mirrored by the development and decline of the Kuranda hippy community. The Holloways Beach settlement was one of the first major regional counter-cultural outposts in Australia. Those who travelled to Holloways were aged from their early twenties and older, and included a variety of ex-professionals

18 Cock, *Alternative Australia*, 18.

19 Robin Gerster and Jan Bassett, *Seizures of Youth: The Sixties and Australia*, (Melbourne: Hyland House Publishing Pty Ltd., 1991), 32-34.

20 Stephens, *An Anti-Disciplinary Politics*, 6.

21 Frank Crowley, *Tough Times: Australia in the Seventies*, (Richmond: William Heinemann Australia, 1986), 34.

22 Peter Cock, 'Alternative Life Styles: Theory and Practice,' in *Social Change in Australia: Readings in Sociology*, ed. Donald E. Edgar, (Melbourne: Cheshire Publishing, 1974), 630.

23 Ibid.

and artists.²⁴ Their life-style was sustained by built-up savings from their previous working lives and through various jobs available to them around the area, including fishing, crocodile hunting, and other seasonal maritime labour.²⁵ The shanty settlement inspired one local cartoonist to illustrate it as a Greenwich Village on the beach.²⁶ They experimented with drugs, alternative life-styles, indulged in creative arts, and demonstrated a yearning for self-realisation, but ultimately they did not engage in a broader political agenda. The hordes of young drop-outs who subsequently arrived at Holloways were eager to indulge in the hedonistic elements of hippydom present at the beach community, but struggled to adapt to the practical elements of living an alternative life-style.

The presence of youth drop-outs camping on Holloways became a significant enough issue for the Cairns City Council to act. In 1970 the Cairns City Council compiled a special report on the camping situation at Holloways Beach, the outcome of which was the prohibition of camping on the Esplanade and at Holloways.²⁷ The decision to ban camping at Holloways Beach was not universally applauded by the Cairns community. At the Council meeting at which the legislation was tabled, a letter from a Holloways store-owner protested the decision, arguing that a more just outcome would be to set up a camping reserve. The store-keeper believed the campers were being victimised.²⁸ Additionally, a letter to the editor in 1971 argued that the Council had been the victim of a 'hippy hoax' and that they had acted in fear of a great convention of hippies.²⁹

The next destination for many of the Holloways community was a caravan park at Kamerunga, but it was Kuranda that became the ultimate settlement for the hippies. Cheap land, the surrounding rainforest, and the abundance of mushrooms (which had become the psychedelic drug of choice for the Holloway's refugees) made Kuranda a desirable location for the hippies. Mushroom use entrenched the Kuranda hippies within the counter-culture; it also distinguished them from the urban hippies of the southern cities. Whereas urban-based hippies indulged in manufactured substances such as LSD, Kuranda hippies preferred the more natural cultivation methods of mushrooms. The 'natural' status of mushrooms also played in to the concept of drug use as a means to discover the 'inner realm' of the self. But despite the localism of the mushroom culture, it proved a major draw for the young drop-outs from the major southern cities who travelled north to Kuranda to experience the hippy lifestyle.³⁰

The increased attention from the wider community was not lost on the original Holloways settlers. The impact of the popularity of the Holloways camp provided a valuable lesson for those who moved on: too much popularity led to publicity, and hence increased attention from the local authorities. Furthermore, the Holloways hippies who were committed to the alternative life-style learned early on that they had to distance themselves from the transient youths.

24 Rosita Henry, 'Practising place, performing memory: identity politics in an Australian town, the "Village in the Rainforest"', (PhD thesis, James Cook University, 1999), 127.

25 *Ibid.*, 128.

26 *The Northerner*, 28 July 1967.

27 'Camping on Beach,' *Cairns Post*, 17 June 1970, 3.

28 *Ibid.*, 3.

29 'Holloways Camp Ban,' letter to the editor, *Cairns Post*, 16 January 1971, 2.

30 'Kuranda's Hippies Await Rain to Bring on the Mushrooms,' *Cairns Post*, 12 November 1971, 1.

The Counter-Cultural Divide

Land prices in Kuranda were cheap enough for some of the Holloways Beach refugees to purchase land individually or as co-operatives. Ownership of land was valuable as it gave some freedom from police harassment. The Holloways experience had taught hippies that living outside the system left them legally exposed to law enforcement and government attacks. However, purchasing land left them exposed to other forms of bureaucracy, principally the local council's building regulations. The regulations enforced by the Council made it difficult to realise the 'alternative lifestyle' dream they had moved out of the city to find. In October 1970 the Mareeba Shire Council, the local council to which Kuranda belonged to, moved to enforce legal action on the 'Council's Building By-laws at Kuranda'.³¹ In a 'Special Meeting' on 18 March 1971 the Council amended their existing building regulations. The amendments specifically outlined that buildings should not be occupied or used until permission from the Council had been received.³² Whilst the minutes of the meeting never directly reference the alternative life-stylers, the amendments would certainly have the greatest impact upon them. As this quote from a councillor in a Sunday Mail article from September 1971 indicates, the hippies of Kuranda were certainly the primary target of the change in legislation:

'Unfortunately, some have bought land here', he said. 'A few have built their own homes, but they are not fit habitations and we have served notices on them to bring the places up to standard'.³³

The Council's building regulations were met with a mixed response. Some 'hairies' tried the best they could to comply with the regulations by submitting plans and living in classified 'temporary dwellings' (caravans, sheds etc.), whilst others chose to ignore the regulations and built what they could afford.³⁴ Whether the occupants were seeking to receive Council approval or not, the land-owners were all chasing a similar goal, to live a life free from the regulatory system of the state. Unfortunately this meant compromising their ideologies and buying into the system in order to live the life they wanted. This compromise is significant to understanding the overall agenda of the Kuranda hippies; there was no anti-social, ideologically-driven goal to 'drop-out' of the system, nor did they intend to revolutionise the social order. Many of those who purchased land in Kuranda did so precisely because it allowed them to pursue the life-style they had begun to enjoy at Holloways, based on ideas of sustainability and simplicity.

The Council's enforcement of the building by-laws had a significant impact upon the lifestyles and image of the Kuranda hippies. By purchasing land the hippies demonstrated to the broader community their commitment to live in Kuranda long-term, it gave them greater freedom to live their particular lifestyle, and they could distinguish themselves from the temporary, transient 'hippy' residents. As stated above, the terms used to distinguish between the two groups of 'drop-outs' were 'hippies' and 'hairies'.³⁵ The distinction and tensions present within the community was clearly expressed by a 'hairy' who stated:

31 Mareeba Shire Council, General Monthly Meeting, 15 October 1970, 5: Health Surveyor's Report: Kuranda Buildings.

32 Mareeba Shire Council, Special Meeting, 18 March 1971.

33 'Hippies Paradise is Locals' Hell,' *Sunday Mail*, 19 September 1971, 3.

34 Henry, 'Practising Place,' 170.

35 *Ibid.*, 164.

There were hippies and hairies. We were hairies... Hippies were dead-shit, nowhere, useless bums, and hairies were people that paid their own bills, very polite, shopped, had long hair but didn't dress in op-shop leftovers, which none of us did. We wore exactly the same almost as everyone else was wearing. We just happened to have hair down to our arse. So we were hairies... The other ones were getting their six dollars a week dole. See none of us did any of that...We were not hippies. We were hairies and hairies actually owned land up the road.³⁶

The media also reported on the tensions within the hippy community. The *Sunday Mail* published an article in 1970 entitled 'Hippy Families Invade North' that suggested several hippies had purchased land in Kuranda and lived privately, whilst most lived in temporary camps on a mixture of private property and Crown land.³⁷ A hippy ('hairy' by earlier definition) was quoted in that article stating: 'We don't want to bludge on society, we don't drink beer, and we don't believe in drugs...We want to build our own houses with our own hands, and grow our own food'.³⁸ Rather than trying to distinguish themselves from the broader community, the Kuranda 'hairies' aimed to distinguish themselves from their fellow counter-culturalists. Their statements to the local paper also provide a clearer understanding of their agenda. Most expressions of the 1960s and 1970s counter-culture sought to address broader social change, the Kuranda hippies were concerned primarily with living sustainably and being left free to do so.

1971 witnessed the peak of Kuranda's popularity as a 'hippy paradise' and various communes struggled to deal with the influx of young drop-outs making their way north to enjoy the communal experience. For the original hippy settlers of Kuranda this popularity was unwanted. The attention from younger, transient drop-outs had been a contributing factor to their being pushed out of Holloways Beach. Additionally, many Holloways' members remembered the paternalistic role they had to take in the relationship with younger bohemians. At Holloways, the younger drop-outs relied upon the older settlers for shelter and security, as one Holloways settler describes:

We were inundated by kids you know who had run away from home and who couldn't wipe their bums basically, and they were all trying to sort of live off us in a sense, I mean we had them sort of living under our tent ropes, they wanted to be that close, because they were basically insecure.³⁹

In Kuranda the teenage drop-outs again became a problem for the former Holloways settlers. As the following recollection from one of the alternative land-owners describes, the influx of teenage drop-outs created tension amongst the hippy community:

The young hippies were...wild...I mean they used to...they were tripping on mushrooms in town and going into the pubs on mushrooms and driving around...and one time they drove through town, about ten or twelve of them in one car, on the bonnet and on the roof. They were pretty wild times...[The Holloways Beach people] they'd bought land up here and they'd got into their houses and they wanted to fit into town...they were going to live here for twenty years...and most of them have, so they didn't want young yahoos creating a bad name or partying all the time...they just became conservative landholders...

³⁶ Ibid., 164.

³⁷ 'Hippy Families Invade North,' *Sunday Mail*, 5 July 1970, 5.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Interview with E1, 4 January 1994, quoted in Henry, 'Practising Place,' 128.

these young people were like pretty high profile you know, sitting around outside the post-office in their raggedy clothes playing guitars.⁴⁰

Another interviewee suggested that the communes were fairly poor places and conceded that they were attracting a range of people that changed the character and nature of the Kuranda scene. Referring to the hippy scene in Kuranda at the peak of its popularity, the interviewee stated:

It was really getting very bad, in terms of hygiene and all that kind of stuff you know. It was becoming a real sort of drop-out centre you know...there were people starting to turn up, like ex-bikers and their wives with kids, with guns and knives and all that kind of thing. The whole picture started to change and also up until then there hadn't been a lot of alcohol and then all of a sudden there was a lot of alcohol, and it became a very different sort of scene then...and those people who came, people called them the scrub ticks, 'cos basically they clung on and sucked everything out you know.⁴¹

Henry suggested that the people who had the capital to buy land were openly welcomed by the older settler families who owned, and were keen to sell, unproductive land.⁴² The negative image of the hippy gave greater reason for the land-owning element of the community to distance themselves from the communal dwelling transients, broadening the divide within the alternative community.

There was some acknowledgement from the mainstream media that diversity existed within the ranks of the counter-culture. The *Bulletin* published two articles by the American journalist John Lindblad, who spent three years visiting counter-culture communities throughout Australia. Lindblad described three distinct ways of living present within these communities: free-form spontaneous communes, land cooperative and 'rugged individualists'. It is clear from Lindblad's assessment that the Kuranda 'hairies' fitted his idea of the 'rugged individualist', those hippies who were generally the first to leave the cities and were 'by far the most productive and self-sufficient'. The Kuranda 'hippies' corresponded with those whom he argued lived in spontaneous communes, who lived together in communal shelters, ate the same food and 'in many cases lived in each other's pockets'. Lindblad suggests that the spontaneous communes were short-lived due to the fact that there was a lack of organisation and responsibility surrounding simple tasks like cooking and cleaning, and that this caused disillusionment and encouraged people to either drift away from the communes or to enter into land cooperatives.⁴³ In Kuranda the diversity was prevalent and the tensions between the various elements of the group were more pronounced. However, this media recognition of the idiosyncratic nature of the Kuranda hippy community was an exception, rather than the rule. Primarily, the hippy community at Kuranda was portrayed as a singular entity, and it was this portrayal that strengthened the divide between the 'hairies' and 'hippies'.

The Media and the Kuranda Hippies

The media played a significant role in shaping public perception of the Kuranda hippies. By analysing the major themes present in the reporting on Kuranda, we can form a better understanding of the bias present within the media and how that bias shaped the public

40 Interview with M, 15 April 1995, quoted in Henry, 'Practising Place,' 142.

41 Ibid., 142.

42 Henry, 'Practising Place,' 158.

43 John Lindblad, 'Dropping-Out: how to avoid the pitfalls,' *Bulletin*, 3 April 1976, 75-77.

perceptions of the Kuranda hippies. The local paper, the *Cairns Post*, presented an anti-Kuranda hippy bias in favour of the views of the local government and law enforcement. The *Post* served as the medium through which both the local council and the police were able to spread messages about the anti-social behaviour of the Kuranda hippies.⁴⁴

The Mareeba Shire Council, along with the previously discussed enforcement of building regulations, used the media to pursue other aspects of hippie culture that it considered a public liability. In an article published 21 September 1971 in the *Australian*, Mareeba Shire Councillor Charles King raised concerns regarding the hygiene standards of the hippies in Kuranda, stating:

If their personal hygiene is no better than their personal appearances then we have a real health worry. They're living without sanitation and this is a very warm climate. I understand this could lead to an outbreak of hepatitis.⁴⁵

A *Sunday Mail* article, published two days earlier, suggested that King would seek an investigation by the Children's Services Department into the possible neglect of children living in unhygienic conditions in the commune.⁴⁶ In the following General Monthly Meeting of the Mareeba Shire Council, Councillor King initiated a motion that 'occupiers of various properties along the Barron Falls Road' would have seven days to provide suitable sanitation—and that failure to comply would result in action taken against them.⁴⁷ In a final comment in the article in the *Sunday Mail*, from 19 September 1971, Councillor King stated that since little had been done in terms of police removing the hippies from Kuranda, the only solution to the problem 'is the old-fashioned one of running them out of town'.⁴⁸ Although there is no evidence in either the Mareeba Council Minutes or the *Cairns Post* that additional action was taken, both the Council and media used the perception of poor hygiene within the communes to justify targeting the hippie community at Kuranda. More importantly it demonstrated the way local conservative institutions, the council and the *Post*, could jointly shape public opinions over fringe elements of society.

The drug culture of the hippies was another major aspect frequently highlighted by the media in their coverage of the Kuranda community. The use of hallucinogenic mushrooms by the Kuranda hippies was reported not only in the local but also in the national media. An article in the *National Times* stated: 'There was only one real form of enterprise or entertainment—mushrooms'.⁴⁹ The *Cairns Post* reported that one young man, who had been arrested on drug possession and was asked why he had taken mushrooms, responded by telling the magistrate: 'We heard a lot about them in Melbourne and wanted to experience the effects'.⁵⁰ Another article reporting on the use of mushrooms in Kuranda stated: 'the hippies eat them in various ways. Some-times they cook them in omelettes'.⁵¹ The use of hallucinogenic mushrooms by Kuranda hippies generated some genuine

44 See *Cairns Post*: 'Drug Addiction is High in District,' 28 May 1971, 2; 'Two Hippies Jailed for Vagrancy,' 18 September 1971, 3; 'Blot on City,' 6 October 1971, 1.

45 'Hippies in Search of a Haven Above Capricorn,' *The Australian*, 21 September 1971, 9.

46 'Hippies' Paradise is Locals' Hell,' 3.

47 Mareeba Shire Council, General Monthly Meeting, 21 October 1971, 5: Health Surveyor's Report: Kuranda Situation.

48 'Hippies' Paradise is Locals' Hell,' 3.

49 M. Byrne, 'Australia's Newest Pioneers,' *National Times*, Supplement, July 1973 in Peter Cock, *Alternative Australia: Communes of the Future?*, (Melbourne: Quartet Books, 1979), 26.

50 'Fined for possession of Mushrooms Extracts,' *Cairns Post*, 12 January 1972, 1.

51 'Kuranda's Hippies Await Rain to Bring on the Mushrooms,' *Cairns Post*, 12 November 1971, 1.

curiosity from the media and the broader community, with the localism of the drug proving a drawcard for non-Kuranda hippies and youth.

It was marijuana, however, which was portrayed as the more sinister drug threat. The *Cairns Post* demonstrated a clear negative trend in their articles about Kuranda with a heavy focus on drug arrests and the drug culture – specifically, on those arrests and that culture connected to marijuana. An article entitled ‘Drug Addiction is High in District’ suggested that the percentage of people addicted to marijuana was ‘probably’ higher in the Cairns region than elsewhere in regional Australia. The article quoted a local Senior Sergeant who stated ‘this is caused by the use of marijuana by visitors, mainly of the hippie type...and not by local residents’.⁵² The *Post* articles from the period offer a valuable insight into the perspectives of the local police officers towards drug users and the culture. Another article quoted a police officer, who stated:

Marijuana is one of the worst drugs in the world. The stark fact is that if they use it, they will continue to use it. I don’t know of any habitual taker of marijuana who has succeeded in his studies-and some try for years to pass an exam.⁵³

The lack of understanding by the police regarding the use and effects of marijuana (and other illicit drugs) was abundantly clear.

By the end of 1972 the *Post* had established the Cairns region as a drug capital of Australia and Kuranda as a major hub of drug activity. An article about a seventeen year old ‘hippy style’ girl arrested on vagrancy charges included a brief exchange between the defendant and the Magistrate that provides a valuable insight into the motivation behind drug use by the hippies:

M: ‘What is the fascination in drugs?’

D: ‘There is no fascination. I just wanted to try it.’⁵⁴

The hippies unashamedly cultivated and consumed their own drugs. Consequently, they were readily a target of media coverage. The term ‘hippy’ itself was not always employed in the headlines, but the articles usually identified the culprits with descriptions heavy with hippie connotations: their youth, lack of employment, and particularly by the location of their arrest—Kuranda.

The division between mainstream media and the Kuranda hippy community also trickled down into mainstream local society. In a *Cairns Post* article from 27 February 1971, residents of Cairns were asked to voice opinions on the hippies and their role in society. The public perception was shown to mirror the anti-hippie and drug related concerns present in the *Post*’s reporting. When asked about the role of drugs in the Kuranda counter-culture, one interviewee asserted:

I think drugs have spoiled it. I think they all take drugs—because they like to experiment. I don’t really know what they do I don’t know anything about marijuana. I don’t want to either.

⁵² ‘Drug Addiction is High in District,’ *Cairns Post*, 28 May 1971, 2.

⁵³ ‘Eighth of State Drug Arrests are in Cairns,’ *Cairns Post*, 9 November 1971, 1.

⁵⁴ ‘Hippies are a Nuisance, Magistrate Tells Girl,’ *Cairns Post*, 17 October 1972, 3.

Anti-hippie opinions also moved beyond the drug culture concerns, with one participant stridently noting:

They don't want to work. They don't keep themselves clean. They spread disease. There's nothing good I can say about them. I think they ought all be rounded up and put in the army and if I was dictator I'd do it too.⁵⁵

Two weeks later a letter to the editor published in the *Post* expressed concerns that the broader Australian public perceived North Queensland as a paradise for hippies, and expressed desires that this image be reversed in order to show southerners that 'the Northern population is mostly a normal cross-section of civilisation who pay their taxes.'⁵⁶ The media, along with the council and police concerns present within the *Post's* reporting, had proved influential in shaping anti-hippy sentiments amongst the broader public.

Improved Perception

The *Post* rarely acted as a voice for the Kuranda hippies, but there were some exceptions to this trend. One article from February 1971 included comments by a Kuranda hippy.⁵⁷ Twenty-seven year old Drene Hall was interviewed on the rumours of drug use and the hippy community's general life-style. Hall said that she had moved from Melbourne in 1966 and was currently living in a house with 'one girl and four young men.' The comments from Hall demonstrate the banality of the hippy's lifestyle, but also diminish the more sinister claims being made by the local police and propagated by the *Post*. On the issue of drug use the article quoted Hall as stating:

I have heard of people smoking dried up toad skins but I don't believe it. There are supposed to be people up here who skin dogs and eat them too. But I don't believe that either.⁵⁸

Hall stated that she and her fellow hippies work when they need to; they find local jobs as labourers, as tobacco pickers, or even at the mines at Mt. Isa.⁵⁹ Speaking to her own circumstances, Hall was quoted as saying:

I'm about to get a job in a coffee lounge in Cairns. I want to build a home up here but that takes money.

This quote, along with Hall's age, the year she moved to North Queensland, and her living arrangements, suggest that Hall was a 'hairy'. Articles such as these did a lot to improve the public perception of the 'hairies' within the Kuranda and Cairns community, but did little to foster positive ideas about the transient 'hippy' youths who continued to be associated with poor public behaviour.⁶⁰

55 'Are Hippies Taking Role in Society?' *Cairns Post*, 27 February 1971, 2.

56 'Hippies in North,' letter to the editor, *Cairns Post*, 2 March 1971, 3.

57 'Left Melbourne for Hippie Life,' *Cairns Post*, 23 February 1971, 1.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid.

60 See *Cairns Post* articles: 'Fined for Nude Bathing,' 18 May 1971, 1; 'Two Hippies Jailed for Vagrancy,' 18 September 1971, 3; 'Court told of life in the commune,' 21 September 1971, 1; 'Complaints over hippie camps,' 25 September 1971, 3; 'Blot on City,' 6 October 1971, 1; 'Youths arrested for nudity,' 21 October, 1971, 3.

By this time the Kuranda hippies were also engaged in a public battle with developers. This battle played a fundamental role in demonstrating to the Kuranda locals the hippies' intentions to remain permanently within the community, and in building a more positive and engaging relationship with the Kuranda locals. The dispute was over a Cairns-based company's planned development of a 24-acre subdivision within the Kuranda rainforest.⁶¹ The Kuranda hippies were reported to have intervened in the planned development originally by gathering at the site and yelling insults, as well as putting sugar into the fuel tank of a bulldozer.⁶² The Kuranda community organised a meeting of local residents to discuss the 'present and future suburban development of Kuranda rainforests.'⁶³ This led to the establishment of the 'Kuranda and District Progress Association', a local organisation whose agenda was to lobby the Mareeba Shire Council for a plan for the betterment of the local area.

The *Post* detailed the public debate over the proposed development of the Kuranda rainforest from February through to March 1972. Two letters to the *Post*, published on 23 February and 25 February 1971, positioned the Kuranda 'hairies', and subsequently the entire Kuranda hippy community, as principal agents within the local issue. The first letter was from an unknown author who lived at Holloways Beach. The author ridiculed the developer's claims of conservation, and claimed the planned development reflected a common occurrence of 'desolate suburbs' replacing pleasant idyllic scenery. The author then linked the Kuranda development with the Kuranda hippies, but principally the 'hairies', by stating:

The owner-residents of Kuranda (the so-called hippie groups) are erecting simple houses in conformity with the character of the area—many of these owner-residents were former residents of Holloways Beach, who moved from it just because of the kind of development now being proposed for Kuranda.

In response, B.H Norman, the owner of the development company, wrote to the *Post* and was both unapologetic and unsympathetic to the hippies and the consequences the development might have upon their lives. The letter stated:

We are accused, or should we say credited, with 'freaking' the hippies out of Holloways. Now, because they are afraid we will 'freak' them out of Kuranda they are clutching at straws trying to stir the public into believing that we are wrecking the rain forest of Kuranda...What they are afraid of is that the Kuranda town boundary will be extended to include the hippies' area and if it does the shire council will then have the power to condemn humpies and substandard building in that area. The council will no doubt want to know where the lavatories are and where they wash. This will cause the hippies some embarrassment and considerable expense and may lead to an exodus to somewhere else. We make no apologies to the hippies for this.

The hippies had subsequently become central figures in a local issue that involved, and divided, the broader Kuranda community.

Subsequent to the formation of the Progress Association another local community lobby group was formed. The Kuranda local D A Hopper, who described himself as a practical conservationist,

61 'Bush subdivision rouses Kuranda's hippie groups,' *Cairns Post*, 10 February 1972, 1.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid.

told the *Post* that it was necessary for Kuranda locals to form a ratepayers association.⁶⁴ Hopper expressed alarm that formalities had been dominated by a specific group at a previous meeting of the Progress Association, The article quoted Hopper as stating:

I felt concerned at the recent Kuranda Progress Association meeting where procedures were dominated by a certain group, most of whom were not ratepayers.⁶⁵

Whilst the article and the quote did not explicitly distinguish the hippies as the 'certain group', the article from 20 March certainly inferred that the Ratepayers Association had a different perspective on the development of Kuranda as the hippies would. Additionally in an article from June 1972, whilst Hopper described many of the 'hairies' as Kuranda land-owners, he distinguished them from the remainder of the Kuranda community on the basis that they 'were not ratepayers as far as the council was concerned.'⁶⁶ At the first meeting the Ratepayers endorsed a proposed town plan of Kuranda presented by the Mareeba Shire Council. The *Post* presented Mr Hopper's feelings on the creation of the Association and proposed development plan by stating:

Mr Hopper felt the formation of association was a good step towards retaining the beauty of the area and being able to make recommendations to council on development and practical conservation.⁶⁷

The *Post's* reporting on this issue remained in favour of the local Kuranda residents, and more specifically with the more conservative elements of it. However, there was present within their reporting a greater acceptance of the hippy element. Additionally, whilst the Kuranda hippies did not endear themselves to the entirety of the Kuranda community they had demonstrated that they intended to be active participants within it. This latter point was fundamental to their broader acceptance.

In the weeks and months after the development dispute, the *Post* began to publish stories which demonstrated both the national, and international, intrigue of the Kuranda hippies as well their positive impact upon the cultural landscape of the Cairns region. On 3 April the *Post* reported positively on a large turn out to 'Placid Lake Revisited', a pop festival held at Lake Placid (about 15km north-west of Cairns) on 2 April.⁶⁸ The article made explicit mention of the good behaviour of the festival attendees, stating that 'the festival went along smoothly with the collection of hippies, bikies and others peacefully enjoying the music at Placid Pop Revisited'.⁶⁹

That same week, the *Post* also reported that the influential Beat poet and icon the of the counter-culture movement, Allen Ginsberg, had visited the Kuranda hippies.⁷⁰ This allowed the *Post* to link the North Queensland region to a much larger and global movement. One month later, the *Post* reported on the attendees of the 1972 State Rural Youth Conference's visit to the Kuranda

64 'Ratepayers meeting at Kuranda,' *Cairns Post*, 18 March 1972, 3; 'Kuranda residents form a ratepayers association,' *Cairns Post*, 20 March 1972, 3.

65 'Ratepayers meeting at Kuranda,' *Cairns Post*, 18 March 1972, 3.

66 'Kuranda outcry to ban hippies,' *Cairns Post*, 22 June 1972, 1.

67 'Kuranda residents form a ratepayers association,' 3.

68 'Big Crowd at Pop Festival, but Police had quiet time,' *Cairns Post*, 3 April 1972, 1.

69 Ibid.

70 'Kuranda visit by poet,' *Cairns Post*, 6 April 1972, 4.

communes.⁷¹ It described how conference delegates spoke to various hippies about their use of drugs, their previous lives, and their general way of life.⁷² Whilst this article expressed alarm at their drug use and poor living conditions, it also demonstrated that there was potential to learn from and better understand the agenda of Kuranda hippies. This theme was continued in an article from 4 August that reported the iconic Australian entertainer Rolf Harris' visit to the commune.⁷³ Harris provided some of the more endearing comments about the Kuranda hippies present in any *Post* articles from 1970 to 1977. Harris stated:

I think it would be a good thing if the rest of Australia could go to Kuranda to see the hippies. I am sure quite a few people would come away very surprised after finding how sensible and logical some of the actions of these people are.⁷⁴

These articles were a significant distinction between the usual reporting from the *Post*, which positioned the Kuranda hippies as sinister agents undermining the traditional values of society.

This positive trend continued even when negative aspects of the hippy community were reported. In these articles, the *Post* included positive remarks that neutralised some of the broader concerns. On 12 June 1972 the *Post* reported on the closure of a major Kuranda commune. The article stated that hepatitis had been reported in the area and the landowner had ordered the hippies to leave.⁷⁵ Yet there was still a presence of transients at this particular commune, and on 22 June the *Post* reported a case of diphtheria in the community. This news prompted D A Hopper to advocate for the complete closure of the hippy commune. The *Post* reported Hopper as saying:

With this and the case of diphtheria I think the police and the council should take very strong action to have the commune closed down once and for all.⁷⁶

Subsequently the Council had a health surveyor conduct a report on the commune.⁷⁷ Whilst the surveyor labelled the living conditions at the commune as 'atrocious' he also added this comment on the occupants' general character:

They surprised me. I expected half of them should still be at school, but I got on pretty well there – they were not at all objectionable.

Whilst health concerns continued to prevail, there was an undeniable shift in perspective towards the hippies from both figures of authority and the *Post*.

An article, from August 1972, printed by the *Post* showed that the public perception of the Kuranda hippy community, at least from Kuranda locals, was beginning to shift towards a more benevolent acceptance. The article entitled 'Kuranda hippies are 'only human beings' discussed the operations and living standards of two communes, the 'Titanic' and 'Rosebud'.⁷⁸ The article highlighted their

⁷¹ 'Rural Youth visit hippies,' *Cairns Post*, 3 May 1972, 3.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ 'Rolf has praise for hippies,' *Cairns Post*, 4 August 1972, 3.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ 'Some Kuranda hippies have gone from the area,' *Cairns Post*, 12 June 1972, 1.

⁷⁶ 'Kuranda Outcry to Ban Hippies,' *Cairns Post*, 22 June 1972, 1.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ 'Kuranda hippies are "only human beings",' *Cairns Post*, 15 August 1972, 3.

aspirations for self-sufficiency and the simplicity of their life-styles. The report included quotes from the leader of the 'Titanic' commune, who said in regards to their public perception:

I still think it is a nice place and the towns-people treat us like human beings, which I am led to believe we are – not weirdos or hippies.

Importantly, the article included this passage on the locals' perception of the Kuranda hippies. The article stated:

Not one person of the several questioned said a bad word against the youths. 'They cause no trouble and just want to be left alone,' said a hotel licensee.⁷⁹

The discussion of the 'Rosebud' commune, referred to as the 'Rosebud farm' in the article, portrayed its occupants as driven, intelligent and energetic agriculturalists. The article stated:

Organically grown citrus fruit and vegetables are the major crops of the farm, which is irrigated from a dam on one of the five rivers flowing through the property... At present there is no electricity but this problem will be overcome in future as members plan to install a waterwheel on one of the rivers and generate their own electricity.

This article, along with demonstrating a more positive perspective of the Kuranda hippies, illuminated their aspirations to the broader public. It demonstrated the Kuranda hippies had real intentions of integrating within the local community and economy.

Cairns Drug Fears Continue

The trend within the reporting of the *Post* with regard to the hippies had become more ambiguous. There was a developing appreciation for the youthful energy and focus that they had brought to the region, and there was also some acknowledgement of their initiative and energy to provide for themselves. However, whilst the public perception of the hippies had shifted, there still lingered a fear of a drug culture in the Cairns region. The *Post* continued to publish stories that linked drugs to Kuranda and hippies but less explicitly than in the past.⁸⁰ The existence of the Kuranda hippies within the broader international counter-culture was also accompanied a national suspicion over the growing drug culture associated with the same counter-cultural movement across Australia.⁸¹ From 1973 to 1976, the *Post* continued their earlier trend in reporting, and positioned Cairns, along with other regional areas of Far North Queensland, including Kuranda, as part of a national drug industry. The *Post* published a series of articles in 1974 that were supplied by the Wallamurra Drug Advisory Service with the intention of providing a more nuanced understanding of drug use. Those articles discussed social factors leading to drug use; the social, personal and physical impacts of drug abuse; the importance of education about drug use; and how to prevent drug abuse and promote rehabilitation.⁸²

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ See *Cairns Post* articles: 'Hippies are a Nuisance, Magistrate Tells Girl,' 3; 'Man fined \$500 on drug charge,' 1 November 1972, 11; 'Girl fined for possessing drug,' 8 December 1972, 9; 'Man fined \$600 on drug charges,' 25 January 1973, 3; 'High school "riddled with marijuana smokers"', 7 May 1973, 3.

⁸¹ Crowley, *Tough Times*, 284.

⁸² See *Cairns Post* articles: 'Drug Abuse Excuse for Young People's Behaviour,' 26 June 1974, 9; 'Improvement in Quality of Life to Combat Drug Abuse,' 17 July 1974, 2; 'Public Must Learn Facts About Drugs,' 8 August 1974, 2; 'Claim That Drug is Safe is Not Supported By Records of Reactions,' 14 August 1974, 2; 'Dependence May Be The Price To Pay For Using Narcotics,' 21 August 1974, 2; 'The Committed and the Uncommitted,' 2 October 1974, 16.

Media concern over the drug culture in the Cairns region and in Kuranda was met with an amplification of police efforts to combat it.⁸³ Ultimately, just as at Holloways Beach, the attention from the local police made it difficult and impractical for the Kuranda hippy culture to continue as a community of communes. Whilst there was no significant raid to break the community, such as the one that occurred at Cedar Bay in 1976, smaller and more consistent threats and incidences of harassment served to make the environment socially inhospitable for a counter-cultural community or alternative life-style communes.⁸⁴ However police harassment was only one factor that impacted upon the practicality of the alternative life-style in Kuranda. The effects of the police were intensified by divisions amongst the counter-culturalists themselves: the division between the 'hippies' and the 'hairies'.

The Decline of the Kuranda Hippy Community

By the end of 1972 the various hippy communities in and around Kuranda began to decline in numbers and presence. Not all of the communes shut down, but those that continued operating limited their membership to those who owned the land, and their invited guests. One of these surviving communities was the 'Rosebud' commune, which existed on a piece of land purchased by a group of American men. In his description of the Kuranda hippy community John Lindblad remarked that 'Rosebud' was notable for being one of the few productive rural communes in Australia. He ascribed the success of 'Rosebud' to its shrewd method of operation. Lindblad stated:

The commune learned a valuable lesson from the bludging hordes, who passed through Kuranda in the earlier days, coming north to 'live on love'. Visitors to this semi-open commune are told that they are welcome to stay one night. Earlier visitors who stayed on to become part of the communal effort were those who showed a responsible and productive interest in the farm. Hangers-on were politely but firmly requested to leave.⁸⁵

Yet despite the success of Rosebud, overall Kuranda was no longer a welcoming environment for the teenage hippy drop-out.⁸⁶ Consequently, Kuranda's status within the broader counter-culture began to diminish and the Aquarius Festival of 1973 in Nimbin gave Australia a new hippy capital.⁸⁷

One of the more intriguing insights into the failure of the Kuranda commune came from an article published in the Monash University student magazine *Lot's Wife* in March 1971. The article focused on the reactions from a man and a woman (Rob and Jenny) returning from a six month stay in Kuranda. The article reported:

Both seemed pretty disillusioned by their experiences although they had different explanations for why the communes weren't working. Jenny saw insurmountable

⁸³ 'Kuranda's police station upgraded,' 6 June 1973, 3.

⁸⁴ At Cedar Bay, 40km south of Cooktown, there existed a hippy commune similar to the ones which existed at Kuranda. Concerns over a national marijuana drug syndicate were present within most eastern states during the early 1970s. On Sunday 29 August 1979 a Queensland State Police unit, a Navy patrol, and Aboriginal trackers raided the Cedar Bay commune. Out of the 24 occupants, 12 were arrested on a combination of vagrancy and possession charges. The camp was also set on fire and destroyed. The entire operation was heavily scrutinised both for its inhumane treatment of the occupants, and for the large cost to the taxpayer. Whilst many of the occupants did face charges in the Cairns magistrate, several of the police officers involved in the operation were charged with arson.

⁸⁵ John Lindblad, 'Where the Drop-Outs Are,' *Bulletin*, 27 March 1976, 34.

⁸⁶ Henry, 'Practising Place,' 157.

⁸⁷ Cock, *Alternative Australia*, 48.

personality problems and Rob saw the constant presence and hassling from police and other authorities as the prime reason for disintegration. The naked confrontation with nature and with self is far too lonely for most of us who have been taught only to mutate them.⁸⁸

The article goes on to highlight the unforeseen difficulties that faced the hippies when it came to the education of their offspring:

I guess the real confrontation with the straight world comes with education. You can never develop an alternative life style while each new generation is receiving daily indoctrination from the Education Department.⁸⁹

The article provided insight into the practical difficulties communes in Kuranda faced, and ended with this summary: 'Yes, we're too attuned to a materialistic society. In a way, it's just like a few heads grabbed off the street and dumped in the country. We're all far too straight'.⁹⁰ The article demonstrated the challenges that transient hippies faced in terms of giving up the aspects of the mainstream world which they had come to rely upon, and the ultimate (necessary) reliance upon the system from which they aimed to detach themselves. However, whilst most the communes shut down and the transient youths left Kuranda, the Holloways Beach refugee alternative life-stylers (who initiated the community at Kuranda and who had purchased land) remained.

The little that has been written about Kuranda by historians covering the Australian counter-culture has presented Kuranda ultimately as a failed endeavour. Bill Hornadge attributed the failure of the Kuranda hippy movement to maintain relevance within the broader counter-culture to the closing of the communes to transient youths.⁹¹ Peter Cock suggested that the Kuranda communes did not match the rural utopia imagined by the city dwellers.⁹² In his analysis, Cock conjured up an image of two hundred people living in four or five primitive shacks and an old double-decker bus, a contrasting description of the imagined paradise many had envisioned before they arrived at the 'Kuranda Commune'.⁹³ Cock suggested that 'Kuranda' did not have a communal agenda at all, instead labelling it a crash-pad. He states:

For some, this crash-pad was a departure point to a more permanent venture. For others, it was a chance to sort themselves out. For some, it was disillusioning. Crash-pads had no collective decision-making or explicit rules. Individuals were left to their own devices. All people had was what they brought with them. Little was produced or grown.⁹⁴

Cock believed that the model of communal living displayed in Kuranda was not viable; it was individualistic in its pursuits rather than prioritising the interests of the group.⁹⁵ Lindblad expressed similar criticism of the Kuranda hippy communes. Lindblad gave a damning description for all those considering heading to Kuranda in pursuit of the alternative paradise, stating:

⁸⁸ 'Kuranda Commune', *Lot's Wife*, 18 March 1971, 14-15.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Bill Hornadge, *The Search for an Australian Paradise*, (Bondi Junction: Imprint, 1999), 172.

⁹² Cock, *Alternative Australia*, 25.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

If you have been considering the tropics as the home of your future 'self-adjustment' paradise you may readjust your plans when you discover that you can't grow food or get supplies from the south for five months because of the wet season. If that doesn't tarnish your hopes and dreams, then living among the competitive tropical ecology of poisonous taipan snakes, leeches, mosquitoes, and tropical ulcers ought to do so.⁹⁶

The combination of the harsh realities of tropical living, and the closing of the communes as open crash-pads, was the key factor as to why the popularity of Kuranda as a hippy paradise declined.

While these explanations of the failure of Kuranda are apt, they did not acknowledge that the Kuranda hippies never aspired to success as a broad community of hippy communes, nor did they wish to become facilitators for transient youths on journeys of self-discovery. The understanding that the Kuranda hippy community never intended to be 'communal', as other counter-cultural outposts did, is fundamental to understanding the events that transpired in Kuranda. Influenced by the events that took place at Holloways, the original Kuranda hippies deliberately distanced themselves from the transient hippy youths that aligned themselves more closely with the broader Australian counter-culture. The purchase of land, the construction of farms for both selling goods and self-sufficiency, intervention within local development plans were all indications of the intentions for the Kuranda hippies to integrate themselves within the local community and economy.

The Kuranda hippy movement's agenda was more subtle in its expression, but it still reflected the broader ideals of the counter-culture. It did not, however, have an explicit ideological agenda. Whilst the Kuranda hippies did not intellectualise about the broader themes and impact of the counter-culture, they still expressed the fundamental notions that were engaged by the 1960s and 1970s youth movement. The Kuranda hippies rejected what they deemed to be the ills of modern society, and sought to escape them by retreating to Holloways Beach and then to Kuranda. The hordes of young drop-outs who followed them rejected the same ills of society, but did not aspire to living a simple, sustainable lifestyle. Rather, the transient youths who flocked to Kuranda sought to indulge in the more hedonistic behaviours of hippydom, a lifestyle which did not conform to the original vision of the Kuranda hippy scene. This does not imply that the Kuranda hippies did not form part of, or were a failed element of, the counter-culture; it is, rather, a demonstration of the diversity within the counter-culture. As such, the Kuranda hippy movement represents a noteworthy element of the Australian counter-culture.

⁹⁶ Lindblad, 'Where the Drop-Outs Are,' 35.