



THE JINDIBAH PHILOSOPHY

Jindibah is a local Aboriginal word meaning both 'wisdom' and 'tawny frog mouthed owl', several of which live on the property, located on Fowlers Lane, Sleepy Creek, outside the town of Bangalow, in the Byron hinterland of Northern NSW.

Since 1907, it had been run as a dairy and cattle farm.

In 1994, a group of six of us bought the 113-acres (46ha), with the purpose of establishing an intentional community. In 1996, our Development Application to establish a 12-household community was granted.

This community is being created – with ecological sensitivity and, hopefully, the wisdom of the owls – for a few compatible people who consciously share the same vision and objectives, and who:

1. Have chosen coastal country living on a primary producing property, rather than living in a city.
2. Want more personal living space than is possible in suburbia or conventional housing estates; and who prefer to share the responsibility and expense of looking after a large property with others, rather than individually.
3. Want to live a healthy life in the country, yet be close to shops, facilities, schools and surf.
4. Choose to live in Byron Shire, and would like to actively support retaining its rural character.
5. Are comfortable with the idea of sharing 113 acres of land with others, but want individual privacy respected, as well as that of neighbouring properties. A total of 22 acres is dedicated to houses and private space.
6. Would like to live in a small, supportive community, with a maximum of 12 households.
7. Would like to continue developing various community-shared resources. These include farming equipment to support our primary producing and revegetation programs; office/admin facilities; and specific areas developed for recreation, from a pool and barbecue to horse-riding, a games area, the community meeting and meditation area, etc. An area of 24 acres is devoted to recreational use. The aim is to create a very beautiful and conveniently organised place to live and work.
8. Would like to gradually develop more income-generating agricultural activities suiting this location (such as a nursery, a cabinet timber plantation, growing coffee, macadamia nuts or mangoes, flowers, organic herbs, beef cattle, etc). Between 55-65 acres is dedicated to primary production.
9. Are committed to regenerating native rainforest and protecting and enhancing any native plant life on the land. Our 10-year plan includes a 12-acre rainforest parkland along Sleepy Creek.
10. Enjoy having a creek and six swimming holes on the land, and aim to have water leave the property as pure as it was when it entered.
11. Accept that living on a community like Jindibah means being constantly involved with other people, as well as embracing the principle of working through problems with goodwill and integrity.
12. Accept that living in close proximity to other rural dwellers in Fowlers Lane requires a neighbourly attitude of reasonableness and co-operation, particularly as regards shared resources such as water and road.
13. Recognise that these words are 'organic' and will change with the nature of those who live here, but hopefully will retain over time the spirit in which they are written.

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THE VISION

The intention of the founders of the Jindibah Community is that this community reflects the 'Triple Bottom Line' principles of finding a sustainable balance between social, environmental and economic life - remembering that if it's not fun, it's probably not sustainable.

Social

Jindibah is blessed with an established history of community works on the property. With the spirit and example of Harry Fowler in mind, existing community members are also keenly involved in the life of the local community.

The challenge for any community is to create an environment where its members can sustain themselves economically, and still have sufficient energy and common purpose to work together to achieve the community's objectives as well as their own.

Working together to achieve such worthwhile projects, and resolving issues as they arise, can be an empowering process for community members, particularly if the necessary levels of awareness are present and conflict resolution skills are developed as part of the process.

Such life skill training creates a community base from which ripples can extend to the wider community starting with the immediate catchment area of Sleepy Creek.

Current members of Jindibah have a balance of the necessary skills to create such an environment, and are attracting others with a similar philosophy.

Property History

Before its current owners bought the land in 1994, it had been owned by **Harry Fowler**, whose father bought the property in about 1907 and established and operated a dairy. An ingenious man, Fowler snr. built his own steam-driven milking machine and separator for use in his dairy on the property.

Harry Fowler, born in 1904, grew up on the land. He ran a herd of dairy cattle, raised heifers and pigs, and grew peanuts. Awarded the Order of Australia medal in 1980 for his tireless work for the Bangalow community, Harry Fowler created a swimming pool on the property along Sleepy Creek, in which he taught many local children to swim. (This pool is currently undergoing restoration as part of Jindibah's long-term riparian revegetation program.)

In Harry's time, many groups from the wider district community made use of his farm. He had horse-riding for the disabled; scout camps; shooting camps; athletics; gymkanas, and many swimming competitions. In the mid-20th century, he built a community shed used as a dance hall for many years for social events in the dairying community. By the 1970s and 1980s, this was also used to stage a number of pop festivals well remembered for the performances by groups such as Midnight Oil, Rose Tattoo, INXS and others, later to become famous on the world stage.

Current skills within the community

Skills include those of a barrister, a doctor, an inspired chef, a cop, a social worker and a paramedic. Some have heaps of experience in farm and property management; with others skilled in communications and counselling and running meditation, yoga and personal growth trainings; high level land access negotiators; top managerial experience in I.T., financial planning and analysis; a world reknown theatrical agent; a uni lecturer/teacher. Heaps of other small business management and operational skills, incl. an organic coffee distributor; import/export; running restaurants; store management/training; plus playing various musical instruments, gardening and - of course - growing fruit and veggies.

History of participation in wider community life

- Actively involved in the **Fowlers Lane Community Group (FLCG)**, in 1996, two members of the Jindibah community organised for several visioning workshops to be held for the people of Fowlers Lane with Peter Cuming, of Sustainable Futures. These formed the basis of the **Fowlers Lane LAMP (Local Area Management Plan)**, submitted to Byron Shire Council during the development of its 1998 Rural Settlement Strategy. They continue to be keenly interested in finding practical solutions to controversies which emerge from time to time within Fowlers Lane. Desktop publishing facilities provided from the Jindibah business centre have been used by the FLCG for many years. The centre has permanent wireless broadband internet access and desktop publishing facilities, with copywriting, design, financial planning and publishing skills available to, and used by, the wider community.

- A member of the Jindibah community was elected to the **Bangalow Community Alliance (BCA)**, a body established in 2000 to assist Bangalow community to act together for mutual benefit, and develop and share community resources, skills and knowledge. Two community members worked for more than a year on the steering committee set up to establish the BCA.

- Two members of the community have initiated programs to benefit community groups in the wider Byron Shire community. An example is the **Rural Landsharing Community Group (RLCA)**, revived in 1996, which works closely with 37 multiple occupancy (intentional) communities in the shire, giving input to both Byron Shire Council staff in their development of parts of the 1998 Rural Settlement Strategy which related to existing communities, and the NSW Dept of Urban Affairs and Planning.

- The community is represented on Byron Council's **Sustainable Agriculture Roundtable (SART)** committee, speaking for Rural Landsharing Communities.

- A community member was a founding member of the Byron Shire's **Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC)**



Economic

Our aim is to establish a way of self-funding most of the maintenance of the property.

We are creating or enhancing community resources that are shared by members to facilitate income generation, e.g. yoga lessons, conflict resolution courses, or growing fruit and veggies for the community, and neighbours.

A property maintenance and development fund, managed by the finance committee, has been established.

The management team uses good business practice, as well as proper budgeting, investment and accounting principles to manage the fund's income and expenditure, according to the strategic direction of the community.

The budget development and monitoring process is determined and implemented on an annual basis.

Members of the Jindibah community are supported in any efforts to join the shire-wide trend of establishing realistic and practical money-making home-based businesses.

Creating an income

Since the property was purchased in 1994, community members have initiated some simple ways to create income from this primary producer property. For instance, we bought 25 cows and borrowed a bull. These multiply and provide us with a good annual income. As well, we take good care to nurture our 'maintenance and development' fund.

Monies thus raised have provided the community with funds to pay rates and maintain the property, eliminating noxious weeds, repairing fences, buying or mending pumps, etc.

Future primary production

From consultant reports and observation of neighbourhood horticultural activities, it is likely that Jindibah has the potential for such orchard crops as coffee, macadamias and stonefruit. Approximately 40 acres of such crops could possibly be developed. The economic viability is being researched and assessed by the management committee.

Energy self-sufficiency and 'Carbon Neutrality'

For both household use and transport, our intent is to run on **clean energy** when the technology becomes economically viable. To this end, we are actively exploring a range of newly developed **alternate energy options**.

Our use of energy in the coming years needs some planning, for three reasons:

1. **'Global Warming'** is now accepted as fact by a consensus of scientists (even though some political leaders remain in denial). Eventually stronger legislation will require the elimination of CO₂ emissions wherever possible. Transport currently accounts for 30% of such emissions, and is therefore a prime target.
2. **'Peak Oil'** as a concept is accepted by the oil industry. There is still an argument about precisely when the global oil production peak will be reached between 2010 and 2040. Meanwhile, and partly due to the economic growth of China and India, it is likely the demand will continue to increase as production falls. So it is highly likely that oil prices will continue to rise.
3. The bulk of remaining oil reserves are located in the Middle East, currently in political turmoil. Some claim that we are already experiencing our first 'oil war' (Iraq). Iran is now openly threatening to use the oil weapon should the UN impose sanctions over its nuclear ambitions (while at the same time inciting the elimination of Israel). People are starting to realise that the West is currently funding both sides in the 'war against terrorism' and would like their **transport needs to be free from dependence on oil**. If oil production is indeed on the decline, we need to stop burning it because its derivatives are needed to manufacture so many other essential products from fertilizers to medicines.

We need to think through the consequences of the above and make decisions about what changes we need to make to our use of energy, both at a personal and a community level.

Businesses already established on Jindibah

- Several community members combine their professional skills and talents to provide local companies with particular management services not available in-house.
- **Not Just Words**, a communications consultancy providing sophisticated marketing materials for a variety of clients, from Lismore and Byron Shire Councils through to The Australian Freshfood Trading Company and significant regional agricultural companies such as Australian Fruit Producers in Brooklet, and AustralEssence in Coraki.
- **Marigold Health Foods Australia**, imports a range of vegetarian health food products, and markets them throughout Australia and New Zealand.
- Two community members run **yoga and meditation courses** in Byron, and also operate regular guided spiritual and yoga tours to India.
- **Transocean Investments Pty Ltd**, a technology and management advisory consultancy. One of its directors has established and maintains **Jindi-Net**, a non-profit cooperative network providing wireless broadband services to the Jindibah community, and its neighbours.



Environmental

Our long-term environmental enhancement and vegetation management program, developed by consultants Firewheel Rainforest Services, has two aims:-

- To enhance the visual amenity of the landscape within and around the property, and to reduce the impact of the development on neighbouring properties, and

- To recreate, along the Sleepy Creek riparian corridor, suitable conditions for the re-establishment of rainforest systems similar to those that existed before clearing.

Started in 2002, the 10-year program is establishing an area of 12 acres of riparian rainforest parkland along Sleepy Creek, with agricultural buffer zones to the north and east of the property, as well as screening Jindibah houses from the view of neighbours.

Objectives

The environmental enhancement and vegetation management program aims to meet the following long-term objectives:

- To provide appropriate visual screen and agricultural buffer plantings within the property.
- To protect sensitive riparian areas and restore their original forest cover, control stream bank erosion, and enhance water quality in Sleepy Creek.
- To provide a wildlife corridor across the property, with the potential to link into other wildlife corridors within Byron Shire in the future.
- To preserve the genetic resource of all existing native plant species on the property.
- To control problem environmental weeds within the property.
- To provide recreational areas within the property.
- To retain large areas for cattle grazing to provide an income from the property and reduce maintenance costs.
- To achieve a balance between the restoration of Sleepy Creek and the retention of riparian pasture for dry season grazing, and cattle access to permanent water in emergencies.
- To meet the requirements of Byron Rural Settlement Strategy for new residential developments.

History of participation in environmental works

In 1996-96, two Jindibah community members worked with others in the catchment area, especially Paul Richmond (from another Fowlers Lane community), to obtain a grant for the **Possum Creek Landcare Group** to work with Greening Australia on the **Byron Shire Green Corridor** project. Six of us were founding members of the group. Many thousands of native trees were planted throughout the catchment area, including 1,000 on Jindibah along Sleepy Creek, a tributary of Possum Creek. Jindibah provided the facilities for many meetings and social occasions of the group, as well as being instrumental in its planning and evolution.

Two community members have undertaken the **Farming for the Future** course, and one took part in a **River Care** course. The community is a member of the **Bangalow Landcare** group, and sources local native seedlings for our ongoing regeneration project from its nursery.

Through a Jindibah home business, a community member participated in the production of two books produced by the **Big Scrub Rainforest Landcare Group** in 1998: *Subtropical Rainforest Restoration* and *Common Weeds of Northern NSW Rainforest*.

Screening trees have been planted around existing houses over several years. Thousands more native plants are planted each wet season in agricultural buffers, shelter belts and visual screening zones as part of our long-term environmental enhancement program.

In 2006, continuing our annual program to re-establish closed canopy rainforest vegetation along the Sleepy Creek riparian zone, great progress was made to plant out and extend an area of 2,500m² existing riparian remnant, the most significant area of High Conservation Value native vegetation on the property.

Two community members have joined with others of like mind to start **Green Coast Catalysts**, a local group working to promote community involvement to deal with the challenges of climate change and peak oil.