

## WELCOME TO RAG

G'day. You might feel a bit spun out and generally overwhelmed after your first RAG meeting but don't worry, everyone feels like that, so that's why we wrote this.

### BACKGROUND OF RAG

RAG is part of a worldwide network of groups concerned about rainforest destruction. This network includes the Rainforest Information Centre in Lismore and the San Fransisco based Rainforest Action Network. Melbourne RAG began in late 1987 and so far, one focus of our energy has been to establish a widespread boycott of rainforest timber and to suggest alternatives. We have achieved extensive community and union support; e.g. the Victorian BWIU have placed a ban on the use of rainforest timber at construction sites. YEAH!

Also we have timber ship blockades, The Good Wood Guide, Rainforest Rock, stalls, a recycled paper printing co-op, educating ourselves and the community and much, much more.

### NONVIOLENT CAMPAIGN

One major aspect of RAG is that we are a nonviolent activist group. Nonviolence is more than just the absence of violence, it is a way of life and a way of dealing with conflict creatively. It also involves a commitment to give other people the opportunity to become environmentally aware, involved and empowered. RAG's use of NV politics has been very successful, helping us to share the workload and participation within the group and to maintain our campaign.

The stages of a NV campaign are:

1. Education- we educate ourselves and the community. We print information, talk to people and organise stalls and lectures in schools, libraries and community groups.
2. Negotiation- We talk to unions and have gained much support and we have an ongoing letter writing campaign.
3. Preparation for NVA- We carefully plan each action, we check out the logistics and we often do a roleplay. Then we tell everyone involved (i.e. no secrecy). This means the media, police and everyone else know what's going on. The feedback we receive also helps us prepare.
4. NVA- Everything from a silent vigil to swimming in front of timber ships! (GOOD FUN!).
5. Protracted Struggle- We realise the rainforest can't be saved in a day and that the struggle is long term. This helps prevent burn out.

Finally we concentrate on de-rolling ourselves and those we deal with. This generates genuine communication rather than following patterns of behaviour. Police are people too!!

#### SOME PROCESS TOOLS WE USE

**Facilitator-** This person keeps the meeting running smoothly, making sure we stick to the agenda, keep running to time, equalise participation etc. Anyone can facilitate, its a good idea to come along to a process meeting and read some info.

**Agenda-** List of items to be discussed at the meeting. Usually we have reports and announcements first (2 mins each max) and then big items (usually 5 mins each).

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#### FACILITATION

The facilitator plays an important role in RAG helping the group organize itself to carry out its tasks. We share the role so that everyone can learn how to facilitate. Also we encourage people to facilitate two weeks consecutively so that we can learn from our mistakes and implement improvements.

What a RAG facilitator does:

- 1) Introduces themselves
- 2) Explains consensus, our examination of group dynamics and our attempts at equalization
- 3) Appoints - a time keeper  
a minutes taker  
process watchers  
group dynamics/statistics recorder
- 4) Can positively discriminate toward people who speak less or toward women
- 5) Welcomes new people - Perhaps by asking them to introduce themselves to an "old" person and then having the old person introduce them back to the group.
- 6) Asks for times to go with agenda items. (Remember, an agenda item is something that needs discussion from the whole group)
- 7) Tries to choose at least one agenda item for small group discussion

There are several books on facilitation in the RAG office and more in the RAG information exchange. Ask around for recommendations!

You have "spoken" if you

- 1) give an opinion
- 2) ask a question
- 3) give information

## SMALL GROUPS

### TELEPHONE TREE

This group activates and organises the telephone tree, which is a telephone system to inform people of forthcoming events. Make sure your name is on it. This is a lot of work and is an easy way to get involved so please ring Rosie 5235455 to help.

### BANKING

A small group doing book keeping and budgeting. Contact them for money matters. Sabine 4810070 Wendy 890425 Carrie 8226737

### NEWSLETTER

Feel free to contribute. Learn some computer skills. Pascale 8194000 w8133830

### BOOK EXCHANGE

Borrowing and lending of books and videos relating to rainforest, ecology, peace etc. Anthony 3809220

### MEN'S GROUP

Regular gatherings to discuss male social patterns and to help personal growth. Cam 3809220

### WOMEN'S GROUP

Regular gatherings with discussion, roleplay, singing, rituals and lots more. If you're feeling a bit lost or just want some fun, come along. Sandra 3809220

### GAIA CHOIR

Singing and music for the forests. Everyone rechoired. Bullfrog 4398535 Tony 3805231

### FESTIVAL

Organize an annual rainforest festival. Much help needed. Norman 8081705

### BLACK RAINBOW GRAPHICS

Provides printing on recycled paper. A great opportunity to pick up some skills, so lend your hand.

### GOOD WOOD ADVISORY

Provides information on alternatives to rainforest timber and second hand timber dealers. Stuart 5281798 David 7722357

### RAINFOREST ROCK

Organising rock concerts for fundraising. A hard working group that needs help. Bernadette 8855139 w 6666082 (5-10.30pm)

### COMMUNITY EDUCATION

An essential part of the NV campaign. Organises stalls, talks, banner hanging, street theatre and displays. Corrina & Tony 3805231 Karen 4176295

### MEDIA

Does the press releases, speeches and interviews. Everyone is welcome and you'll learn heaps. Wendy 3904725

### CLOTH PRINTING

This is for fundraising and is lots of fun. Screenprinting T-shirts, Michael 3809220 Rainbow scarves and T-shirts, Pascale 8133830 w8194000.

### NONVIOLENT ACTION TRAINING

Nonviolent theory and principles workshop. (It's fun too) Rob 3873398

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**Brainstorm-** This is to get ideas flowing. The topic and a time limit is set (e.g. 2 mins) then everyone calls out their ideas in four words or less no matter how wild or trivial. The facilitator writes frantically. At the end people can ask for clarification of any point and then discussion begins.

**Consensus-** This is how we make decisions and it's much better than voting! After discussion someone makes a proposal considering all that has been said. Once everyone has made sure they know what is meant, the facilitator asks if there are any objections. People must then explain why they are uncomfortable with a proposal. Sometimes the proposal can be adjusted so it suits everyone and sometimes after discussion the person may stand aside. Consensus decision making does not mean that everyone is completely satisfied with the final outcome, but that the decision is acceptable to all because no one feels that her or his vital interests or values are compromised by it. This process requires trust (people must feel safe in raising objections and comfortable in standing aside) so we have lots of-

**Games and Circles-** Anything. Singing, wooshes, please bring your ideas.

NVA weekend workshops are highly recommended for all RAGers and anyone who wants to know more about all this. See directory.

## DIVERSITY

An important part of RAG is accepting diverse ideas and ways of life (just like the diversity of rainforests). Here are some of those ideas.

### Deep Ecology

People often try to justify their exploitation of other beings by believing that they are superior e.g. sexism, racism, specism. Deep ecology is a concept which undermines the foundation upon which exploitation is carried out. It is the acknowledgement that since we are a part of nature we should regain a balance living within it. The earth is not our resource but we are part of the earth.

### Power Imbalance

People within RAG are actively trying to overcome power imbalance as an integral part of our campaign. To establish equality within meetings we use various tools such as recording the number of times each person speaks, limiting the number of times each person speaks, positive discrimination and trying to be brief and to the point when speaking. There are also women's and men's gatherings to discuss these problems.

### Acceptance

There is a great number of issues which we face and have become involved in within RAG. These include the rainforest timber ban, anti-bases, anti-duck shooting and the destruction of local natural ecosystems such as the Cape Paterson heathlands. If you feel that you disagree with an issue which RAG has taken up be sure to voice any concerns you may have but please respect the views of other beings in this dynamic, world changing, oppression confronting, peace loving, peace making, groooooovy group!