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Free

# Nimbin News

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## Peter Loses Home in Fire

### Life's Work Up In Smoke

Peter Pedals, founder of Rainbow Power Company, Nimbin Neighbourhood & Information Centre and the Nimbin News lost his home to fire on Wednesday afternoon 14th September 2011 along with most of his possessions and memorabilia. Peter was helping a nearby neighbour with her solar power system at the time of the tragedy. A neighbour, Bill Cox, was the first to spot the fire when he happened to be driving a fire engine back to the depot after having attended another fire. The noise of the fire engine alerted Peter who immediately hopped into his car to see where the fire engine was heading. As soon as he turned the car to head up the hill he realised it was his house that was on fire.



Gary Kennedy from the Crime Scene unit and Daniel Ainsworth from the NSW Fire Service investigated the aftermath of the fire with Peter Pedals and agreed that the spontaneous combustion of a lithium cobalt battery was the most likely source of the fire. Nothing could be proven in this regard but it was clear that the heat radiation emanated from that area.

Peter Pedals lost nearly everything he owned in the fire, including his very extensive music collection, his computers, a 3.5kW solar array and a solar hot water system.

There will be a site clean-up on Sunday 25th September starting at 9am at 924 Blue Knob Rd (immediately after the Websters Creek Crossing). Bring sturdy shoes and protective gloves.

On Sunday 2nd October there will be a Peter Pedals fundraiser at the Bush Theatre (phone 66891111) with lots of music and entertainment. It will be starting at 11am and continue through the day and into the evening. It will be a no-alcohol event with a sausage sizzle as well as vegetarian / vegan salads. The café will be open for coffee and cakes. You will be asked for a \$10 donation at the gate. Some volunteers are required to man the gates. Donations are also accepted at The Emporium and Rainbow Power Company.

One problem with Lithium batteries, especially Lithium Cobalt and Lithium Manganese is that if a battery cell exceeds a critical voltage it will spontaneously combust. In this case there was a 24 volt Lithium battery which is made of eight 3 volt cells in series was being charged by a single 24 volt Lithium charger. This charger cannot tell if a single cell voltage is higher or lower than the rest. It can only know what the combined voltage is. So in this case a Lithium cell may well have exceeded that critical voltage whilst the rest of the battery pack was still within acceptable limits. Lithium Ferro-phosphate are safer than Lithium Cobalt and Lithium Manganese. Lithium batteries should be charged with a balancing charger - a charger which monitors every single cell to protect against the scenario that burned Peter's house down. The last word of advice is to not leave a Lithium battery on charge unattended, especially if its not got a balancing charger.