

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine Rural Fire Brigade
Held on Saturday 1st June 2013 in the Mt Irvine Hall**

Attendance:

Invited guests present: Hon. Louise Markus (Federal Member for Macquarie), Councillor Don McGregor & Susie McGregor, David Jones (District Manager BMRFS), Mick Metcalfe (Group Leader BMRFS), Fred Taylor (Deputy Group Captain West 2), Peter Church (Deputy Group Captain West 3), Peter Ellison (Captain Bell RFB), Greg Honeysett (Captain Bell RFB) & Belinda Honeysett,

Residents of Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine present: Susie Hope, David & Sarah Howell, Graham & Judy Tribe, Ray Harrington, Wendy Holland, Michael Sweeney, Bill Scriviner, Mark Bancroft, Robyn Scriviner, Tim & Kim Gow, Richard Beattie, Beth Raines, Ron & Moira Green, Henric & Minny Nicholas, Ted & Deb Griffin, Peter Dempsey, Kathleen Oakes, Stephen Dean, Barry Freeman, Helen Naylor, Paul Naylor, Robbie Feyder, Peter & Marilyn Laving, Robyn Hyde, John Sullivan, Libby Raines, Peter Raines, Eleanor Herriott, Anne Mellady, Elizabeth & Joe Montano,

Welcome:

The President David Howell opened the meeting at 3.10pm and welcomed the invited guests present and residents of Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine.

David thanked the members of the Executive Committee for their work during the year and especially Beth, Peter Raines and the Deputy Captains. He also thanked those filling roles in our brigade: Graham Tribe for his work as Training Officer, Stephen Dean as Equipment Officer, Moira Green for Catering, who is stepping down from this role, Kathleen Oakes and Kim Gow for their work in Community Engagement, Peter Dempsey & Vic Zhukov for keeping the fire trails clear, and to all members, both old and new, for their huge effort during the year.

David then introduced Louise Markus, Federal Member for Macquarie, to the meeting:

Louise Markus thanked Beth, David and the RFB team for doing a great job informing her on issues of concern, particularly Bowen's Creek Road and Bridge.

She is a member of Oakville Rural Fire Brigade

Thank you to all members and their families as she is aware we do a lot more for the community than fires
It is a pleasure to be at our meeting.

Apologies:

From invited guests: Roza Sage (State Member for Blue Mountains), Councillor Michael Begg, Neil Stone (NPWS), Frank Vincent (Deputy Group Captain West 1), Steve McMillan (President Bilpin FRB), Bill Shields (Captain Bilpin FRB), Charles Comer (Bell RFB)

From Residents of Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine: Owen Havilland, Sarah Hope, Graham & Beverley Thompson, Brian & Carol Carrigan, Mary & Ellis Reynolds, Diana & Joe Landsberg, Jack Davies & Jill Hoskin, John & Judy Teulon, Nancy Fox & Bruce Arnold, Tom & Suzanne Bassett, Barbara Harry, Penny Ewing, Julian, Bettina, Max & Beatrice Ludowici, Boz Brooks, Ross & Maria Kelly, Stephen List & Rosie Walshe, John & Robyn Leonard, Milba Kirk, Alan & Elcira Rose, Helen, Adam & Rachel Freeman, Margaret Dean, Kathy Harrington, Vic Zhukov, Alan & Elly Gunn, John Lee, Geoff Naylor, Alan Hyde, Ruth Scriviner

Confirmation of minutes from 2012 AGM:

- Moved by Barry Freeman, seconded by Graham Tribe that the minutes of 2012 AGM be accepted

Report from David Jones District Manager/Fire Control Office BMD RFS

We were pleased to welcome Superintendent David Jones to our AGM to present his message
A summary is presented in these minutes; the full report is available on request.

David Jones thanked the District family for his warm welcome.

He reported that the past year has seen a period of consolidation following the extensive opening works of his predecessor, moving forward on projects commenced and completing other projects, challenging

ourselves in the ever changing environment we live and operate in and adopting new practices and standards that will ensure the longevity of the NSWRFs in the Blue Mountains.

The biggest challenge is ensuring we are able to meet our core business requirements. Can we provide crews for response at all times? Can we complete hazard reductions efficiently by embracing new concepts of operation? Are we providing effective community engagement activities to ensure our communities are ready for and resilient to bush fire events? These challenges will be our focus during the next twelve months and beyond.

He thanked all the outgoing Field Officers and Brigade Executive Officers and their families for their contribution to the Brigade, District, NSWRFs and the wider community. He also offered congratulations to the incoming Brigade Executive and Field Officers.

In closing, David noted that we should prepare ourselves for a period of change in the NSWRFs and ultimately in the District. We will continue to see significant change in the NSWRFs and with this change we have an opportunity to shape our District to return to the position as the most respected District of the NSWRFs in the highest bush fire risk region in the State if not the world.

- David Jones then answered questions about Bowens Creek Rd/Bridge and the Mt Wilson Station extensions. A summary of this along with discussion on this subject is at the end of the minutes:

Reports for 2012 – 2013

Captain: Beth Raines

The Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine Rural Fire Brigade has had another busy year, attending incidents, doing pre-incident planning, conducting training and improving information and communication with the community.

We have attended 56 incidents this year (up from 33 last year):

25 MVAs

14 CFR calls

5 trees down/storm damage

5 fires

4 rescues

3 oil spills

The most unusual call out was to assist police near Holly Lodge, Bells Line of Road, near Bell, where we were asked to wet the road down to allow Police to run a series of skid tests on the corner to add weight to their (and our) argument to RTA that the corner is unsafe and needs resurfacing. RTA's response has been to put a sign up!

We have been lucky this year that the fires from approximately 12 lightning strikes between Newnes Plateau and north of Mt Tootie were extinguished by NPWS remote area fire fighters, but we have to be prepared for the day when it is too dangerous for direct fire fighting and we have to concentrate on property protection and interface fire fighting. This is where what you do (or don't do) plays the biggest role. If you care about your property you have to prepare it so it is able to survive by itself because the reality is the Brigade can't be everywhere and I and other Crew Leaders definitely will not be sending our friends into a property that is dangerous and not adequately prepared. Have a plan, revise your plan, practice your plan, and discuss your plan with your neighbours and the Brigade. As the RFS Ad campaign says 'planning to make a plan is not a plan'. Kathleen ran a hugely successful session on Bushfire Survival Plans aimed at Brigade members and their families and with the development of 'places of last resort' at Bisley and Hawthorn; there will be further sessions for community members.

This year has been a year of a number of disappointments and frustrations:

- The communications tower at Mt Wilson is irreparable
- We haven't progressed at all with our extensions at either Mt Wilson or Mt Irvine
- We have watched while Hawkesbury City Council have sat back and done nothing about a road that has gone from driveable with a small two wheel drive car, to negotiable by experienced 4W drivers, to a washed away road, all in a matter of 15 years.
- Because of the state of Bowens Creek Road the Mt Wilson to Bilpin Bush Run has been cancelled. This has been a hugely successful event for 17 years, a wonderful joint exercise with Bilpin Brigade and the Brigade's largest organised fund raiser.

Now for some positives:

- We have initiated a new fundraising project, the 'Photography and Art Exhibition', the second to be held on 26th & 27th October. Huge thanks to Tim & Kim, Graham & Judy and Bev & Phil Woodman who just made it happen.
- We have conducted a number of projects over the year:
 - David Howell has been undertaking a survey of water sources. We now have to figure out the best way of presenting and storing this information
 - Peter Raines and David Gunn have been busy with fire trail maintenance. The Northern Fire Trail had the gutters cleaned and a couple of new culverts put in but there is some repair work to do after the torrential rain in February. Kookootonga fire trail and Knight Brown fire trail are on this years 'to do' list as well as a hydrant system for the Mt Wilson Station
 - The Community Protection Plan project stalled because Mt Irvine wasn't in the pilot project, but with the insistence of the Brigade we hope to get the project back on track. Ross Kelly and Brian Carrigan have agreed to team lead this with start-up help from Graham, Stephen, Kathleen and I.

Henric Nicholas is having one of his wishes realised. He believes that whole and extended families should join up as active members and this year we have seen the Woolfenden family complete their training, the Montano family and Hugh and Emmy Nicholas undertake training. All will be fantastic additions to our great Brigade. Stephen, Ted and Michael are currently undertaking Advanced Firefighting; we had 14 people attend the First Aid course in February, a number doing the chainsaw training or reassessment to-day. Deputies have taken on the responsibility of running at least one training session plus every second month our Brigade joins up with Mt Tomah and Bell Brigades and West 3 for a combined training session. A big thank you to Peter Church, Mt Tomah and Bell members, it is always a pleasure to work with you.

We had a crew of four assist with a hazard reduction at Stockyard Gully, Mt Tomah and another member help with the blacking out the following day. This year we have been assisted by Brigades from South Katoomba, Medlow Bath (twice), Blackheath/Mt Victoria and West 3 at the hazard reductions that were completed at Mt Irvine and Wynnes Rocks Rd. We have a number of hazard reductions to be completed, but are waiting for Hazard Reduction Certificates, burn plans, approvals and mitigation trail work to be completed.

The Brigade's involvement with the Ambulance Service continues. We are well supported by paramedics from Lithgow Station conducting monthly training – we will need to do some paediatric training soon – just in case! Kathleen and I recently attended an exercise with paramedic trainees. It was challenging with realistic scenarios involving tractors, chainsaws, motor bikes, trees and chemicals all with live casualties and bystanders who really got into acting the part.

A special thank you to Deputy Group Officer West 3, Peter Church, who does so much for this end of the mountains. His leadership and mentoring on the training portfolio and well as organising the hugely successful West Sector Exercise and the huge amount of time, effort and sacrifice for the service is much appreciated. The way he represents the Sector and expresses our Brigades concerns and frustrations 'up the line' is something that we thank him for.

It is with sadness that we farewelled Suzzane Daly and little Sunny from the Mountains. Suzzane was a core member of the Brigade, was secretary for a number of years and was one of the Community First Responder team. She is missed. Other departures include Diana Lauzi and Vic Zhukov – but rest assured Vic will be back – he is just taking time out riding around Australia!

Thanks to the Exec, to the Deputies, training officers, catering, community engagement and equipment teams. Thanks for all your work and for taking some of the pressure off me. Moira and Kim are taking a step back, as opposed to standing down.

- Moved by Henric Nicholas and seconded by David Howell that the Captains report be accepted

Treasurer: Susie Hope

This report covers our financial dealings for the 12 month period from 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013. A copy of the report was sent out with the AGM papers

Copies of the audited statement of income and expenditure, statement of accumulated funds, Public Fund account and Social Club account summary and copies of excel books/worksheets are available for anyone who would like to see them.

In summary:

Income: including		\$28,364.94	
Donations pre 1.1.13	\$19,276.25		
Donations post 1.1.13 designated for our Public Fund	\$130.00		
Fundraising :			
Photo exhibition	\$6,483.20		
Sale of goods donated by Cathy Delaney	\$396.36		
Bank account interest	\$6.79		
Investment income (interest on Term Deposits)	-		
Membership fees	\$2,363.47		
Other income	\$483.24		
GST – collected	\$286.63		
GST – paid to ATO	(\$1061.00)		
Expenditure: including		\$43,158.94	
Personal Equipment	-		
Printing & Postage	\$364.54		
Fire Fighting Equipment - purchases	\$1,724.90		
Fire Fighting Equipment – repairs & maintenance	\$1,367.37		
Fundraising expenses – photo exhibition	\$5,380.59		
Sundry Expenses:			
Hall hire, general catering, shed supplies & Elgas	\$1,739.80		
Oxygen & other medical supplies	\$182.40		
Fire trail maintenance	\$4,650.00		
Computers & software	\$1,400		
Title search	\$140.00		
Station signs	\$250.00		
Tower removal	\$2,013.00		
Weather meter	\$254.55		
PAYPAL subscription	\$111.36		
Returned cheque	\$249.00		
Term Deposit	\$20,000.00		
Public Fund: to open account	\$100.00		

Public Fund donations banked in working account	\$130.00		
Office Administration Expenses	\$637.64		
Telecommunication Expenses	\$3,261.51		
GST paid	\$1,344.28		
GST – refunded by ATO	(\$2,142.00)		
Result for year		(\$14,794.00)	
Balance of Brigade Working Account at 31 March 2012		\$20, 921.70	
Balance of Brigade Working Account at 31 March 2013			\$6,127.70
Term Deposits			\$143,055.73
Balance of Captain's Debit Account			\$3,000.00
Balance of Public Fund			\$575.00
Total Brigade Funds at 31 March 2013			<u>\$152,758.43</u>

The Social Club Account balance at 31 March 2013 is \$3,624.80

- It was moved by David Howell and seconded by Beth Raines that the Treasurer's report be accepted

Appointment of an Auditor:

Susie Hope thanked Phil Lupton for auditing the accounts, pro bono. She also informed the meeting that Phil Lupton from Honan Partners is her personal accountant.

- It was moved by Beth Raines and seconded by David Howell and agreed unanimously that Phil Lupton be appointed as auditor. Susie Hope abstained from the vote.

Election of officers for 2013/14:

Superintendent David Jones took the chair for the elections. The following people had been nominated unopposed prior to the meeting and were confirmed in their positions:

Position	Nominee Name
*President	David Howell
*Vice President	Henric Nicholas
*Treasurer	Susie Hope
*Secretary	Judy Tribe
*Captain	Beth Raines
*Senior Deputy Captain	Peter Raines
*Deputy Captain (1)	Barry Freeman
Deputy Captain (2)	Tim Gow
Deputy Captain (3)	David Howell
Deputy Captain (4)	Ian Docker
Deputy Captain (5)	Peter Dempsey
*Training	Graham Tribe
Community Engagement	Kathleen Oakes
Equipment Officer	Stephen Dean
Catering	Deb Griffin

Those elected positions marked with * will form the Executive Committee

Other Business:

To consider and pass a motion:

- That the Brigade implements a policy requiring operational fire fighters attend at least one incident, training session or hazard reduction per two years to remain Operational. If they are not able to do this they will be reclassified from Operational to Reserve. To regain their Operational status they will need to attend two training sessions to become Operational again.

David Howell spoke to the motion explaining how important it is that operational fire fighters are familiar with the equipment and procedures so that we have crew members who know their role and the equipment and they can perform their function without putting other crew members at risk. The goal is to have all active operational firefighters participating in enough activity to stay current with skills and equipment. David said the plan was to step from a two year requirement to a one year requirement as we progress.

- Moved that the motion be accepted by Stephen Dean, seconded by Barry Freeman and carried unanimously

Questions and Discussion:

Greg Honeysett thanked us for helping out with incidents at Bell.

Bowens Creek Road/Bridge:

Work was carried out on our side of Bowens Creek Bridge, but the heavy rain in February washed this away. Rollover and drainage work needs to be carried out to ensure that water doesn't run down the road.

David Jones has discussed the Bridge with the Council engineer who inspected the bridge about 10 months ago and feels that it is structurally sound but work needs to be done on the deck and the structure of the abutment

He attended the meeting that Louise Marcus convened on Bowens Creek Rd/Bridge which was also attended by Roza Sage, Mayor BMCC, Bill Shields (Captain Bilpin RFB), David Howell and Beth Raines, but not by either the State Member or Mayor for Hawkesbury. Louise Markus is to seek a meeting with Hawkesbury people separately.

Louise Marcus said that she had hoped more would have been achieved from this meeting and thanked both David and Beth for being so responsive to her questions about this issue. She has advocated for what needs to be done by Hawkesbury and will continue to advocate for us and would welcome information so that the money that is spent is spent wisely. It is her view that Bowens Creek Road and Bridge needs to be kept open.

Hawkesbury City Council placed an advertisement in the Hawkesbury Gazette Newspaper of 15 May 2013 that The Crown Lands Division of the NSW Department of Trade and Investment and Hawkesbury City Council, under a partnership agreement, gives notice that the Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services proposes to consider the closing of Mt Irvine/Bowens Creek Road. Submissions concerning the proposal can be made to the General Manager, Hawkesbury City Council within 28 days.

David Howell has written to the General Manager of Hawkesbury City Council on behalf of the Brigade and Richard Beattie on behalf of the Mt Wilson Progress Association to protest against the closure of Bowens Creek Road and the necessity for our communities that it is kept open. Residents were encouraged to write to Hawkesbury City Council to voice their disapproval about closing the road.

Councillor Don McGregor will meet with the Mayor of BMCC about this matter.

Considering the findings of the Victorian Royal Commission into the fires of 2010, that there is now only one road into and out of Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine and that there is no safe haven in our area there was some discussion about mounting a class action against Hawkesbury City Council for breach of duty of care.

David Jones was also asked questions about the extension to Mt Wilson Fire Station:

He confirmed that the project has been endorsed by BMRFS. There are still issues to be resolved about securing the land and it is important that we be patient with the process.

The DA is still to be lodged.

Henric Nicholas has contacted Roza Sage to help with the process of the land transfer. The process is being blocked by the Education Department transferring the land to BMCC, who have agreed to take the land.

Closure of the meeting:

As there was no other business David Howell closed the meeting at 4.25pm with a reminder that the regular monthly training session was on tomorrow to complete the water project on Farrer Rd East, Danes Way and Mt Irvine Road. He invited all those present to join the committee for wine and cheese.