

Blue Mountains Rural Fire Service

Mount Wilson/Mount Irvine Rural Fire Brigade

Annual General Meeting 2021

Held via Zoom

Saturday 26th June 2021 at 16:00

Meeting Opened 16:05

David Howell, President, called the meeting to order and acknowledged that we were meeting on Gundungurra and Darug County. Invited guests and residents of Mt Irvine and Mount Wilson were welcomed.

Determination of quorum – *achieved 33 'ordinary members' participated*

Apologies:

Invited Guests:

Mick Medcalf, Goup Leader, Blue Mountains District Office

Fred Taylor, Deputy Group Leader, West 1

Trish Doyle – Member for Blue Mountains *“Trish hopes to catch up with you all soon. We are in the process of organising a mobile office day visit to Mt Wilson in August”*

Michael Garvey – NSW Ambulance

Mark Greenhill – Mayor BMCC

Kelly Haines - Bipin RFB

Jim Haines – Bilpin RFB

Peter Eillison – Mt Tomah RFB

Fred Taylor, Deputy Group Captain West Sector – *“Fred would like to congratulate those who take office and thank those for last year’s efforts, support, and commitment”*

Susan Templeman, *“Susan would like to congratulate the outgoing committee, welcome the incoming and reiterate just want an important role your volunteers play in protecting our community”.*

Community Members

Penny Ewing, Tim Gow, Kim Gow, Jim Tzannes, Annie Catlin, Alexander Montano, Katherine Montano, David Hyde, Sarah Hyde, Peter Cudlipp, Mary Holt, Barbara Schmidt, Alice Simpson, Megan Wood

Attendees:

Invited Guests:

Nick Medianik, District Manager, Blue Mountains District Office

Anthony Black, Group Leader, West Sector

Steve Parrott, Deputy Group Leader, West Sector

Peter Bennett, Deputy Group Leader, West Sector

Residents of Mt Irvine and Mount Wilson and guests:

Lesley Wilson, Beth Raines, David Howell, Graham Tribe, Steve Woolfenden, Sue Woolfenden, Allen Hyde, Robyn Hyde, Elizabeth Montano, Joe Montano, Helen Freeman, Barry Freeman, Sarah Howell, Robbie Feyder, Judy Tribe, Peter Raines, Cheryl Dubois, Mark Bancroft, Robyn Scrivener, Ted Griffin, Ray Harrington, Kathy Harrington, Duncan Peppercorn, Hugh Wilson, Mitchell Woolfenden, Robert Green, Robbie Feyder, Tom Riddell, Matt Mason, Andrew Tetley, Julian Ludowici, Nancy Fox, Bruce Arnold, Peter Resanceff, James Douglas, Mits Delisle

Declaration of members with proxy votes - *nil*

Acceptance of the Minutes of the 2020 AGM.

Moved: Graham Tribe. Seconded: Tom Riddell

Business arising from AGM 2020 – *n/a*

Captain's Report:

March 2021 - June 2021

Special welcome to Anthony Black and Peter Bennett from West Sector, our Brigade is glad to welcome them aboard.

There have been six incidents, 3 CFR, 1 rescue, 1 storm damage and 1 snow event.

In all 27 people responded. 8 members of our Brigade attended the 6-foot track, which was a great event.

Thanks to David Howell for almost 2 decades of service to the Brigade, including 19 years on the executive, 17 of them as President. Both the community and the Brigade are grateful for his years of service and dedication. David has left his mark with the water book, it is notable that he checks those resources every year, identifies issues and solves those issues. David has also shown leadership with his involvement in the IT and data management team. Beth noted that it is a shame that we are meeting via Zoom and cannot be together to express our appreciation in person.

Looking forward – there is a need to get our Community Engagement up and running and street meetings happening. There have been lots of changes in our population and new residents need to be familiarised with the Brigade and fire safety basics. There are going to be substantial additions to the Mt Wilson Village Hall, BMCC has awarded a grant to upgrade the Hall's facilities. The Brigade's input towards the success of the grant application was noted. The project to make substantial additions to the Mt Wilson shed is about to happen, again those changes will improve the Brigade's facilities significantly.

A local BF course is scheduled for later this year, that was meant to happen earlier in the year, but storm events and COVID-19 have interrupted those plans.

President's report

David Howell thanked everyone for attending the meeting via Zoom. There was a special welcome for the VIPs in particular Anthony Black, Steve Parrott and Peter Bennett from West Sector. David also thanked the executive. Beth is a great leader and he had depended on her knowledge and support for his nearly 2 decades on the executive committee. The community also owes a debt to Peter Raines who can often be found clearing trees from roads and fire trails and leading rescues amongst many other things. Robyn Scrivener, Secretary and Susie Hope, Treasurer were thanked for their contribution. Graham Tribe has led the training and IT teams. Joe Montano was thanked for taking over the role of President. Allen Hyde and Elizabeth Montano were thanked for their contributions as committee members. Lesley Wilson's great catering was also acknowledged.

Henric Nicholas, Vice President from 2008-2020, is sorely missed. He and Minnie came to the Mounts in the 1970s. For many years he was a valued advisor to many; he had the uncanny ability to answer questions even before they were posed. He participated in fires in 2006, and in 2013 he and Minnie turned around from Dubai and came home immediately on hearing news of the State Mine Fire. Henrik was on the fireground within hours of arriving home. Henric and Minnie have encouraged their family to join the Brigade. His passing is a great loss to our community. David concluded by thanking all those in the Brigade and in the community for their support over the last 17 years.

Treasurers Report

a) Financial statement

My report covers our financial position for the 12-month period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. You should have all received an unaudited copy of our financial movements for the year with your notice of this meeting. These have now been audited and found to be correct. An audited copy is available from either me or Robyn Scrivener

Our Working Account runs the brigade financially but can't legally accept any donations.

Income for the year totalled \$32,671.06 with the notable amounts being:

- Sale of our topographic maps and history books, \$227.26. Copies of these are still available with maps being \$20 & history books \$30. Contact either Robyn or myself if you want either .. or both!
- We managed to claim back some money from BMCC, being \$785.88 for our telephone rental. We also got a grant for a water tank, being \$9,081.82. Since then, we've got an additional grant for a second water tank and both tanks are now installed.

There is obviously a huge gap between the above amounts and \$32,671.06 income. As you can see from your financial reports this is mainly attributable to a \$93.60 refund from a website upgrade to include The Old School House, \$2,163.48

membership fees and funds transferred from our Public Fund Account of \$15,087.22. Then there's the GST in and out to the ATO.

Our only other income was \$5,190.00 donations incorrectly deposited into our working account. Once again can I please stress that our DGR (Deductible Gift Recipient) status relies on all donations to our Brigade being deposited into our Public Fund Account, not our Working Account. Details of both are on the website.

Outgoings for the year totalled \$39,980.48. The biggest expenses were

- General catering & shed supplies - \$947.13.
- Equipment purchase, repairs & maintenance - \$2,083.63
- Water tanks - \$18,800.00, both almost completely paid for with our grants as previously noted
- I pads & fittings for our trucks - \$2,968.83
- Initial outlays relating to our Mt Wilson shed upgrade & our Mt Irvine shed replacement – BMCC for Mt Irvine shed LUA \$390.91 & Mt Wilson shed DA \$2,065.00 – consultants for Mt Wilson shed septic tank plans \$800.00 & IT plans \$387.50
- Communication expenses - \$4,292.95
- Transfer of incorrectly deposited donations to the Public Fund - \$5,190.00

Other expenses were – gas \$438.58 – hall hire & hall equipment hire \$560.91 – uniform name tags \$420.00 – Paypal transaction fees \$79.08 – website maintenance \$487.20 – office admin expenses \$286.99. Then there was the GST paid & claimed back from the ATO.

The resulting deficit from the above was \$7,309.42, which, when subtracted from our 1 April 2020 opening balance of \$14,133.49, resulted in a closing balance in our working account of \$6,824.07.

Our Public Fund Account accepts all donations and channels its funds, as unanimously approved by its committee members, back into our Working Account as long as they are purely for the purpose of supporting our fire and emergency services.

Income for the year totalled \$39,289.10. This was made up of \$39,129.10 donations & \$160.00 membership incorrectly deposited.

Outgoings for the year totalled \$15,237.18 consisting of the approved \$15,087.22 transferred to our working account, transfer of the incorrectly deposited membership, and some Paypal fees.

The resulting surplus from all this was \$24,051.92, which, when added to our 1 April 2020 balance of \$57,970.24 resulted in a 31 March 2021 balance of \$82,022.16. We chose not to invest some of this in term deposits as we have done in the past because the rates are currently so low and we expect to start spending soon on our Mt Wilson shed extension.

As well as the funds in our Working and Public Fund accounts as at 31 March 2021, we have \$539,352.82 invested in term deposits with the Commonwealth Bank. Safely squirreled away to put towards upgrading our sheds .. at last!

With the \$3,000.00 held in our Captain's debit account (set up to cover her general minor expenses) our total funds as at 31 March 2021 were \$631,199.05.

A separate account is also kept for social activities not strictly related to RFB operations. The funds in this account totalled \$120.93 as at 31 March 2021. This reflects a decrease of \$171.00 for the year because we purchased sundry drinks for our AGM and general meetings.

Yet again my very caring accountant, Phill Lupton from Honan Partners, has kindly audited our books at no charge to us. I've convinced him to act as our auditor for the 2021/2022 financial year if you choose to appoint him to do so. Whilst I completely trust Phill to act on behalf of the Brigade rather than me, I understand that if I'm re-elected as treasurer, appointing my personal accountant as my auditor may appear to be a conflict of interest for the Brigade. Whoever your choice of our future auditor is I would like to thank Phill for auditing our accounts over the last thirteen years.

Report accepted: Beth Raines

Seconded: David Howell

b) Approval of expenditure over \$1000

"That the meeting approves payments of amounts greater than \$1,000 for the following"

\$1,100.00 Docker Smith – structural engineers for the Mt Wilson fire shed extension

Works associated with the recent installation of the two fire-fighting water tanks, one in Mt Irvine & one in Church Lane Mt Wilson – semi-completed and still to be invoiced

\$2,750.00 Estimated cost of cranes that were used to install the concrete tanks

\$1,281.50 Estimated cost of excavator & labour used to install the concrete tanks contracted to Peter Raines

\$2,200.00 Estimated cost of plumbing works (labour & materials) still to be done to commission the water tanks contracted to Peter Raines

Moved: David Howell Seconded: Graham Tribe. Resolution unanimously accepted

Appointment of Returning Officer for election

Anthony Black was appointed as returning officer

Declarations that all positions are vacant, the following Field and Administration Officers were all elected unopposed for 2021/2022.

Position	Nominee Name
*President	Joe Montano
*Vice President	Allen Hyde
*Treasurer	Susie Hope
*Secretary	Robyn Scrivener
*Captain	Beth Raines
Senior Deputy Captain	David Howell
*Deputy Captain (1)	Peter Raines
Deputy Captain (2)	Joe Montano
Deputy Captain (3)	Barry Freeman
Deputy Captain (4)	
Deputy Captain (5)	
*Catering Officer	Lesley Wilson
Community Engagement Officer	Bruce Arnold
Equipment Officer	Stephen Dean
Fire Trails Coordinator	Beth Raines
*Training Officer	Graham Tribe
OH&S Officer	Elizabeth Montano
*Committee Member	Elizabeth Montano

Those elected positions marked with * will form the Executive committee

Appointment of Brigade Auditor

Susie Hope proposed that we appoint Mr Phil Lupton as auditor for 2021/2022. Nick Medianik mentioned that if a Brigade's assets are valued over \$500,000 the auditor needs to be registered with ASIC. Allen Hyde stated that we can agree to Phil Lupton being the auditor but in interim Susie Hope will check to see if he is registered with ASIC. All agreed.

Other AGM business

As the President, Joe Montano took over as Chairperson. He moved a further vote of thanks to David Howell for his 17 years as President and 19 years' service on the Executive Committee.

Peter Raines has stepped down as Senior Deputy Captain, which he has served for 13 years, again, a vote of thanks to him for his years of contribution. His contribution in the 2013 and 2020 fires was noted. During those events he was ever present, and we are fortunate that his experience and knowledge can still be called upon as he is staying on as Deputy Captain and as a committee member.

Joe then went on to give a short update on the Mt Wilson shed extensions and the replacement of the Mt Irvine shed.

The site for the Mt Irvine shed is still to be verified.

The outcome of the grant application for the extensions to the Mt Wilson shed is due to be announced by the end of this month, therefore it is imminent. If that application is not successful, the 'Plan B' will be a re-examination of the scoping of the project. Nick Medianik has helped with the procurement of the Crown Lands Licence in concert with BMCC. A new water tank for the Mt Wilson station is planned. During the 2020 fires the station ran out of water, which had to be relayed to the station via bulk water carriers to keep on refilling the present tank. We are working with Nick Medianik for a 275,000-litre tank to be installed. Once the outcome of the grant application is known the executive will call a special general meeting to consider how to move forward with the Mt Wilson Shed project.

Elizabeth Montano mentioned that Beth Raines had been awarded the Blue Mountains Woman of the Year in March. She was nominated by Trish Doyle, the Member for Blue Mountains. Ms Doyle had said that Beth was by far the most outstanding candidate for the award.

Elizabeth outlined submissions and actions that have been advocated on behalf of our Brigade.

State and Federal enquiries into bushfires:

Our Brigade made submissions to both the NSW Bushfire Enquiry of 2020 and to the Commonwealth Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements 2020. Beth Raines and Peter Bennett both gave advice and evidence and shed light from the perspective of a Brigade in a remote area.

Telecoms:

Our Brigade missed out on any advantage from the Mt Tomah Telstra Black Spot Tower project. Elizabeth Montano is still in communication with Senator Marise Payne on this matter. Senator Payne is based in Western Sydney. Elizabeth is also in communication with Susan Templeman, the Member for Macquarie, on this matter. Ms Templeman advocates for better communications either by Telstra tower in Mt Tomah or in Bilpin. This may improve communications throughout the Mounts, keeping in mind that even radio contact can be difficult to maintain in some areas of our district.

Bowens Creek Road (BCR):

The Brigade has advocated that BCR should be used as an emergency vehicle access route from Mt Irvine through to the Bells Line of Road in Bilpin. From 2005-2010 the deterioration and lack of maintenance of BCR has rendered it impassable. The Brigade has never advocated for it as an evacuation route for the public, rather that it should be available for emergency vehicles only. The route would not only be useful during bushfires. The recent landslide at Mt Tomah and flooding at the North Richmond Bridge rendered a large community completely cut off. Had we had the use of BCR supply vehicles, ambulances and other emergency vehicles could have accessed and serviced those stranded communities. Our Brigade will continue to advocate for this potentially life saving route. Peter Bennett expressed interest in visiting the BCR to assess the situation. Members of our Brigade volunteered to show him the road when current COVID-19 restrictions permit.

Please find attached the District Managers AGM 2021 address sent after the meeting.

Meeting Closed 16:53

Next Meeting General Meeting September 24th, 2021, 18:00, noting that a special meeting may be called before that date