

Blue Mountains Rural Fire Service

Mount Wilson/Mount Irvine Rural Fire Brigade

Annual General Meeting 2022

Held at Mt Wilson Village Hall and via Zoom

Saturday 4th June 2022 at 16:00

Meeting Opened 16:05

Joe Montano, President, called the meeting to order and made an acknowledgement of Country. Invited guests and residents of Mt Irvine and Mount Wilson were welcomed.

Determination of quorum – *achieved*

Apologies:

Invited Guests:

Anthony Black, Group Leader, Blue Mountains District Office

Fred Taylor, Deputy Group Leader, West Sector

Trish Doyle, Member for Blue Mountains, sent a note *“I am sorry for being unavailable today as I am unfortunately recovering from pneumonia. I send you all my best wishes and express my gratitude on behalf of our community for all your hard work.”*

Brigade Members and community guests

Penny Ewing, Tim Gow, Kim Gow, Alexander Montano, Katherine Montano, David Hyde, Bruce Kerridge, John Lee, Eleanor Herriott, James Tzannes, Annie Catling, Sarah Hope, Exequiel Calderon, Judy Tribe, Mitchell Woolfenden, Andrew Woolfenden, Adam Freeman, Margaret Dean

Attendees:

Invited Guests:

Susan Templeman, Member for Macquarie

Nick Medianik, District Manager, Blue Mountains District Office

Amber Carpenter, Operational Officer, Blue Mountains District Office

Peter Bennett, Deputy Group Leader, West Sector

Steve Parrott, Deputy Group Leader, West Sector

Councillor Kevin Schreiber, BMCC

Councillor Susie Van Opdorp, BMCC (via Zoom)

Councillor Sarah Redshaw, BMCC (via Zoom)

Brigade Members and community guests:

Beth Raines, Graham Tribe, Steve Woolfenden, Sue Woolfenden, Allen Hyde, Robyn Hyde, Sarah Hyde, Elizabeth Montano, Joe Montano, Helen Freeman, Barry

Freeman, David Howell, Sarah Howell, Peter Raines, Mark Bancroft, Robyn Scrivener, Robert Green, Nancy Fox, Bruce Arnold, Andrew Mitchell, Janet McDonald, Stephen Dean, Ann Bateman, Nicholas Delbridge, Terri Jorgensen, Geoffrey Hull, Ben Shepherd, Mark Andrews (Susan Templeman's Chief of Staff), Georgina Laverty, Ian Lourenco, Mahn England, Anne De Salis, Martin Barge, Sally Banfield, Graham Tribe, Owen Haviland, Susie Hope, Linda Sterling-Levis.

Daniel Delisle, Keith Ralston (via Zoom)

Declaration of members with proxy votes - nil

Acceptance of the Minutes of the 2021 AGM.

Motion carried.

Business arising from AGM 2021 – n/a

President's report: Joe Montano

Although it has been a quiet year in terms of firefighting, there has been lots of activity for our Brigade. There has been progress on both the Mt Wilson shed extension and the plans for a new shed in Mt Irvine.

The Mt Wilson shed extensions have made good progress, despite delays due to unusually wet weather. The anticipated date of completion is the end of October this year, but it may be pushed out if the bad weather persists.

The Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Package (BLERF) grant awarded to the project amounted to approximately \$700,000. The Brigade has allocated further funds amounting to approximately \$400,000 to the project. Two project claims have been submitted by the builder and they have been assessed and approved. A third claim is currently under review.

The vast amount of work of the Brigade Executive was acknowledged, as was that of Owen Haviland, and the team at Haviland Architects. Graham Tribe is overseeing the IT aspects of the project. Mahn England is overseeing the joinery and has designed improvements to the hose drying system. Maria Johnson is overseeing the detail of finishes, such as floor coverings and colour pallets. Special mention and thanks to the Mount Wilson/Mount Irvine Rural Bushfire Infrastructure Inc. Committee, comprised of Anne De Salis, Owen Haviland, Joe Montano, Elizabeth Montano, Graham Tribe, Edward Griffin and Tom Riddell. This incorporated association was set up to provide a body to enter into contracts and administer the grant funds for the project. Thanks also to Sarah Howell, who compiled the various parts of the information the Committee put together for the grant application and lodged the successful grant application. Beth Raines added that Joe Montano should be thanked for the huge effort he has put into driving the project forward.

National Emergency Medal

This is an award under the National Honours System given to volunteers and others who make a sustained or significant effort during a nationally significant emergency. The 2019/2020 Gospers Mountain Fire has been declared such an emergency and RFS volunteers who have performed the required amount of effort are eligible to

receive it. 52 members of our Brigade have qualified for this medal and their names were read out. This list is attached. Elizabeth Montano has been working towards having these medals awarded to the recipients by an eminent person at a special event which she hopes will be held on a weekend in August. Those details are yet to be confirmed. If any members choose to have their medals made available before then they can contact District Office.

Changes of Administrative Officers

Sarah Howell is stepping down as Senior Station Officer and will also not continue as a Station Officer, Sue Woolfenden has agreed to nominate for that position. The President thanked Sarah Howell for her contribution.

Bruce Arnold is stepping down as Community Engagement Officer and Janet McDonald has agreed to nominate for that position. The President thanked Bruce Arnold for his contribution.

Mitchell Woolfenden will take up a new role, working on the membership matters for the Secretary.

Matt Mason and Allen Hyde are continuing to assist Graham Tribe as Training Officer.

Captain's Report: Beth Raines

- Search &/or Rescues – 4 including 6-day local search
- Community First Responder – 4
- Motor Vehicle Accidents – 3
- Fires / Smoke Investigation - 2
- Snow Patrol - 1
- Out of Area Deployments - Flood Response – 2
- Community First Responder – 4
- Motor Vehicle Accidents – 3
- Fires / Smoke Investigation - 2
- Snow Patrol - 1
- Out of Area Deployments - Flood Response - 3

Training



Congratulations to the following successful candidates:

Bush Firefighter Course

Alexander Moffatt, Mike Farmer, Sonia Walker, Jessie Bancroft, Mits Delisle, Brett Ainsworth, Ben Shepherd, Andrew Cameron, Finn Cameron, Oli Watts

Village Firefighter

Andrew Mitchell, Sally Banfield, Matt Mason, Geoff Hull, Elizabeth Montano, Keith Waters, Robert Green, Keith Ralston, Mitchell Woolfenden, Andrew Woolfenden, Katherine Montano, Nick Pembroke

Crew Leader

Allen Hyde, Robbie Feyder

Monthly training

Between 10-20 participants monthly

CFR training

6 Members + 1 pending; training monthly

Other activities

Blaxland Road Hazard Reduction
Search debrief with RFS Peer Support and CISS
Maintenance Evenings
Regular monthly training
Mount Wilson Station Extension
Mount Irvine Station consultations
WHS District Committee

Thank you

Executive Team, members of Infrastructure Inc., and Joe Montano
Training Team – Graham Tribe, Allen Hyde, Matt Mason, David Howell plus other Brigades members especially Adam Taranto and Sabine Koch and the Blackheath, Mt Victoria, Mount Tomah, and Bell Brigades.
Maintenance Team – Stephen Dean, Mahn England, Alex Halliday, Alice Simpson, Maria Johnson, Bruce Arnold, Jane Hutt
Station Officers – Sarah Howell, Sue Woolfenden, Robyn Scrivener, Nancy Fox

Group Officers – Anthony Black, Fred Taylor, Steve Parrott, Peter Bennett &
District Office Staff
NSW Ambulance Staff – Jacob Lung

Treasurers Report: Susie Hope

The Treasurer deliver her report covering the Brigade's financial position for the 12-month period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. Members have received an unaudited copy of the financial statements with the notice of this meeting. These have now been audited with a signed audited copy being available at the meeting, along with copies of excel cash books for the Brigade's Working, Public Fund & Social accounts.

Noting that members have had access to the above the Treasurer commented on some important items, mentioned others, and highlight the Brigade's bottom line. The Treasurer invited members to raise any queries they may have.

Our Working Account is used to run day to day activities for the Brigade financially but can't legally accept any tax-deductible donations.

Income for the year totalled **\$313,997.02** with the notable items being:

- Closed term deposits (TDs) & interest \$217,319.50. Over the past years we have been fund raising for the desperately needed extension to our Mount Wilson shed & replacement of our Mount Irvine shed. We've finally done it! Fire Control has committed to building a new shed at Mount Irvine and we've received a grant to upgrade our Mount Wilson shed. One of the conditions of that grant is that we contribute a percentage of the costs to the "build". Our TDs were closed so we had the funds readily available to comply with that condition. In our expenses you will see that we have already outlaid \$175,000 towards this.
- We claimed back some money from BMCC, being \$785.88 for our telephone rental. We also applied for and got grants for a water tank and a diesel heater, totalling \$9,671.82.
- Sale of our wonderful area topographic maps and Brigade history books continue. These are still available with maps being \$20 & history books \$30. Contact either Robyn or myself if you want to purchase one .. or even both! We also have them available right here.
- \$77,959.82 was transferred from our public fund into this account.
- Our annual membership fees totalled \$2,236.18. This means that about 123 of our community cares enough about our amazing RFB to support them. The Treasurer commented that, considering how much the Brigade does to protect us, many more of us should.

Our DGR (Deductible Gift Recipient) status relies on all tax-deductible donations to our Brigade being deposited into our Public Fund account, not this Working account. Details of both are on our website.

Outgoings for the year totalled **\$207,182.82**. The most notable expenses were:

- Our \$175,000 contribution towards our shed extension & \$1,800 paid to an engineer prior to our grant approval.
- Our payment for the new community water tank sites preparation & delivery, \$5,796.50.
- Purchase of I pads for our trucks, etc., \$4,231.11.
- A new computer for our Brigade captain, \$2,699.08.
- Our amazing catering team spent \$2,926.38 looking after us and keeping our shed & trucks well stocked.
- Phone & internet expenses totalled \$4,570.60 and, apart from the usual other annual maintenance items, we used the grant to purchase the diesel heater, \$771.82, & upgraded the canyon signage, \$665.

The resulting **surplus** from the above was **\$106,814.20**, which, when added to our 1 April 2021 opening balance of \$6,824.07, resulted in a closing balance in our Working account of **\$113,638.27**.

Our Public Fund Account accepts all donations and channels its funds, as unanimously approved by its committee members and the Public Fund Trustees, back into our Working account such funds must be used for the purpose of supporting our volunteer-based fire and emergency services.

Income for the year totalled **\$359,223.86**. This was made up of \$33,380 donations, \$325,763.86 closed term deposits & interest, plus \$80.00 membership incorrectly deposited.

Outgoings for the year totalled **\$78,093.22** consisting of the approved \$77,959.82 transferred to our Working account, transfer of the incorrectly deposited membership, and some PayPal fees.

The resulting **surplus** from all this was **\$281,130.64**, which, when added to our 1 April 2021 balance of \$82,022.16, resulted in a 31 March 2022 balance of **\$363,152.80**.

All our term deposits were closed during the year.

PLEASE NOTE There is a discrepancy in the reporting of the Brigade Fixed Term Deposits between my distributed statements & the audited version of same. This appears in both the Statement of Income & Expenditure and the Statement of Accumulated Funds. I deducted \$542,474.55 TDs & added \$3,121.73 TD interest. My auditor disagreed and deducted \$543,083.36 TDs & added \$3,730.54 TD interest. The resulting difference was \$608.81 deducted & \$608.81 added, a negating figure making no eventual difference to our bottom line but important that I point it out to you.

With the **\$3,000.00** held in our Captain's debit account set up to cover her general minor expenses our total funds as of 31 March 2022 were **\$479,791.07**.

A separate Social account is also kept for social activities not strictly related to RFB operations. The funds in this account totalled **\$3,523.44** as of 31 March 2022. This reflects an **increase** of **\$3,402.51** for the year because we had a “drive” to raise extra non-tax-deductible funds to keep supporting what we consider is essential social interaction between our members-

Receipt of financial statements - *Passed unanimously*

Brigade subscription

The meeting agreed that the Brigade subscription fee should remain at \$20 per person

Appointment of Brigade Auditor

The meeting was asked to vote on the appointment of Phil Lupton from Honan Partners as auditor for 2022/2033 financial year - *Passed unanimously*

Appointment of Returning Officer for election

Steve Parrott was appointed as returning officer

Declarations that all positions are vacant, the following Field and Administration Officers were all elected unopposed for 2022/2023.

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)	Barry Freeman
Deputy Captain (3)	Joe Montano
Deputy Captain (4)	Allen Hyde
Deputy Captain (5)	
*Catering Officer	Lesley Wilson
Community Engagement Officer	Janet McDonald
Equipment Officer	Stephen Dean
Senior Station Officer	Susan Woolfenden
Fire Trails Coordinator	Beth Raines
*Training Officer	Graham Tribe
Health and Safety Officer	Elizabeth Montano

*Committee Member	Elizabeth Montano
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Those elected positions marked with * will form the Executive committee

Susan Templeman, the Member for Macquarie addressed the meeting.

She finds the value of being at the meeting was in finding out about the detail of our Brigade's activities, and to thank the Brigade members for their work. She aims to look at Grant funding, and how it could work to best effect. As promised before the election, the government will provide \$50,000 to each Brigade. These funds can be spent at the Brigade's discretion; one Brigade has nominated that they will put it towards mental health training, another to use it for laundry facilities so that contaminated PPE can be laundered at the station.

Ms Templeman also reported that Telstra will install a mobile telecommunications tower at Mt Tomah. This facility is crucial for communications support during emergency incidents and for ongoing community resilience.

District Office Report

Nick Medianik, General Manager, Blue Mountains District RFS

The written report submitted to the meeting is attached. The main points were: Thanks to the Brigade for their work and assistance in work associated with the recent floods.

There have been major challenges associated with COVID. Thanks to all who have handled the difficult discussions, such as the vaccine mandate.

It is anticipated that the construction of a new shed for Mt Irvine will begin in the new financial year. It will be a 2A style station. The RFS will oversee the building project. A group comprised of RFS, BMCC, Mt Irvine Progress Association and the Mt Irvine Village Hall Land Managers have been working on progressing this long-awaited project.

The District ICT project is near completion with Mt Wilson Shed the last to benefit, awaiting the new extensions.

The Brigade was commended for their professionalism, commitment, and compassion throughout the search for the 9-year-old child. District Office is looking to having an AAR.

Mt Tomah Fire Station is the site secured for the Telstra mobile phone tower.

BR9 helmets are being distributed, all fire fighters should have one.

The new CAD system will go live in September.

Barry Freeman suggested that the improved shed in Mt Wilson and a new shed at Mt Irvine present a prime opportunity to highlight the dreadful state of the road between Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine.

Nick Medianik volunteered to take up that issue.

Other AGM business

Membership status changes

It was moved that the following Brigade members have had their member classification change from Member Probationary to Member Ordinary. Brett Ainsworth, Jessie Bancroft, Andrew Cameron, Finn Cameron, Daniel Delisle, Matthew Donnet, Peter Dougan, James Douglas, David Gunn, Zavier Jurgens, Maximillian Ludowici, Warren Riddell, Louise Rigozzi, Benjamin Shepherd, Oliver Watts, Megan Wood, Argirious Korogiannis

The meeting approved that the member classifications should be made.

OH&S Report

Elizabeth Montano Health and Safety Officer delivered the OH&S Report. The main obligation of the Health and Safety Officer is to assist the Captain maintaining a safe work place. Whilst Brigade members are volunteers, we are covered by WHS legislation. Most members are careful and observant of OH&S whilst on trucks and during operations; however, special mention was made that care needs to be maintained whilst in the Fire station.

COVID – there was a survey to ascertain the Brigade's attitude to mandatory vaccination and it found that the majority were in favour.

RATs have been issued to Brigade members when conducting activities where it is appropriate to do so.

Social distancing has been observed as much as possible at training and maintenance nights.

There will be a better space for the Workplace Health and Safety notice board in the new Mt Wilson shed extension.

Telecommunications

The Brigade made a submission to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications public consultation on telecommunications in peri-urban areas of Australia as part of the 2021 Regional Telecommunications Review. The emphasis on this submission was that the Brigade needs resilient telecommunications, particularly in an emergency incident.

Coronial Enquiry

The Brigade made a submission to the Coronial Inquiry into the 2019-2020 Grose Valley Mt Wilson Fire, (which the Inquiry has separately identified to the Gaspers Mountain Fire). It concentrated on operational issues such as: preparation beforehand, maintenance of fire trails, telecommunications, and the use of the expertise of local Brigades.

RFS

Barry Freeman encouraged members to join the RFS as its power rests in its membership and adds weight to their representations made on Brigade members behalf. It also administers grants, support in Section 44s, provides scholarships and supports leadership mentoring. They have a shop in Penrith. A brochure was displayed at the meeting. Members can go online to register; all they need is their fire zone number.

Property and National Parks preparation for fire season

Peter Raines encouraged all members of the community to use the next 2-3 years to their best effect and to prepare their properties for fires.

The Gardens of Stone are now under the care of National Parks NSW. State Forests of NSW maintain and prepare the country between the Gardens of Stone and the Wollemi National Park. Peter suggested that the Brigade needs to make a submission to National Parks NSW to protect the area between the Gardens of Stone and the Wollemi National Park to keep that area prepared for fire as our Mounts can be affected by fire coming from that direction.

Meeting Closed 17:35

Next Meeting General Meeting August 26th, 2022, 18:00