

## Blue Mountains Rural Fire Service

### Mount Wilson/Mount Irvine Rural Fire Brigade

#### Annual General Meeting 2023

Held at Mt Wilson Rural Fire Station and via Zoom

Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2023 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:

Trish Doyle, Member for Blue Mountains, sent a note *"I send you all my best wishes and express my gratitude on behalf of our community for all your hard work."*

Anthony Black, Group Leader, Blue Mountains District Office

Susie Van Opdorp – Councillor Ward 1, BMCC

Greg Honeysett, Captain, Bell RFS

##### Brigade Members and community guests

Alexander Montano, Katherine Montano, Adam Freeman, Margaret Dean, Stephen Dean, Nancy Fox, Janet McDonald, Andrew Mitchell, Heidi Irwin, Sean Irwin, Richard Beattie, Loretta Beattie, Allen Hyde, Jane Hutt, Petula Martin, Jessie Bancroft

#### Attendees:

##### Invited Guests:

Susan Templeman, Member for Macquarie

Robert Vinzenz, Assistant District Manager, Blue Mountains District Office

Peter Bennett, Deputy Group Leader, West Sector

Steve Parrott, Deputy Group Leader, West Sector

Fred Taylor, Deputy Group Leader, West Sector

Ron Gavin, Ambulance NSW

Councillor Kevin Schreiber, BMCC

##### Brigade Members and community guests:

Beth Raines, Graham Tribe, Steve Woolfenden, Sue Woolfenden, Robyn Hyde, Elizabeth Montano, Joe Montano, Helen Freeman, Barry Freeman, David Howell, Sarah Howell, Peter Raines, Mark Bancroft, Robyn Scrivener, Rosie Walsh, Stephen List, Susie Hope, Owen Haveland, Graham Tribe, Judy Tribe, Adreinne Schrieber, Rachael McKinlay, Ross McKinlay, Michael Cary, Jennifer Carey, Bruce Arnold, Martin

Barge, Anne de Salis, Hugh Cowan, Louise Rigozzi, Mary Holt, Terri Jorgensen, Geoffrey Hull, Alex Halliday, Peter Raines, Grace Nicholas  
 Via Zoom: Daniel Delisle, Robbie Feyder, Robert Green, Mahn England, Sally Banfield, Penny Ewing, Tim Gow, Kim Gow, Julian Ludowici, Alexander Moffat, Peter Resanceff.

**Declaration of members with proxy votes - nil**

**Acceptance of the Minutes of the 2022 AGM.**

Motion carried.

**Business arising from AGM 2022 – 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.

The Mt Wilson shed extension has been a major focus and has neared successful completion

The plans for the new shed at Mt Irvine have been held up as there is a Native Title Claim.

Welcome to our new members.

There have been three Street meetings with three more scheduled to happen.

Brigade members assisted with the 6-foot Track event in March.

The National Emergency Medal was presented to 52 Brigade members by the Governor General and 28 members received a Commissioner’s Certificate.

**Mt Wilson Shed extension project expenditure by Inc. since GM 24 February 2023:**

24-Feb-23	Mt Wilson Rural Contracting	187	\$25,172.71
2-Mar-23	Solitary IT Solutions	various - see tab	\$2,402.56
7-Mar-23	Jatomeia (the Builder)	240	\$150,986.12
18-Mar-23	Johns Carpets	13342	\$1,700.00
23-Mar-23	Jatomeia (the Builder)	244	\$68,683.45
31-Mar-23	Jatomeia (the Builder)	242	\$28,843.17
4-Apr-23	Johns Carpets	13342	\$1,700.00
4-Apr-23	T&D Dean Civil (Jatomeia)	251	\$5,456.00
17-Apr-23	Solitary IT Solutions	various see folder	\$379.85
27-Apr-23	T&D Dean Civil (Jatomeia)	255	\$2,695.00
30-Apr-23	Jatomeia (the Builder)	253	\$28,843.17

#### Expenditure by Brigade since GM 24 February 2023

Computer	2,181.00	
Audio Equipment	1,256.00	
White Boards	4,221.92	
Plumbing	2,966.15	
Total expenditure to 28 May 2023		\$1,294,075
Grant \$697,832		
Brigade \$596,243		

#### Brigade Field Officers:

Two Deputy Captains have stepped down, David Howell during the year (and previously acknowledged), and Barry Freeman at this meeting. Both will remain active in the Brigade.

Barry Freeman's contribution was acknowledged; he has been the driving force behind positive change in the Brigade such as more women members becoming members and operational firefighters, and the establishment of Community First Responders as part of the Brigade, a first in NSW.

Barry joined the Brigade in 1997, Deputy Captain from 2000-2002, Captain from 2002-2005, Deputy Group Captain from 2005-2008 and from 2008-2023 Deputy Captain. He received the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation in 2009. Barry was presented a plant as a token of the Brigade's appreciation of his contribution.

As there are now only two Deputy Captains our Brigade needs more members going through the courses and equipping themselves with the qualifications and experience to become Deputy Captains. Three members are currently in the process of doing so. If possible, we would like to appoint members who become qualified to become Deputy Captains before the next AGM:

Resolution: *"That the Brigade creates 6 Deputy Captain positions for the coming year"* – carried

#### Frequency of General Meetings:

These have been held quarterly which has worked well during Mt Wilson station's extension project. It was raised from the floor at the last General Meeting that should be changed to fewer meetings. If we had fewer meetings, we would need to consider whether the limit for Executive expenditure would need to be increased (as there will be a longer period between meetings). As per the Brigade's Constitution: *"9.9 The Brigade may adopt a resolution at the AGM or a general meeting of the Brigade authorising the executive committee to approve Brigade expenditure subject to any conditions or limits set out in the resolution provided that all such expenditure is subsequently reported to a Brigade AGM or general meeting"*.

This will be flagged to come under discussion at the next General Meeting.

#### **Captain's Report: Beth Raines**

There have been 27 incidents this year:

12 CFR

6 MVA

6 Search and rescues

1 gas leak

2 trees down

There was one fatality: a person in the Wollangambe Canyon Brigade members went to the Hill End fire

Training:

Members have attended training for BFF, AF, VF, Crew Leader, First Aid, Chain saw and Driver. We hope for members to become trained as CFRs.

Events:

The National Emergency awarded to 52 and Commissioner's Certificate awarded to 28 brigade members

The community opening of the Mt Wilson Station extensions

The Knight Brown Fire Trail was cleared

Community Engagement Street Meetings – 3 held and 3 to be held

Thanks were extended to the staff at District Office, Lisa Maxwell, Ramona Oldenmenger, Rob Vinzenz.

Thanks also to the west sector Group Officers.

Special thanks and acknowledgement to Barry Freeman for his years of service to the Brigade as Captain, Deputy Captain, Group Captain, and as a source of constant support and mentorship for me as Captain.

### **Treasurers Report: Susie Hope**

The report covers our financial position for the 12-month period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. You will all have received an unaudited copy of our financial movements for the year with your notice of this meeting. These have now been audited with a signed audited copy being available with me here, along with copies of excel cash books for our Working, Public Fund & Social accounts.

Our Working Account runs 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. For many 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 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 make a purchase. 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 us care enough about our amazing RFB to support them. I sincerely think that, considering how much they do 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 iPads for our trucks, etc., \$4,231.11.
- A new computer for our Brigade captain, \$2,699.08.
- Our 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, back into our Working account as long as they are purely 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 TDs were closed during the year.

**PLEASE NOTE** There is a discrepancy in the reporting of the Brigade Fixed Term Deposits between my distributed financial records & 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 at 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 at 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 Brigade members.

Resolution: *"That the report be accepted"* - Passed unanimously

Resolution: *"That the members approved that the Brigade subscription be set at \$20 per person"* - Passed unanimously

Susie Hope's accountant, Phill Lupton from Honan Partners, has kindly audited our books at no charge to us. He will act as our auditor for the 2023/2024 financial year if you choose to appoint him to do so. While I trust Phill to act on behalf of the Brigade, 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. I would like to thank Phill for auditing our accounts over the last fifteen years.

Resolution: *"That Phill Lupton be the Brigade's auditor for the current financial year"* - Passed unanimously

### **Appointment of Returning Officer for election**

Rob Vinzenz was appointed as returning officer

Declarations that all positions are vacant, the following Field and Administration Officers were all elected unopposed for 2023/2024.

<b>Position</b>	<b>Nominee Name</b>
*President	Joe Montano
Vice President	Allen Hyde
*Treasurer	Susie Hope
*Secretary	Robyn Scrivener
*Captain	Beth Raines
Senior Deputy Captain	Peter Raines
Deputy Captain (1)	Joe Montano
Deputy Captain (2)	Allen Hyde
Deputy Captain (3)	
Deputy Captain (4)	
Deputy Captain (5)	

Deputy Captain (6)	
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 (1)	Graham Tribe
Training Officer (2)	Matt Mason
Health and Safety Officer	Elizabeth Montano
*Committee Member	Peter Raines
*Committee Member	Allen Hyde
*Committee Member	Graham Tribe
*Committee Member	Elizabeth Montano
*Committee Member	Lesley Wilson
*Committee Member	Matt Mason

Those elected positions marked with \* will form the Executive committee

**Susan Templeman, the Member for Macquarie** addressed the meeting.

Thanks to all the members of the Brigade for their work.

Progress on the \$50,000 grant to each Brigade mentioned at the last AGM - Emergency Services funding still needs to be passed in Parliament, this may be within 3 months, but has taken 12 months to get to this stage.

The Brigade was congratulated on its new shed and its use of the BLERF grant towards making our community more resilient.

The Mt Tomah Black Spot program has funding as is now well underway. Another round of Black Spot funding is due soon.

There is a new service for emergency service workers call National Support for Emergency Workers, which will be extended to all emergency workers including volunteers. It is an online mental health tool and provides access to up to 12 sessions with a psychologist.

Apologies for not being able to attend the National Emergency Medal presentations.

#### **Ron Gavin, Ambulance NSW**

Passed on thanks to the Community First Responders from the Commissioner.

Thanks to the RFS and the community for supporting the CFR program. Always on the lookout for new CFR recruits, please consider becoming trained as a CFR.

Congratulations on the new shed.

Thanks to Barry Freeman, who started as a CFR in 2008.

Thanks to the Brigade for supporting NSW Ambulance during operations in our district.

#### **District Office Report**

*Delivered by Rob Vinzenz, Assistant General Manager, on behalf of Nick Medianik, General Manager, Blue Mountains District RFS*

The written report submitted to the meeting is attached

Rob Vinzenz thanked our Brigade and made special mention of Barry Freeman's contribution not only to our Brigade but also to the wider Blue Mountains District throughout his years of service.

### **Other AGM business**

#### *WH&S Report – Elizabeth Montano*

The safety of both people and property is important, and 'near misses' need to be avoided. Treating WH&S as a priority after an incident has occurred is an opportunity missed.

Our Brigade has:

A WH&S information board on display

Evacuation diagrams on display and has done evacuation drills

Registers for equipment

Reminder about safe work practices around the station where guard can be relaxed

Members were also reminded that now is a good opportunity to make sure they have the correct and properly maintained PPC/PPE

#### *Bushfire Risk Management – Peter Raines*

The members were encouraged to look at the Bushfire Risk Management Plan; to look at the fuel load on their properties and on their surrounds and to be aware of high-risk areas.

To prepare a local risk plan the Brigade aims to check rainforest areas, and to look at hazard reduction plans. As so much was burned in 2019/2020, most scheduled hazard reductions will be 5-8 years from now, and for some areas over 25 years from now.

The community was encouraged to direct any queries to Peter Raines, Beth Raines, or Joe Montano.

The senior operational team is working with National Parks to clear fire trails in our district; they are also working with landowners to have fire trails which are situated on private property to be cleared.

### **Meeting Closed 17:40**

Next Meeting General Meeting September 22nd, 2023, at 18:00