

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING  
MOUNT WILSON PROGRESS ASSOCIATION INC  
Held on Saturday, 25 June, 2016  
in the Mount Wilson Village Hall, The Avenue, Mount Wilson**

**1. CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS**

The meeting opened at 5.30 p.m. when the Chairman welcomed everyone. He apologised for the lack of heating which Judy and Graham Tribe were attempting to fix. The Committee was recognised, Secretary Sue Woolfenden, Treasurer Libby Raines, and Committee members Nancy Fox, Ted Griffin and Peter Laving.

He introduced his daughter, Vanessa who was to type up on the screen for the record any actions the meeting recommends. Barry Freeman was to assist with taking recommendations.

Vice President, Alison Halliday and Committee member, Lorraine Barrett sent their apologies.

The Chairman went on to congratulate the MW&MIRFB for the great lobbying, led by Elizabeth Montano, resulting in the \$100,000 commitment from the federal government to kick-start work by the Hawkesbury Council on an emergency vehicle route between Bowens Creek and Bilpin. The federal Major Projects Minister, Paul Fletcher, says the "funding for HCC will allow the Bowens Creek Fire Trail to be opened".

Many hurdles have to be crossed before the first vehicle drives a restored route but this is the first concrete, ministerial commitment to put serious money on the table to get HCC moving. When that council does they will be complementing the ongoing work and commitment of BMCC to maintain Bowens Creek Road down to the bridge. The two councils will have joint responsibility for a new crossing. This is a great new start following community advocacy over many decades with the credit for achieving this stage resting with our local member. We have to give credit to Louise Markus and our RFB lobbyist Elizabeth Montano.

Elizabeth Montano provided an update: Trish Doyle, our state MP has made a speech on the floor of Parliament. In the speech, which was recorded in Hansard, she sets out the reasons for the necessity of opening the road for emergency vehicle access.

Susan Templeman, the Labor candidate, has been briefed on the issue for six months. She has advised that Labor will also commit \$100,000 if elected. \$100,000 will not cover the cost of repairing the road. It puts us in a position to do a feasibility study and prepare a bid.

## **2. ATTENDANCE**

**Committee:** Richard Beattie (President), Libby Raines (Treasurer), Sue Woolfenden (Secretary), Nancy Fox, Ted Griffin and Peter Laving.

**Other members:** Loretta Beattie, Rodger Davidson, Stephen and Margaret Dean, Robbie Feyder, Barry Freeman (not signed in), Deborah Griffin, David Howell, Sarah Howell (late), Diana and Joe Landsberg, Marilyn Laving, Stephen List, Janet McDonald, Maurice May, George and Jayne Mayne, Joe and Elizabeth Montano, Kathleen Oakes, Michael Pembroke, Peter Raines (not signed in), Bill Ryan, James Stein Jnr, Alice Simpson, Judy and Graham Tribe, Rosie Walsh, Raoul and Lesley Wilson, Deidre and Michael Wren.

**Visitors:** Keegan Buzza, Jessica Delbridge, Linda and James Sterling-Levis

**Apologies:** Allen Hyde (President MIPA), Bruce Kerridge (Secretary MIPA), Robert Chesney, Ron and Moira Green, Mary Holt, Susie Hope, Sarah Howell, John and Robyn Leonard, Alexander Montano, Katherine Montano, Gillian Pembroke, Linda Raines, Alan Rose, Maureen Ryan, James Stein, Graham and Beverly Thompson, John and Judy Teulon.

## **3. General Business**

*The Chairman introduced the discussion:*

In April, Mount Wilson and Mount Irvine experienced the greatest influx of visitors for decades, perhaps ever. The Mount Wilson Autumn Festival saw about 8,000 people come and go on the weekend of 16-17 April. The following Anzac three-day holiday weekend saw about 15,500 people arrive and leave. That is about 25,500 visitors over five days with the chaotic peak on the Anzac Day Monday.

In addition to the traffic problems there were the related safety issues – luckily there were no incidents – and grossly insufficient and inadequate toilet facilities. The MWPA has been working with BMCC for many years on this issue with little results.

The ideal weather helped bring the crowds but for many residents and visitors, especially over the Anzac Day weekend, arriving and getting away from Mount Wilson and Mount Irvine was a frustrating, annoying and disappointing time for many despite the brilliant autumn colours of the trees people came to see and photograph.

As we discuss these issues please remember the key authorities responsible for these matters are the BMCC and the police. Both have made clear to us that without the authorities' traffic control licenses, volunteers not only have no rights to direct traffic but if they do individuals volunteering could be liable in court for their actions in the event of any unfortunate traffic incident, injury or worse. This puts an important responsibility on any organisers for any public or big private event.

The three General Business agenda items for discussion are:

1. An open-ended opportunity to discuss the outlook for the future of events and peak seasonal visitor numbers at Mount Wilson
2. What can be done to overcome the seasonal peak visitor problems?
3. Why is the MWPA raising funds to be spent to improve public infrastructure and facilities?

I think we are all looking for steps to be taken as a result of the autumn experience. To help lead the discussion I've asked Barry Freeman – a man with great experience in this area – to help and we will record actions to be followed up.

Because I've come to think it best to discuss the issues in chronological order it will be useful to start with the 16<sup>th</sup> of April and the question:

➤ **Why is the MWPA raising funds to be spent to improve public infrastructure and facilities?**

In the Background Paper that came with the Notice of Meeting for today there is brief comment on page 4 on this question. In a nutshell, if the Progress Association, or for that matter the Village Hall Management Committee or the RFB, do not raise funds for the community's benefit on projects like the \$70,000 raised here for the new Village Hall improvements, or the big dollars needed for a new kitchen much needed here, or the \$300,000 extension of the fire shed, then those improvements will not be made. Those funds were raised by the Hall Committee and the Brigade. The Progress Association's Autumn Festival raised about \$22,000 last year and a net \$67,104 this year. We expected double the number of visitors, but ended up with three times as many.

*Joe Montano:* What was the position with volunteers at the Festival?

*The Chairman:* They were exposed. We have an obligation to have an approved traffic plan by consultants. They would provide temporary no parking signs and use qualified traffic controllers. The quote for such a service was for \$5,000 to \$8,000.

*Ted Griffin:* The committee had disclosed to the insurer that we would be directing traffic at the Festival.

*The Chairman continued:*

The Committee has discussed the MWPA could made a substantial contribution from these funds should the Hall Committee decide on a campaign to contribute to building a new Hall kitchen. We have a \$300,000 plus property adjacent – the Marcus Clarke Reserve – we need funds for its maintenance and improvement. I have a long list of other suggestions made by community members that could be put up on the screen but that's too much detail for the moment.

The committee agrees that we should use BMCC to pay where applicable and to make grants and submissions rather than using community funds.

*Barry Freeman:* From my perspective the fundamental issue is whether we want to change anything. The purpose of the MWPA according to the Constitution is to express and represent the wishes of members. This meeting is an opportunity to

talk. The association is listening to the views and will take action. Do we want to improve public infrastructure and do we want to address peak visitor numbers?

*Joe Montano:* That's the nub of it – the bigger issue is what does the community want the Progress Association to do? What infrastructure does the community want the Progress Association to address? Fundraising needs to be addressed to a purpose. Do we want the Progress Association to raise funds for the community? Do we want the Progress Association to raise funds for visitors?

*Maurice May:* People will come at certain times of the year. We can't close the road. If the BMCC is reluctant to put money into the community, do we allow people to come with inadequate facilities? There is a responsibility for police and council to direct traffic. Parking is the issue – people were looking for parking. We need to accept that people will come even if we do nothing. There could be greater numbers next year.

*Barry Freeman:* You would like the Progress Association to hold the BMCC accountable and provide the resources needed. With planning in peak periods we can make BMCC aware and they will take some action. There is a will even if they can't do it. BMCC would like us to make bids for funding.

*Chairman:* We need to put the plan in and once BMCC supports it they will make signage available. BMCC wouldn't supply rangers. Further inquiry is needed into the role and responsibilities of police and BMCC.

*Deborah Griffin:* We like the village the way it is, quiet and peaceful. At the GM councillors said "like tourist towns". The questions are - can we do it with our infrastructure? do we want it? I don't want to fund raise for toilets. Are we powerless? I feel strongly that we shouldn't go with the flow. The question is whether we are prepared to accept the numbers.

*Barry Freeman:* How do we deal with that – are we going to raise funds for the community?

*David Howell:* We are not just talking about an event we are talking about a season.

*Keegan Buzza:* We can't tell people they can't come to Mount Wilson. Us contributing to infrastructure is about the community. We are shortsighted if we don't and it will impact on the residents. Rubbish will be left and roads dug up. It benefits us, as residents so the village isn't trashed.

*Rosie W:* We had an event in April. For events there exists a manual for organisers. The person who puts it on carries the cost of the event and there is a formula for calculating the number of toilets.

*Elizabeth Montano:* In reply to Keegan: this is the role of government not a small association. There is also a difference for businesses and private residents. A community organisation with volunteers won't get many volunteers.

*Keegan Buzza:* Perhaps larger businesses should be asked to contribute.

*Peter Raines:* Mount Wilson has never been funded by BMCC. The residents planted the street trees because they wanted a beautiful place. We are the same. We have to be careful not to do much to change so it remains as it is. There are a lot of reserves

that need to be maintained. Toilets shouldn't be funded by the MWPA. Walking tracks and reserves need to be maintained and that benefits local resident and weekenders. We could use MWPA funds for this. On Anzac weekend everyone stopped at Breenhold. The question is how can we passively control the traffic. We need to investigate why was there a problem there and how can we stop it. We need to develop passive parking measures such as low basalt gutters, providing off street parking. The concentration of visitors in one place is not good for other businesses.

*Michael Pembroke:* We have always taken it as our responsibility to provide a minimum level of facilities. We should be hospitable and facilitate the smoothness of experiences for visitors.

*Chairman:* So far the policy the meeting is suggesting is: Toilets, garbage, the village hall should be BMCC responsibility and we won't spend money on things that are the responsibility of the council. Funds raised are for the other improvements that we want done. We have a responsibility to make sure MCR is safe.

*Joe Montano:* If we are raising funds that BMCC won't provide, are we raising for visitors or residents? Part of the problem is the more we do, the more visitors we attract so we could compound the problem.

**There was agreement from the floor that funds should go to the community.**

*Margaret Dean:* Why do we have an autumn festival? Why should others contribute to our amenity?

*Chairman:* This has been the third year the festival has run.

*Margaret Dean:* It should be local festival for developing community closeness.

*Chairman:* We have a long list of suggestions for using the money raised this year – we can commit money to MWVHC if they wish to fund raise for a new kitchen.

*Maurice May:* It's a catch 22 situation. The suggestion has been made that we shouldn't promote events. We didn't promote the Anzac weekend and people still came. People in Sydney are aware it's beautiful here and will come anyway. We should be using the time of year to raise money for the community. The sentiment we should shut down won't work.

*Owen Haviland:* There is a difference between planned and unplanned events.

*Chairman:* Anzac chaos would have happened anyway. Government authorities have to be responsible. Residents are not authorised to direct traffic.

*Owen Haviland:* We won't know until the day that there is chaos.

*Barry Freeman:* Why is the MWPA raising funds to be spent to improve public infrastructure and facilities?

- To raise money for the community not for making visitors more comfortable.
- To mitigate impact and risk.
- Not for projects and costs that council is responsible for.
- To bridge gaps in funding from council.
- Before we commit funds we would consult the community so funds go specifically to projects the local community agrees on.

*George Mayne:* Can Silva Plana be used for parking.

*Chairman:* It is not suitable as it is fragile and much money has been spent to restore it after filming of *The Great Gatsby*.

*Elizabeth Montano:* Councillor Sarah Shrubbs would like feedback from the meeting as BMCC is putting together a plan for addressing increasing visitor numbers in the Blue Mountains.

➤ **An open-ended opportunity to discuss the outlook for the future of events and peak seasonal visitor numbers at Mount Wilson**

*Chairman:* Graham Thompson has asked me to pass on this suggestion he says that in future with apparently increasing autumn visitor numbers might work:

- For say the four peak visitor weekends provide, for a commercial rental space fee, for commercial food and drink vendors to use the hall or bring their own marquees or vans to provide services for visitors.
- Our volunteer numbers would be limited to arranging and overseeing the vendors and traffic management.

Response from the floor was negative.

*Steve Woolfenden:* If they are involved in a commercial venture we risk them promoting the area and further increasing the visitor numbers.

➤ **What can be done to overcome the seasonal peak visitor problems?**

*Diana Landsberg:* Look at the weather forecast and if it's going to be nice lock the gates and go away!

*Barry Freeman:* How can we mitigate the problems? We need to have some infrastructure in place from BMCC or using our own money. More of our money should go to the community.

*Judy Tribe:* We can't stop people from coming but we do have opportunities to organise ourselves. We could provide off street parking which would make it better for the community.

*Jayne Mayne:* Years ago the BMCC did provide additional toilets in autumn.

*Chairman:* We will ask again but this hasn't happened in recent years. The MWPA will go to the police and BMCC prior to Anzac Day next year.

*Deidre Wren:* We could provide off street parking and provide a shuttle bus.

*Chairman:* Peter Kerstens is putting such a plan in place. There will be no 90 degree parking outside Breenhold. It is possible for Breenhold to provide substantial parking

*Deborah Griffin:* People came in droves because of new advertising. The publicity we seek ourselves such as in garden magazines is okay. I believe that the community wants to keep its traditional base.

*Chairman:* We have no responsibility for articles that are written and published by visitors.

*Graham Tribe:* We have data on the increasing numbers. We have been traffic counting for two decades. It shows a rough rule of thumb - in April the numbers are doubling every decade. We can assume it will keep on happening. Gardens have been advertised for decades – this is not a new thing. In planning we need to focus on how we minimise the congestion.

*Barry Freeman:* This is not a new problem.

*David Howell:* There is a corollary to this. We can't predict the numbers so any measure we put in place have to be passive measures. The MWPA is acting on behalf of the community. The details can be left to the committee to decide in consultation with relevant bodies.

*Ted Griffin:* If congestion is a natural event should we spend money to make it run better? No. We have to ask BMCC to have their own plan. Large gardens need to have staff in place. We need solutions that are passive. If there are planned events and we let BMCC know they will supply signage to direct visitors to off road parking. If gardens are running a business they should have arrangements for parking. In built up areas a business has to have a plan. BMCC should negotiate with the businesses.

*Jessica Delbridge:* Do they have to provide toilets to operate a business?

*Linda Sterling-Levis:* Are catering vans able to set up in the village?

*Jessica Delbridge:* I have recently made inquiries and there are Council guidelines. To set up on Council owned land they need permission. There are large fines for setting up on public roads. They can arrange with the owners to trade in private gardens.

*Stephen Dean:* If the traffic extends onto Bells Line of Road to Pierces Pass the police should be involved and they should not let people into the place.

*Chairman:* The police have said they have no power to stop vehicles using a road no matter how long the delays. I will speak to the police again to confirm this.

*Bill Ryan:* How can we extract money from all the visitors? In the past we have received voluntary donations from users of Cathedral Reserve. We could circulate flyers explaining how the community supports visitors and request voluntary donations.

*Deidre Wren:* We could charge a general fee for a day visit to the village.

Response from the floor was disagreement.

*Barry Freeman:* What can be done to overcome the seasonal peak visitor numbers?

For planned events:

- Hold council and the other agencies, e.g. the police, responsible for traffic control.
- More enquiries into having licensed staff to control traffic.
- Minimise advertising to keep numbers down.

For unplanned events e.g. Anzac day:

- Approach council and the police before Anzac day if the weather is forecast to be good.
- If the traffic gets out of hand police need to be contacted to sort it out.

#### **4. Concluding Remarks**

There will be two vacancies on MWPAC at the AGM. Peter Laving and Richard Beattie have resigned effective 17 September. Please consider nominating to join the committee.

#### **5. Next meeting**

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 17 September 2016 at 5.30 p.m.

#### **6. Closure of meeting**

Everyone is invited to stay for drinks, cheese and biscuits. The meeting closed at 7.00 p.m.