

HAWKESBURY HIGHLANDS

COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 1 MARCH APRIL 2023

BRINGING YOU NEWS AND INFORMATION FROM THE HEIGHTS TO THE MOUNTS.

Kurrajong Heights, Bilpin, Warawaralong, Berambing, Mt Tomah, Wilson, Irvine, Tootie and Lagoon

WHAT'S THIS SIGN ALL ABOUT?

Drivers along Bells Line of Road can't miss it. East Bilpin resident Martin Tebbutt a 50-year Bilpin property owner erected the sign after becoming angry at the removal of street trees he planted and had nurtured for the past two years. The Tebbutt property, along with many other residents in East Bilpin & Kurrajong Heights were burnt by the out-of-control RFS Mt Wilson backburn in December 2019.

"Many trees along Bells Line Road were killed by the fire and when they were removed the place looked terrible. Much of the district has beautiful roadside trees planted by previous generations and so my wife and I planted decorative trees each side of the road for future generations to admire." Said Martin Tebbutt.

The Tebbutt's nurtured the trees for 2 years receiving compliments from neighbors and residents for their efforts.

The trouble started when the Tebbutts received a phone call from the President of the Bilpin RFS Brigade Ross McKinlay stating a fire trail was going to be made through the plantings on one side of the road and the trees had to be removed as they were a danger to the community.

"I emailed my response and said there was space for a fire trail beside the plantings and suggested we discuss things. In the past I have had a good relationship with our local RFS who I had found to be respectful and friendly. But I couldn't find common ground with this Brigade Executive," said Tebbutt. Bilpin Brigade did not answer this email.

Next the Tebbutt's received a visit from NSW RFS officials responding to a complaint that their property was a fire hazard. "I was shocked when they turned up. They wouldn't say who made the complaint. I showed them around, they were decent people and very professional and they complimented me on how well kept my property is," said Tebbutt.

The RFS Commissioner Rob Rogers then sent Mr. Tebbutt a letter saying that his property was not a fire hazard.

Next the Tebbutts received two anonymous abusive letters in their mailbox and one abusive phone call anonymous persons saying they hated the street trees and they needed to be removed.

So, the Tebbutts asked NSW RFS whether they were concerned about their street trees and received their second supportive letter from the RFS Commissioner Rob Rogers saying they weren't.

Then Hawkesbury Council Administration stepped in after receiving an email complaint about the street tree plantings from McKinlay in his capacity as President of Bilpin RFS. In an email to Hawkesbury Councilors dated 15 September 2022 McKinlay



wrote lobbying for the removal of Tebbutts roadside plantings:

"... our brigade membership is approximately 10% of the population of Bilpin. Coupled with the Hall Committee and BRAG that we work closely with I think I can state accurately what the broader community attitude is. I don't think Council would be able to maintain a shred of respect up here if they were seen to side with a couple of self-interested people over the wider community again." (Extract from email from Bilpin Bushfire Brigade obtained by GIPA from Hawkesbury Council)

This complaint fell on more fertile ground than the NSW RFS. Hawkesbury Council Administration concluded they had the legal power to remove the trees as the Tebbutt's had not sought Council permission to plant them. On 7 November the trees were removed at a cost of \$4,602.02. (Information obtained by GIPA from Hawkesbury Council)

Tebbutt maintains that McKinlay and Council Administration actions were motivated by Tebbutts speaking out at a Council meeting in February 2022 supporting the RFS Rural Boundary Clearing Code. The adoption of this NSW RFS policy by Hawkesbury Council was opposed by Council Administration, and McKinlay and his brother Bilpin RFS Deputy Captain Stuart who is also an employee of Hawkesbury Council. Despite this opposition Hawkesbury Councilors voted to endorse this RFS policy at Council meetings. This resulted in Penny McKinlay (Bilpin Residents Action Group BRAG founder), publicly accusing Hawkesbury Mayor of disrespecting her husband, Stuart, and her brother in-law Ross by using his casting vote to support the RFS policy. (See article Hawkesbury Post dated 21 February 2022).

Story continues on next page...

A week after Hawkesbury Council removed the trees, on 15 November 2022 the Bilpin RFS posted information on their Facebook page about the street trees making claims, Tebbutt says, that were false and misleading, however he was unable to respond as the comment's icon on the post had been disabled.

"That was the last straw. Our street trees

were planted adjacent to, not under power lines that are ten meters high. The deciduous trees were Japanese Maples, which are fire retardant and mature at a height of 5 metres. We set out to leave a legacy of beauty for future generations which has been destroyed. I put up my sign to let everyone know what I think about the unfair behavior of Bilpin RFS and Council."

Many properties along Bells Line Road and its tributary streets have roadside planting of small to large deciduous trees and pines under and adjacent to power lines.

According to Tebbutt the sign is staying up until Bilpin RFS remove the false statements, they have made on their Facebook Page about the street trees and apologize.

BILPIN PARK ONLY SAFE ACCESS BY CAR

Any person wanting to enjoy the recently renovated Bilpin Park should drive there. Bells Line Road has a turning lane allowing vehicles to safely enter and exit the park. The same can't be said for pedestrian traffic.

"I walked my 7- and 11-year-old grandchildren up to the Park along the new footpath, then had to leave it, make our way down a 1.5 metre bank to Bells Line Road then dash across to get into the park and do the same routine in reverse when leaving" said Bilpin resident Lichell Maris. This is the shortest route across the road to the park. "My grandchildren were on scooters and as we waited to cross the road a semi came along and the up draft caused by those huge wheels sucked hard against the kids and me,

it was really frightening. It's ridiculous, something needs to be done to improve access for residents who want to walk to their local park."

The community was originally consulted through Bilpin Regional Action Group (BRAG) about a footpath linking the Bilpin Hall and park and this was welcomed. Council later asked BRAG if it could be located on the opposite side of the road to these public facilities.

The decision to move the foot path to the opposite side of Bells Line Road to the Bilpin Hall and Park has resulted in 5 properties having a concrete pathway pedestrian access to the Bilpin CBD while members of the community with vehicles are able to safely drive to the park.



Photo: Lichell Maris at crossing to Bilpin Park

KOALAS KILLED ON THE ROAD AT MT LAGOON & KURRAJONG HEIGHTS



Photo: Dead koala found on Mt Lagoon Rd

For the first time in living memory, which is over half a century, a koala was found dead on the carriage way of Mt Lagoon Road, apparently killed by a passing vehicle. Another Koala body, reported on Facebook, was found on Bells Line Road at Kurrajong Heights.

Mt Lagoon has a koala colony that has been studied by Sydney University for the past decade. The RFS Mountain Lagoon backburn

conducted during the Black Summer Fires burnt much of the colony's territory and one Koala body was found after this fire.

Concerned that Koala's are about to enter our endangered species list, local Wildlife Warrior Dannii Warner resident of Mt Lagoon asked Hawkesbury Council, WIRES and Transport NSW to install electronic warning signs along Bells Line Road and other local roads at known wildlife crossings.

"The solar powered signs flash on dusk alerting motorists to the possible presence of wildlife crossing the road. This is the current best method we have for trying to prevent road deaths" says Ms Warner.

Council and WIRES replied rejecting the request saying they didn't have the funds to do this. WIRES received approximately 90 million dollars in donation during the Black Summer bushfires. We have asked WIRES

to comment on what money has been spent aiding recovery in the Wollemi National Park in which Mt Lagoon is located. The Park had about 80 percent of its land mass burnt.

"Council have installed more of the static ineffective signs, which may make Council Officers feel better but did nothing to prevent the recent deaths. "Static signs are initially seen by residents when they are first erected but then become invisible as people drive past them regularly. It's the same reason we have flashing electronic signs at school zones to remind motorists twice daily to be careful."

Mt Lagoon residents are consulting with their Kurrajong Heights neighbors about what can be done to help protect our local colonies. The Koala Action Network is a valuable community partner for residents concerned about this matter

www.koalaactionnetwork.org/p/about.html

Mt Tomah RFS celebrate diversity with pride.

GATHER DREAM AMPLIFY

Mt Tomah RFS Brigade celebrated World Pride Day and the Mardi Gras with the release of a video on how welcoming and inclusive their brigade is to all members of their small community. The video can be viewed at <https://www.facebook.com/MtTomahRFB/> The FB page commentary on the video says:

"This year's Mardi Gras theme is "Gather, Dream, Amplify" – in line with this theme we are helping to amplify the voices of our #NSWRFS members and communities. In this video, we speak with the members of the Mt Tomah Rural Fire Brigade about the importance of creating a welcoming and supportive brigade."

MOUNTAIN OF JOY HAS MOVED FROM KURRAJONG HEIGHTS TO KURRAJONG

Mountain of Joy our local food bank has moved from a garage at Kurrajong Heights to the veranda Kurrajong Baptist Church, after its founder Karen Suttle moved to regional NSW.

Mountain of Joy is a food bank where you can deposit surplus food stuffs and or make a withdrawal of anything you need. The great thing about Mountain of Joy is that it helps decrease the amount of food wastage.

According to Food Bank Australia about 7.5 billion tons of food is lost or wasted each year. Yet one in six Australian adults haven't had enough to eat and 1.2 million children have gone hungry in the last year. Food wastage is a much bigger problem than just feeding the hungry in our district.

We need to avoid waste and when we can't, we need to share our surplus by trading it at Mountain of Joy for produce we need.

"Mountain of Joy is a food swop and trading service. I have shopped at Mountain of Joy, cooked the produce recently into zucchini frittata, fed my family and packaged the excess into 6 meal size containers and returned these to Mountain of Joy freezer for residents who are looking for a nutritious home cooked meal". Said a resident who did not want to be named

because of the stigma associated with not having enough money to buy food for your family. "I do this from time to time when I don't have enough money to make ends meet."



**NEED HELP
WITH FOOD
AND OTHER
BASICS?
MOUNTAIN OF
JOY IS HERE
FOR YOU.**

**BAPTIST CHURCH
66 KURRAJONG ROAD
KURRAJONG**



24-hour drop-in service available for basic foodstuffs - sensor light will shine on table loaded with food for you to choose from.

PANTRY is open for you to refill your fridge and cupboards on

Tuesday	9.30am to 3pm
Thursday	9.30am to 12 noon
Friday	1:00pm to 3pm
Saturday	10am to 12 noon

Home cooked frozen meals available - just heat and eat.

WASTE NOT - WANT NOT!

Everyone is welcome to take anything they need and drop off any surplus food they have.

Please note you can only drop off or get food that needs to be refrigerated when the PANTRY is open.

BELLS LINE ROAD BUSINESS COUNCIL INC IS HERE TO ASSIST LOCAL SMALL AND MICRO BUSINESSES!!

Bells Line of Road Business Council Inc (BLOR Business) held an inaugural networking luncheon on Tuesday 21 February 2023 hosted by Archibald Hotel Kurrajong Heights.

Over 50 people representing 40 businesses along, or off, Bells Line of Road attended the event welcoming the chance to share concerns about common problems and opportunities for mutual benefit.

BLOR Business vision is to build a thriving and diverse regional corridor to live, work and enjoy for residents, visitors, and travelers alike.

The Council was formed in 2022 and aims to improve existing networks and

channels of cooperation between small and micro businesses and all tiers of government.

The Council provides information, advice, and support on matters of concern to its membership and lobbies government with suggestions for improvements to policies and procedures that will help small, and micro businesses survive in this difficult economic time.

Recently the Council made representations to the Minister for Planning Anthony Roberts regarding regulation of Agritourism and Farm Gate visitation.

BLOR Business President Marg Tadrosse owner of the Bilpin Fruit Bowl said: "We

visited the Minister in NSW Parliament and then he came to Bilpin so he could better gauge the impact of what the Government was proposing. Our exchange was positive, and we obtained changes that will help local micro and small businesses."

"The Council executive meets monthly and its proposed to hold quarterly networking meetings to provide information, discuss matters of mutual interest and give support to businesses in these tough times."

You can contact the BLOR Business Council via the website to find out when the next meeting is. Go to www.bellslineroad.com.au or by email blorbusinesscouncil@gmail.com



Photo: Marg Tadrosse President BLOR Business Council

TAKE THE BLOR ROAD SURVEY

Bells Line of Road Business Council has responded to a spate of recent accidents on this road by asking the public to do a survey so they can better determine how \$100 million funding pledged by the Federal and State Government to improve the road is spent.

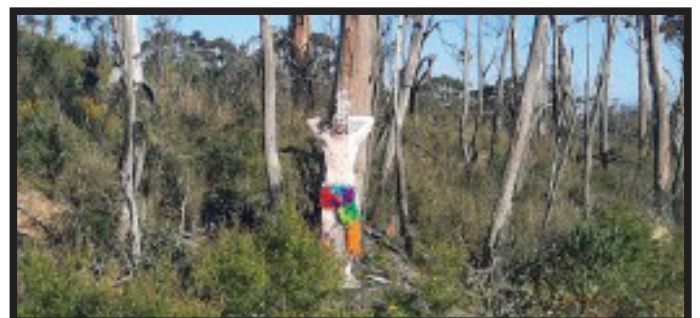
The survey for residents and travelers can be completed at www.bellslineroad.com.au/blor-funding-survey



For more information check out www.bellslineroad.com.au

DARGAN MAN NEWS

Know this man? Is he an escapee from the popular TV show Married at First Sight gone feral? We would like to know more about Dargan man. If you have any information, please contact us at bilpindistrictnewsletter@gmail.com or Bilpin District Community Facebook page.



MT WILSON RFS BACKBURN CORONIAL INQUIRY UPDATE

The NSW Coronial Inquiry into the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) escaped Mt Wilson backburn has set down hearing dates from 16 to 25 May 2023. A coronial inquiry uses an inquisitorial process, actively investigating and gathering evidence to ensure a thorough and complete review of the matter and make recommendations for improvement.

The escaped RFS Mt Wilson Backburn on 14 December 2019 started a bushfire that burnt for 53 days before being extinguished. It impacted the settlements of Mt Wilson, Mt Tomah, Berambing, Bilpin, Kurrajong Heights, Bell, Dargan, Mt Victoria, and Blackheath. This fire burnt 63,700 hectares, destroying 70 structures and threatening thousands of homes in the Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury Local Government Areas, causing stress and anxiety for tens of thousands of people.

The Coroner has decided to use this escaped backburn fire as a case study on RFS backburning practices in its General Inquiry into the NSW Bushfires.

The Mt Wilson backburn survivor group is represented at this Hearing by Honorable Adam Searle Barrister at Law, a resident of the Blue Mountains and former Member of the Legislative Council of NSW Parliament.

The group made a public submission to the Coroner in May 2022 that can be viewed at www.mtwilsonbackburn.com. This submission uses RFS documentation to detail a chronology of events starting with the lighting of the backburn on 14 December 2019 at 9:58am at corner of Bells Line and Mt Wilson roads and the fire escaping containment lines 5 hours later; to a request from the fire ground the next day Sunday 15 December 2019 at 12:49pm for an upgrade of the warning level to Emergency which was denied; then



Photo: Bulgamatta Road Berambing about 4pm 15 December 2019

the impact of this fire two and half hours later on residents and property owners at Berambing then Mt Tomah; to finally at 4:17pm when an Emergency Warning was issued while people were fighting to save their lives and property.

If Residents have experiences they would like to share and or have suggestions on how to improve things so the future bushfires can be better managed contact Mt Wilson Backburn Survivors Group via their website www.mtwilsonbackburn.com You can also stay up to date with the progress on the Inquiry through the website.

CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THE MT WILSON BACKBURN? YES, YOU CAN!

Speaking about traumatic events helps us make sense of the experience. Talking helps us process what happened and the emotions and thoughts associated with the experience. It helps gain new perspectives on what happened.

Talking reduces feelings of isolation, shame, guilt, and other negative emotions. Talking about it with someone who understands and supports you can reduce these feelings and help with emotional regulation.

Sharing experiences with others helps us feel more supported and connected and builds a stronger sense of community.

Time does change our feeling about traumatic events, sometimes sharpening them and people may experience 'assassins' grief.

"This is where, out of the blue, you are overwhelmed by emotions that take you back to the grief and loss you experienced during and immediately after the fire and

you think – where did that come from? You're not going mad, it's just something that happens." Says Kooryn Sheaves of Mt Lagoon who will be appearing at the Coronial Hearing to be held in May 2023.

Community events held at Berambing and Kurrajong Heights in 2022 gave residents a chance to share their experiences of this disaster. A video documentary Out of the Ashes highlights the story of some survivors of the fire speaking up about their experience. You can view this at www.mtwilsonbackburn.com and clicking on the Film tab.

A few people have given witness statements for the Coronial Hearings and have been notified they cannot discuss with others

what they intend to say to the Court, but can talk about everything else to do with their experience of the Mt Wilson back burn fire.

If you are concerned for yourself or others, you can contact the Mental Health Line 1800 011 511.



Photo: RFS meeting with residents to hear concerns about escaped Mt Wilson back burn at Berambing.

DISTRICT DOINGS

MT WILSON & MT IRVINE

Their latest quarterly newsletter March 2023 is packed with interesting current and historical information on the area, including maps of walking trails and information on how to navigate that age old problem of dogs and snakes. It's well worth a read.

MT TOMAH

The Mt Tomah Society recently had a very successful social event at Suzarosa Berambing Crescent. About 60 residents gathered over the afternoon and evening to smile, mingle, and exchange stories of life on the Mountain. If you are interested in joining the Society, contact ask anyone on the Mountain when the next event is.

MT TOOTIE

Mt Tootie road book library is a great place to pick up something good to read. You can drop off or pick up books. Check out the new road library at the Bilpin Post Office.

MT LAGOON

Mt Lagoon residents enjoy a rotating monthly afternoon tea held on properties along the road. It's a great way to have a good sticky beak around people places and catch up on all the local gossip.

BERAMBING

Yes, we are the shadow of Mt Tomah that makes us cool in summer and hotter in winter and Suzarosa on Berambing Crescent is a great meeting place for the two communities.

WARAWARALONG

Where the bloody hell is Warawaralong! That's what Robert asked John who told him that is the name of the suburb between Bilpin and Berambing in which they each have a property. Yes, check out the maps you may live there too.

BILPIN

The post office has just installed a new street library that residents are welcome to make deposits and withdrawals at their leisure.

KURRAJONG HEIGHTS

The Heights are looking forward to full opening of the Bowling Club for community activities. There is particular interest in the basketball court that has been marked out on the secondary carpark area behind the hedge and a return of the monthly cabaret nights.

FROM OUR FOREIGN CORRESPONDENCE DESK

Young Kurrajong musicians and singing duet The Turnbull Brothers were chosen out of thousands of artists to be in the top 50 on the Channel 7 Australian Idol TV show. There was so much talent and both brothers did well to make it into the top 50 performers, with Cooper making it in to the top 24 best in Australia. Well Done to the Turnbull Brothers of Kurrajong and everyone look out for their gigs in local venues.

Email news of what's happening in your place to bilpindistrictcommunitynews@gmail.com

COMMUNITY GROUPS WELCOMING NEW MEMBERS

MT LAGOON SATURDAY BBQ LUNCH held the first and third Saturdays in the month starting at 12 noon beside the RFS shed on Sam's Way. Everyone welcome.

MT TOMAH AND BERAMBING COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION INC welcomes new members, and you can contact them at mtra2020@gmail.com for updates on their next event.

KURRAJONG HEIGHTS GARDEN CLUB has regularly activities and everyone is welcome. Contact Joanne on 0407626

KURRAJONG HEIGHTS BOWLING CLUB welcomes everyone to attend any activities. Check out our Facebook page or ring Lichell on 0417656437

BELLS LINE ROAD BUSINESS COUNCIL meets monthly and has regular networking meetings. Contact Fiona on 0416031885

HAWKESBURY HARVEST FARM gate trail meets monthly and welcomes everyone. Contact Eric on 0438731712

NEPEAN HAWKESBURY LAND CARE holds regular events and would love to see you at them. Contact Katherine on 45749604

THE CLUB COMMUNITY GARDEN welcomes new people to the Kurrajong Heights Bowling Club for a paddock to the plate affair. Come and plant, pick and eat their way from the garden to the Club kitchen. Contact Eric on 0438731712

*Email news of your community group to
bilpindistrictcommunitynews@gmail.com*

COMMUNITY NOTICE BOARD

**If you would promote an activity in our community
let us know and we will list it here.**

WEEKLY EVENTS HAPPENING IN OUR COMMUNITY.

- Tai Chi @ Bilpin Hall Monday 4:30pm
- Play group @ Bilpin Hall Tuesdays 10am to 12 noon.
- Social Bowls @ the Club Tuesday 10am to 12 noon
- Tai Chi @ Bilpin Hall Wednesday 9:30am
- Preschool @ Bilpin Hall Thursday 9am to 3pm
- Community dinner @ the Club Thursday 5:30pm to 8:30pm
- Preschool @ Bilpin Hall Friday 9am to 3pm
- Tennis @ The Heights Friday 9am to 12 noon
- Bilpin Markets @ Bilpin Hall Saturday 10am t 12 noon

✧ YOUR STARS FOR MARCH & APRIL ✧

This is the time of sensitive, gracious, and emotionally aware **PISCES** who will take this newsletter and speak of it kindly as you promote the virtues of a liberal community, debating issues of concern with civility and graciousness.

ARIES passionate, motivated, and energetic make your way up to one of the Mounts lookouts and inhale the sweet air beat your chest and let out a Tarzan size roar across the Grose Valley. Let our neighbors on the Blue Mountains side know we are here!

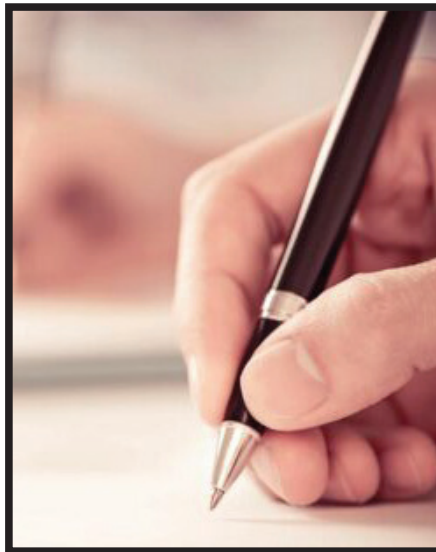
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

You're not entitled to your opinion

While everyone has the right to hold an opinion, not all opinions are equally valid or worthy of respect. Opinions that are based on reason and logic are more likely to be well-informed, well-considered, and defensible than those that are based on emotions, biases, or misinformation.

Using reason and logic to support an opinion means providing evidence, data, and logical arguments to back up your position. It also means being open to hearing and considering alternative viewpoints and being willing to revise or adjust your opinion considering new information or evidence. (Extract: New Philosophy Magazine Volume 5, 2015)

This is our editorial philosophy, and we will publish Letters to the Editor that are congruent with this viewpoint.



ABOUT US

Hawkesbury Highlands is a new community newsletter. We believe a newsletter helps build a sense of community and keeps residents informed about local news, events, and things relevant to our daily lives.

Hawkesbury Highlands provides a forum where you can find reliable information and a platform to voice community issues, share feedback and suggest ideas to improve community wellbeing.

The Newsletter content is moderated by an Editorial Collective with a background in publication. If you would like to join the Collective, please email us outlining your qualifications and experience.

Find us www.bilpinnews.com Contact us bilpindistrictcommunitynews@gmail.com Join us on Facebook Bilpin District Community News

BILPIN LAND OF THE MOUNTAIN RUMOR

Reporting on the most interesting rumor circulating in the Hawkesbury Highlands

It is rumored that Hawkesbury rate payers need to brace for a turd tax!

Yes, apparently Council is considering a so-called turd tax after Council Administration have failed to repair a broken sewage pipe at Windsor. The pipe is busted about 3 kilometers from the McGraths Hill sewage treatment works. The cost of repair at the time was estimated to be \$400,000.

For a year, sewage trucks have been hired 24/7 to cart the waste from the broken pipe behind the Jolly Frog Inn to the treatment works at a cost of \$36million and growing. Hawkesbury Council only has reserves of \$45 million, but recently borrowed another \$30million at an unknown interest rate to keep the poo moving. Meanwhile Council is trying to have these costs caused by a flood of incompetence not water, paid by the State Government. Liberal Mayor Sarah McMahon wrote before the election asking the State Government to pay the bill as it was caused by flood disasters. But all bets are off now we have a Labor Government.

Hawkesbury Council has built and successfully operated

sewage treatment works through fire and floods for many decades. The recent appointment of two Sydney based General Managers with no experience in managing regional communities' is speculated to be a problem. The first one left after a no confidence vote by Councilor's, while this one is literally in the shit!

At the moment whether everyone will be slugged with the turd tax or if it will be limited to the makers of the poo is anyone's guess.



Photo: Poo trucks lined up waiting to plug into sewer pipe and truck turds to treatment works

WHAT IS THE NSW RFS RURAL BOUNDARY CLEARING CODE AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

From story page 1 What is this sign about.

The Rural Boundary Clearing Code allows landowners to clear certain vegetation along the boundary of their landholding to reduce the potential for the spread of bush fires.

This Code was a recommendation of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry, which was commissioned following the devastating 2019/20 NSW bush fires that cost the lives of 26 people and destroyed 2,476 homes across NSW.

The objective of the Rural Boundary Clearing Code is to simplify vegetation management for owners or occupiers of land for the purpose of bush fire hazard mitigation by allowing them to clear vegetation on their property within 25 metres of their property boundary.

The Rural Boundary Clearing Code will assist landowners to limit the spread of fire and extend the existing exempt clearing provisions in NSW to provide for clearing, as fire-breaks, along property boundaries. The scheme is designed to facilitate bush fire hazard reduction works to limit fire spreading from or entering properties. (Extract: Rural Boundary Clearing Code for NSW RFS 2021)

THE RURAL BOUNDARY CLEARING TOOL

Before you clear up to 25 metres inside your boundary fence line, the landowner must use the on line Rural Boundary Clearing Tool <https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/boundary-clearing-tool>

You enter your address, and the tool will tell you if you can clear inside your boundary fence. Some areas are exempt from the Code for environmental reasons such as Mt Lagoon.

It is the responsibility of the owner of the land to maintain a copy of the Rural Boundary Clearing online tool search results from the day that the clearing is undertaken. Landowners are required to provide evidence of the online search tool results in the circumstance that a relevant regulatory authority seeks such evidence. (Extract: Rural Boundary Clearing Code for NSW RFS 2021)

NEXT ISSUE MAY 2023

- Where the \$100 million of Federal State funding announced for BLOR is going to be spent?
- Will Hawkesbury Council Peppercorn Inc finally apologize for using money earmarked for Black Summer bushfire victims to fund its aged care service activity in Richmond?
- Blue Mountains Council The big fix - what is it and what does it mean for the Mounts.
- Update on NSW Coronial Inquiry into the escaped Mt Wilson RFS backburn.
- First Dargan Man at the entrance to Blue Mountains National Park, now Bilpin Woman is coming to the start of Wollemi Wilderness National Park.

WHY DID HAWKESBURY COUNCILORS VOTE THREE TIMES TO APPROVE THIS CODE?

This Code came about in part through the lobbying efforts of Martin Tebbutt who appeared on television and radio promoting the need for it.

Hawkesbury Council Administration presented a report to Councilors in February 2022, stating adoption of the Rural Boundary Clearing Code could result in 15,800 hectares being cleared. (See story on page 1 Hawkesbury Post article.) Council Administration added up the boundaries of all properties in the Hawkesbury and came up with this figure. The Administration did not discount the boundary fences that have been cleared over the past 230 plus years of European farming and grazing in the Hawkesbury.

A public debate caused divisions in the Bilpin District communities, with the Bilpin RFS Brigade President, the former RFS Captain Bill Shield's and current Deputy Captain addressing a Council meeting in February 2022 opposing the adoption of the Code. Martin Tebbutt, Captain of Kurrajong Heights RFS Brian Williams, and Lionel Buckett Berambing property owner who was burnt out during the 2019 fires, spoke at the same meeting in support of the adoption of the Code. The Council met three times to discuss the issue with the Mayor having to use their casting vote each time to obtain a majority to pass the Code.

