

HAWKESBURY HIGHLANDS

COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 3 JULY AUGUST 2023

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

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

4 YEARS AND \$40 MILLION IN GOVERNMENT DISASTER FUNDING

Hawkesbury still lacks essential firefighting infrastructure.

After four years and \$40 million in government disaster funding, Hawkesbury is still missing essential firefighting infrastructure as its first real fire season since the Black Summer of 2019 approaches.

On 15 December 2019 when the RFS Mt Wilson backburn escaped burning down homes at Mt Wilson, Mt Tomah, Berambing and Bilpin, RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons ordered NSW Fire



Rescue out of Sydney and up the mountain to help.

At the time the Commissioner was unaware Bells Line of Road didn't have roadside water hydrants where Fire Rescue Trucks could refill. The results were devastating for everyone. Residents watched as their homes burnt, surrounded by

NSW Fire Rescue that couldn't spray water on the fire because they couldn't refill their trucks.

"We had a Skype meeting on 20 December 2021 with Shane Fitzsimmons when he was the Resilience Commissioner. He told us he dispatched all available Fire Rescue crews when the RFS backburn escaped. He said he



thought we had roadside water for their trucks to refill. We told him the Blue Mountains do but we don't, and he was shocked." Said Lionel Buckett of Hawkesbury Blue Mountains Community Bushfire Alliance.

An application was made to the Commonwealth Disaster Ready Fund to install inground 120 litre concrete tanks filled by water bores to redress this problem. The government outsourced assessment of these projects to international consultancy agency GHD whose Senior Advisor read the application and concluded:

"I am left asking - Is there anything else could this money be spent on to protect the community? When I should be convinced this is

the best option."

This comment has raised concerns about the validity of the assessment process. No application for any project in the Hawkesbury received funding.

"The government needs to take a good look at the knowledge, skills and expertise of the consultants because anyone with basic knowledge of fire disaster mitigation knows the best way to protect a community is ready access to water, which is why streets in suburban Australia have roadside fire hydrants."

Residents of Wilson Tomah, Berambing, East Bilpin and Kurrajong Heights, having survived the devastating Mt Wilson backburn fire got together and formed the Hawkesbury Blue Mountains Community Bushfire Alliance to lobby to improve firefighting infrastructure.

Hawkesbury Blue Mountains Community Bushfire Alliance NSW Parliament June 2023

The Alliance met with NSW Parliamentarians to discuss concerns about disaster funding.

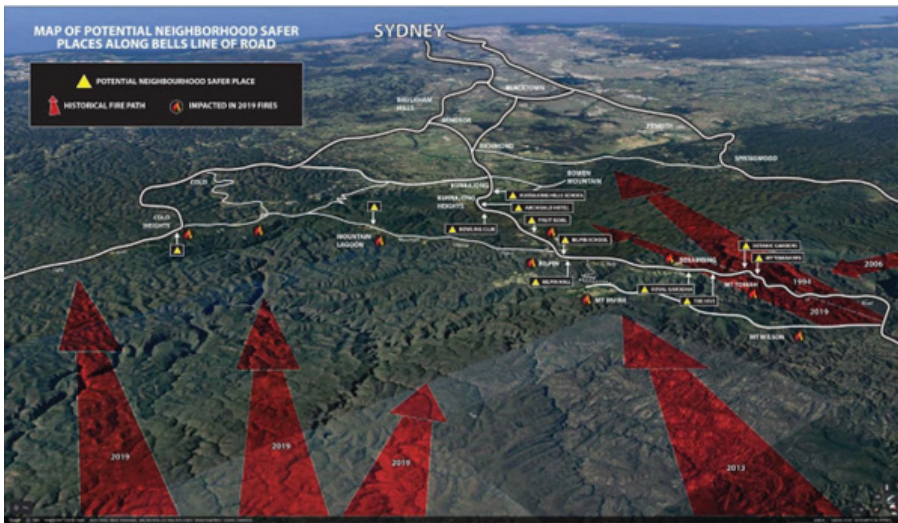
Of equal concern to the need for roadside water is the failure of Hawkesbury Council to construct local 'Places of last' resort along Bells Line Road known as Neighbourhood Safer Places (NSP)

Places of last resort - Neighbourhood Safer Places (NSP)

According to NSW RFS Neighbourhood Safer Places (NSP) are a place of last resort during a bush fire emergency. You should be aware of any Neighbourhood Safer Places in your area and note them in your bush fire survival plan. You can use the RFS App to locate your nearest. <https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/neighbourhood-safer-places>

Alliance members first visited NSW Parliament in March 2022, presenting a detailed plan for the location of inground bore filled roadside water tanks and designated Neighbourhood Safer Places along Bells Line Road.



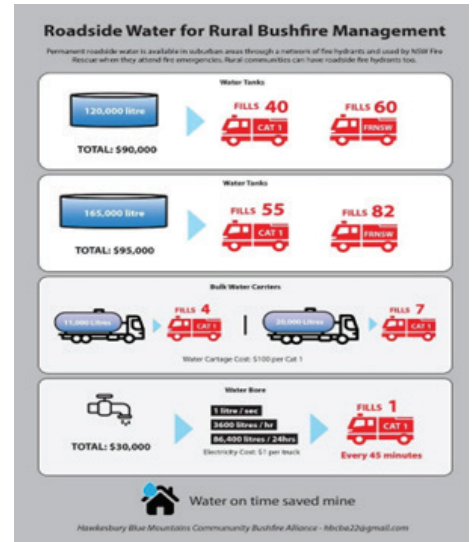


Neighbourhood Safer Places (NSP) - Method 2 Certification
 Up to \$3000 for certification.
 Additional costs for modification work to be determined on a site-by-site basis.
 Find out more: www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/neighbourhood-safer-places

For Trish Doyle MP for Blue Mountains and Robyn Preston MP for Hawkesbury it made sense, and they supported the plan. With the support of Blue Mountains Council, roadside water tanks have been installed at Mt Tomah and the RFS sheds at Bell and Mt Tomah and now designated Neighbourhood Safer Places (NSP) as is Mt Wilson Hall. Blue Mountains now has

34 Neighbourhood Safer Places. On 19 August 2022 Bilpin Bushfire Brigade Executive Committee invited the Alliance and Hawkesbury RFS HQ to a meeting at their fire shed where they outlined their opposition to Neighbourhood Safer Places claiming NSP's encourage people to stay during bushfire disasters. They also opposed roadside water as

they considered there was sufficient water available from other sources. However, if roadside water tanks were to be installed then they would have one to be used only by the RFS or emergency services. The diagram shows the efficiency of roadside water storage for fire fighting compared to the use of Bulk Water Carrier trucks transporting water for roadside refilling of fire trucks.



COMMUNITY ROADSIDE WATER AVAILABLE AT KURRAJONG

Fortunately, with the support of the Hawkesbury Mayor, and State and Federal politicians and Hawkesbury RFS HQ, the Kurrajong Heights Bowling Club won a grant in 2022 to upgrade its bushfire disaster staging area.

The community now has the one permanent roadside water supply, at the Kurrajong Heights Bowling Club, where up to 90 NSW RFS and Fire Rescue trucks and local community fire fighters can continuously fill up before the water flow slows.

"We handed the keys to the staging area to Kurrajong Heights RFS and it's a relief to know the community has permanent accessible water available to firefighting this summer. We are also using private certification to make the Club House an NSP so people at this end of Bilpin District will have a place of last resort if they get trapped on the mountain during a fire." Says the Club President Lionel Buckett. The completion of the grant has been delayed while approval for a verandah to be erected on the side of the Club house is obtained from Council.

KURRAJONG HEIGHTS RFS HAPPY WITH NEW BUSHFIRE STAGING AREA

"An ample supply of water is critical to any fire fighting effort and it is pretty scarce in the Blue Mountains. We use it to fill our tankers and the buckets of fire fighting helicopters. So this new development at the Bowlo is more than welcome.

The old car park at the club now has a huge concrete apron and alongside the northern edge are sited a number of single and dual outlet hydrants.

The outlets are fed by two 100,000 litre water tanks which are filled from rain water from the club roof and backed up by bore water. There's a generator to power the pumps in the event of power failure and there's solar to minimise the club's power bill.

In addition there is a separate dual outlet hydrant situated at the eastern end of the property and

accessed through double gates from Bells Line of Road.

We deployed our buoy wall in the north western corner of the concrete apron and filled it with 11,000 litres of water so that a helicopter could lower its bucket and take a fill. It's a good exercise to do and the buoy wall has proved invaluable in large fires." Source: Kurrajong Heights RFS Facebook page.



GREATER BELLS LINE ROAD CAMPAIGN

Alongside, the BLOR Business Council's online directory showcasing 125 local offerings, GreaterBellsLineofRoad.com.au, takes centre stage, positioning the region as a self-sustained destination catering to diverse interests – whether it's a quick day trip from Sydney, a picturesque destination wedding, a rejuvenating weekend getaway, or a journey through the Blue Mountains.

Commending the collaborative spirit

among businesses along the Bells Line, Federal member of Parliament Susan Templeman congratulated their efforts in tackling local and business-related concerns while showcasing the region's appeal as a tourist magnet.

"It's fantastic to see businesses along Bells Line coming together to work on issues that impact both themselves and local residents, and also to spread the word about what a great place it is to visit".

State member for Hawkesbury Robyn Preston echoed the sentiment. "The Greater Bells Line of Road campaign has been created by locals, who know just what attractions this corridor has to offer – from quaint cafes nestled in a village environment to funky gift stores, breathtaking vistas, farm experiences and wholesome produce." Excerpt Hawkesbury Post 14 August 2023



Visit: GreaterBellsLineofRoad.com.au

BLOR BUSINESS COUNCIL

IF THE LAST FEW YEARS HAVE LEFT YOU STRESSED, ANXIOUS, SAD OR OVERWHELMED, YOU ARE NOT ALONE!

Multiple extreme weather events, COVID-19, the rising cost of living, and financial stress and the start of a new dry period have affected all of us in different ways.

Dealing with the effects of natural disasters and other unexpected events can have long-term effects on our mental health and wellbeing. It's natural to experience a range of responses and emotions, including stress, fear, and anxiety. If you have been directly affected, you might still be feeling intense emotions. You may have concerns about how the experience has affected your family, your living arrangements, finances, school, or work.

Even if you have not been directly affected, you may have ongoing distress from previous events. You may have loved ones who are going through a rough time, or you may feel overwhelmed from media coverage or hearing people around you

talk about the event(s).

Whatever you're going through, it is important that you talk to someone you trust and find support. This could include talking with friends, family, and community members as well as services in your local area, your GP, or a national support service about how you are feeling.

ANYONE LIVING IN AUSTRALIA CAN CALL HEAD TO HEALTH ON 1800 595 212



THE STATE OF THE ROAD!

For most of June and July there were 23 Road Works signs between Mt Wilson turnoff and Kurrajong Heights. These signs advised motorists of an array of possible hazards from stones being thrown up to drive at 80 kms and 60 kms simultaneously. For residents the road works signs are a source of increasing frustration and anger. Road users are losing trust in the accuracy and relevance of road signage making the situation more dangerous with one saying, "When I see a Road Works sign, I think it indicates that repairs are needed to that part of the road, not that the repairs are actually being done."

The state of Bells Line Road, for which the State Government is responsible, is a continuing topic of concern among

Hawkesbury Highland residents and businesses.

While road work signs are essential for ensuring the safety of road works and drivers providing advance notice of potential hazards, when signs indicate road works and there are no actual construction activities taking place it can lead to potential harmful outcomes.

The most obvious is driver confusion which can lead to erratic driving – do I slow down or speed up – what is the speed limit. This increases the risk of accidents.

Non-resident drivers see the signs and in anticipation of road works slow down causing unnecessary congestion.

Commercial drivers are forced by fear of loss of licence points to stick to the 60 km

speed limit increasing travel time, delivery schedules and costs.

According to Robyn Preston MP for Hawkesbury the owner of the signs are likely Ventia the company that holds the NSW road maintenance for Bells Line Road. She encouraged residents to contact this company with any concerns. The contact details are below.

VENTIA
1800 577 441
Info.parkland@ventia.com.au



\$100 MILLION FOR BELLS LINE ROAD

In January 2023 the Federal Government pledged \$100 million to fix Bells Line of Road. According to ABC News BLOR is considered one of the most dangerous stretches of road in the country. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-01-18/bells-line-road-government-100m-pledge/101869012>

The steep, winding road has an accident rate that's higher than the state average and was heavily impacted by extreme weather last year and record rainfall.

It is an important arterial route for primary producers and tourists, with weekend traffic around 60 per cent higher than weekday traffic. That project has been slated to be jointly funded by the federal and state governments in an 80/20 funding split.

The Hawkesbury Highlands asked Susan Templeman MP for an update on the status of this funding and is awaiting a response that will be published in the next newsletter.

MT TOMAH & BERAMBING COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION AGM CALLS FOR AMBULANCE STATION

The Mt Tomah and Beraming Community Association held its AGM on 12 August and about 30 people attended. With the State electoral boundary running through Beraming, both the Blue Mountains State MP, Trish Doyle and the Hawkesbury MP, Robyn Preston, were there.

Both expressed support for the proposal which is for a new ambulance station to be built in Beraming, and for it to also serve as a Neighbourhood Safer Place during bushfire emergencies. Support of our local MPs is crucial as we now need to present the case to the minister for Health, Ryan Park.

The Association noted that the previous minister for Health, Brad Hazzard, approved a second ambulance station in the Hawkesbury electorate, but its location

was not decided.

“We are pressing for it to be in Beraming, as a logical midpoint between the existing stations in Richmond and Lithgow. This is the best way to maximise coverage and improve service response times for everyone along the BLOR.”

Having an ambulance station located 45 minutes away from the nearest hospital can offer several advantages, including a significantly reduced response times in emergency situations. A quicker response time can mean the difference between life and death for patients with critical medical conditions, trauma, or other emergencies.



It would also be beneficial for disaster preparedness. Ambulance staff stationed in the area can become familiar with local geography, road conditions, and potential challenges, allowing them to navigate efficiently and make informed decisions during emergencies.

NSW SPECIAL CORONIAL INQUIRY INTO THE RFS MT WILSON BACKBURN CASE STUDY.

This inquiry finished taking evidence on 10th August 2023 with the Mt Wilson Backburn Survivors group claiming a breach of natural justice. The group who was represented at the hearing by the Hon Adam Searle is concerned about the inquisitorial process undertaken by the Coroner.

To summarise their concerns Counsel Assisting denied the community group the opportunity to present their expert report to the Inquiry, instead relying solely on the Court appointed independent expert witness, a consultant Mr Geoff Conway. Mr Conway is an ex-fire bureaucrat from the Victorian Country Fire Authority who held the equivalent position as the RFS Deputy Commissioner Rob Roger. What was revealed about Mr Conway in research and cross examination from Hon Adam Searle was he:

- Never planned or had overseen a backburn fire
- Never visited the Blue Mountains or conducted any independent investigation into the Mt Wilson

backburn fire

- Been criticised during the Royal Commission into the Victorian Black Saturday fires and in the media for the role he played in those devastating fires after which he resigned and opened a consultancy business.
- Has done past consultancy work for the RFS
- Found no need for substantive improvement in any area of RFS activity.

Matter that remains outstanding for the Group are:

1. Why the backburn was lit in a location known for its past escaped backburns and why Rob Rogers RFS Commissioner who planned and approved the backburn was not called to give evidence at the inquiry.
2. Why the RFS HQ lit the backburn without calling a community meeting to inform Bilpin residents.
3. Why the RFS lit a backburn without a contingency plan if the fire escaped. This is particularly important as at



Photo: Planning the Grose Valley backburn fire. The RFS called the escaped Mt Wilson backburn fire the Gaspers Mountain Fire where it burnt north of the Grose River and the Grose Valley Fire where it burnt south of the river. The practice of presenting volunteer firefighters to the court, rather than the fire bureaucrats responsible for approving backburn plans and their implementation was criticised in the Victorian Royal Commission into the Black Saturday fires.

least 6 of the previous backburns they had lit on the Southern Containment line leading up to the Mt Wilson fire

4. 4. Why the issuing of an emergency warning about the escaped backburn on 15 December was denied by RFS HQ approximately 3 hours before the fire engulfed properties and burnt down houses after which an emergency warning was then issued. Properties were already being impacted when the RFS finally issued an emergency warning.

Concerns about the Mt Wilson and Balmoral RFS backburn fires were expressed back in June 2020 in an ABC Investigation Report. According to the community group the Coroner has done nothing to address the issues raised by residents. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-06-10/backburns-at-balmoral-and-bilpin-caused-damage/12334842>
The community group points to the Commonwealth Government response to

bushfire as being best practice.
"In 2013 when the Army caused the last fire that burnt out the district, they were fantastic. They said it was their fault, paid compensation for damage the fire caused and told us how they would stop it happening again, so we felt safe. Perhaps the best thing that can happen is for the Commonwealth to take over the RFS and put the Army in charge."

SCHOOL KIDS DENY WRITING HAWKESBURY COUNCIL PLACE PLANS REPORT



School children deny authoring Hawkesbury Place Plans Report, a crucial document Council intends to guide them in allocation of funding received from the State and Federal Governments.

The document was placed on public exhibition in May 2023 and received damning criticism from respondents for its inaccuracies and superficial description of future development of local villages leading people to comment that it looks like school kids wrote it.

This has raised the ire of local school kids who deny having any input into the document.

"It's obvious we didn't write it, kids wouldn't make so many mistakes about our local community."

"Everyone knows the Council cause lots of problems for people and we know to stay away from troublemakers."

"You can tell kids didn't have anything to do with it because they don't list anything that would help make life better for us like better mobile reception and public transport to get places and stuff for kids to get together and

do after school."

"There is nothing for old people either. They want a local cemetery."

"And we want adults to stop saying we wrote it. Adults need to take responsibility for their bad work."

Concern about the Place Plan Report was also raised at the Bells Line Road Business

Council networking meeting Q & A forum on 4 July with Hawkesbury Mayor Sarah McMahon, Robyn Preston MP, and Susan Templeman MP where serious "here and now problems" were raised, particularly the traffic congestion, parking and road crossing at Kurrajong Heights and Bilpin CBD's.

Critical planning information missing from Place Plans Report.

Information usually found in planning reports designed by Local Government to direct future expenditure on physical and social infrastructure and is missing from Hawkesbury Place Plans Report. The missing information includes:

Demographics: This includes factors such as population size, age distribution, income levels, ethnic diversity, and educational background. Demographic data helps identify specific needs and preferences of different population groups in a place and is a key element in determining what current and future characteristic will be important to a particular place and it's essential for ensuring the fair distribution of future

government grants.

Infrastructure and Facilities: Assessing the existing infrastructure and facilities available in a place, such as transportation systems, utilities (water, electricity, sewage etc.), healthcare facilities, educational institutions, recreational spaces, and public services is not in the report. The report does not accurately show existing infrastructure or land use zoning. There is no analysis involving understanding the distribution of residential, commercial, farming, and public spaces and how this aligns with the community needs and goals, and consideration of possible adjustments or improvements to the place.

Health and Safety: Prioritizing the health and safety of community members has not been included in the place plans. Consideration of factors such as access to healthcare services, emergency response systems, crime rates, traffic safety, and disaster preparedness is not shown on the place plans.

Future Growth and Trends: Consideration of future population growth projections, economic trends, and technological advancements that may impact the community needs is not included in this document. So current and anticipated changes like the growth in agritourism are not included in the plan so sustainable growth, accommodating new industries, emerging technologies, and potential shifts in the community demographic makeup is not incorporated in our community place plans.

Community Engagement and Participation: The report states that

information came from community forums held in August September 2022. Identification of what community groups or individuals were present at the community forums providing information on the place

plan is not provided. It is good practice to provide this information as it allows for review of who had input and who may have been underrepresented or not represented at these forums. The community can then

see that a cross section of views were voiced. It is clear from the information in the Place Plan document that many voices from the Highlands were either not present or not heard at these meetings.

What can be done about this missing information?

You can ask our local elected Councillors to move a motion at a Council meeting requiring the General Manager to include this information in the Place Plan Report. Contact details for Councillors can be found at <https://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/your-council/councillors/councillor-profiles>

BELLS LINE ROAD BUSINESS COUNCIL Q&A WITH POLITICIANS



BLOR businesses gathered on 4 July for a networking meeting and Q&A session with local politicians at the Archibald Hotel.

The Business Council announced the results of a survey of users of Bells Line Road. They had over 140 respondents of which the key findings were: 91% felt unsafe driving on BLOR.

- 95% believe travelling on BLOR requires a higher level of driving skills than needed on other roads.
- 94% believe maintenance is not done regularly enough and 64% of respondents have sustained damage to their vehicles driving on BLOR.

“BC members’ most significant concern is the poor state of Bells Line Road and its impact on businesses and residents. This is a matter that involves all tiers of Government” says Fiona Germaine who chaired the session.

The Federal Government has announced \$100 million funding and Susan Templeman MP repeated the announcement made in January this year.

The State Government contractor for BLOR maintenance is Ventia and residents need to keep on to them about what is happening on the road. Says Robyn Preston MP who also acknowledged the contractors schedule

was tailored to meet their needs and not the communities along BLOR.

Mayor Sarah McMahon said that Council Road maintenance problems were with the supply of contractors to do the work “Council has the money but not the personnel to do all the work that is needed immediately”. Businesses at the meeting suggested the State Government contractor to co-ordinate work with local Government maintenance of the main feeder roads off BLOR such as Kurts Road, Mt Lagoon Road, Bilpin Springs Road and Valley Ridges Road to improve efficiency and effectiveness of road maintenance. All elected representatives agreed this was not possible for bureaucratic reasons.

The traffic and pedestrian issues at Bilpin CBD and Hall were raised and there was general agreement that they were the most pressing road safety concerns for the community and travellers particularly on weekends. The use of electronic variable speed signs as a way to address some concerns was also discussed.

The Mayor also acknowledged deficiencies in the Hawkesbury Council Place Plan Report and encouraged residents to give their feedback through the Council portal.

Immediate key infrastructure needed

identified by BLOR BC for improvement are:

- Publication of the maintenance schedule for BLOR and contact person for notification of urgent repairs
- Better roadside signage for businesses, high pedestrian crossing areas and parking areas with public amenities
- Roadside Regional Tourism map showing all the activities and emergency evacuation areas.

The survey also asked respondents about Neighbourhood Safer Places along the Hawkesbury Council section of the road with 94% of respondents saying they were needed.

What attendees thought

“The food and company were good – I swapped stories about what was happening with businesses up and down the mountain and we had a lot of problems in common. A burden shared is a burden halved, I felt lighter when I was leaving.”

“It was good because you could talk to all the pollies in one place and give them an ear bashing on what needs to be done.”

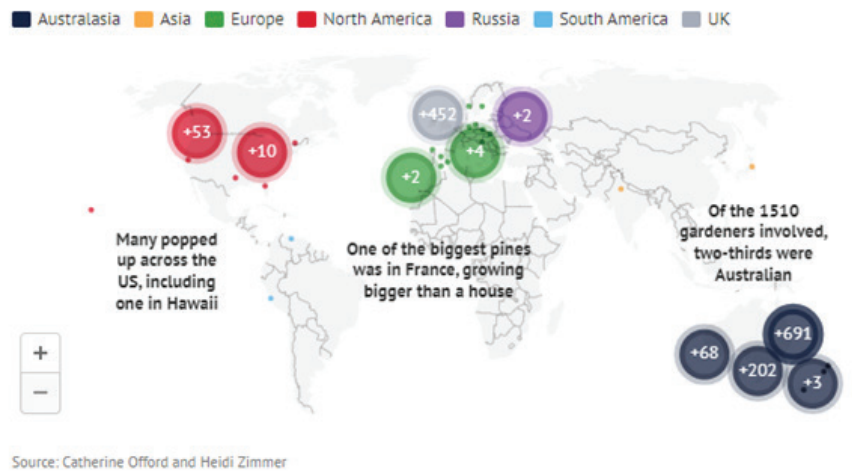
“I came for the first time and was surprised how friendly and uplifting it was, I’ll be back next time.”

For further information <https://www.greaterbellslineofroad.com.au/media>

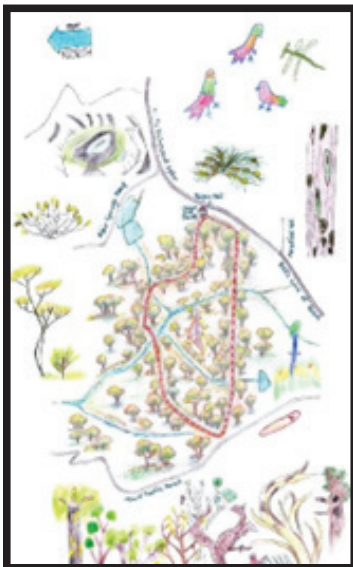
WHERE'S WOLLY? HERE IN THE HIGHLAND & ALL OVER THE WORLD!

The ancient Australian tree, the Wollemi pine, located in the secret Wollemi Pine plantation near Mt Tomah, protected by National Parks during the Black Summer fires, has gone global. It has been adopted by gardeners from Japan to Venezuela who are part of a massive conservation experiment that could save the critically endangered tree from extinction. Only 100 adult Wollemi pines survive in the wild in a secret canyon near Sydney. When they were found in 1994, these unusual pines were new to science and captured the public's imagination. The pines had a lineage that went back 60 million years to the time of the dinosaurs,

a bark resembling the children's party treat chocolate crackles, and the trees have both male and female sexual reproductive cones. Now a new survey by Australian research scientists Dr Heidi Zimmer and Dr Cathy Offord has unearthed a passionate community of gardeners exchanging tips on how to grow and propagate the pines. They received an overwhelming response from 1510 gardeners in 31 countries across five continents. Wollemi pines are growing in pots, backyards and balconies from Moscow to Hawaii, the United Kingdom and United States. Two thirds of respondents were Australian, many in NSW.



<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/it-started-with-100-plants-in-a-secret-sydney-canyon-now-they-re-popping-up-all-around-the-world-20230802-p5dtan.html> Excerpt: Sydney Morning Herald 5 August 2023



BULLUNGGA TRACK FROM MOTOCROSS FAME TO NATURE EXPLORATION ADVENTURE LAND

Located in the heart of the apple growing country, looping from Bilpin Hall is the 2.6 km median grade Bullungga Track. Originally Durug land with stone sharpening grooves and other ancient tool artifacts have been located on site. Post WWII it became part of a motocross track where old locals cut their teeth learning to become NSW and Australian champions of this sport.

Now this land is being used to foster a new generation of natural scientists who will hopefully go on to be as successful as our motocross champions. The track takes less than an hour to walk. <https://www.bushtrackers.com.au/images/pdf-guides/bilpin-bullungga-track.pdf>

LIONS BONES AND BULLETS IN THE HAWKESBURY

Local wildlife warrior Dani Warner of Mt Lagoon organised a screening of the award-winning documentary Lions Bones and Bullets at Richmond Regent Cinema to raise fund for the African Wildlife Sanctuary where she returns to work at every opportunity. At this sanctuary she nurtured back to health some lions rescued

from horrendous farming practices featured in the movie. The documentary was screened in July to a full house with \$8 from every ticket sale being donated to Panthera Africa Big Cat Sanctuary. Penguin Random House author, Richard Peirce, leads the dramatic adventure

from lion farms in South Africa to wildlife traffickers in Laos and Vietnam. He makes a shocking discovery that wildlife ranchers in South Africa are farming lions in their thousands to export their bones to Asia for traditional medicine. Richard battles to uncover the elaborate wildlife fraud of processing lion bones into food products which could contain the 'world's deadliest infectious disease.' The heart-warming tale of two lion cubs given a new life, along with positive approaches to wild lion conservation resolves the film with positivity.

What people said about the film.

"It was confronting and shocking. I didn't realise this was going on and I'm pleased to have helped do something to stop it by watching the documentary. I also want to thank Dani for bringing it to our attention."

"I watched it with my 12-year-old grandson and we both cried. Afterwards we had some good conversation about how important it is to know when bad things are happening so we can do something to stop it."

For further information and to watch the film https://www.lionsbonesbullets.film/images/Images/News/2021_JWMA_Winner_16x9.png



UPDATES ON LAST EDITION'S STORIES

RUMOUR ABOUT TURD TAX

Remember the rumour about a Turd Tax in the first edition of the Highlands? Well here it is - see Hawkesbury Post article "Massive council loan to cover sewage disaster will see rates jump 14%". (Hawkesbury Post 6 June 2023) "Residents of the Hawkesbury who use the council sewage system will see their rate rise 14% next financial year to cover the cost of a \$35.1 million loan taken out by the council in December last year, an equivalent to about one third of the HCC annual budget."

Massive council loan to cover sewerage disaster will see rates jump 14%

PEARL WHITE HAS

SOMETHING TO SAY ABOUT THE FIRST NATION FLAG FLYING AT BILPIN CIDER.

Bilpin Cider received a communication from Pearl White about the Aboriginal Flag flying at the Cellar Door. For Pearl and others interested in the upcoming Referendum on The Voice to Parliament see Liberal MP Julian Leeser says The Voice debate not about politics | Watch (msn.com) for an alternative view.

WHAT'S THIS SIGN IN LIGHTS ABOUT

The first edition of the Hawkesbury Highlands carried a story explaining why the large sign on Bells Line Road had been erected by the Tebbutt's, pumpkin farmers who have had property in Bilpin for over 50 years. The sign appeared after the Bilpin

RFS President Ross McKinlay wrote a letter to Hawkesbury Council stating street trees Tebbutt had planted should be removed. Council Director of Planning Meagan Ang organised for the removal of the trees at a cost of \$4,602 despite Tebbutt having a letter from NSW RFS saying they did not cause a problem.

Bilpin RFS then made a statement on their Facebook page that Tebbutt maintains are false and blocked anyone from being able to respond to the post. The Tebbutt's who have always had a cordial relationship with Bilpin RFS wanted the right to respond to the false information and an apology. <https://bilpinnews.com/>



The Highland went back to ask why the sign remained with UNFAIR now graffitied to read FAIR and with lights to illuminate it of a night.

Tebbutt replied, the vandals who illegally entered their property and graffitied the sign had to now drive past knowing their actions had only increased Tebbutt's resolve to have the false information Bilpin RFS posted on their Facebook page about their street trees removed.

Mr & Mrs Tebbutt remain outraged by

the actions of the Director Planning at Hawkesbury Council who appears to be the first bureaucrat in the history of Hawkesbury to order the removal of street trees; and the actions of the Bilpin RFS executive for their refusal to correct false information on their Facebook page and apologise.

The Tebbutts who are in their 70's would like the dispute resolved. Bilpin RFS have not responded to questions about this matter.

BILPIN HALL CAR PARK

Senior Hawkesbury Council bureaucrats have met with the Bilpin Hall Committee, Bilpin RFS, Bells Line Road Business Council and Bilpin Regional Action Group to discuss the car park. Council has given an undertaking to present a plan that meets community needs by October.

The BLOR Business Council representative Fiona Germaine and Peter Sterelyn attended the meeting with Council Engineer & Director of Planning. Germaine noted the "surprise" of these bureaucrats "at the raw emotional connection to emergency services" held by locals.

These bureaucrats have supported



bushfire impacted communities being provided with \$300,000 dance lessons to assist them with recovery, and a footpath meant to link the Bilpin Hall and Park being built on the opposite side of the highway to these public spaces.

The BLOR Business Council represents the needs of residents who own and/or operate businesses in the Highlands.

“Local residents must feel safe and current emergency service infrastructure in the Hawkesbury are below that of our neighbouring LGAs. The BLOR

Business Council asserts that in recent times government agencies have relied too heavily on private entities- mostly businesses to meet community needs at their own cost. Now is the time for the government to make necessary improvements by ensuring public disaster management infrastructure is improved.”

Ms Germaine left the meeting concerned with the comment made by these bureaucrats labelling the community needs as perceived.

“I left the meeting concerned about their

comments that our needs were perceived. Perceived needs are the things we think that people want or should do, and they are based on our personal values and beliefs. In the past funding has been allocated according to the perceived needs of these bureaucrats rather than that of our community and I hope it is not going to happen again.”

According to Council the car park upgrade will be released to tender in October 2023.

DISTRICT DOINGS

MT WILSON

Go to The Mounts Winter 2023 community newsletter for the latest going on at Wilson and Irvine <https://www.mtwilson.com.au/documentation/general/734-the-mounts-winter-2023/file>

MT TOMAH

Mt Tomah Society which Mt Tomah Society which includes Berambing but not Warralong residents had another successful meeting at Suzarosa on 12 August. They hosted the Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury MP's Trish Doyle and Robyn Preston to morning tea and discussed their community needs advocating for an Ambulance to be stationed west of the river among other things. The community appreciates the water storage tanks Blue Mountains Council have installed on Skyline Drive and Tomah brigade has just finished fill them up ready for the upcoming fire season. The meeting also was thankful the fire shed is now an NSP and voted that more places be made NSP's along Bells Line Road



MT TOOTIE

Mt Tootie CBD (also known as the Metro) is promoting their new coffee hangout with Joe anytime between 7am and 11.30am Thursday to Monday. You can pick up a book from the street library to ready while you enjoy your coffee.

MT LAGOON

L.I.E the famous Lagoon Information Exchange is caught here in action. Mt Lagoon has a simple and very active information transfer network. It works like this - every time you pass someone on the road you stop to exchange information vital to the wellbeing of residents and the broader community. Meetings have been known to last over an hour and cause some traffic impediments. This meeting was discussing the removal of Lindsay's big dead trees, what a good stump grinder Dave is and the recovery of Pip



and Pete from their respective medical conditions.

BERAMBING

Everyone is looking forward to the opening of the Royal Gardenia Cafe and hope Jay and Jessica and family had a lovely break. “We miss sitting in the afternoon sun looking out over the glorious view of the mountains sipping an excellent coffee and hot chocolate”.

WARRAWARRALONG

Residents discover a new suburb



John and Robert acknowledged residents of Warawaralong have discovered another previously unacknowledged place in the Highland Tabarag located between Bilpin and Kurrajong Heights. It's true, says John, we are not the only forgotten people in the District.

BILPIN

For all the latest news and information go to Facebook Bilpin Newsletter - it has great coverage of information and events not contained in this newsletter.

TARABARG

Suggested boundaries for Tabarug are from Pittmans Road to the Fruit Bowl. Anyone else has heard of this place please let us know.

KURRAJONG HEIGHTS

The Archibald Hotel Born Jovi live music night went off with a large crowd of all ages singing along to classic Bon Jovi hits as well as an array of Aussie Pub Rock hits. Welcome back live entertainment to the Highlands.

KURRAJONG HILLS

As the Highlands is now delivered to the Hills we are seeking a social news editor for this area. Please contact us at bilpindistrictnews@gmail.com

IN THE STARS FOR CANCER & LEO

Cancer



Nurturing, sensitive, compassionate, self-protective, security-seeking, creative, emotionally intelligent and displaying a goofy, ingratiating sense of humor. Cancerians are more of a homebody well suited to the cold winter months where they can keep the fire burning and get a hot curry from Kurrajong Heights Eratwat Indian Restaurant to pleasure your taste buds on your arrival home.

Leo



Fiery Leo are known for their ferocious and passionate attitude. Always one to embrace life to its fullest, the regal lion has a gregarious and jovial personality that others are often drawn to. Outgoing, passionate, spontaneous, and loves the spotlight Leo is a water sign and maybe of great assistance in the upcoming dry spring and summer, so be nice to them.

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 0409762686

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*

BILPIN LAND OF THE MOUNTAIN ~~APPLE~~ RUMOR

Inside sources say Hawkesbury Council General Manager and other senior bureaucrats would like to apologise for getting some things wrong. However, they don't live in the Hawkesbury and are still struggling to understand why people do when Sydney suburbs are so much safer as you don't have to worry about bushfires and floods.

So, they think getting things wrong may help residents in the long run, encouraging them to move into town which would make things easier for everyone – or at least them.

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

APOLOGIES FOR STORIES NOT RUN THIS EDITION

Apologies for stories not run this edition.

We promised this issue to bring the following stories, which have been postponed to the July Issue:

- Where the \$100 million of Federal State funding announced for BLOR is going to be spent?
- Will Hawkesbury Council Peppercorn Inc finally apologise for applying to have money earmarked for Black Summer Bushfire victims used to fund its aged care service activities in Richmond.
- Bilpin woman is coming for Dargan man.

— THE BIG FIX – SHARING THE — FIXING NOT THE BREAK NEWS

Living on the boundary between Hawkesbury and Blue Mountains Councils leads to an inevitable comparison between these two Local Government Areas. While there are many similarities, nothing highlights the differing approach to community development as clearly as The Big Fix.

The Big Fix is a collaboration between individuals, community groups, businesses, educators, researchers, artists, and Blue Mountains Council to 'change the story' to grow a collaborative solutions-focused culture.

The Big Fix works locally and bio-regionally with artists and writers to support storytelling and help us envision and grow a collaborative culture - sharing the fixing news, not the breaking news.

Cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead once famously said: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

In July a storytelling workshop was held and a small group of 'thoughtful committed citizens', from Council and community, analysed the many challenges facing the Blue Mountains and the planet, and discussed the powerful role storytelling can play in inspiring and assisting people to change our culture and tackle these challenges.

Workshop participant, social ecologist Professor Stuart Hill talked about writing stories to "make health contagious" and to inspire curiosity about systems that can create person to planet wellbeing.

Key stories in our lives form our beliefs and values, which then drive our actions. These actions determine the future of our planet. We considered the stories that influenced our own beliefs, and the stories that are changing our feelings about the future. We looked at how recent journalism movements are calling for more balance in reporting, so that problems are presented within a framework that also offers a way forward for communities by sharing solutions that can be replicated.

These movements include Constructive or Solutions Journalism, Responsible



Storytelling and Peace Journalism, and are the inspiration behind the stories the Planetary Health Initiative is sharing on its Local News Platforms.

Camille Walsh described the experience as "sitting in a little room in a little town in one little corner of the world, exchanging ideas and finding hope."

Stories can inspire feelings like hope. Feelings that profoundly influence us, can also become the defining stories of our lives.

In considering the feelings behind a defining moment in her life, Camille recalled moving "from the Northwest slopes of NSW with its dust and parched earth" to The Channon in the Northern Rivers where, as a small child, she witnessed the commencement of logging in the Terania Forest. She recalled the division amongst locals "as the age-old debate bubbled over – what should we be fighting for: the economy and the workers, or the environment?"

For rural communities covered by the Hawkesbury Highlands, economy and environment are interwoven. Eco and agri tourism are key economic drivers and how these are harmonised with the needs of residents who feel invaded by outsiders (tourists) on many weekends is the new debate.

Telling stories of how our future can be, looking at how other communities have managed this transition is a way to reset the us against them discussion.

The tree against the blue, blue sky to me

symbolises finding beauty and hope in what otherwise might be perceived as a lost cause. The tree is still so majestic, even when bare and is a reminder of the cycle of nature – the essential period of Wintering that comes before life bursts forth in Spring. It also makes me think of incubation and is somewhat representative of what we all doing, gathered together, forming ideas and sharing stories and perspectives, laying the ground work for the creation of something fabulous! (Camille Walsh) Extracts from <https://thebigfix.org/>



ABOUT US

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 bilpindistrictnews@gmail.com