

Volunteer Fire Fighters Association

"The Voice of Volunteer Firefighters in NSW"

PO Box 123, Clarence Town NSW 2321



MINUTES OF VFFA ORDINARY MEETING 2018 HELD ON SATURDAY 4 AUGUST 2018 THE PARKVIEW HOTEL 281 SUMMER STREET ORANGE NSW

Meeting commenced 1310 hours.

Attendees; as per the attendance list.

1. **Welcome by Chairman:** President Mr Michael Holton welcomed all to the meeting
2. **Apologies:** As per AGM minutes.
Moved A. Scholz Second Michael Scholz **Carried**
3. **Previous minutes of 2017 Ordinary meeting:** The secretary presented the minutes of the 2017 Ordinary meeting. President M. Holton read through the minutes for the benefit of the members present.
Greg Godde moved that the minutes of the 2016 Ordinary meeting were a true and accurate copy of the meeting. Second Jon Russell **Carried**
4. **Business arising:**
 - NEFG still ongoing trying to get them on the road. Funding is the main focus to try and get this group up and going.
 - Henty Fields Days – Costs involved with the site, advertising and any community consultation can be used against the \$5,000.00 grant received from the Ministry of Police given to the VFFA in 2015 for community liaison. A breakdown of the funds needs to be drawn up by the treasurer to keep an up to date ledger. Visitors sign on sheet and petition to be designed for people attending on the day.
 - Report on the Bargo RFB new station and some of the problems they had in getting the land to build the station.

5. **Correspondence:** The correspondence report was presented as per the AGM.

6. **Financial Report:** The financial report was presented as per the AGM.

Mick Holton spoke on the report as per the AGM.

Moved M. Holton

Seconded M. Scholz

Carried.

7. **President's report:** Michael Holton thanked everyone for their supreme efforts over the last 12 months; attached is a copy of the Presidents report.

8. **Media Officer report:** Jon Russell gave a report on the following points;

- Jon gave a brief background on the role of the Media Officer.
- VFFA winter issue magazine is now out.
- Move submissions from brigade needed.
- Bullying inquiry – media releases and media talk back shows with Mick Holton.
- Oliver Maruda case. Ex-gratis legal payments through RFS.
- Meeting with NSW Premier.

9. **WHS report:** Greg Godde gave a brief report on some of the issues that have been reported throughout the year.

- Bullying - still receiving complaints and actioning on behalf of the volunteer members. Volunteers have been targeted with brigades being coerced by District Offices to deal with these so-called trouble makers and remove them from the brigade membership.
- Greg explained the due process in following up on any complaints or allegations of the volunteer members. It is not an overnight fix, but we do follow through as quickly as possible. Discussion and debate from the floor took place.
- A. Scholz suggested that the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal be accessed with submissions. Andrew emphasized the point that do not resign from the RFS stay in the RFS no matter how hard it gets as it will very hard to try and sign back up again.
- PTSD legal action against the RFS still in progress after nearly 3 years,

10. **Web manger report:** Michael Holton explained a 12-month report from Goggle analysis and the break down which can be very confusing but just shows how much big brother is watching. It is noticeable that our membership spikes when a big incident such as a large fire has occurred and a media release on issues is put out. Social media is a big part of our day to day operation and we have our positive feedback as well as our negative feed back followers.

11. General Business:

11.1 Keeping 'Rural' in the NSWRFSS.

Topic has fairly well been covered through out the meeting. The VFFA has achieved some big results in this area and we are still pushing the theme to get all of HO out of Sydney.

11.2 Henty Machinery Field Days

- Members available to assist over the 3-day period
- Focus of this year is a membership drive.
- All VFFA banners required for the HMFDD
- Draw card for the site – trailer, old vehicle
- Ideas for other field days next year

11.3 Health and Safety Representatives.

- Shane Byant spoke on current problems within the NSWRFSS and especially the elections that were to take place June 2018, but these did not take place. Incident at the Holsworthy fire where a volunteer RFS member was struck in the chin by exploding ordinance and required stitches, other members reported being struck on the helmet by flying stones.
- Incidents relating to NSWRFSS and NSWFR attending the same incident without being responded from dispatch.
- Incidents relating to the turf wars. No problems with NSWFR on the ground and work well together. Mick Holton recommended the best solution to any problems between the services is to train together and get to know each other and what you can do for any incident.
- In-depth discussion around the room on the for's and against of having one fire service in NSW. What the benefits are and reducing pressure on the small towns all fighting for the same person to do one job.

11.4 Michael Scholz spoke on the problems they are having in trying to get a replacement station. The Wilberforce Brigade does not have toilet, shower and limited running water. As a CABA fitted brigade there is not enough clean sterile area to clean the equipment after has been used at an incident. The station is substandard and requires major upgrade or a new station built. Andrew Scholz recommended that a Directorate should be established to oversee all the construction of fire station across the state. Some brigade have big 3 bay sheds and meeting room with all the amenities that has only 2 vehicle and possibly 10 members that are active. There is no standard policy or practice on land acquisition within the RFS. The RFS leaves it in the hands of Councils to find suitable land to build new stations. There seems to be little or no asset management within the RFS and no future projection on brigade infrastructure into the future they (RFS) just rely on the day to day operation of the brigades. Bargo RFB being a prime example of the time and hurdles it had to jump to get their new station. A. Scholz suggested that a letter be sent to the NSWRFSS on

this matter and try and get a solution on the board that would benefit the brigades and volunteer members.

- 11.5 **Fire trails** – Discussion of the construction of fire trails and the Government sting the farmers to pay a contribution for the construction of a fire trail through their land. Will this then leave these trails open to public access?

12. **Next Ordinary Meetings** - to be advised closer to the date when and if a location of significant event happens such as a large fire.

13. **Meeting closed 1525 hours.**

Greg Godde
Secretary
VFFA

Mick Holton
President
VFFA

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