

Volunteer Fire Fighters Association

"The Voice of Volunteer Firefighters in NSW"

PO Box 123, Clarence Town NSW 2321



MINUTES OF VFFA ORDINARY MEETING 2019 HELD ON SATURDAY 10 AUGUST 2019 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 2018 Ordinary meeting:** The secretary presented the minutes of the 2018 Ordinary meeting. President M. Holton read through the minutes for the benefit of the members present.
Brian Williams moved that the minutes of the 2018 Ordinary meeting were a true and accurate copy of the meeting. Second Jon Russell **Carried**
4. **Business arising:**
 - Fire Trails – this issue is an ongoing concern that is not progressing across the state leaving many landholders frustrated especially after big fires. Fire trails are a community asset and action is needed in this area. Government is trying to get farmers to pay contributions towards developing fire trails, no property owners should agree or be part of paying anything towards fire trails.
 - Brigade stations – costing for stations is becoming far overpriced when government contract become involved. Local builders are becoming frustrated when the same building can be built locally by at least 75% less than the finished product by Sydney builders. Then when follow up repair work is required the local builder is then expected to fix the problems.
 - Frustrations from brigades that they are not being informed when changes are being made to their vehicles, equipment and station modifications. Members are not turning up to call outs more frequently then ever before. Private units are now being formed across the state and have the local community support in their day to day operations.
 - Current legal actions in place from the volunteers within the NSWRFs. Oliver Maruda legal case still a main issue.
Discussion around the meeting ensued.

Volunteers for community and the environment

- Bill Robinson spoke on some of his issues within the Cooks Gap Brigade and the investigation conducted by the District office into his involvement with alleged fraud of the brigade books. After many interviews and wasted time there was no evidence to back up their claims as alleged by the complainant. This has left his family under a lot of stress and questioning his future association with the NSWRFSS.

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 B. Williams

Carried.

7. **President's report:** Michael Holton thanked everyone for their assistance and support for the last year.

- Priority on Oliver Maruda. The under handed tactics used by the Commissioner in trying to avoid reimbursing Oliver legal costs is a personal attack on all volunteers. The amount of community support that is being ignored by the NSWRFSS and parliamentary ministers' stinks of a cover up. Workers Compensation Act covers the volunteers whilst they are on the fire ground or at incidents.
- Focus on learn how to Burn
- NSWRFSS budget overruns – local government left to cover cost by increasing ES levy
- Fire permits – current issues with unexpectant fire season timing could see fire permits all year around. Land clearing, hazard reductions and
- Clarence Hungerford item has been published in the magazine on a book he wrote in the 1950's which you would think it was today.
- Fire Fighters cancer issue is big on the table, it is going to cost the service and people are ducking and weaving to avoid the costs.
- Expanding budget of NSWRFSS for reactionary efforts such as VLAT plane and not concentrating on proactive approach.

8. **Single Fire Service** – Mick Holton spoke on the pro's and con's of having one fire service in NSW. Many lessons are to be learnt from other states and overseas in this matter. If approached correctly and implemented with all stake holders involved there are many advantages in this area to the volunteers. Discussion ensued within the meeting.

9. **Vice Presidents report** – Brian Williams spoke on the following points –

- VFFA organization – we need to investigate how to grow the VFFA and become in a better financial situation. The VFFA will either sink or swim in the future if we do not be aggressive.

- The employment of a paid staff member within the VFFA is paramount. Funding for this position needs to be investigated further now. A fully signed car with the VFFA logo has been offered. Robert Brown gave some suggestions on how to push this issue further. Options for funding were discussed such as a subscription for different levels of membership.
- The Oliver Maruda still needs our push to try and get a quick and fruitful resolution.

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

- VFFA magazine needs more local stories.
- Oliver Maruda case. Still being drawn out with no end in sight.
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11. **WHS report:** Greg Godde gave a brief report on some of the issues that have been reported throughout the year.

- Still receiving complaints from volunteer members.
- A lot of complaints from local volunteers have been investigated. Explained some of the cases that the VFFA has dealt with.
- Volunteers are now taking other volunteers to court to get an outcome to issues which the District and Regional Offices will not act on.
- PTSD legal action against the RFS still in progress after nearly 3 years,

12. **Web manger report:** Michael Holton – website is kept reasonably up to date with not much a lot od activity happening. Moving along quite smoothly.

13. **General Business:**

- 11.1 Henty Machinery Field Days
 - No information or application from the HMFD committee this year. Why? Follow up to find out.
 - National Field Days at Borenore near Orange, anyone interested?
- 11.2 Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in the NSWRFs and how does the RFS depict between staff and volunteers.
- 11.3 NSWRFs volunteer membership declining numbers – discussion took place on the number of members on the books and how many are actually are active members. Of the so called 73,000 RFS volunteers there would be only 18,500 who actually do something in the brigade. The Presumptive Legislation could now see a different light on the subject where money is now involved.
- 11.4 Hazard reductions across the state – the statistics supplied by the NSWRFs are not accurate and are blown out to make the numbers look good. The paperwork it takes to apply for a hazard reduction takes longer to process then it does to do the actual HR.

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

15. **Meeting closed 1530 hours.**

Greg Godde
Secretary
VFFA

Mick Holton
President
VFFA

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