

# Volunteer Fire Fighters Association

"The Voice of Volunteer Firefighters in NSW"

293 Kauthi Road Brett NSW 2422



## MINUTES OF VFFA ORDINARY MEETING 2020 HELD ON SATURDAY 8 AUGUST 2020 The Friendly Inn Kangaroo Valley 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 J. Russell                      Second B. Williams                      **Carried**
3. **Previous minutes of 2019 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:**
  - Farmers private units – mosquito fleet a very valuable resource with water supply and quick backup.
  - Current legal actions in place from the volunteers within the NSWRFSS. Oliver Maruda legal case still a main issue. Detailed outline of what happened to Oliver Maruda and current update.
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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 proud of the achievements the VFFA has gained and thanked everyone for their assistance and support for the last year.  
M. Holton presented a written report. (attached)
  - 1300 number
  - Zoom conferences
  - WHS – with many volunteers reporting bullying and harassment

*Volunteers for community and the environment*

- Oliver Maruda update
- NSWRFSS reform and cultural change
- Land management practices – Canobolas model
- VFFA Magazine – changes on the way – advertisers and supporters
- Membership
- New VFFA logo
- Engagement of CEO
- New App to support volunteers
- New file sharing system (Sync)
- Working with other volunteer associations
- Mental Health – organisations and to better support volunteers
- Bushfire inquiry
- Respiratory protection – volunteers should have access to a range of respiratory protection that meets or exceeds the minimum AS/NZS standards.
- Meeting with the RFS Commissioner Mr. Rob Rogers – 18 Aug 20

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

- VFFA has kicked a lot of goals
- Lot of media coverage during the recent fires – well done M. Holton for his time and effort on media coverage on national television
- Jeremy Braithwaite now on board and doing great stuff with webpage
- Heading in the right direction with Politicians on Environmental aspects – changing people’s perspective
- Koala habitats – a move is on to have farmers develop koala habitats on their land – as state government cannot manage their own land
- Need volunteers to push agenda issues with their local members
- Any help from individuals would be appreciated

**Mike Gorman -**

- spoke on the summary of the Royal Commission broken down into different areas relating to submissions – on the VFFA webpage
- Government taking too long to Act on the recommendations
- Local knowledge not being used was a consistent issue
- Use of heavy plant not being utilized fully – poor management
- The 3 aircraft companies also made comments on poor early response to fires
- Indigenous burning
- Encourage people to check his report and make any comments. Work is done after he has finished his daytime fulltime job – anything that is not right or should not be there let Mike know.
- Minderoo Foundation set up by Twiggy Forest

9. **Open Floor Forum** - the President open the meeting to all members present to have their say.

- **Bullying** – members reported on some local instances where members had been stood down and even removed from RFS membership from trumped up issues from within brigades and FCC management. There have been breeches of privacy once again with peoples personal Facebook pages used by the NSWRFs to discipline members that has no connection with the NSWRFs.
- No follow up from FCC's with brigades into their wellbeing after the fires – brigade members are phoning other brigade members to check on their health and wellbeing – no action from Group officers.
- No follow up on reported accident's and injuries from the fires
- Vehicles still waiting for service and repairs from the fires
- Fire Control staff are not seen and now are faceless people – are only seen or heard when complaints against members are submitted. Volunteers are locked out of FCC's, cannot get access to staff for enquires unless they have an appointment.
- Brigade elections are not based on knowledge and experience anymore but on popularity and the social group.
- Need to get back to the grassroots volunteer, back to the days of being a volunteer to assist the community and not big noting themselves. Original core value skills where all members were involved in brigade activities.

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

- VFFA magazine – stories – high resolution photo's
- VFFA background
- Thank you to Mike Gorman for his tireless work on the Royal Commission report
- A big to everyone who has contributed to assisting with the fires last season

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

- Report on Supreme Court outcome with RFS volunteer and NSWRFs.
- Will speak with members after the meeting on their local issues.
- Still receiving reports from members across the state on many issues.

**12. Web manger report:** Michael Holton – introduced Jeremy Braithwaite and his role since joining the VFFA team with the webpage and other work.

- Weekly round up on the webpage from stories around the state
- Current issues affecting members and volunteers
- What things would you like to see on the web site?
- Encourage members to use web site messaging if they have any questions.
- Photo's – if you have any photo's send them through to be put on the webpage.

**13. General Business:**

13.1 – Fund raising for volunteers – Mick Holton spoke on the issue of fund raising from the fire season and where a benevolent fund should be raised for volunteers who lost property during the fires.

13.2 - Book received – Predicting Storms

13.3 - Hazard reduction across state – a more consolidated and structured plan needs to be put in place to ensure adequate HR is obtained.

13.4 - Shane Bryant spoke on the following points.

- Policy on PPE CABA new uniforms / only one issue some not being washed regularly
- Same with bushfire fighting PPE, only one issued can be weeks between washing – should have 2 sets issued
- Current system of issuing uniforms should change to online – uniforms are delivered to FCC's for pick up.
- Every FCC seems to have a different system in place requires a standardisation across the state.
- An incentive should be introduced where volunteers who give a lot of time should be rewarded maybe some sort of points system – where certain points may equate to another uniform issue.

**14. Next Ordinary Meetings 2021** - to be advised closer to the date.

**15. Meeting closed 1555 hours.**

Greg Godde  
Secretary  
VFFA

Mick Holton  
President  
VFFA