

# THE RIVERINA HIGHLANDS ZONE LIAISON COMMITTEE

## Minutes



### MEETING DETAILS:

**Meeting Date:** Tuesday, 5<sup>th</sup> August 2008  
**Location:** Riverina Highlands Building,  
 Capper Street, Tumut  
**Start:** 2.30 pm  
**Closed:** 4.25 pm

Participants:	Present:	Apology:	Absent:
Councillor Michael Kingwill, Gundagai Council	√		
Paul Luff, Gundagai Council	√		
Robert Field, Gundagai		√	
Graeme Tickner, Gundagai Council		√	
Councillor Ron Blyton			√
Councillor Graham Smith, Tumbarumba Council		√	
Kay Whitehead, Tumbarumba Council	√		
John Jervois, Tumbarumba		√	
Ian Pratt, Tumbarumba	√		
Theresa Lonergan, Tumbarumba			√
Brian Pearson, Tumbarumba Council		√	
Councillor Gene Vanzella, Mayor Tumut Shire Council		√	
Councillor Audrey McKenzie, Tumut Shire Council	√		
Alan Tonkin, Tumut Shire Council	√		
David McGruer, Tumut		√	
Paul Mullins, Tumut Shire Council		√	
Chris Adams, Tumut Shire Council		√	
Tony Clee, RFS Staff	√		
Marie Casey, RFS Staff	√		
Lindsay Lashbrook, RFS Staff			

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**1. WELCOME**

Chairperson, Clr Kingwill welcomed all present at the meeting.

Introduction: Tony Clee informed the meeting that the Rural Fire Service has appointed Jason Heffernan, Community Safety Officer, MacArthur Zone (Sydney) as the Acting Zone Manager from mid August to January 2009 and gave a brief description of his background. Lindsay Lashbrook, currently the Zone Learning & Development Officer for Riverina Highlands is to takeover the role of Acting Zone Manager from January to July 2009. Jason will be introduced to the Senior Management Team, by Jeff Lucas, at the next SMT meeting to be called for Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> August .

Tony thanked the members of the Liaison Committee for their regular attendances and for meeting the necessary challenges within the committee.

Various members thanked Tony for his cooperation and for what has been achieved for the Zone and wished him all the best in his retirement.

It was noted that the election of the Chairperson will be an agenda item at the next meeting due to the upcoming Local Government elections.

Clr Kingwill stated that this would also be his last meeting as he did not intend standing for the next council elections. He commented the Zone has come a long way since the amalgamation by providing an improved firefighting fleet and provision of PPE for volunteers which needed the Liaison Committee support to happen.

**2. APOLOGIES**

Official apologies were received from Clr Graham Smith, Mayor Gene Vanzella, Robert Field, John Jervois, Paul Mullins, Chris Adams and Graeme Tickner.

**3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING 19 FEBRUARY 2008.**

Minutes from the meeting on 19 February 2008 were confirmed as a true and accurate record.

**Moved by Alan Tonkin/Seconded Marie Casey**

***CARRIED***

**4. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES**

- Cadets from the two schools in the Tumut District have been outstanding.
- Gundagai & Tumbarumba Schools have not participated in the Cadet program which maybe due to lack of teacher involvement.
- Meeting was informed that 16 cadets are to compete in State Championships at Tweed Heads. Due to the distance, the RFS intends to fly the cadets from Sydney to Tweed Heads Local assistance maybe required to transport the cadets to Mascot Airport from Tumut.
- General Business: Volunteer Forum held at Talbingo was an outstanding success and valuable for the 35 Volunteers attending from across the Zone. The forum was regarded as money well spent by all who attended as it allowed Volunteers to get together without the stress of a fire. It also provided a good opportunity for learning and developing updates that time normally doesn't allow for.

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**5. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND ZONE BUSINESS PLAN**

- The RFS Zone reporting and performance measurement program has been changed into a consistent state-wide Service Delivery Model. A course was held at Yass to explain the new system and the guidelines to be used for performance measurements and targets.
- RFS needs to address the approach to training. Comments that the training calendar is a bit ambitious and not sure if the level of hours spent on training and number of courses offered is sustainable
- Repetitive training over the last 4/5 years; low number of new recruits; attitude towards central location. Main problems for Volunteers are travel expenses and time.
- Explained a lot of qualifications issued prior to 1990 don't represent what's required today. Training courses are set down annually but are flexible to meet Volunteers requirements and time. Training can be taken to the brigades.
- It was acknowledged that some brigade members are now recognizing the need for training.
- Central brigades such as Tumbarumba are asked to respond to some incidents in rural brigades due to the work commitments and the remoteness of rural brigades. Gundagai is a difficult area due to the Hume Highway and thankfully we have Tumblong, Nth & Sth Gundagai and Coolac brigades to respond.
- Update on all stations: Coolac waiting on gravel fill to be delivered by Abbie Group (Contractors for Highway by-pass); Abbie supplied the concrete for Darbalara station and Rosewood Station is going ahead as planned.
- Local paging system requires upgrade. Funding is part of State paging network enhancement. Communication tower at Mt Kendal has been erected by Country Energy. When completed the Mt Kendal facility will provide better paging for west parts of Zone.
- Zone office PCs replaced every 3 years from funding through the estimates process.
- Firezone reporting: Service Standard now requires all 000 calls to be reported within 7 days. Some Brigades are slow putting in the reports so all minor incidents will now be put in by RFS staff except incidents involving multiply Volunteer brigades which will need to be called in by the Brigades.
- Call Centre sometimes not very responsive to Captains who phone in the incidents and can take 15/20 minutes. It was explained that there may only be two on duty to cope with whole of the state calling in and prevailing weather can slow call taking down.
- Stated also that 1800 calls cannot be phoned in from a mobile phone.

**6. QUARTERLY FINANCIAL REPORT**

**Fire Control Centre Enhancement 2007-08 - \$200,000**

Final cost of renovation to Riverina Highlands Building was \$97,785, balance remaining is \$102,215 from which \$95,000 was allocated for a new tanker for the Tumut District, leaving a balance of \$7,215.

The new furniture for the renovation area is a Capital Works item and was allocated to M&R in error. Due to the incorrect allocation of the furniture, Tumut Shire Council will now invoice RFS for \$13,000: TSC will pay \$7000 and asked if Tumbarumba & Gundagai Shire Councils would be happy to pay an extra 13% contribution (\$1740 each) for the shortfall.

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It was requested that a letter accompany the Invoice from TSC to the other Councils to explain the over payment as it will need to go to Council. It was not realised that the renovation was a general area and not specifically an RFS area.

**Zone Expenses**

Zone expenses all ok. It was explained that a couple of items had incorrectly been charged to the Tumut District when in fact they were a zone expense: Talbingo Forum, a telephone expense had been allocated to District telephones which was a Zone expense. These expenses will be allocated to the Zone

It was acknowledge that there was an agreement in place for Tumut Shire Council to host the expenses for the 3 councils. When the Tumut Shire Council receives the reimbursements from the RFS, funds will be split as per the allocation to Tumut, Gundagai and Tumbarumba Shire Councils.

**Tumut District** expenses were very close to the budget.

**Gundagai District** expenses came in \$2000 under budget and were happy with the final figure.

**Tumbarumba District** expenses were also under budget.

**7. PREPARATION AND APPROVAL OF 2008/2009 FUNDING ESTIMATES**

In accordance with RFS estimates Draft Zone Proposed Bid Estimates 2009/2010 are to be placed prior to September. A copy of the Proposed Estimate Bid Draft was included in the meeting business papers and those present commented that the costs are very close to the present costs for 2007/08. It was explained that the bid would not be approved until September/October as the RFS finance works 18 months behind.

A run down of the Draft budget was given

- Willigobung tanker totaling \$65,000 and Rosewood Station amenities totaling \$25,000 had not been included in the Total Capital Bids. With this included the amount is \$543,261.
- A couple of changes to the previous budgets were explained: Electricity and telephone will no longer be placed in reimbursable items and will now be an M&R item. The FFC lease and Fire Retardant Air Base Charges still have to be claimed as a reimbursable item. .
- The Fire Retardant Air Base Charges will now be split as per the 30/30/40 cost as previously Tumut Shire Council paid these charges.
- Water Connection to Khancoban Airport has been included in the Tumbarumba Council M&R estimates.
- FCC lease costs will remain constant as a 5 year term lease was taken.
- Fuel and oil budget will increase due to the increased fuel prices.
- Capital Items include: New Cat 1 for Tumut; New Cat 7 for Bringenbrong; used Cat 1 for Willigobung and new Cat 7 for Nth Gundagai (over a two year period).
- Sheds are getting expensive and to prevent confusion with payments for sheds, all requests must now be made in writing. The zone has received a written request from Yaven Creek.
- State Items: PPE \$99000, Other Equipment \$60000 Community Education are split 13% contribution from each district.

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- MYRFS is an item beyond control of this zone. MYRFS contains useful information and gives access to information not normally available. 10,000 Volunteers so far have accessed the program.
- Fee for internet and networking. These costs have been reduced due to providing this service to a zone and not 3 separate districts.
- Staff vehicles have been downsized and this should reduce maintenance costs.
- Equipment general: 2 computers are replaced from these funds each year.
- M & R not a huge variation when compared to 07/08 and the bottom line net amount: close to last year.
- Program charges should be split 30/30/40.
- Discussion regarding Volunteer Insurance for Active Members: what is classed as active e.g. catering, maintenance worker and the number of active members per district can become complex.

Resolution: The Liaison Committee adopts that RFS Volunteer Insurance costs are split at the 30/30/40 ratio. If councils wish to adopt costs on an individual membership basis then the council should come back to the RFS as amended.

**Moved by Paul Luff / Seconded Kay Whitehead**

#### **8. UPDATE REGARDING STAND ALONE FIRE CONTROL CENTRE**

A detailed report was provided to the three councils and requested a reply to RFS by Sept 2008:

- Gundagai Council agreed not to fund a Stand Alone Fire Control Centre and replied instantly.
- Tumut Council is still in discussion.
- The present Tumbarumba Council agreed with the need for the facility and suggested it be placed at the Tumut Airport but did not approve due to close local government elections.

The Liaison Committee was informed this will be a reoccurring issue and the RFS will re-present the report to the three councils.

It was questioned if State Forest New South Wales and National Parks and Wildlife, will be requested to contribute to the funds due to the vast areas of Nationals Parks and State Forests in the Zone.

Meeting closed at 4.25pm.