

FRIENDS OF THE ROYAL NATIONAL PARK INCORPORATED

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING

Held on Thursday 22 February 2018

At the Environment Education Centre, Farnell Avenue, Royal National Park

Meeting opened: at 4.00 pm

Chairperson – John Arney.

Minutes – Basil Ellis

A/ Preliminaries

Acknowledgment of Country

John Arney acknowledged the traditional custodians of the land on which the Royal National Park is situated.

Members present

John Arney, Ian Hill, Basil Ellis, Jo Keohan, Bruce Cooper, Peter Kahn, Josie Piper, Tony Larkin, Ralph Cartwright, Anne Carrick, Tom Ledden, Mark da Silva, Neville Bethe, Helen Voysey, Peter Donley, Liz Donley, James Lancaster, Dave Robson.

Visitors present

Adrian Johnstone (NPWS).

Apologies

Gareth Denyer, Ron Fox, Judith Carrick, Diane Townley, Peter Stitt.

B/ Routine Business

Adoption of Previous Minutes

The previous minutes for the 26 November 2017 meeting had been circulated for comment last year. These were adopted.

Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

There has been an ongoing discussion of an appropriate strategy for volunteers. This is discussed below under other business.

Correspondence

There were two items of correspondence recorded.

1. Julie Gallen of the Environment Education Centre had sought support for gardening work. Neville Bethe is providing this and will seek support from Liz Donley and Jo Keohan as needed.
2. John Arney had sent a letter to Brian Everingham, Acting Chairperson, of the Regional Advisory Group (South-west) on 1 November, in regards to the Spring Gully Road Access Application to the Environment and Heritage Minister. Receipt of the letter was acknowledged but there has been no further response to date.

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Treasurer's Report

The treasurer Ralph Cartwright prepared the following information on 22 February 2018. There are no fixed assets and the Current Assets listed below are the Total Assets. There are currently 43 members.

Assets	<u>2/18</u>
Westpac Cheque Account	\$4,694.95
Westpac Savings account	\$2,640.75
PayPal	\$455.39
TOTAL	\$7,791.09

C/ Other Business

Park Report

Adrian Johnstone reported to the meeting on NPWS activities.

- 1) The peak season workload in December and January, although high as expected, was manageable.
- 2) The bushfires along Bertram Stevens Drive started on 20 January with the period until 25 January declared under section 44 of the Rural Fires Act as a localised State of Emergency. Overall 2,190 ha were damaged.
 - a) In all there were five visible ignition points (including Flat Rock) which is highly suggestive of arson. There was discussion on possible use of more security cameras. Adrian said this was being considered and noted that the Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) are responsible for the roads and would be involved.
 - b) During the fire-fighting operations the fire could not be contained at Curra Moors and had to be contained at the road to Wattamolla. The overall area affected is generally south of Wattamolla, north of Garie and across Bertram Stevens Drive towards Lady Carrington Drive.
 - c) Much of the fibre-glass (FRP) boardwalk on the Coast Track between Wattamolla and Garie has been destroyed. The steel foundation supports survived, but have been damaged and will need to be removed and replaced. The burnt FRP has left a powder residue.
 - d) In response to discussion on the suitability of the boardwalk materials, Adrian said that this is being reviewed and noted that as this was the second instance of fire damage, the insurance company would set requirements for replacement.
 - e) The residue has been examined and is safe. It will be removed and the track will be re-opened as a bare track (without board-walk sections). This may take six months or more.
 - f) Adrian praised the efforts of all those who helped including the Visitor Services Assistants, cabins people, lifesavers and the emergency services generally.

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- g) The potential damage to vegetation from salt water used during fire-fighting was discussed.
 - h) James Lancaster reported that the Audley Dancehall and Cafe were closed for four days. He was impressed by the pragmatism of the emergency services in minimising disruption.
- 3) Adrian summarised the staff changes relating to the RNP. The new Area Manager is Sean Elwood. Adrian has been retained in effectively the same role with the title Team Leader, Ranger. In other news of special interest to Friends and the volunteers, Matt Springhall has recently joined RNP from Lane Cove NP in a full-time, temporary role until at least June as a Senior Field Officer. Matt's experience is in volunteer coordination and he will support volunteers in that role at the operational level.
- 4) Security arrangements are in place at Wedding Cake Rock to help ensure visitor safety at this attraction.

Spring Gully

Mark Da Silva reported that the development had been approved under section 153c of the National Parks and Wildlife Act which allows the Minister to allow access through park land. The approvals are in place subject to a number of conditions e.g. the requirement for a keypad operated boom gate. Mark and others are considering the advisability of a legal challenge to the Minister's decision. Grounds may be uncertainty over the 'paper roads'. A challenge would be difficult and costly.

A motion was passed (proposed Helen Voysey, seconded Ian Hill) by which Friends will, if required, provide financial support up to \$2,000 for the challenge. The National Parks Association has also offered to provide financial support if required.

Friends of Royal Newsletter

The first issue is nearly ready with two articles awaiting completion. The intention is to issue a newsletter every second month to members and other supporters.

Volunteers

John Arney and Bruce Cooper met with the new Area Manager Sean Elwood in January as part of the long-term effort to get strategic support for volunteering in the RNP. They have also met with the OEH Chief Executive Anthony Lean and the State Member for Heathcote Lee Evans. John and Bruce will pursue this with OEH staff.

Grant Monies

Some grant monies are available but Friends still are not clear on the current NPWS priority tasks. A list will be prepared.

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Litter

Clean up of litter in the RNP was discussed. It was agreed that this would be most useful after Easter. Although this is later than Clean Up Australia Day it could still be part of that initiative.

D/ General Business

For those members with environmental concerns about the impacts of coal and gas mining, there will be a rally on 24 March at 12.00 pm in Macquarie Street, Sydney CBD.

'The Bentley Effect' is a movie about opposition to natural gas fracking in the Northern Rivers shire. There will be screenings in Bundeena on 7 March and Engadine on 9 March. These are free but require prior booking¹.

Meeting closed: at 6.20p.m.

Next General Meeting

Thursday 26 April, 2018 at 4 pm.

Next Committee Meeting

Thursday 22 March, 2018 at 4pm.

Adoption

These minutes were adopted on 26 April, 2018 as an accurate record of the meeting.

Signed: John Arney

Date:

¹ Bookings though <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/> and search for 'Bentley'.