**FRIENDS OF THE ROYAL NATIONAL PARK INCORPORATED**

**MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING**

**Held on Thursday 22nd April 2021 at 4.00pm at EEC**

**Meeting opened:** at 4.03 pm

**Chairperson – Ian Hill. Minutes – Dave Robson**

**Committee Members present**

Ian Hill , John Arney, Ralph Cartwright, Peter Donley, Dave Robson, Neville Bethe, Diane Townley

**General Members present**

Liz Donley, Tony Larkin, Peter Kahn, Kris Nolte, Catherine Reynolds, Jessica Bellet, Josie Piper

**Apologies**

Mel Keith - NPWS Liaison

**Acknowledgement of Country**

Ian gave the Acknowledgement of Country.

**Correspondence**

* Mel Keith sent two messages commending the Friends of the Royal work
  + Firstly to Ralph : “I’m loving the posts about the Park… very informative and speaks to wide range of potential visitors. We don’t have much of a social media presence so it’s fantastic to have a reliable resource out there!”
  + Then to Neville and the other volunteers: “Volunteers in Royal have contributed 1526 hours this calendar year! Second in the state to Lane Cove who has a few hundred volunteers. Incredible effort team.”

**Treasurer’s Report**

* $7956.09 in bank and paypal accounts.
* 62 financial members. There has been a great increase from the average of the last few years of around 40. This can be put down to Facebook and Website presence, increased activities such bushcare, koala monitoring, population reaction to Covid lockdowns etc.

**Other Business**

* No Park report this month due to the hazard reduction burn committing NPWS staff
* Application for grant from Wettenhall Environmental Trust. We are attempting to get funding for the DNA sampling from Woronora and Hacking Rivers for evidence of Platypuses.
  + The grant application has been completed and we are awaiting one more reference letter before submitting. We are seeking approximately $5000 funding for the project.
  + The scope has been set as sampling 22 sites along the Hacking and Woronora Rivers including tributaries.
  + Sampling will occur in September when the platypuses are most active in the rivers.
  + Consideration was given to targeting additional species but this was rejected when it was discovered that the other species of interest such as Rakali did not show up well on eDNA testing.
  + We will need two volunteers to visit all 22 sites on the same day to collect the water samples. In some cases the volunteers will be able to visit multiple sites, so the total number of volunteers required has not yet been calculated but is expected to be around 30 to 36. We have set a target of 30% new volunteers for this project.
* Discussion around the bridge upgrade planned on Heathcote Road and its potential effect on water quality.
* SEC are planning some water quality testing of the rivers which could provide additional input
* Jibbon Bushcare Grant
  + The grant is from Land Care and will focus on the area that still has fencing crossed by the Shelly Beach track
  + Work to be completed by April 2022
  + New gates have been fixed but as yet without springs
  + A contractor has been selected by NPWS, they will work on green cestrum, yuccas, prickly pear, canary island date palms
  + Volunteers and park staff must contribute “in kind” hours. Bushies worked there on 17th April and were scheduled to work there on 22nd April but this was cancelled due the hazard reduction. Neville will undoubtedly be requested to schedule more dates for the Bushies to work in this area
  + The field staff have poisoned the very large coral tree that was located 100 meters behind the dune at the eastern end of the lagoon
* No news on the release of the Plan of Management. The last we heard it was with the Minister
* Last Months Activities
  + Friday 26th March and Tuesday 13th April – Bushcare Red Jacks Point
    - We had 19 people on 13th April. Huge progress made in pulling out all the Cassia (Senna). Three new FoR volunteers all of whom enjoyed it and want to come back. Five new Sutherland Bushwalkers some of whom will probably come back.
  + Monday 29th March 8am – Guided bird walk –Wattamolla to Eagle Rock
    - Four participants, birds that they had never seen before were identified for them
  + Monday 19th April 9am – Bushcare at Middle Rill
    - 8 volunteers. We removed all the seed heads from the 50+ pampas grass present in the valley. Pulled hundreds of cotton plants and removed their seed pods
* Next Two Months Activities (John to organise)
  + Monday 17th May 9am – Bushcare at Red Jacks Point
  + Friday 18th June – either Middle Rill or Red Jacks Pt
  + Friday 25th June – guided plant walk
* Meeting with Brendon Neilly (NPWS Area Manager) and the 4 FoR office bearers to be held 7th June at 9am. A request is made to members to nominate to the FoR committee any issues that they would like discussed. Some possible items:
  + Bonnie Vale: Deeban spit wildlife protection, Cabbage Tree Basin opening
  + Wildlife corridors: Princes Highway

**General Business**

* A koala was sighted in the evening of 13th April on the Bundeena Rd just north of the Mt Bass firetrail. Its eartags showed it was “Royal” the koala that we had been monitoring in 2020
  + Because his location was very close to the imminent hazard reduction NPWS searched the area with detector dogs and thermal image cameras. Volunteers searched the trees in the vicinity of the Saddle. No further sightings were made.

**Meeting closed:** at 5.45 p.m.

**Next General Meeting**

* Thursday 24 June, 2021 at 4 pm – EEC

**Next Committee Meeting**

* Thursday 27 May, 2021 at 4pm via Zoom