



The newsletter of the Wolgan Valley Association Inc.

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The Hon. Andrew Gee, Member for Calare, with members of the Wolgan Valley Association. Minister Gee visited the Valley on Sunday 4 July to congratulate the Association on being awarded \$990,000 in funding under Stage 2 of the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund a joint Federal State initiative in response to the 2019/20 fires. Mr Gee commended the Association on securing the funding for the construction of what will be an important community asset noting the Association's formation only six months earlier.

Photo: Kristie Kearney

Wolgan Valley Secures \$3.7m in Bushfire Recovery Funding

BLER Funding for Community Hall and water tanks approved

The Association, with the support of the MINGAAN Wiradjuri Aboriginal Corporation is delighted to announce the approval of its application under the joint State and Federal Government's Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund (BLER) for an Evacuation Shelter and three water refilling stations. The \$990,000 Grant will enable the Association to build a community fire shelter in the centre of the Valley. This will also serve as a community hall and emergency evacuation point with a water refilling station

for fire fighting vehicles; two additional water refilling stations with pumps will be located at either end of the Valley, at the bottom of the Gap and at Newnes. The funding also provides for the development of a Valley-wide fire management and ecology plan. The project will be completed in March 2023 and will work with Public Works Advisory project management services to deliver the project.

When the project is completed, it will address some of the serious deficiencies in emergency infrastructure provision in the Valley. Currently there is no emergency infrastructure for

campers and day tourists in the Valley. It will also enable the Valley community to take responsibility for future fire mitigation by providing a meeting place to plan, educate and coordinate landholders in hazard reduction involving cool burning techniques. The two key community partners - landholders through the Wolgan Valley Association and Indigenous Rangers through MINGAAN Wiradjuri, can work together in developing a whole of Valley plan for fire and ecology management, in partnership with the RFS, Forestry Corporation, NPWS and Lithgow Council.

The Committee will organise another Valley get together after it has met with Public Works Advisory to discuss the grant conditions. At that community meeting we will take everyone through the original application and get feedback on the design and potential siting for the facilities. In the meantime, however, we would welcome people contacting either Jayne Vought, or the project co-ordinator, Andrew Chalk phone: 0427270555, email: achalk@chalkbehrendt.com.au, to discuss your ideas and willingness to contribute to the project team. Jayne or Andrew will also be circulating more information as it becomes available. We have already had a wonderful response from members offering their assistance and ideas and we strongly encourage everyone to get involved.

Meeting with Lithgow Council General Manager—Craig Butler

The Committee had a very fruitful meeting with Lithgow Council General Manager, Craig Butler, on 8 May at the Corn Paddock. Craig Butler very kindly gave up his Saturday to discuss where the Council was heading with its strategic planning and to hear from the Committee about the Association's vision for the Valley and the needs of our community.

Craig told the Committee that the Council had received \$300,000 for a study that will canvass how to ensure secure access to the Valley. We discussed the problems with landslips on the Gap and the need for either an alternative access or major structural works to prevent a serious road failure. Council is committed to involving the residents in the study.

The Committee also discussed the need for more reliable telecommunications in the Valley, especially for emergencies like bushfires and road accidents. Council is continuing to make representations for mobile coverage.

Lastly, the Committee discussed planning reform and a way to better tailor the existing planning controls to reflect the Valley's vision for sensitive, low-scale development around eco-tourism, boutique agriculture, conservation, and education. The Committee emphasised that the Valley was special and that its rural/ wild character needed to be preserved at the same time as allowing new, low-scale opportunities that complemented that character. Craig invited us make submissions to Council on changes that we would like to see to the LEP.



Andrew Gee and Thomas Ebersoll at the start of the Glow Worm Tunnel Track In the Wolgan Valley. Photo: Kristie Kearney

\$2.7 million BLER Funding for Glow Worm Tunnel Upgrade

Mr Gee also made time to meet with Thomas Ebersoll, Owner/Manager of the Newnes Hotel Cabins, to congratulate him and the NSW Department of Planning, Industry & Environment (NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service) in securing funding for the \$2.7m upgrade to the Glow Worm Tunnel Trail funded under Stage 2 of the State and Federal Government's Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund (BLER). The project will see the construction of a new carpark and toilet facilities in Wolgan Valley at the existing trailhead near the 'Corn Paddock' and 'Koopertoo'; upgrade to the Wolgan Valley Railway Trail between its junction with the Old Coach Road that continues on to Penrose Gorge; and the construction of a boardwalk through the Glow Worm Tunnel. The project will also see the upgrade of the carpark and toilet facilities on Newnes Plateau.

Wolgan Valley Committee Member Profile



Secretary - Dawn Bower

My connection with the Valley was through Michael Coates, Gail and Ian's eldest son. We visited the Coates' in 1989 and they brought us down to the Valley. Ian thought that there might be an unsold block in the subdivision which included their property. We contacted the owner, Vic Bates, and purchased the property in 1989.

We came from Avoca Beach. People came from everywhere to live in Avoca Beach and the Central Coast, whereas it seems the majority of people have lived in Lithgow for generations. There is a sense of community.

I joined the committee because I agree with the Objects of the WVA. I don't want the amenity of the Valley to change. I hope that the combined strength of an organisation will have greater influence than that of an individual when it comes to approaching government authorities and the like. I love my splendid isolation in the 'right end' of the Valley - could be a million miles from anywhere but is only thirty minutes from town.

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