

**BYWONG COMMUNITY INCORPORATED (BCI)  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - 20th August 2007  
PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR 2006/07**

During 2006/7, BCI continued to make an active contribution to our community by engaging with State and Local Government on local issues and by fostering a program of community events.

### **Engaging with State and Local Government**

#### **State Government**

##### **Braidwood Rural Lands Protection Board (BRLPB)**

Residents will be aware that the BRLPB lowered the land size which would attract RLPB rates and that many land owners in Bywong were, without warning, liable to pay RLPB rates. This led to the election of BCI member Colin Brammall to the BRLPB on a ticket which pledged to support the interests of small landholders. Colin's candidacy was supported by BCI. In addition, BCI made representations to local State MP, Steve Whan, urging that a review of the way RLPBs operate be undertaken. We also arranged an information night for Bywong residents to hear from Colin, which approximately 30 residents attended.

Subsequently, the NSW State Government commissioned Mr. Richard Bull to undertake a review of the rates charged by RLPBs. BCI made a submission to this review and the submission is available on our website at : <http://www.bywongcommunity.org.au>. Members of BCI also attended a meeting in Bungendore with Richard Bull during the course of the review.

The review has been completed and its findings are available at [http://www.rlpb.org.au/files/RLPB\\_RATES\\_REVIEW\\_REPORT.pdf](http://www.rlpb.org.au/files/RLPB_RATES_REVIEW_REPORT.pdf). The main point of interest to small landholders in Bywong is that the report recommends a return to 10 hectares as the minimum rateable land size. If agreed to by the NSW State Government, this will mean a victory for everyone involved.

Particular thanks go to Colin Brammall for the huge commitment he has given to fighting this unjust tax.

### **Meet the Candidates - State Election**

BCI hosted a district 'Meet the Candidates' night during the recent NSW State Government elections. Approximately 30 residents and local media representatives heard candidates in the State election, Steve Whan MP (ALP), David Madew (Nationals) and Catherine Moore (Greens) deliver their election pledges for Monaro.

The audience raised many issues but the majority focused on the RLPB rates; the shire amalgamation process which led to the creation of Palerang Shire; and water issues. Community members met the candidates informally over a cup of tea after the formal meeting finished.

### **Valuations**

BCI supported the great work done by Wamboin Community Association (WCA) in challenging property valuations in Bywong and Wamboin. I attended meetings with the WCA Executive on the topic and encouraged BCI members to appeal their rates notices. This community action led to a declaration by the NSW Valuer General of the 'discovery' of a systemic error in valuations in Bywong and Wamboin done on the 5<sup>th</sup> October, 2006 and the announcement of a review of those rates. This has led to large reductions in valuations in Bywong and Wamboin, with subsequent flow on to lower rates.

### **Insurance - Stamp Duty Exemption**

Your Executive was successful in obtaining an exemption from NSW Stamp Duty on BCI's public liability insurance, thereby providing more money for donations to local community groups. In addition, we made representations to local Councillors, and State and Federal politicians regarding possible increases in public liability insurance for non-profit organisations in 2008, and are continuing to monitor the situation and explore ways of reducing the cost of this insurance to BCI.

### **Local Government**

#### **Palerang Council - Social and Community Development Plan (SCDP)**

Palerang's draft SCDP left quite a lot to be desired as it related to Bywong. Our general meeting in April took the form of a round table discussion of the draft plan. We invited BCI members, and other local groups such as Wamboin Community Association, Rotary, the CWA, Greenways and Les Reardon Reserve and Hall Committees to participate and the results formed the basis of our submission, which can be read on our website. Our submission pointed out that Council's report contained little information about, or understanding of, the large rural residential areas in the west of its area. It recommended that Council include a section on Bywong in the report and that Council

contact community associations in Bywong, Wamboin and other areas to obtain accurate information about these areas, and that the Plan address the matter of insurance, vital for the continued functioning of community associations.

The submission also contained a number of other recommendations relating to signage, road safety and repair issues, improvements to the Les Reardon Reserve and Hall and the availability of more public space. Council accepted BCI's recommendations in full.

#### **Les Reardon Reserve and Hall Committee (LRRHC)**

I have attended two meetings of the above committee as your president. LRRHC is a S355 Committee of Palerang Council and is responsible for the management of the LRRH facilities. Some of the issues discussed/progressed have been improvements to the outdoor facilities and upgrade of the electricity supply.

#### **Quinn subdivision**

BCI is keeping a watching brief on this development.

#### **Grants to local community groups**

In 2006/7 your Executive decided on a number of grants to local community groups, totalling over \$1600. These grants were made from the funds raised by our Car Boot Sale and Trivia Night. Groups which benefited included:

- Wamboin Rural Fire Service
- Bungendore Tennis Club
- Wildcare
- Guides/Brownies

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#### **Program of community and social events**

##### **Christmas drinks**

As usual, BCI members and friends mixed with members of other community groups and State and Local politicians at our Christmas drinks in December, 2006 and enjoyed tasting the always reliable Gidgee Estate wines.

##### **Clean Up Australia Day**

Approximately 50 enthusiastic Bywong residents and several Bywong dogs took part in the Clean Up Australia Day activities. About 90 bags of rubbish were collected and several truck loads of other rubbish went off to the tip. All of Macs Reef Rd and most of Bungendore Rd and

environs were covered. The organizers, Warwick and Jenny Johnston, are to be again congratulated on a very successful event. As usual, most of the rubbish came from through traffic on Macs Reef and Bungendore Rds, with Maccas once again being the major sponsor (of the rubbish), together with various breweries and soft drink manufacturers.

#### **Car Boot sale**

Once again, the annual Car Boot Sale was an outstanding success, and the outstanding organisational skills of Morag Cottsell must be highlighted. We raised a record amount for local organisations, and more than seventy visitors returned home with the added bonus of a prize from the Monster Raffle, an event solidly supported by a wide range of local businesses. More than eighty stalls provided a variety of treasures for bargain hunters. The weather was perfect after rain the day before. Unfortunately, the event was marred this year by the theft of money from the Landcare Stall

During the day, BCA presented a cheque for \$1,000 to the Wamboin Rural Fire Service. Brigade Captain, Cliff Spong, accepted the cheque and thanked the Community for its support.

#### **Trivia night**

Trivia Night 2007 again was 'sold out' with 9 tables competing for the BCI Trivia Shield. The Bungendore team, 'XX' was the winning team, for the 4<sup>th</sup> time. BCI members provided a wonderful array of soups, our Trivia masters Warwick and Diana, provided the usual testing set of questions and a convivial night was enjoyed by all.

#### **October bushwalk**

A smaller than usual group of community walkers turned up for the October walk up the Molonglo Gorge. This is a little known but scenically remarkable local excursion, which was greatly enjoyed by those who made the trip.

#### **Bywong skies**

Amateur astronomer Steve Crouch, a volunteer guide at Tidbinbilla Tracking Station, captured the rapt attention of about twenty locals at our November meeting. Steve told us a lot about what happens above our heads, and showed us some of his award winning photographs of southern skies and deep space.

**Judith Miller**

**20<sup>th</sup> August, 2007**