

# WAMBOIN



COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

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## The Whisper

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**July 2013**

**CIRCULATION: 1,278**

**Wamboin Community Assn:**

[www.wamboincommunity.asn.au](http://www.wamboincommunity.asn.au)

**Bywong Community:**

[www.bywongcommunity.org.au](http://www.bywongcommunity.org.au)

**Fire Brigade:**

<http://brigade.wamboincommunity.asn.au>

All proceeds from advertisements after printing costs go to the WAMBOIN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION that started The Whisper as a community newsletter in 1981, and continues to own it. The newsletter is distributed to all letterboxes in Wamboin, Bywong and to Palerang Council residents southeast of the Federal Highway at the start of each month, except January. Contributions from all residents are encouraged, valued and the main content of the newsletter. The Editor is Ned Noel, 17 Reedy Creek Place, Wamboin, 2620, phone 6238-3484. Please email contributions to either [nednoel@optusnet.com.au](mailto:nednoel@optusnet.com.au) or [whisper@wamboincommunity.asn.au](mailto:whisper@wamboincommunity.asn.au) or mail them. The deadline for the next issue of The Whisper is always the last Sunday of the month, 7 pm, so for the August 2013 issue the deadline is Sunday, 28 July, 7 pm. Instant Colour Press will then multiply 1 copy into more than 1200. Then the new issue goes to volunteer deliverers by the first Sunday of the new month.

**LIFE THREATENING EMERGENCIES Fire/Police/Ambulance - Dial Triple Zero (000) All Hours**

**Bungendore Police: 6238 1244 Wamboin Fire Brigade Info Centre: 0409 991 340 Ambulance Bookings: 131233**

### LOCAL FACILITIES AND CONTACTS

<b>Wamboin Community Assn</b>	Jenny Richards, President	6238 1329	<a href="mailto:president@wamboincommunity.asn.au">president@wamboincommunity.asn.au</a>
<b>Bywong Community</b>	Darryl Bourke, President		<a href="mailto:president@bywongcommunity.org.au">president@bywongcommunity.org.au</a>
<b>Fire Brigade</b>	David Cochrane, Captain	0409 991 340	
<b>Palerang Councillor</b>	Pete Harrison	0427 711 028	<a href="mailto:cr.pete.harrison@palerang.nsw.gov.au">cr.pete.harrison@palerang.nsw.gov.au</a>
<b>Palerang Councillor</b>	Keith France	0427 365 715	<a href="mailto:cr.keith.france@palerang.nsw.gov.au">cr.keith.france@palerang.nsw.gov.au</a>
<b>Wamboin Markets</b>	Joan Mason, contact	6238 3258	
<b>Sutton School Playgroup</b>	Johanna Bradley, Convenor	0406 399 713	<a href="mailto:johannabradley@dodo.com.au">johannabradley@dodo.com.au</a>
<b>Landcare</b>	Roger Good, Secretary	6236 9048	
<b>Community Nurse</b>	Heather Morrison, Bungendore	6238 1333	
<b>Emergency Services</b>	NSW Call Centre, Staff	132 500	
<b>Emergency Services Admin.</b>	Colin Brown, Controller	6238 1067	
<b>Justice of the Peace</b>	Peter Greenwood, JP	6238 3358	
<b>Justice of the Peace</b>	Keith France, JP	6238 3596	
<b>Justice of the Peace</b>	Margaret Fletcher, JP	6238 1211	
<b>Justice of the Peace</b>	Tony Holland	6238 3762	<a href="mailto:hollandfamily@rockyhill.com.au">hollandfamily@rockyhill.com.au</a>
<b>Justice of the Peace</b>	Jill Sedaitis, JP	6236 9559	
<b>Wamboin Scout Group</b>	Peter Harrison, contact	6238 3525	
<b>Wamboin Pony Club</b>	Leanne Quick, Club Captain	6238 3435	
<b>Geary's Gap Pony Club</b>	Katarina Biondic, contact	0421 859 917	
<b>Wamboin Play Group</b>	Emma Auzins, Convener	6238 3974	<a href="mailto:emauszins@gmail.com">emauszins@gmail.com</a>
<b>Bywong Hall Bookings</b>	Guy Cotsell, contact	6230 3523	<a href="mailto:cotsell@moraguy.net">cotsell@moraguy.net</a>
<b>Wamboin Hall Bookings</b>	Joan Mason, contact	6238 3258	
<b>Church - Anglican</b>	Robyn Robertson, Warden	6238 3202	
<b>Christian Prayer Group</b>	Steve & Imelda Taylor, contacts	6238 3220	
<b>KYB Bible Study Group</b>	Yvonne Barrett, contact	6230 3539	
<b>Golf</b>	Peter Greenwood, Golfer	6238 3358	<a href="mailto:p.greenwood2@bigpond.com">p.greenwood2@bigpond.com</a>
<b>Injured Wildlife</b>	Wildcare, Helpline	6299 1966	
<b>Wonderful Wmen of Wmbn</b>	Gail Ritchie Knight, Contact	0416 097 500	<a href="mailto:whirlwind@argonite.com.au">whirlwind@argonite.com.au</a>
<b>Lake George VIEW Club</b>	Pauline Segeri, contact	6238 1996	
<b>Wamboin Book Group</b>	Alice Scott, Secretary	6238 3178	

### YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS

Alana Stenning	pet sitting	6238 3030	Jess Smith	pet sitting, house sitting	6238 3115
Fiona Skea	baby sitting	6238 3290	Ashleigh Caird	baby sitting	6238 0746
Rebecca Purdie	pet sitting	6238 3343	Gabrielle Simpkin	baby sitting/ pets sitting	6238-1335
Mara Sutcliffe	pet sitting	6238 3228	Jack & Matilda Whitney	child, pet & house sttg, odd jobs	6238 3059
Jordan Brown	baby sitting	0414-907-921	Genevieve Phipps	Babysitting/ petsitting	6238 1660

# **Warning**

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than it is worth.**

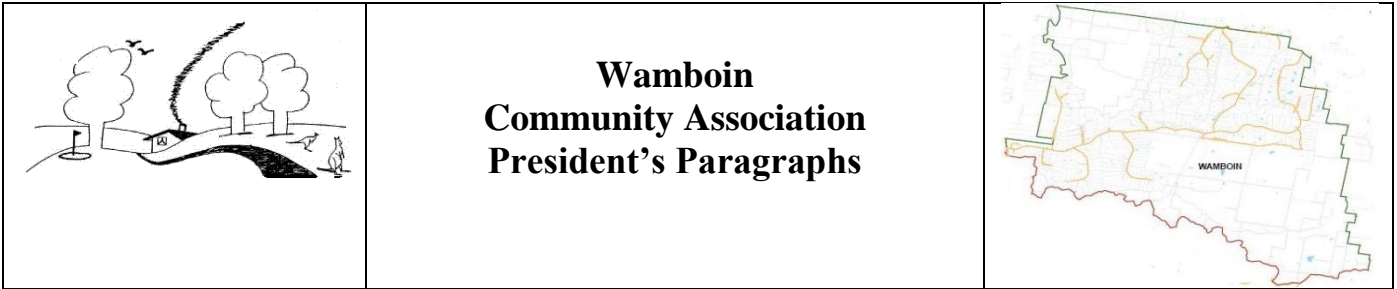
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Hello everyone and welcome back.

**WCA** – On Tuesday 18th June we held a rather extended monthly meeting of the Community Association to come to grips with the NSW government's White Paper and its implications for us here in Wamboin and Bywong. Basically we are led to understand that the driving factor behind this paper will be the PLEP that is currently in draft form and soon to be open for public comment and debate once more. The message seemed to be that we must get this draft PLEP as complete as possible because once the White Paper comes into effect sometime in September this plan will be used as its main basis of law. Once the draft PLEP comes back into the public area I feel it may be worthwhile for people to study it and perhaps suggests changes if they are possible at this stage.

Please keep an eye out on local newspapers for when this will happen if you feel this might affect you.

**Curry Night** – A quick reminder that the annual Curry Night is coming up in August. This will be hosted again by Dave Hubbard. This has become quite a popular event in recent years with numbers of attendees growing steadily. Further information on this event should be available elsewhere in The Whisper.

**Monthly Produce Market** – The Home Produce Market for June was cold but well attended. A reminder that the markets are now in recess until September.

**Art Competition For Our Youngest People** – Our youngest people have had their competition. Now, starting with this issue, along with one more drawing from a 5 year old, we move on to the next age range -- 6,7 and 8 year olds. Content: – anything that they like about living in Wamboin or Bywong. I urge any interested 6, 7 and 8 year olds to enter the competition. Apparently our youngest group really enjoyed seeing their works of art in The Whisper and we certainly enjoyed seeing them. As with our youngest group, prizes will be offered to the best in this age range. I hope as many children as possible will enter this event. Mail or email your child's drawing, along with name and age and a sentence or two describing the picture, to either me ([president@wamboincommunity.asn.au](mailto:president@wamboincommunity.asn.au)) or Ned Noel ([nednoel@optusnet.com.au](mailto:nednoel@optusnet.com.au) or [whisper@wamboincommunity.asn.au](mailto:whisper@wamboincommunity.asn.au)). You can see the full colour results by looking at the whisper at [www.wamboincommunity.asn.au](http://www.wamboincommunity.asn.au)

**Rain And Roads** – Obviously the recent amount of rain we received has put the Mac's Reef Road work on a slow down but it is great to see how far council have progressed with this project. The road promises to be a great improvement when it's finished . - Jenny Richards (President)

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	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Bywong Community News</b> <a href="http://www.bywongcommunity.org.au">www.bywongcommunity.org.au</a> <b>Darryl Bourke, President</b> This News Put Together by the Bywong Committee</p>	
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At the start of the walk, a brief talk about the route.



Horse comes to greet the walkers & see what all the fuss is about.



A well-earned rest at The Henge, just before sunset.

## **Walking into the Light: East Meets West on the Winter Solstice in Bywong**

**By Nora Stewart**

"What a beautiful walk, what fabulous bush- I was amazed by the wild life we saw along the way. To be able to walk, talk and enjoy the peace of the countryside was a terrific pleasure for me."

So said Pauline Chambers, one of 29 winter solstice walkers last Saturday, and a local Bywong resident. This particular walk helped show the links between Millyn Road (East Bywong) and Donnelly Road (West Bywong), through a beautiful bush crown road & council reserve. The group of residents and visitors then wended its way along Donnelly Road until crossing the new Federal Highway, across the road to the old Federal Highway and a relaxed ramble down the road to the Tulip Tops Garden.

Some walkers then moved on to The Henge to join in the solstice celebrations, amply warmed by a gorgeous fire atop the hill amongst the stone circle, and supplemented by mulled wine and marshmallows. The solstice sky did not disappoint with a sublime sunset, complemented by subtle rainbows and an appreciative audience. A final word from another walker:-

*"Nora - Thanks for a unique and special day: first, our roller ski, then a bush walk in a different locale, a sky that picked up a bit of cloud to give a glorious sunset on the solstice, a clear sky in the east to give us a full-on moon, nice warming snacks/drinks/fire for a crispy evening on a hill top with a view and decorative rocks to bless the location. David La Porte*

This was one of 5 public walks for 2013 organised by the **Bywong & Wamboin Greenways Working (GRoW)** group, with the purpose of extending the public access ways for pedestrians and horse-riders across the locality. The next walk is on 1 September and will walk the south-western Weereewa escarpment, enjoying the spring wildflowers. See [www.BywongCommunity.org.au](http://www.BywongCommunity.org.au) "Events" for more details or contact Nora Stewart on 62 303 305.

**Photos by Ulli Brunnschweiler**

Skye Richards, Age 6

What I like most about living in Wamboin is having our own chickens. This is their house Daddy built and I am bringing them scraps.



## **WAMBOIN HOME PRODUCE MARKETS**

We are now in recess for the Winter break - July and August is our rest time. June Market was a good one, seemed to be lots of locals there enjoying the atmosphere our Markets are known for. Weather was a bit chilly, but that didn't stop a good crowd attending.

**Markets will resume** again on the third Saturday of each month commencing –  
**21<sup>st</sup> September 2013.**

A big THANK YOU to all the wonderful market stallholders, who have supported Wamboin market over the last year, and previous years, without them coming each month our markets wouldn't be. Hoping to see each one and hopefully new stallholders after our two month break.

It is my intention to run the markets for the next ten months after the winter break, then retire from the organisation of the markets. I have been doing this, with Lofty's help, practically since the markets began in October, 2003, so my plan is to finish June 2014. Hopefully, some good person/s may put up their hand to continue the Wamboin Markets going from month to month. I am happy to help out and advise anyone interested, please contact me.

Thank you all for your loyal support.

JOAN MASON, 62 383258



# The Wamboin Firefighter

The Wamboin Firefighter newsletter is produced by the Wamboin Rural Fire Brigade for the benefit of residents and property owners in the brigade's area i.e. the localities of Wamboin and Bywong, plus Sutton (south of the Federal Highway) and Bungendore (along and west of the Lake George escarpment).

## BURNING OFF

Outside the declared bushfire danger period a **Fire Permit** is not required to burn off in the open. But, if you do plan to light a fire in the open, you must notify:

- **your neighbours and anyone else living within 200m; and**
- **the Queanbeyan Fire Control Centre on 6297 1840 (weekday business hrs)**

at least 24 hours before you light the fire.

Your thoughtfulness will help minimise neighbour anxiety and unnecessary brigade call-outs.

Fire management, including containment of a fire originating on your property, is your responsibility. **BUT**, if the fire escalates to become more than you can handle, don't hesitate, ring the emergency number directly below.

TO REPORT FIRES OR SMOKE SIGHTINGS  
RING TRIPLE ZERO



## PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.

### RECRUITING

Becoming a volunteer firefighter in the brigade or member of the support group is easier than most people think. The Brigade conducts a low level recruiting posture. It has a current active membership of over 70 members of the community made up of operational firefighters, support crew and administrative staff. We are particularly targeting the younger members of the community (preferably 18 years or older) including people who will be able to lead the Brigade in the future. The recent busy fire season highlighted the capability of several new Rural Fire Service initiatives particularly the use of aerial firefighting resources. A number of Brigade members have recently gained aviation support qualifications. The way bushfires are being fought is changing with increasing use being made of technology. We need to grow our firefighter numbers and capability but we also look to the community for people to become involved in other areas, e.g. communications, catering, logistics, and community engagement. If you would like more information on joining the Wamboin Brigade, please contact the Secretary at [secretary@brigade.wamboincommunity.asn.au](mailto:secretary@brigade.wamboincommunity.asn.au)

### PREPARING FOR THE COMING BUSHFIRE SEASON

You must make important decisions before the fire season starts ('normally' 1<sup>st</sup> October). Bush fires are a natural part of the Australian environment and occur regularly, but many people fail to prepare for them. When threatened by bush fires, people will often leave it too late to make critical decisions and often have few safe options left. That's why we all need to **Prepare. Act. Survive.** Rural fire brigades, including ours, use winter to check brigade supplies, and make sure that all our machinery and equipment is in good working order. If your bush fire survival plan involves your reliance on taps and pumps and nozzles and hoses or other equipment and tools, it's a good time for you to do the same. Some of the things you should also be doing around your property include:

<b>WINTER</b>	
Remove dead vegetation from around your home and prune lower limbs of trees. Cut back any overhanging trees or shrubs and dispose of cuttings appropriately.	Look for places where embers could start fires, e.g. check roof for loose tiles or iron sheeting. Fix gaps and make repairs as necessary.
Seal any areas under your home, verandas or balconies.	With your family, prepare/review/update your Bush Fire Survival Plan.
Remove and store any flammable items e.g. petrol away from the house.	Talk to your neighbours about their Bush Fire Plans and their interest in setting up a Community FireWise Group.
<b>SPRING</b>	
Slash or mow long grass and remove any build-up of material. Keep garden mulch away from your house.	Check/service equipment, e.g. grass cutters, water pumps, sprinkler systems and fire extinguishers.
Remove leaves from gutters.	Make sure the pressure relief valve on LPG cylinders

	faces outwards (so a flame won't be directed towards any part of your house).
Cut back trees overhanging both your home and your access/egress route(s).	Review, update and practise your Bush Fire Survival Plan.
Remove fallen branches and other debris.	With your family, identify and assemble items that will form part of your Bush Fire Survival Kit ( <i>refer NSWRFSS Bush Fire Survival Plan booklet</i> ).

Preparation is not just about cleaning up around the house and having a plan. It is also about making sure you consider your physical, mental and emotional preparedness and that of your family. Further information on how you can prepare yourself, your family and your property for the event of bush fire can be found on the NSW Rural Fire Service website at <http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/>

**BRIGADE ACTIVITY**

**Incidents since last month's newsletter**

Fortunately, it's been a fairly quiet month for the brigade with callouts reduced to just 3 incidents.

*Friday 31<sup>st</sup> May just before 3pm* - the brigade responded to a report of a grass fire on a property abutting the Federal Highway Service Rd, Sutton. Although the un-notified hazard reduction burn had escaped the northern boundary of the property, fortunately, it was stopped a few metres further on where the grass met a large concrete drain that abutted the Federal Highway Service Rd. Crew in two of the brigade tankers ensured the burnt area outside the property boundary was completely out before departing. Tankers and crew were able to return to the Fire Station just before 4pm.



*Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> June shortly after 5pm* – crew in two tankers responded to an emergency call that involved a report of the smell of smoke emanating from a property in Bidges Rd, Sutton. After a short search of the area in fading light the source of the smoke was found to be coming from an abandoned outside waste fire. The fire appeared to include builders and other rubbish. Smoke from the fire was pungent. The Captain was unable to locate the owner of the land (and the fire). Crew from both brigade tankers quelled the fire as much as possible and, once it was considered safe to leave, returned to the Fire Station at around 6.30pm.

*Monday 17<sup>th</sup> June at 7.10pm* – members of the brigade were paged to the station and crew in the two large tankers and the Captain in Wamboin PC were despatched to a report of a motor vehicle accident on Bungendore Rd near the intersection of Norton Rd. The incident involved a vehicle that had leaked a small amount of fuel. Having determined there was little risk of fire the Captain asked for the two brigade tankers to be turned around en-route and they returned to the Fire Station shortly after 7.30pm.

**Training**

Training during June focused on navigation, communication, firefighting and incident control skills. It included a joint exercise (simulated building fire) between Wamboin and Bungendore Rural Fire Brigades at the Wamboin Fire Station on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> June. Crews from Wamboin were the first to arrive at the Wamboin Community Complex (Fire Station and Community Hall) to find dense smoke (courtesy of a very effective artificial smoke machine) pluming from the building (aka Fire Station). According to the distraught owner of the building, there were two people missing - whereabouts unknown. Maintaining a safe distance from the building to avoid inhalation of smoke and other potentially dangerous pollutants, crew in two Wamboin tankers began a defensive (outside building) attack on the fire with the aim of not allowing the flames or embers to escape into nearby bush or encroach the adjoining building.



With the arrival of two tankers from Bungendore and its specialist Breathing Apparatus team, Wamboin crew along with other crew from Bungendore set about the complementary role of supporting (water supply/hose management) the Breathing Apparatus Operators who were preparing to conduct a search inside the building for the persons believed to be missing, and to attack the fire directly. This is an extremely dangerous but pivotal point of dealing with a structure fire. Fortunately, the 'missing' persons were eventually located and removed from the building. The fire was contained and extinguished. Members of both brigades agreed the joint exercise provided some excellent learning and development opportunities.



### Annual General Meeting

The Brigade held its AGM on Tuesday 11 June. The President introduced members to the Annual Report for 2012-2013. This is the second year that an Annual Report had been produced. The purpose of the Annual Report was to better inform members of the activities of the Brigade and its capabilities. He then outlined key areas addressed in the Annual Report. The Captain highlighted that this had been one of the busiest fire seasons in the past decade and the Brigade had responded remarkably well to the challenges presented. He thanked the Field Officers for their commitment and support during the year and especially the Senior Deputy Captain for his support. The President, Captain, Support Crew Co-ordinator, Community Safety/Education Officer and Treasurer then spoke to their various sections of the Annual Report. The President acknowledged and thanked the various parties within and outside the Brigade for their interest, participation, generosity, encouragement and support of the Brigade during the year. The Annual Report was tabled and adopted.



An electronic copy of the Annual Report has been distributed to all members. Anyone else who would like to receive an electronic copy of the Annual Report should contact the Brigade Secretary by email: [secretary@brigade.wamboincommunity.asn.au](mailto:secretary@brigade.wamboincommunity.asn.au) with your request and provide your contact details.

An election for Office Bearers for the next 12 months was conducted with the following results:

Office Bearers			
Administrative Officers		Field Officers	
President	<i>Ian Coillet</i>	Captain	<i>Richard Hobbs</i>
Vice President	<i>Peter Greenwood</i>	Senior Deputy Captain	<i>Geoff Foster</i>
Secretary	<i>Jim Greethead</i>	Deputy Captain	<i>Matt O'Brien</i>
Treasurer	<i>Neville Schroder</i>	Deputy Captain	<i>Col Prest</i>
Support Crew Coordinator	<i>Wendy Downs</i>	Deputy Captain	<i>Neville Schroder</i>
Community Education Officer	<i>Geoff Foster</i>	Deputy Captain	<i>Brad Arrowsmith</i>
Equipment Officer	<i>Tim Barter</i>	Deputy Captain	<i>Cliff Spong</i>
Training Officer	<i>John Taubman</i>	Deputy Captain	<i>John Taubman</i>

In addition to the elected Office Bearers, there are a number of other members who continue to fulfil important roles in co-opted positions. They are:

Communications Coordinator (Equipment)	<i>Peter Greenwood</i>	Pumphouse Coordinator	<i>Richard Evans</i>
First Aid Equipment Coordinator	<i>Jake Blight</i>	IT Administrator	<i>Neville Schroder</i>
Fuel Store Coordinator	<i>John McGrath</i>	Website Administrator	<i>Steve Richards</i>
Map & Navigation Coordinator	<i>Chris Murdock</i>		

### Community Education



**Community FireWise groups:** If you would like to know more about the purpose of, role, and how to set up a *FireWise Group* with your neighbours, please contact the Captain, Richard Hobbs, on 0409 991 340 or email [captain@brigade.wamboincommunity.asn.au](mailto:captain@brigade.wamboincommunity.asn.au)

**Wamboin Market Day Brigade Info Shopfront:** There were 4 enquiries from visitors to the June brigade info stall on market day Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> June including two residents who had just moved to the area. We were able to help them with their bushfire preparation queries. The recently arrived residents asked if a member of Brigade's Community Engagement team could visit their property and talk to them about the type of things they might consider in developing a fire plan for their property. The next Brigade Info Shopfront will be on Saturday 21 September when the Wamboin Home Produce Market re-opens after its winter recess.

### New Brigade Members

Eleven new recruits joined the fire brigade in the past 12 months. We always welcome enquiries from people who would like to become part of the community's rural fire brigade. Depending on the role you'd like to play, you'll be trained either as a fire fighter or member of the brigade's Support Crew. If you would like to know more, please ring the Secretary, Jim Greethead, on 6230 3165 or email: [secretary@brigade.wamboincommunity.asn.au](mailto:secretary@brigade.wamboincommunity.asn.au) for further information and/or to receive a Membership Application Pack.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

Sat 21 <sup>st</sup> Sept	<p><i>Brigade Information 'Shopfront'</i> adjacent to the Wamboin Home Produce Market (9am-12noon).</p> <p>WCA Bonfire &amp; Fireworks Night @ Wamboin Community Complex, 112 Bingley Way Wamboin.</p>
Sat 28 <sup>th</sup> Sept	<p><i>NSW RFS Brigade Open Day (10am – 3pm).</i> The Brigade is throwing open its doors and invite you to come and have a look over the Fire Station and vehicles. Brigade members will be on hand to show you around and to chat about anything you care to discuss, e.g. joining the brigade, help with your bush fire survival plan, or simply getting to know a few of the members of the brigade. Refreshments will be served throughout the day, and there will be a BBQ lunch at around 12.30pm. All welcome.</p>

**FURTHER INFORMATION**

**Wamboin Brigade Website**

The site will help you monitor local conditions and Brigade announcements. The **Community Information** section has useful information plus links to other websites including the NSW Rural Fire Service that provide guidance regarding bush and grass fire preparations. You'll also find the brigade's history and other interesting material including photos on the website at <http://brigade.wamboincommunity.asn.au>

**And finally...**

Should you have any non-emergency enquiry, e.g. if you are seeking guidance with your Bush Fire Survival Plan, you can contact the Brigade directly by email [captain@brigade.wamboincommunity.asn.au](mailto:captain@brigade.wamboincommunity.asn.au) or phone 0409 991 340.

**FOR ALL EMERGENCY CALLS**



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soaps & lotions		fruit & vegetables																									
picture frames		clothing & footwear																									



# 'SHUT THE .. STABLE DOOR!'

by Ian Coillet

**An occasional column**

**OUR 'COMMUNITY' – WHAT IS IT, WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

I am part way through Peter Stanley's recently released book titled '*Black Saturday at Steels Creek*'. 'Black Saturday', you may recall, is the short name given to the fateful period beginning on Saturday February 7, 2009, when fires that started east of Melbourne (in what was that city's hottest ever recorded temperature) burned out 395,000 hectares of land, destroyed over 2,000 homes, killed countless animals, and claimed 173 human lives (apparently more from heat stroke and exhaustion than of fire).

Peter Stanley's '*Black Saturday at Steels Creek*' adds to the fine contribution of others I have read, i.e. Karen Kissane's '*Worst of Days*' and Adrian Hyland's '*Kinglake – 350*'.

Steels Creek is a small township in Victoria, 45 km north-east of Melbourne i.e. its fringe. It is midway between Yarra Glen and Kinglake. The community of Steels Creek lost 10 of its residents during the Black Saturday fires.

Peter Stanley, a distinguished military historian, was invited into the Kinglake community to sift through the events of Black Saturday.

The book tells dramatic stories of this small town on that one terrifying evening. And it doesn't shy away from the personal tragedies, the loss of lives, the inadequacies of events and policies before, throughout, and after Black Saturday and the difficulties in getting in and out of the valley in the days following the fire. Stanley also captures the essence of what drew the small but diverse community together before the fires and what has united the bonds in the rebuilding process.

As Andrew Chapman, Editor, '*The Jolly Thing*' – the Steels Creek local newsletter says in his Prologue to Stanley's book, 'Bushfire is an ever-present force that at some time affects many country communities across our sunburnt land, and, while this is our community's story, it could be another's in the future'.

Stanley investigates the nature of the community into which he was invited at the time it was trying to see how far and in what form it could re-establish itself. The community included a mixture of longer term residents, tree-changers, weekenders, small businesses, vineyards, hobby farms, professionals, commuters, those who have volunteered for almost everything and others who were reclusive – in some ways not dissimilar to our own community. He observes that 'the word *community* is a living presence in Steels Creek. It is invoked constantly, an abstract noun standing for a real phenomenon.' He went on to say that 'Most talk simply of 'the community' without defining what they mean'. Stanley identifies a community representative who, as far back as 2004, 'talked about the values and aspirations that the people of Steels Creek shared: friendship, mateship, mutual trust, respect and support, tolerance, co-operation, communication, and participation.' As Stanley notes, 'It was, and remains, a beguiling vision. Of course it works best at a local level.'



Translating that to our area, there are many examples of active communities here as well. At the risk of exposing my inadequate appreciation of community activities that prevails in our local area, here goes, in no particular order:

Wamboin Community Association	Blessing of the Animals	Pilates group
Bywong Community Association	Wheels of Wamboin	Wamboin Book Group
St Andrews Anglican Church	Wamboin Rural Fire Brigade	Wamboin Home Produce Market
Wamboin Playgroup	WSEFOAROFFOTs – Fire Brigade's gathering of senior (seasoned) brigade members on Friday afternoons.	Wamboin Annual Curry Night
Scout Group	BCA – Trivia Night	Wamboin Fishing Club
Pony Clubs – Wamboin & Geary's Gap	BCA – Christmas drinks	Community FireWise Groups
Prayer Group	BCA - Annual Car Boot Sale	
Bible Study Group	Greenways Walking Group	Wamboin Fishing Club
Wamboin Golf Club	Geary's Gap/Wamboin Landcare	Community FireWise Groups
Wonderful Women of Wamboin	WCA's monthly community newsletter – 'The Whisper'	EagleHawk Hotel Social Group
Lake George Day VIEW Club	Websites – WCA/BCA/Fire Brigade	WCA Bonfire & Fireworks Night
Yoga group	Bywong & Wamboin Community Halls	Christmas Carols – WCA Hall

That's probably the 'tip of the iceberg'. Are there other community activities out there you know of that could be added to this list? If so, perhaps you could forward them to me. I'd be happy to collate them and include an updated list in a future edition of the community's newsletter, The Whisper. Not looking for detail at this point – bare bones - just name the community activity or community interest group. Any additions can be emailed to me at [lodestar@ozemail.com.au](mailto:lodestar@ozemail.com.au)

## WAMBOIN 15 YEARS AGO From the Whisper, July, 1998 Circulation: 600

Prepared by Robyn Robertson

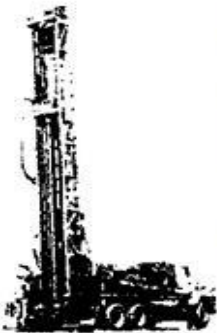
Extract from the President's Annual Report to the Wamboin Community Association AGM:

"Many events affected our area in the past year. The most dramatic of these occurred on Fridays. A severe storm cut a path through Wamboin on the evening of Friday, 30 October 1997, destroying a couple of houses that were under construction, unroofing two others and causing minor damage for many property owners. Our local Bushfire Brigade and the SES came to the rescue and worked throughout the night and the next day to provide temporary roofs, remove fallen trees, etc. Less than six months later, on the morning of Friday, 13 March, the fire we had been waiting for all Summer broke out on the Lake George escarpment and threatened properties in the vicinity and towards Bungendore. Once again the volunteer brigades came to the rescue and extinguished the fire with minimum property damage. I know I can speak for all residents when I thank the Bushfire Brigade and SES volunteers for their sense of duty that enables our community to experience the pleasures of country living with a feeling of being protected." - Libby King, President, WCA

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## Rainfall and Temperatures in Wamboin - 38-year statistics from the Robertsons

June rainfall to 30/6 .....	105mm	June 2012 .....	43.5mm
2013 rainfall to 30/6 .....	267.5mm	2012 to 30/6 .....	505mm
Average July rainfall .....	52.8mm	July 2012 .....	45.5mm
Wettest July .....	142mm in 1993	Driest July .....	4.5mm in 1982
Hottest July day .....	15C on 22/7/79	Coldest July day .....	3C on 25/7/11
Coldest July night .....	-5C on 10/7/96 and 12/7/11		

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## How The Whisper Gets Delivered Each Month

The 50 or so people below each spend time every month to make sure that Wamboin and Bywong homes own and receive a free community newspaper written by residents. If your deliverer has been on the job for a long time and you have a bit of time you could spare, think about offering to take over the job or help out. If you already have too many tasks in your month, every now and then give your volunteer paperwoman/man/boy/girl a thank you.

Thanks to each of you. - Ned Noel, volunteer editor

### 170: CO-ORDINATED HELEN MONTESIN: ph 6238 3208

Fay Kelly Norton Rd West Area from Cmpbl Pl 20  
 Helen Montesin Fernloff Rd 35  
 Julie Veal Poppet Rd (for all on road) 32

### 172: CO-ORDINATED BY KATHY HANDEL: ph 6238 3596

Joan Mason Bingley Way 48  
 Sue Ward Norton Rd (Bingley to Weeroona) 32  
 Kathy Handel Norton (Weerona to Hilltop) 18

### 232: CO-ORDINATED BY KERRIE FISHER: ph 6238 3489

Lesley Page Valley View Ln 4  
 Colleen Foster B'dore Rd to Nrtm Rd 22  
 Cassie Fisher Clare Ln 12  
 Dominica Lorima North end Clare Valley 42

### 245: CO-ORDINATED BY JOHN VAN DER STRAATEN: ph 6238 3590

Sheryl Barnes Denley Dr (Sth End 1/2 way2 Kestral) 15  
 Don Malcolmson Macs Reef Rd (Denley to Gum Flat) 7  
 Connie & Hans Bachor Dnly Dr to Macs Rf Rd incl Bchm Gr 28  
 Nora Stewart Rovere Ln 7  
 Carol & Clive Boughton Macs Reef Rd (Bankers to Fed Hwy) 33  
 Beth Hope Gum Flat Ln 6  
 Kevin Beier DenleyDr (Kestral2 1/2 way 2SthEnd) 15

### 147: CO-ORDINATED BY IAN COILLET ph 6238 3425

Michael & Jose Deane FdHwSvcRd/Bidges/Hickey/O'Gold 63  
 Robert&Marzena Luton Sutton Park Estate 48  
 Ian Coillet Fed Hwy Misc 7

### 203: CO-ORDINATED BY KEVIN ANDERSON ph 6236 9333

Phil & Pam Dawes Donnelly Rd & Donnelly Ln 25  
 Kevin Anderson B'dore Rd (Macs Reef to Summerhill) 35  
 Kerrie Gougeon B'dore Rd (Fed Hwy to Summerhill) 25  
 Sue Aunella Brooks Rd 21

### 109: CO-ORDINATED BY NED NOEL ph 6238 3484

Diana Griffin Majors Close 18  
 Advertisers & Misc (Out of area mailouts) 41

Bill Owen Cooper Rd 26  
 Stuart Whitten Canning Cl 17  
 Alan Rope Sutton Rd 40

Margaret Heleimin Merino Vale Dr 17  
 Anne Gardner Weeroona Dr (Norton to Majors) 31  
 Penny Evans Norton Rd (Campbell to Bingley) 26

Deb Gordon Yalana East 44  
 Rob Gorham South end Clare Valley 38  
 Lyle Montesin The Forest Rd area incl Joe Rcks 60  
 Bungendore Foodworks Bungendore 10

Brian Higginson Denley Dr (Birchmans to Kestral inc) 12  
 Rhett Cox Macs Reef Rd (Newington to Bankers) 7  
 Morag & Guy Cotsell Macs Reef Rd b'n Nwgtm& Harriott 30  
 Sandra Favre Macs Reef Rd b'n Nwngtn& Harriott 20  
 Joan Milnor Birriwa Rd plus Macs Rf Rd to Harriott 30  
 Tony Bond Hogan Dr/Orana Dr/Yuranga Dr 35

Jenny Bryce Wattle Flat Rd 11  
 Penny & Russell Ball Macs Reef (Denley Dr to Bungdre Rd) 18

David Featherston Summerhill and Creekborough Rds 26  
 Attila & Cherry Hrgsi. Snowgum Rd 26  
 Chris Fowler Shinglehouse & Millyn Rds 20  
 Richard Holding Wyoming & Doust Rds 25

David Anderson Weeroona (Majors to Denley) 36  
 Palerang Council Council Offices 14

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Picture titled "Lizard in my backyard", by Zachary Parkes, age 5.  
The picture is of a lizard Zachary saw in the backyard over summer at our property. He really likes lizards because of their long tongues and they can hide really well. He also likes the way some of them can stick to trees with their feet and hands.



**New Classifieds**

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### St Andrews and St Peters -- Church Notices

The interior modifications to St Andrews are taking shape, and it should give us a more flexible space. With concertina glass doors, the utility area can now be opened up to the main body of the church. This will make it easier for large crowds at Christmas and Easter services, and less congested for morning tea and chat after the Sunday services, and Kids Club. It is rather special that these alterations are being done by Pat Harradine, who has done a lot of work in the Wamboin-Sutton area. We are very pleased to welcome Robyn Robinson back to the organ at St Peters, once a month. It will ease the load for Bill and Christine, and perhaps allow them to have an occasional holiday!

There are plans afoot to start a regular gathering of those older members of the community who might like to get together at St Andrews for morning tea and music. There are many people in our midst who like to play an instrument or sing or simply enjoy listening to others, but feel isolated at home, especially during the long winter months. This is just an idea being floated to see who would be interested in coming together on a fortnightly or monthly basis. Morning tea and transport to and from would be provided. If you are interested, or know someone who might enjoy being involved in this activity, please contact any of the numbers listed below.

And finally, the Patronal service at St Peters, was held on the last Sunday of the month. Many regulars were away, taking a break from our cold weather, but there was a good crowd to celebrate the Saints day, and the little church looked splendid. The scrumptious spread after the service was much appreciated and we all welcomed the chance to catch up and swap yarns.

Services are held on the first and third Sunday of each month at St Andrews, at 9am, and on the second and fourth Sunday at St Peters, at the same time. Kids Club is having a break for the school holidays but will resume when the children return to school. Contacts: Robyn Robertson...62383202, Bronwyn Elliott...62383359, Alan Rope...623224, Peter Cartwright...62303202

### Abbey Nelson, aged 6 , of Macs Reef Road “Chickens running from one of the local foxes”



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## Nature Notes June 2013

Jo Walker

As I am writing this on the last day of June, it feels almost like spring outside. The ground is moist after all the recent rain and lots of tiny plants have germinated to green up the landscape.

The *Wurmbea dioica* (Early Nancy) are putting up their slender onion-like leaves, and, in some areas on my place, little forests of *Geranium solanderi* are appearing. It looks like a good year for the yellow-flowering daisy, Austral Bear's Ear (*Cymbonotus lawsonianus*), as little plants have been coming up for some time now in all of the open areas. Rosettes of Scaly Buttons (*Leptorhynchos squamatus*) and Billy Buttons (*Craspedia variabilis*) are appearing in the damper areas, and Little Dumpy Orchids (*Diplodium truncatum*) are coming up in all the usual places. One population at the top of the hill here is now covering over a metre of ground.

The White-winged Chough family that returned here last month still visits regularly and has protracted tiffs with the Noisy Miners some days. The Little Pied Cormorant and White-faced Heron that frequented the dam here for several months have gone elsewhere but have been replaced by a lone Grebe (most probably an Australasian Grebe rather than a Hoary-headed Grebe, but I haven't had a good look at it yet). The local pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles visited during the month. A cacophony of Raven calls caught my attention – they were harassing the two eagles who had perched (rather unsteadily) in one of the eucalypts for a rest.

There seem to be a lot of Huntsman Spiders around this winter. I seem to be carrying one outside every few days and was greeted by one waving a long leg round the edge of the door when I opened it this morning. Almost all of them are male spiders.

After some heavy rain at the beginning of the month, there was a large emergence of Swift Moths (Family: Hepialidae). The larvae of these large moths feed in the trunks and roots of eucalypts, pupate in the soil, and emerge after rain leaving the large tan-coloured empty pupal cases protruding from the ground. They are attracted to light at night, often leaving windows creatively adorned with long droplets of white fluid. One morning, I found a pile of moth wings near the verandah door. Obviously some small mammal had had a feed of the highly nutritious moths. I put out a few pellets for the kangaroos on the verandah the night after finding the moth wings. They left some of them, and, the next morning, I found another heap of moth wings in a corner stacked on the neatly piled pellets. So far, the perpetrator remains a mystery.

Not so another little animal spotted by Gayle, a neighbour who lives a little to the north of my place. She rang me one day to tell me about an exciting find at their place and then emailed a photo to confirm it. It was a Spotted Quoll! They are mostly found in the taller, wetter forests near the coast or in the coastal ranges, but every now and then one turns up further afield. Now Wamboin has one of its own. Spotted Quolls are about the size of a well-fed cat with long furry tails. Their dense dark brown fur is blotched with large white spots which extend down the tail. They are carnivorous (and by all accounts quite fierce little animals) and feed on birds, lizards, small mammals and insects and will also eat carrion. They shelter in rock cavities or tree hollows and can climb and hunt in trees.

The range of Wamboin and Bywong fauna and flora seems to still be on the increase. We don't have Koalas yet although there was a sighting reported from Sutton Road some years ago (and a sickly one was recently found at Jerrabomberra, rescued and treated and later released into a safe area). So, who knows what might turn up here in years to come.



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FOR HIRE from the Wamboin Hall: A 4 Burner, Hooded BBQ with side burner. Half cast iron plate and half grill plus temperature gauge. \$50 (includes gas) together with \$30 cleaning bond. Both payable on collection. Bond refunded if BBQ is returned clean. Enquiries - Joan Mason 6238 3258.

Trestles and chairs are available for hire by local residents. Hire rates are: Trestle \$10ea and chairs \$1.50 ea. Price does not include delivery or pick-up charges. Available from the Wamboin Community Hall, 112 Bingley Way. Must be returned in clean servicable condition. All damages are responsibility of the hirer. Equipment must be tied securely on trailer etc. whentaken (otherwise they don't go.) Time of pick-up and returned MUST be adhered to (I don't live at the Hall!) - Joan Mason, 62383258.



## Wamboin Golf

by John Whitney

An event re-shuffle had L & L King sponsoring the June event a little earlier than planned. Scrumptious eats by Libby were enjoyed by all at the end of the day's play around a big fire in the community hall. Close to 15 players turned out to compete in a stroke event around our rain blessed course. This month's Googly Ball went to Paul Griffin and we all know who received the Dummy Spit award.

**Winners:** The encouragement award went to Madison and Alex Gordon with the days Junior Award going to Taylor Miners with a score of 54/26 - well done Taylor.

The 9 hole event was won by John Whitney, on count back, with a 38/32, second would have been Larry but ... so Steve Miners took out 2nd with a 41/32 with Joan and/or Lofty taking 3rd with a 45/32.

The 18 hole event was won by Tim Barter with a 79/65, second was Paul Griffin with 94/71 and Len Ivey taking 3rd with 87/73.

Nearest the pin and longest drive ball winners were Ken Gordon x2, Joan Mason x 2, Larry King, Tim Barter, Stephen Miners, Len Ivey and Lofty Mason.

Don't forget next month's event is the GST Anniversary. Come along to the Community Hall in Bingley Way on Sunday at 12:15 for a 12:30 start, all welcome. Picture: Sponsor Larry with his trusty 'ole 55' driver on the par 3 4th.

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## Bush Baroque

by Richard and Joan Milnor

**Bush Baroque** will present another of their popular concerts in aid of Hartley LifeCare (providing support for the disabled) at their Bywong home on the weekend of July 27 and 28. This concert of early music entitled "Sacred and Sublime" will be given on Saturday and Sunday both starting at 2.00 pm. We welcome back as guest Emma Griffiths, a charismatic



soprano blessed with an angelic voice who has sung with Parson's Affayre in Sydney and now sings with Coro in Canberra. She will be singing a sacred concerto by Buxtehude, a cantata by Telemann, sacred motets by Guerrero and two of David Yardley's new settings of Chaucerian words from his new CD.

Come along and hear Canberra districts only viol consort which consists of treble, tenor and bass instruments making a glorious sonority. Playing consort music was popular amongst royalty and the landed gentry in their stately homes in England at the time of Henry VIII and Shakespeare. Famous players

include Samuel Pepys and King Charles 1. Richard Milner, Joan Milner, Owen Bingham and Rachel Walker will play viol fantasies of William Byrd and Giovanni Coprario (real name Joe Cooper!) as well as combining with Emma in the Guerrero and Yardley pices.

Trio sonatas for recorders with harpsichord and organ by Godfrey Finger and Paolo Bellinzani will round off this varied programme.

Of our last concert Jill Gregory said:

"A true Gem! I came away from the concert feeling buoyed by the music, in awe of the talents of others and quietly pleased that the proceeds went to Hartley LifeCare. I will certainly be there for the next concert." Wamboin Whisper August 2012

Bookings are essential, please contact us to ensure a place as we have limited seating.

Email: [violsaustrali@gmail.com](mailto:violsaustrali@gmail.com), or phone (62369212). Details of the venue will be sent with your booking confirmation.

See selections from our recent concerts on <http://www.youtube.com/user/violsaustralia>

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## News from WWOW The Wonderful Women of Wamboin

By Gail Ritchie Knight

The Wonderful Women of Wamboin continue to meet every Monday sharing stories, news and skills. A couple of weeks ago long-term member Liz Hendrikson conducted a short workshop on how to cover a tape measure. Using colourful patterned scrap fabric we each transformed a plain utilitarian item into an attractive small gift. Not only is Liz nimble with the thimble she is also a retired teacher and both sets of skills shone on the day.

Two of our group, Robin Asman and Kerry Garland, are also members of the Canberra Spinners and Weavers and recently exhibited their work at the 'Warped and Twisted' exhibition at The Q Performing Arts Centre. They are exceptionally talented and their works on display were magnificent. Robin's rag rug was a whimsical depiction of her family living in the country. While Kerry entered a number of items including hand-dyed spun and woven scarves, shawl and vest.

All women are welcome at WWOW — Mondays, 10 AM to 12 NOON at St Andrew's Anglican Church on the corner of Poppet Road and Norton Road in Wamboin.

For more information contact Gail Ritchie Knight 0416 097 500 [whirlwind@argonite.com.au](mailto:whirlwind@argonite.com.au).



Left: By Robin Asman

Right: By Kerry Garland



**FOR HIRE: WAMBOIN COMMUNITY HALL.** Bookings arranged by Joan Mason 6238 3258. Local Residents \$100, Bond \$250. Non-Resident \$150, Bond \$300. The Hall is not available for teenage, 18 or 21st. functions.

**FOR HIRE: BYWONG COMMUNITY HALL.** Suitable for smaller functions and seminars, groups etc. Check availability and booking information on [www.bywongcommunity.org.au](http://www.bywongcommunity.org.au).

The Whisper is a community newspaper for Wamboin and Bywong. If you live in the area and have something to say about living here that is informative, thoughtful or entertaining, think about writing it up for the next issue. For more information contact the editor on 6238-3484 or email [nednoel@optusnet.com.au](mailto:nednoel@optusnet.com.au)

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**Editor's Note:** Canberra Equine Hospital offered to prepare veterinary content for the Whisper as a series of articles. I declined because of worries about running articles which could possibly have a double purpose of providing information while also being a form of advertisement. Canberra Equine hospital offered to pay for the more educative content at the rate charged for advertisement, saying they will try using their paid space below to provide information useful to residents.

## Hendra Virus- So What's the Deal?

By Dr. Natasha Hovanessian, BVSc., MS.

Hendra Virus is probably the most frightening disease currently present in Australia, due to its deadly risk to human life. It has been classified as Bio-Safety Level 4 Hot Agent, meaning it is in the deadliest category of diseases on earth because there is no human vaccine or treatment. Not trying to be alarmist here, because Hendra is actually seriously alarming.

The virus was named Hendra after the Brisbane suburb in which it first occurred in 1994. Over 35 further outbreaks of Hendra have occurred from northern Queensland to Macksville, NSW. All four species of flying foxes and bats in Australia have tested positive to shedding the virus. This means it's only a matter of time before horses across the country could contract Hendra. June and July is the time when more bats are recorded to shed live virus, as opposed to other times of the year. This is reflected in the fact that the majority of horse Hendra cases occur between May and August.



Fruit bats are 'natural hosts', carrying the virus with little effect to them before passing it onto horses. Five to 16 days after infection, horses may begin to show fever, neurologic signs, depression, colic and respiratory disease from oedema (fluid) and congestion in the lungs. The wide range

of signs in horses makes Hendra difficult to diagnose without testing, because so many other conditions look just like it. Therefore, the safest bet for human health is to presume it's Hendra until proven otherwise. Signs in humans include bleeding and fluid in the lungs, and neurological disease. Transmission of Hendra from bats to humans has not been reported. Humans contract the disease through virus-containing bodily fluids from infected horses. Sadly, four of the seven humans who contracted Hendra have died. Horses in close contact can also spread the virus to each other through secretions including from the nose, blood, urine and manure.

*Zoetis Australia*<sup>®</sup>, developed a highly effective vaccine for horses in 2012, which stops replication and shedding of the virus if a horse is infected. Accredited veterinarians can administer the vaccine, with an initial course of two shots 21 to 42 days apart then 6-monthly boosters are currently recommended. The Australian Veterinary Association recommends vaccination for Hendra in all horses across the country and is working to educate horse owners about its importance.

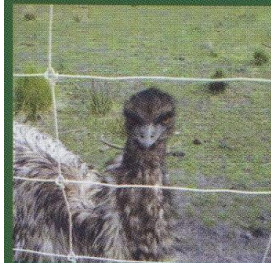
### Special Offer!!!

Horses receiving their first Hendra vaccine before the 31<sup>st</sup> July, receive the second vaccine free. Additionally, horses due for their 6-monthly booster before 31<sup>st</sup> July receive a free *Equest Plus Tape*<sup>®</sup> worming paste.

Contact Canberra Equine Hospital at: (02) 6241 8888 or [equine@canberravet.com.au](mailto:equine@canberravet.com.au).

[Or visit our website at www.canberraequinehospital.com.au](http://www.canberraequinehospital.com.au)

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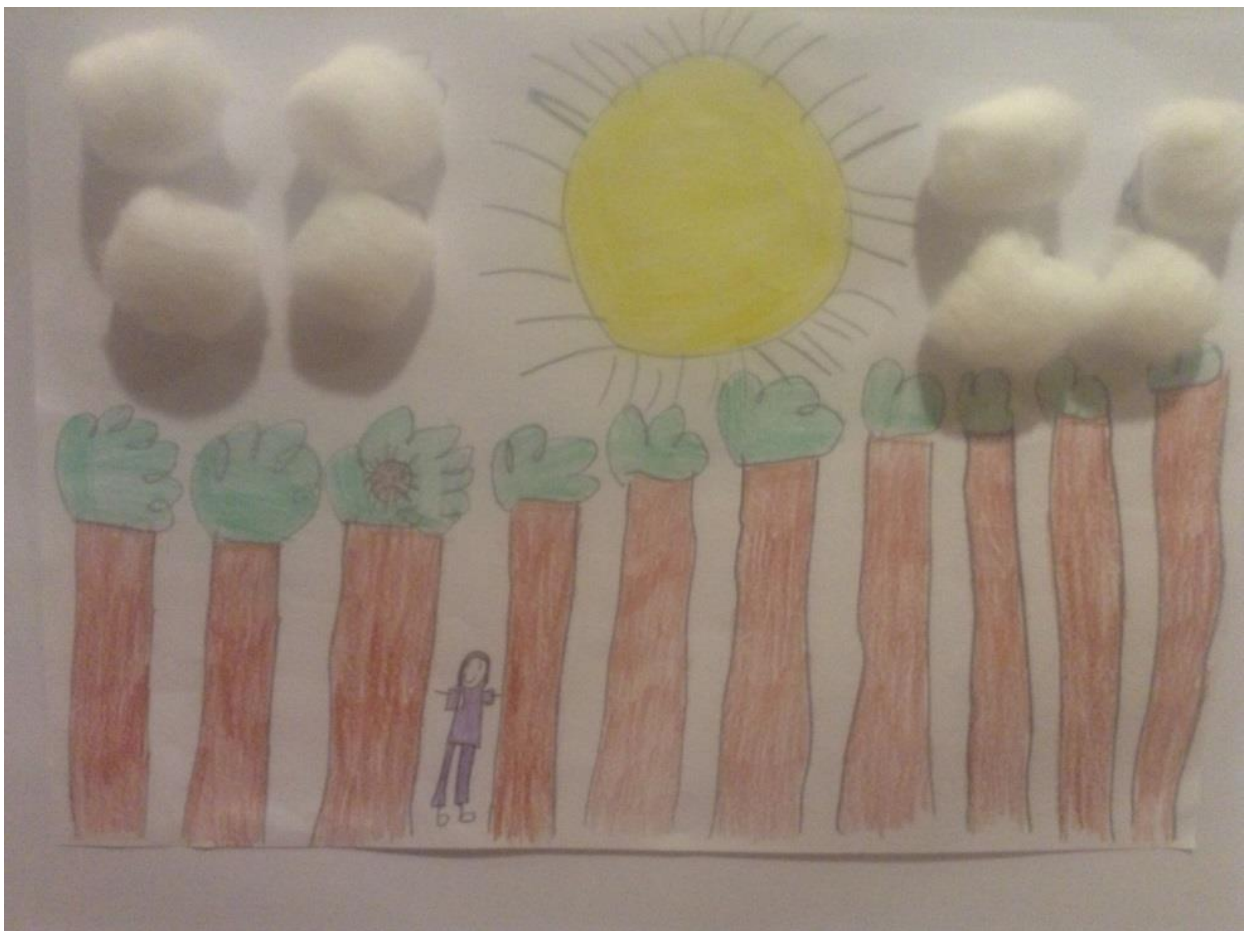
## WAMBOIN PONY CLUB June - 2013

What a busy month for your local Wamboin Pony Club. Not only was there our regular rally day, which saw a great turnout of riders, but it was a busy day spent practicing for our Mounted Games Event. What a great day that turned out to be, held last week at Bungendore Showground. 95 riders from clubs all around the local area and some from further afield competed in the Wamboin Pony Club Friendly Games. It was great to see led riders as young as 3 years old competing alongside those older and much more skilled, however the nature of the event means all can have fun and enjoy the day. Mounted games involves horse and rider attempting various games which need skill and technique to complete tasks such as carrying items while riding or dismounting and completing tasks on the ground then riding again. All races are timed and teams are scored in these times. An exciting and fun day which all seemed to enjoy. Thanks to all the helpers on the day. So if you have access to your own horse and are aged from 5-25 come along and join in the company of other riders and see what Wamboin Pony Club has to offer. Our club has dedicated volunteer instructors who will not only help your riding improve but make the day enjoyable. Wamboin Pony club usually meet's twice a month on Sunday's on our grounds at the end of Canning Close. For information about Wamboin Pony Club and our upcoming rally days go to our website: [www.wamboin.pcansw.org.au](http://www.wamboin.pcansw.org.au) for information, we hope we will see you soon. - Steve Quick



### Zoe Richards Age 8

What I like most about Wamboin is going for bushwalks through the trees and finding interesting things.





## **Solar Energy, Energy Suppliers, and Solar Energy Buy-backs**

**Naomi Robertson and Sam Reisenfeld**

This article includes some information provided by neighbours in response to our post on the *Wamboin Noticeboard* during the month of June. In our post we asked for people's experiences with energy suppliers and in particular for any information on the buying back of excess energy generated by solar energy systems. We received several responses, and so thought this was a matter worthy of discussion in the *Wamboin Whisper*.

### **A solar energy scenario**

Here's the scenario at our place. Almost immediately after moving in during January 2013, we installed a fairly large (40-panel) solar energy system on the assumption that we would generate much of our necessary electrical power and that what we didn't use during the day could be sold back to Essential Energy, the electricity distribution company. We were led to believe by the outfit that sold us the solar panels (at a cost exceeding \$16,000) that during the day we would avoid purchasing energy at approximately \$0.32 per kilowatt hour and also be able to sell any excess energy we put back into the grid at approximately \$0.08 per kilowatt hour. We hit a number of snags, and the system wasn't fully operational for at least two months, but we were expecting to see great results on the bill that came out in June. Imagine our surprise when the bill showed that we were receiving nothing for the 975 kilowatt hours that we were shown to have put back into the grid.

### **Confusion about suppliers vs. billers**

The electricity distribution company in our area is apparently Essential Energy. However, there are several entities which bill customers for their energy use. We were being billed by ACTewAGL, mostly because I had a previous account with them and was loathe to change. As I understand from neighbours' responses, we might get a better deal by switching to Origin Energy, or, as one person suggested, Dodo Power and Gas (although I admit that the name does not inspire confidence). Each of these billing entities has a website where you can, after a series of links, and if your eyes don't glaze over first, access their pricing schemes. Alternatively, you can ring them and, after a few minutes in the queue, talk to a Real Live Person who will provide you with similarly confusing information about "All Day Rates" vs. "Time of Use Rates" and "Discounts" if you sign a contract of some specified length.

### **Energy in the ACT vs. in our area of NSW**

ACTewAGL appears to have radically different billing practices for its customers in Canberra and its customers in Wamboin. The first difference is in the "Electricity Consumption Charge" which our recent bill shows as \$0.3129 per kWh, while an ACTewAGL bill for a resident of Canberra is \$0.179 per kWh (granted, this person was also paying a "Daily Supply Charge" of \$0.605 per day, which amounted to \$58.08 over a 96 day period). Said Canberra resident thought this was fair in that supplying electricity to his flat in the centre of the city entailed much less infrastructure than supplying electricity to a rural property more than half a kilometer from the road. However, the fact remains that we are being billed nearly twice as much per kWh long after the infrastructure has been provided, and with only occasional service call-outs for Essential Energy staff. The second issue on which ACTewAGL discriminates is in providing "buy back" for solar energy systems connected to the grid. It appears that even in the ACT the rates for "buy back" have become significantly less generous over the past few years, and another change will be implemented on July 1, 2013. From what I can determine, ACTewAGL will provide \$0.075 per kWh for electricity put into the grid by solar energy systems in the ACT.

When we rang ACTewAGL about their non-payment of any "buy back" amount, we were told by one customer service agent that they had discontinued such payments. A call the following day, however, led to the admission that they were going to start paying something as of July 1, 2013 at a rate of \$0.06/kWh.

### **Origin Energy**

A couple people on the *Wamboin Noticeboard* recommended Origin Energy, and I would say that, on the face of it, they were at least *more friendly* than ACTewAGL, and that they may have better terms (although their pricing was also changing on July 1, 2013). From notes that I took in talking to Real Live Person "Bob" I determined the following for customers of Essential Energy in our part of NSW:

The rates depend on a choice of metering schemes. You can choose an "All Day Rate" of \$0.3127 per kWh (which is the same as ACTewAGL's) or you can choose a "Time of Use" rate, which gives advantage for "off peak" energy consumption. In this case:

Peak usage (between 7AM and 10PM) is \$0.3489 per kWh and

Off-peak usage (10PM to 7AM) is \$0.1737 per kWh

This appears to be a good deal for people with solar energy systems since, for at least part of the peak period, you would be "off the grid", and when you were running your heater or air conditioner overnight you would be doing so at about half the rate.

In addition, Origin offers a 16% discount for those who sign a 12-month contract. During this time the rates are locked in. What is not locked in, however, is a \$0.06 per kWh "buy back" of solar energy put back into the grid, which will be the going rate starting July 1, 2013.

### **Solar Storage Batteries**

It is tempting to contemplate *storing* the energy from one's solar system so that it could be used at night, or on the rare day when the sun doesn't make much of an appearance. Aside from the obvious savings you could anticipate by not having a power bill, you could also have the satisfaction of telling the energy suppliers and billers to shove off, that you are no longer subject to their confusing/high-handed/discriminatory policies. Unfortunately, this is not a viable option, except for the person who may have a spare \$16,000 or so on hand, which most of us do not, especially if we've paid nearly that to install the solar panels already.

Two neighbours who responded on the *Wamboin Noticeboard* do have storage batteries and seem happy with being “off the grid” (others may also have done so, and we would welcome information on your experience with batteries). One pioneering family chose to install batteries because they were building a home on a block that was not connected to the grid, and it would cost about half as much to connect to the grid as to install their entire solar system, including batteries. This family estimates the current cost of batteries such as they installed to be about \$16,500, with a guarantee of 10 years of proper use. They state that more recent gel or lithium batteries claim to be maintenance-free. This family claims that they can enjoy power from the batteries for about 3 cloudy/rainy days although they have a back-up generator for boosting the charge in the batteries.

**A Word of Caution**

Apparently, the electrical energy billing company is not obligated by either state or federal law to disclose the terms and conditions of an electrical energy contract to the consumer prior to establishing a contract with that individual. Contracts, including long term contracts, may be entered into by the consumer simply agreeing to the contract in a telephone conversation. The energy billing company and the energy distribution company then reserve the right to change the terms and conditions of the contract and the billing rates for energy consumption without informing the customer in advance, or, indeed, without ever informing the customer. The first indication of an increase of billing rates would be contained in the bill received by the customer. The change of billing rate is not required to be indicated in a clear manner on the bill. Both the electricity distribution company and the billing company are, by current law, able to substantially benefit by the fact that most customers are unlikely to switch companies when they are unaware of increased charging rates.

A factor in minimizing the amount of power that customers can put into the electricity grid and sell to the electricity distribution company is the insistence by the electricity distribution company that the supply voltage at the power meter be kept at the high point of the acceptable range of voltages. This minimizes current flow into the grid and subsequently reduces the power that the solar panels are able to supply to the grid. The voltage can be reduced to 240 volts (which is the centre of the voltage range) by the energy distribution company by a simple change of the tap at the power transformer located near the customer’s house. There apparently is no regulatory requirement of the electricity distribution company to reduce the voltage to 240 volts at the customer’s request. Clearly, the electricity distribution company is not being driven by minimizing Australia’s carbon footprint but is making decisions that only maximize their own profit at the expense of a higher carbon footprint.

There has been movement in Australia in recent years to deregulate the electricity industry. However, Essential Energy, ACTewAGL, and Origin Energy are all partially owned by the Government, and part of the profit from all three companies goes into the Government coffers. It is interesting to speculate why the Government has instituted a Carbon Emissions Tax to minimize Australia’s carbon footprint and at the same time, through lack of appropriate regulation, has not regulated companies which it partially owns that operate in ways to increase Australia’s carbon footprint. In both the Carbon Emission Tax and ownership of energy companies, the Government benefits through income to the Treasury. However, it is interesting to speculate whether the primary motivation of the Carbon Emission Tax is to produce income or to actually reduce Australia’s carbon footprint. Perhaps the legislation which regulates the electricity industry must be changed to reflect a consistent and coherent Government policy which truly will reduce Australia’s carbon footprint. If the legislators are not able to produce the necessary changes in regulations, perhaps it is time to change the legislators themselves.

**Conclusions**

Installing a solar system is pricey, and negotiating the terms of various electrical suppliers and billers is annoying. So far we see the “break-even” point (when our system will have paid for itself) receding into the distant future. We would like to learn more about storage batteries and hope that people who have taken the pioneering step of becoming energy self-sufficient will consider writing a *Whisper* column for the benefit of their neighbours. In the meantime, may you enjoy sunny days (with the occasional much-needed rain) and the happiness of hearth and home.



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## Councillor's Corner

**Constitutional Recognition of Local Government** — For anyone who is not already aware of the fact, there will be a referendum held in conjunction with the upcoming Federal Election. The referendum will be seeking endorsement to amend the Australian Constitution to recognise the existence of local government.

As it currently stands, there is no reference to local government in the Constitution. To many, this may seem inconsequential, but recent decisions in the High Court have questioned the legality of Commonwealth funding to any entity that is not so recognised.

Local Government is an instrument of State Government. Councils are created and dismantled by the State, they carry out such functions as they are directed by the State, and to some extent they are funded by the State. Of course, Local Government raises some of its own revenue, through council rates and charges, but it also receives a significant level of funding from the Commonwealth. More specifically, a large proportion of the funding for the maintenance of community infrastructure, including local roads, bridges, swimming pools, sporting facilities and the like, is provided by the Commonwealth, either directly through programs like Roads to Recovery (R2R), or through agencies like Regional Development Australia (RDA).

As an example of how important this funding is to our community, in the 2012/13 financial year almost 30% of the funding for the maintenance of local road infrastructure came from the Commonwealth, through the R2R program. A similar situation exists with respect funding for community infrastructure such as community halls and sporting facilities. If these programs were to be abandoned, the only way to maintain service levels would be through direct increases in rates.

The change being sought to the Constitution seeks to avoid any challenge to the legitimacy of these funding programs. Section 96 of the Constitution would be amended to formalise the capacity of the Commonwealth to provide funds directly to local government bodies.

Specifically, Section 96 would be amended to read "...Parliament may grant financial assistance to any state **or local government body formed by a law of a State** on such terms and conditions as the Parliament thinks fit." (Amendment in bold).

This would not change the status of councils. Nor would it give the Federal Government any power over local government. It would simply remove the uncertainty that now surrounds direct funding programs such as R2R, which have been in place for many years, under both sides of politics.

The referendum has support from all political parties and independents, the bill passing through the lower house with only two dissenting votes. There is, nonetheless, resistance to the proposal at the State Government level, where it is seen as undermining their authority.

From the local government perspective, the change is simply seen as a means of ensuring that the development and maintenance of local infrastructure remains, as far as possible, under the control of local communities, and not left to the whim of the State or as yet another financial burden on ratepayers.

**The Palerang Blog**—New entries in my councillor website Blog (<http://peteharrison.id.au/blog>) since my last update: Constitutional Recognition

Council's General Meetings are held on the first Thursday of the month, commencing at 5.00 pm. Members of the public are welcome. The meeting location varies—check Council's website (<http://palerang.nsw.gov.au>) for details. Meeting Business Papers are also available on Council's website on the Friday preceding the meeting.

- Cr Pete Harrison, Ph. 6238 3640, Mob. 0427 711 028, Email: [Pete.Harrison@palerang.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Pete.Harrison@palerang.nsw.gov.au)

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## Wamboin Muse

Jill Gregory

There's nothing like the comforting glow and warmth of a wood fire, but it takes more than a roaring fire to keep a house warm at this time of the year. Our house was built when most people insulated their ceilings with a few inches of batts, put token insulation in wall cavities if there were spare funds, curtained the expanses of glass with heavy curtains where affordable, and carpeted the wooden floors. But fashion changed, and we ripped up carpets opting for the simplicity of wooden floors and hoping, at the same time, to confound dust mites. We dismissed pelmets as fusty and outdated, and opened the curtains during the day to banish the gloom in an empty house. When we returned in the evening we wondered why it was like entering an icebox. We sat by the fire at night and talked about how we could make the place cosier, but then the weather would start to warm up and we'd be in the garden desperately trying to keep abreast of spring. Suddenly, it would be winter again and we were back to where we started. Now that we are spending more time at home, however, and are not wielding the mattock so vigorously, we are trying to change our ways. We are installing double glazing and pelmets, but it is a slow process. When you choose to live on twenty acres in the bush, you tend to like doing things yourself, so nothing ever happens quickly. And although I use the word, "we", suggesting that there are two hard at work, when it comes to actually doing the job I shamefully admit that it is "he". I'm better with ideas, morning tea and holding a hammer, thoughtfully.

A week or so ago we were just part of the crowd warming ourselves at another fire, the bonfire in the old church grounds at Sutton. It was a simple but spectacular family event. The local Fire Brigade created a massive pile of wood, a sculpture in itself, and the flames disposed of an old pine tree that had long ago reached its use by date. The evening had an old fashioned charm about it. While the adults stood around chatting and sipping, relishing the flames and warming dark faces, the kids, big and small, explored the night, playing games in the dark in time honoured fashion. It was a happy, casual atmosphere, and I wondered if the kids ran free because there was a fence of sorts around the perimeter. There were defined limits, so parents could let their kids go, and the kids could push the boundaries, safe within those limits. It made me think about the importance of boundaries in our lives and the need to give them a nudge occasionally.

In the garden the rain gauge has filled twice and is filling again, and the creek is making sweet music. We've planted a crab apple to replace the one that languished for years after being ringbarked by hares, I've found some plants sown by birds and put them in little pots for spring planting, and I've been picking up barrow loads of kindling and firewood. Winter has its own delights.

I wouldn't live anywhere else..... and most especially when it's cold and grey outside and I'm sitting comfortably beside a good fire in the knowledge that there's a full wood box on the back verandah.

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