



E NEWS MAY 2009

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Welcome to the May edition of E News 2009. The weather has changed significantly here in Victoria since the Easter break and there is nearly a metre of snow in the high country. In certain areas seasonal track closures will be brought forward because of the effect of the devastating bushfires for the year, so I urge all members to check with the local park ranger or DSE officer in charge before you head off on your new four wheel drive trek.

Over the last month a significant amount of work has occurred at Four Wheel Drive Victoria and amongst other things in my spare time I have been reading a book called Making Visitors Mindful written Gianna Moscardo and having regard to our interests in creating a sustainable environment for our recreation the book is a compelling read. For example, the author writes:

“In summary then, sustainable tourism is based upon 3 core principals:

- 1. Quality. Sustainable tourism provides a quality experience for visitors while improving the quality of life of the host community and protecting the quality of the environment.*
- 2. Continuity. Sustainable tourism ensure the continuity of the natural resources upon which it is based and the continuity of the culture of the host community*
- 3. Balance. Sustainable tourism balances the needs of hosts, guests and the environment.*

Good communication and interpretation can contribute to sustainable tourism and recreation through enhancing the quality of the experience for visitors and encouraging continued visitor interest in the activity and assisting in the management of visitors and their impact thus contributing to

the continued quality of the environment and the way of life of the host community.”.

We often talk about and encourage our club members to get involved in rural and regional communities as we travel on our journey. The Camp Host program tries to encourage people to behave well and to learn more about the environment in which they are travelling. All of these things have a serious impact for the better in supporting rural communities, protecting the environment and enhancing the enjoyment of visitors to our recreation. Later in this edition of E News I discuss Camp Host and encourage you all to get involved for the obvious benefits of promoting your own club but more importantly supporting the rural and regional communities in which we travel and preserving the environment we visit.

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General Manager

It is with great pleasure I announce the appointment of Mr Russell Sturzaker as the new General Manager for Four Wheel Drive Victoria. Russell has had a very successful background in running his own business and others in the printing industry. He was previously the Senior Vice President of the Printing Industry of Australia Association and has had significant dealings with government, sponsorships and members issues. Russell has worked in the four wheel drive industry in his previous role as Sales and Marketing Manager for Piranha Off Road Products and he is an active member of the Pajero Four Wheel Drive Club. Please welcome Russell to the association and I look forward to developing a business plan as we go forward. Russell starts with us on Monday the 11th May 2009.

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Regional Representatives

The Regional Representatives Group held one of their bi-annual meetings last Sunday, 26 April 2009 in Ballarat with 13 club representatives and 9 Parks and DSE staff. The meeting discussed the introduction of the MVO Track Access Policy which was accessed for the first time that weekend by the Melbourne Jeep Owners Club and congratulations to them in that regard the Camp Host update, Parks Victoria and DSE Statewide Program, a report on the Murray River and Alpine National Park Planning process.

Further discussion centred on the track classification role out, its process, its mapping and the plan for the Otways and wombat areas to be assessed during late May. The terrific news in relation to the track classification program is that the data will be stored on the Vic Map 1 in 50,000 reference system with DSE.

Mr Ross Grant of Parks Victoria gave a presentation in relation to the planning approach to the Alpine National Park. He reported that a new approach is being

adopted by Parks Victoria and members can visit the Parks website at www.weplan.parks.vic.gov.au and contribute to the planning process. Parks Victoria has created a website incorporating a blog, wiki and user contributed images and videos, social networking, a points reward system based on the amount of content contributed and an innovative participatory geographic information system. I encourage all our members to have a look at the planning process on this new website and contribute to the discussion. Four Wheel Drive Victoria will be dealing with the strategic issues of track access and disbursed vehicle based camping.

The next meeting of the Four Wheel Drive Regional Representatives will be in Bendigo on 7 September 2009 and we look forward to progressing and reporting on the track classification program at that time.

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Camp Host

The locations for Camp Host for the Queens Birthday weekend are Mount Buangor (Host City West), O'Tooles Camp Ground (Camp Host Jackaroo), Buckland Valley (Camp Host Wangaratta Four Wheel Drive Club), Grampians (Camp Host Wimmera Four Wheel Drive Club), Two Mile Camp Sites Dargo Area (Camp Host La Trobe Valley Four Wheel Drive Club), Murray River Barmah Lakes Camp Ground (Camp Host Toyota Landcruiser Club).

We have a site for the Otways, Mitchell River National Park and the Alpine Region of Victoria available for free clubs to pick up at this time and could you please consider your clubs position to earn some income and to participate in the enhancement of our recreation by contacting Suzie at the office of Four Wheel Drive Victoria on 03 9857 5209.

Four Wheel Drive Victoria has now produced a draft OH&S booklet for club members. This booklet has been sent to all club presidents for comment and to assist clubs when doing volunteer work.

The draft booklet has been prepared with a great deal of support from a number of people including Stan Williams and Bethne Goudie from the Wangaratta Four Wheel Drive Club, Steven Hanson from TLC and Range Rover Club Victoria and Jackie Woods from the Department of Sustainability and Environment. The booklet is a draft but is a good start in particular if when we do volunteer work the leader of the group spends a bit of time discussing safety issues giving people various jobs to look after each other and to protect the health and wellbeing of our members. I commend the work to you and seek club input so that we can sign off on a good workable and effective document.

VSB 14

For those of you who have not been in the loop VSB 14 is a proposed new law to be implemented which limits vehicle lift to a total of 50mm. This includes suspension, body and tyres. Four Wheel Drive Victoria has been making submissions on your behalf and has reached agreement with the AAAA (Australian Automotive Aftermarket Association) to carry out a number of tests on appropriate vehicles to submit to the Roads Corporation to support the principal that vehicle lift can be up to 100mm.

The Associations position is that there needs to be a scientific basis for formulating any view in relation to vehicle lift. It is obvious to most that excessive vehicle lift can be dangerous and there should be some common denominator that is consistent around Australia. This is the basis upon which VSB 14 is being formulated across the country. Your Association has met with the Minister's Office and with senior Vic Roads executives and a process has been agreed to.

Members should be concerned having regard to the terrain in which we travel in Victoria that they would be required to obtain a certification under the current proposed system for all vehicles, irrespective of age should the vehicle exceed 50mm in lift in excess of the manufacture's completed product. Your Association is actively managing the process at this time and club member should discuss the issue and be aware. Further information can be obtained from the Vic Roads website.

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Club Insurance

The renew of affiliation fees and public liability insurance has now gone out to all clubs and in accordance with the general meeting of March 2009 the affiliation fee including insurance will be \$40 per member. A more simple form has been sent out to clubs to complete where they estimate the number of members they will have for the insuring year, complete the form and questionnaire and return it with their cheque to the association office.

This year we have a significant change in the cover that is being provided to association members. In particular we have dispensed with the volunteer cover and we have replaced it with a members personal accident cover. Details of that cover and a summary are available from the Association website, but suffice to say we are excited to announce that all club members will be covered for personal accident whilst on any club trip. This expanded policy will cover all members and the definition of a member has been clarified to include the person who is the member together with all the direct family of that member. Special thanks must go to Ian Parsons, our insurance guru on the Board of Four Wheel Drive Victoria for his terrific help in developing this extended policy cover for our members.

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Business Plan

Members will be please to note that a new committee has been formed at Four Wheel Drive Victoria to deal with the recommendations made by the Club Presidents at the presidents meeting held each year in relation to the business plan.

The subcommittee chaired by Hari Maragos will consist of club members and their role will be to take the old business plan and amended it inline with the recommendations of the presidents at the November presidents meeting and then to work in consultation with our stake holders and clubs to consider and discuss improvements to the business plan going forward. The subcommittee will report back to the Board of Four Wheel Drive Victoria for sign off and approval of recommendation which will be put to the next appropriate general meeting. This new process will ensure that the business plan recommendations are picked up and adopted and that ongoing discussions continue to occur in that area. Any clubs that wish to be involved in the process are requested to contact Hari direct.

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MVO – Track Access Policy

Members will be pleased to know that the Track Access Policy has now officially started with the Melbourne Jeep Owners Club being the first club to access two MVO tracks in the Ottways on the weekend of the 25th and 26th April 2009.

All clubs that have been involved in a review of the no list of tracks have completed their work and a further report has been provided to Parks Victoria for ongoing discussion.

For those who do not know or understand the process, all MVO tracks in Victoria were listed and Parks rangers were asked to consider whether the tracks should be included in the MVO Access Policy. A sizable number of tracks across the state were given a yes commentary and a greater number were given a no commentary. Four Wheel Drive member clubs were asked to review the no list with a view to agreeing as to what tracks should remain in the no list and making recommendations of what tracks should be included in the yes list.

The process of course is continuing and will continue as tracks change nature and the cooperation that we have had from Parks Victoria is indicative of the relationship and the terms of our understanding between each other. This is a terrific testament to the outcomes being achieved by the Victorian Government policy and our partnership with Parks Victoria.

Members can download the MVO Track Access Policy paperwork from the Association website and obtain more information by contacting the Association office.

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Rural Response Group

Newsletter number 4 dated 3 April 2009 of the Rural Response Group advises that of the 75 clubs in Four Wheel Drive Victoria, 56 of the have registered interest in providing assistance to bushfire survivors. To date 46 of these clubs have already provided service. During the Easter and Anzac Day weekend members of some New South Wales and ACT clubs joined clubs operating in the Beechworth fire area. These services are being coordinated by David Blore of the Wangaratta Four Wheel Drive Club. The New South Wales/ACT Four Wheel Drive Association Vice President, Roger Sheath will be accompanying the New South Wales members. This interstate assistance and the work being done by our member clubs is absolutely fantastic.

We have been receiving many requests for assistance, in particular from the Wellington Shires Recovery Centre, fencing assistance for the Shires of Yarat Ranges, Nillumbuk and Whittlesea. The Gippsland Four Wheel Drive Club is seeking others to assist it in the Labertouche area and the Toyota Land Cruiser Club is seeking assistance for work being done in the Yarra Ranges Shire.

The Victorian Farmers Federation is established coordinators responsible for fencing recovery in most of the fire areas and the coordinators have been telephoning clubs for assistance. Your attention is drawn to the fact that we request that when working as a volunteer in this area it is important that all members and guest complete a volunteer activity form provided by the council or the Victorian Farmers Federation coordinators and that copies are kept by the team leaders of clubs assisting in that regard.

The caravan deliveries have nearly been completed and Four Wheel Drive Victoria has received a letter of thanks and appreciation from the Department of Human Services for assisting them with the delivery project. A copy of the letter has been emailed to all clubs involved so far. To those clubs who have been participating in these programs, thank you very much on behalf of all Victorians. Your work, your contribution and your assistance has been sensational.

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The Otways Trail Bike Project

DSE have been implementing a management plan to control trail bike activity in the Otways. The recommendations by DSE has been to close a number of tracks which has a direct impact on our recreation.

Four Wheel Drive Victoria does not support the principals enunciated by DSE and has specifically directed their attention to the provisions of the Vehicle Control Regulations which allow DSE to limit or prohibit class of vehicles in State parks and forests. It is the view of your association that if environmental damage is being occasioned by trail bikes and/or noise issues are affecting local residence then those

areas should be declared a trail bike free zone. The proposition that the tracks should be closed prejudicing our members is not acceptable to the Association.

To this end we have provided to Minister Gavin Jennings a detailed submission seeking a meeting to discuss this strategic issue further with a view to seeing that our members rights to their recreation are not prejudiced as a result of the activities of people how have little or no regard for the preservation and protection of the environment and local community issues. This is not to tar everyone with the same brush but to deal with an issue that must be faced and dealt with having regard that our principals of sustainable recreation and public land access for all needs to be maintained.

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Kookaburra Awards

Four Wheel Drive Victoria has made an application to be a recipient of a Kookaburra Award presented by Parks Victoria. A special function is being held in the Dandenong's during May to present awards and recognise outstanding achievement in environmental issues. More on this in the next exciting issue of E News.

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ARB Open Day

On 4 April 2009 ARB held a special open day which Four Wheel Drive Victoria supported. The Association had a display and handed out some 300 show bags to people how were not members of the Association so that we could provide them with information about clubs and activities. The open day was a great success with a large turnout of visits. It is proposed by ARB that they will make this an annual event.

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Association Submissions

Over the last month a number of submissions have been put into various authorities by the Association. In particular:

- The Devil Bend natural features reserve draft management plan.
- A green paper on land and bio diversity to DSE.
- A report to VAC on remanent vegetation.
- A report to DSE on the timber release plan.

These submissions have been put onto the download sections of the Association website should members be interested.

The latest and most important management plan process is the Alpine National Park Plan and I refer to you to my comments earlier in this edition of E News.

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Succession Planning

It is important for me to advise you that I will not be remaining as president of the Association at the Annual General Meeting this year. You will know that we have amended the Constitution to create a position for 12 months of the immediate past president. This position created to facilitate the transition from one presidency to another. With the appointment of our new general manager and opportunities for our business plans going forward there is a terrific opportunity for one of our members to step up to the plate and continue with the development of our association.

It has been my privilege to be your president for the last 6 years. It is my fervent wish that two of our members will put their hand up to follow the path that we have created over the last 6 years and develop our plans and projects for the benefit of all our members and all Victorians. I do not have any one person that I can say “g’day, its time for you to take over” and this is because, I think, leaders are very special people who set aside their own personal views to assist others in the broad sense, achieve outstanding outcomes. Notwithstanding that most leaders are the recipients of individual negative attacks. The understanding that everyone has a point of view and has a right to express that point of view is a very serious leadership trait.

To that end it is vitally important that our members discuss amongst themselves our succession plan. It’s not just a matter of saying she’ll be right because without discussion and proper planning “she” certainly will not be right. I ask you to think seriously about our future and to talk to your club leaders about being involved to takeover where I will leave off.

I wish you all the best for the winter touring season and I look forward to reporting further in the next edition of E News.

Michael Coldham

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