



**E NEWS**

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## **Introduction**

It is travel time when most of our members trek off to far flung exotic places across the length and breadth of the country. It is my time when I always manage to sneak off from work and do a trip but the GFC (Global Financial Crisis) got in the way for me and I found myself back at my desk dealing with some pretty serious issues for my clients. In

small business there are so many issues that confront business owners that I have been able to see real parallels with the development of our Association.

In the last three months, we have engaged Russell Sturzaker to take on the role of General Manager and now we have the support of Wayne Hevey and Fred Farrugia. I have commented before about the business of the Association, but I guess most of you will have next to no idea how much is being done by the team. It is not my intention to fill you in here, but I want to say how great it is that we now have for the first time in our history an organisation that is respected by a very large group of stakeholders, including but not limited to Government, Government agencies, business and our industry group.

I have talked about the issue involving VSB14 previously and there are now lots of people telling you in the media what terrific jobs they have done and how good they all are. We do not have a media unit and we do not get any air time, yet you can be assured that a great amount of work has been done with meetings with the Minister for Roads and Vicroads staff to get where we are today. All the work of the AAAA, VACC, The National Automotive Council and ourselves in working with Milton Oliver and our staff to make certain that the other state Associations get involved and the good work by the NSW&ACT Association in taking on the NSW minister for transport, who called us all Hoons because we had our vehicle modified.

What has happened is a social awareness of your Association, supported by Government, about how we do business and the outcomes we expect with co-operation and consultation. The VSB14 issue and other issues that will have an effect on our recreation are still on the table. The issue is not resolved. There is a lot of work that needs to be done in meetings and written submissions. The capacity to modify your vehicle within standard parameters is being lost for no reason other than corporate greed and government overregulation.

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### **Jamieson Licola Road**

Many of our members will be aware that we received notification four weeks ago that the Mansfield Shire Council had closed the Jamieson Licola Road by formal notice in the Government gazette. This meant that any person who drove on that road would be liable to a fine and loss of points. The fact that people have been getting stuck because they are badly prepared or trained and the fact that there have been at least two major call outs each year has been a major issue for Police and Emergency Services and those that drive on the closed road will be prosecuted.

In a meeting with Shire Officers held the 29<sup>th</sup> July between the General Manager and myself a presentation was made to Council to deal with the issue so it does not prejudice our members. I have pleasure in advising that agreement has been made with the Shire allowing Four Wheel Drive Victoria members access to the closed road by way of a permit system. A special notice has been sent out by the General Manager advising of the process that will be applied.

Only Four Wheel Drive Victoria members will be permitted this access and we have the obligation to support that privilege by making certain that only our members, who have been authorised by this new agreement drive on the road during the declared closure period. Members are urged to respect and protect the terms of this significant agreement.

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## **The future**

I furthermore have the pleasure of informing you that a new team will be joining the Association at the Annual General Meeting and this will lead to an exciting future. Nominations have been received for President Tony Kregor, Secretary Matt Warren new committee Members Alison McLaughlin and Graeme Walsh.

We still have vacancies on the general committee and for the executive. the future will be the most exciting thing that has happened to our organisation. A vibrant administration with a real focus, a business plan covering all activities and a greater depth in communication. I encourage our members to really get excited about our future.

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## **Alpine National Park**

Parks Victoria in conjunction with its prime stakeholders are conducting a very important review of the Alpine National Park. The issues specifically relate to our recreation. Parks are adopting world's best practice in starting a process for public comment and review via the internet and its web portal called weplan. <http://www.weplan.parks.vic.gov.au/> I ask that everyone of our members spend just one evening with weplan and get involved.

Our Association has played an active role in the preservation and sustainability of our Alpine National Park. It is vital for the future that our members express their own point of view about how each and everyone of us perceive the importance of the Park, the role it can play in our cultural health and wellbeing, the significance of the flora and fauna, the preservation of Aboriginal heritage and the understanding of our own culture

Parks Victoria's vision is to maintain an outstanding parks and waterways system, which is protected and enhanced for people, for ever. These parks are reserved to protect their important natural values and the WePlan Alpine project is your chance to contribute to fulfilling this vision. By having your say, you are adding to the environmental, social and economic wellbeing of Victorians.

Use this site to keep up with the planning team's progress, share your knowledge and ideas and talk to other interested people. Click "Create new account" to register and get started. Each user will be visible to all others so it is a great way of connecting with other people interested in this magnificent area.

Of course you could choose not to get involved but then please do not complain when decisions are made that do not make you happy. Talk about this at Club level; ask your committee if they have created a sub committee to review this important planning process etc. We all value the High Country - it is important to have our say.

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### **Track Maintenance program**

As happens each year the track maintenance works program is provided to the members for comment. In the last 5 years there has not been much activity in reviewing this document from the membership. It might be that it is not an important issue but the spending of the allocated funding on tracks is important when one considers that the money may be applied to works that could be better spent else where. In any event the program has been loaded onto our web site and you can click here and review tracks in the area your travel and provide Wayne with your feedback. You can view the report from the Association web site.

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### **Variety the Children's Charity**

It is with pleasure that we announce the information about Four Wheel Drive Victoria and Variety forming a relationship to promote the activities of our organisations and for our Association to partner in the Variety 4X4 Trek 2010.

#### **STAR TREKKING - MILDURA TO MANSFIELD VIA THE BIRDSVILLE TRACK**

The 4WD Trek is your chance to get your 4WD off the bitumen and onto some of the finest 4WD country in Australia. The 2010 4WD Trek will commence in Mildura on 29 April 2010 and trek across the country towards Birdsville. Our first stop is Silverton in NSW, recognisable from the many films, commercials and television shows, which feature the town. From there we will travel into the heart of Australia, taking in the breathtaking scenery of the outback. On the way we will visit historic townships, landmarks, environmental wonders and experience some fantastic 4WD tracks. The event will conclude in Mansfield on 8th May, where a fantastic farewell dinner will take place.

How good is this, we actually get to have a lot of fun and support a very important charity. So you now have the challenge of seeing if you can join us by entering your car in the event. Organise your sponsors, employer, your own business, get your mates involved. We have limited places for 2010 so this is serious stuff, get onboard and join me and support Variety. You can get information from Wayne at the Association office go on ask him and click this link. [Variety the Children's Charity](#) add your contact details. As part of this event we will be having a muster at the Caulfield Race Course to see if we can gather more than 1000 4x4s to set a new Guinness book world record.

## **Do you want to be part of an adventure and help Victoria's disadvantaged and disabled children?**

Then the Variety 4WD Trek is the event for you!

Be part of the Variety 4WD Trek and make new friends with the same common interest - 4WD driving and helping children. If you are looking for a great time, great company, and a chance to see our vast country, then join us as we travel from Melbourne to Mansfield, via the Birdsville Track.

In keeping with the Trek's ethos, the Variety 4WD Trek is not a race. It's about traveling to remote and beautiful places, with friends, who share your love of the great outdoors and 4WD driving. Your involvement will also ensure that Special Needs Children receive much needed funding to help them participate in some of life's experiences that we all take for granted.

This 4WD Trek is for everyone from couples of all ages to mates with their mates. The 4WD Trek is your chance to get your 4WD off the bitumen and onto some of the finest 4WD country in Australia.

What does it take to enjoy one of the great Vic Bash Events! Here's the checklist:

- Time
- A sense of humor
- A desire to help children with special needs
- Fundraising ideas
- A sense of adventure

### **Event Structure**

The 4WD Trek has a dedicated team to ensure all of our entrants have a safe and happy journey. Our 4WD Committee meets monthly to plan every detail of the event, from road surveys, accommodation, catering and adventures and fun stops along the way. Four official vehicles travel on the event, one "Sweep" and mobile workshop, one official car with a Variety representative and ambulance officers, one "Scout" to make sure the road ahead is safe and one communications vehicle to make sure we are all in touch. Each entrant receives a 4WD Trek Bible that details the route, driving notes, accommodation, catering and general interest information on the areas we are visiting.

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### **The Association business plan**

For a number of months now a very important sub-committee has been working very hard to bring together a complete working document called the Business Plan. A very dedicated group lead by Board member Hari Marigos have been working very hard to put together a document that brings together all aspects of the Association's activities. The Board has agreed that the plan will be tabled at the next general meeting of the Association in its final form. In the future the plan will be discussed at two President's meetings to be held in November and March. The November meeting will work to

consider changes to be made to the plan and the March meeting will be to sign off and approve the plan.

The business plan will include all activities and budgets and will set out in a fair amount of detail what the Association is to do for the next three and five years. A working document always being updated but most importantly a direction by the members as to how the Association is to be run and the issues the members want tackled into the future. I take this opportunity of sending thanks to Hari and all the team for the work they have done. Presidents and delegates will be notified in the usual way, when the document is being distributed. If you want information about the current status you can contact our General Manager Russell.

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### **Four Wheel Drive Victoria becomes Tour Operator**

It is with pleasure that I announce that your Association has applied to become a tour operator. A new plan has been agreed brought to the Association by John and Prue Hasler. The plan is for the Association to run four wheel drive tours for non members of the Association. Because the Association is the peak body representing four wheel drive interests, John and Prue propose that we should be taking the general public out and introducing them to the great Victorian bush educating them about four wheel drive ethics and our clubs in our environment.

These trips are touring day and overnight trips to iconic places and sights but will be in a safe and educative environment. We will be promoting these tours at the four wheel drive shows and other events and it will be fun to welcome the wider community into ours. A great plan of John and Prue and another example of the business being developed at our office.

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### **Four Wheel Drive Advisory Committee**

Since the last e news the four wheel drive advisory committee has met. At this last meeting we welcomed Peter Appleford, DSE Executive Director for Parks and Forests. Peter has been appointed to manage the issues of Parks and Forest at executive level as a result of the recent restructure at DSE. Peter has a great background in four wheel driving and public land management and more importantly his portfolio manages our relationship with DSE.

The main issues discussed were:

- Regional representatives group and future planning
- Paddy's swamp and single vehicle track closure consultation process
- Track classification and next area to be planned
- Iconic 4WD Touring Routes

- Summer works program
- Camp host and funding arrangements for 2010
- Expansion of MVO access to policy to interstate clubs
- Track clearing and fire protection

If members want further information on these topics an email to the GM is all that is needed. Russell is keen to visit the clubs at their meetings and discuss all the activities of the Association.

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### **Leisurefest**

The Melbourne Leisurefest show at Sandown will be held again this year on the weekend of the 1st to 4th October 2009. There are 7 free sites for four wheel drive clubs to promote their activities and membership on a first in best dressed basis. Last year 30,000 people visited the show. People visiting the show are most often looking for a 4 x 4 and a camper or van and they all need driver training and education about their fourby and the great Australian outback. If your club wants to join us this year, contact Wayne but do it quick as we only have 7 sites.

The Association will also be there in full swing promoting clubs and its education programs. On that note, we will be running the outdoor driving centre again this year again promoting our members and our activities. The Association will also be attending the National 4WD Show this year at the showground's, the Caravan and Camping show at Caulfield, Wandin and Heyfield field day as part of our promotional activities.

We are always looking for volunteers to help us at these shows and we provide the necessary training and free entry and we cover the day's personal expenses. Why not join us in promoting our Association and its members and activities. If you have retired or are working part time and can help us contact Wayne at the Association office and have a chat.

And other great news is that 4X4 Equip have agreed to sponsor with the Association for the production of its show bags. All shows for the 2009-2010 will be wearing the 4X4 Equip logo and as a result we are very pleased to support their support for us. You can visit their web site and order online from a terrific range of accessories. See [www.4x4equip.com.au](http://www.4x4equip.com.au) and when you see their stand at the show or talk to Ian Hastie say thanks for your support.

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### **St Arnaud Parks Management Plan**

The St Arnaud Parks Draft Management Plan came out for discussion this last month and for the first time we have seen a proposal by Parks that solid fuel camp fires be banned from October to April each year. There is a great need for this issue to be

discussed amongst our members because the protection of our Parks and Forests is a very important issue.

Ron Moon expressing his view said to me in a recent email

*Got to say I'm for it. Maybe it's my South Australian upbringing where we have been living with fire bans over the summer for as long as I can remember.*

*And I reckon it's one you can't win anyway. What with the big bush fires over the last few years, climate change (if you believe in that), and the record of fires getting away from so called extinguished camp fires, you'd be pushing poop uphill.....*

*In the past I've already written pieces on banning wood fires in some of our most iconic desert places as a way of saving these areas from being stripped of timber. A different argument here in well-treed (well before the bushfires anyway) Victoria, but we need to educate people on the use of fires anywhere. Many Victorians, used to a plentiful supply of wood and used to having a bonfire here in the mountains, take that same attitude to places like Durba Springs and other desert oasis.*

Ron is right and we have not yet investigated the need for habitat protection for other critters in the bush. Places like Hattah already protect the environment and addresses those habitat issues. Now what do you think? We have all seen fires left by irresponsible people as they burn all the wood they have cut but not used rather than leave it for the next to turn up. Certainly in the need for a fire in winter is a reasonable need. Should we not support gas fires and save the bush. There will be more on this as we mature in our development and management of this issue. You can view a copy of our submission to Parks on St Arnaud from the Association web site under the submissions heading.

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### **Occupational Health and Safety**

The OH&S sub-committee has received 4 submissions from clubs about the OH&S review and a final paper will be presented to the next General Meeting. Work is still being undertaken by clubs dealing with fencing, caravans and other clean up work. The team started thinking about how to clear a tree and forgot about the safety of the people involved and the plan. A little discussion, a good outcome and a safe finish. It is so simple and something we do not do enough.

I did a caravan delivery from Seymour DHS centre to a block in Clonbinane last weekend. I say a block because there is no house in fact the whole community lost all their houses on this ridgeline and on arrival I met by the property owner, who was still cleaning up as was everyone else in the area. I could see the house stumps about 2 inches above the ground and the flat area, where the house stood. Apart from feeling that sick feeling again I was so pleased to receive safety instructions from the RRG co-

ordinator Ron Reed. I am not a towing person - I camp, so towing the van has many issues that I do not know about and I was relieved to have something, in the form of the safety sheet, that gave me a bit of comfort that I would not miss something. So simple, a piece of paper, and those words "if you are not comfortable DO NOT DO IT go home". I checked the van drove at an appropriate speed and arrived safely to a very happy family that will now have somewhere to stay inside on their block.

Every volunteer activity undertaken by all our clubs should have as a matter of course a safety officer. Perhaps we should make it part of the clubs by laws, that would be a good start.

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### **The end**

The Annual General Meeting of the Association will be held at the Association Office on the 16th September 2009 commencing at 7.00pm. All members are invited to attend.

This year we have a guest speaker from Parks Victoria and the reports will be pretty significant and the election of a new Board will be setting the path for the next stage in our development. I wrote previously about my time in office. This time I say thank you for the privilege of allowing me and my vision to lead our Association into a terrific and exciting future.

The future for us is exciting, dynamic and will bring fantastic benefits to our members and the preservation of our recreation. After all "*There is no doubt about it, you just cannot beat the great Australian outdoor life*" special thanks and acknowledgement to Ron Douglas, Range Rover Club Victoria for that quote. I love it and c u at the AGM.

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