

# Bushwalking NSW Newsletter

Edition 13

November 2014



**NB: PLEASE PASS THIS ON TO YOUR MEMBERS – keep everyone in the loop!**

Hello Everyone.

The big news this month is that we have a new Administration Officer in the Office of Bushwalking NSW – me! My name is Cheryl Collins and I will be in the Office on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays from 8:30 – 1:30. I look forward to working with you.

I have a strong background in Administration – according to my CV! – and I also hold a Master's degree in Applied Linguistics, so if you need advice on writing, editing etc, I'm happy to help.

I think it might be a good time to acknowledge Gail Clifford's work here as Administration Officer over the past four years, and to thank her for everything she managed to achieve on your behalf. I am sure many of you will miss Gail and I hope to prove a satisfactory successor.

**Please note: the Office will close for two weeks from 22/12/2014 – 2/1/2015.**

This month's Newsletter includes a report from Keith Maxwell of the BWRS on the recent search undertaken in the Kanangra Boyd National Park for a missing walker. We also have a report from our President, David Morrison, and some news about a Submission our Conservation Officer, Sierra Classen, is preparing on the *10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code*.

Enjoy!! And share – please, s p r e a d the word!

## **Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue Squad (BWRS) & bushwalkers in major search.**

Many bushwalkers assisted NSW Police and BWRS in this large search for missing person Sevak Simonian based at Kanangra Walls. We were a major participant in this large search controlled by Bathurst Command of NSW Police.

NSW Police located Sevak's car at the Kanangra Walls car park. Sevak had not returned to work as planned after a short break. Hence the available information regarding his visit to the area was minimal.

BWRS was present in varying numbers from 26 October to 10 November, 2014. Geoff Dale, Paul Campbell-Allen, Caro Ryan and Keith Maxwell served as BWRS Search Managers during this time. The weather was mostly benign during the search so it was considered that Sevak could have survived and possibly travelled long distances. This search may have concluded sooner but for the strong family support and representations of Dick Smith.

Vast areas of Kanangra Boyd National Park were searched by BWRS members along with personnel from SES, RFS and NP&WS. Another VRA Squad, NSW Cave Rescue also made a strong contribution. The VRA squad, WICEN, of amateur radio operators ensured that the VRA search teams had excellent communications. NP&WS assisted with access to normally closed fire roads. Eventually the Kanangra Walls road was closed to the public at the Boyd River campground. Search teams were often taken by helicopter to and from their search area.

The extraordinary results achieved by BWRS would not have been possible without the assistance of experienced bushwalkers of clubs from Bushwalking NSW. This currently is not usual where it was common 30 years ago. It required special permission from senior Police to involve bushwalking club members. Bushwalking skills are still essential but now BWRS members undergo CBT training not available 30 years ago. Skills such as protect and preserve incident scene, maintain safety at an incident scene, operate communication systems etc. Where possible a BWRS member would be a Team Leader to ensure that search teams had a core of modern search knowledge. Downloaded GPS tracks from BWRS receivers recorded where BWRS teams actually went. At one stage assistance from Victorian Bushwalkers Search & Rescue was also considered.

At this stage there is no sign of Sevak. A NSW Police cadaver dog was taken to a smell site. From 4-11-14 catering was offered to volunteers of hot breakfast and dinner with cold lunch packs by the 'rapid relief team'. Prior to this Sevak family members often brought food to the search base.

Searching went as far as the Coxs River, Kowmung River and Dex Creek plus major creek / canyon systems and the head waters of many creek systems. Tracks and common access routes leading away from Kanangra Walls were all covered along with potential decision points.

BWRS would like to thank the large number of bushwalkers from many clubs for their extraordinary service during this search. NSW Police were very impressed.

Keith Maxwell.



Past-president David Trinder and I attended the annual meeting of Bushwalking Australia recently. It was held over a weekend in Adelaide and hosted by Walking SA.

Bushwalking Australia is the peak body representing the state bushwalking organisations. One of its roles is to negotiate our insurance cover on behalf of all club members throughout Australia. It also represents bushwalkers on the national and international fronts.

The annual meeting is an opportunity for the state bodies to get together and compare notes on issues that face us all. Not surprisingly, the other states have many similar issues to us:

- Club memberships are declining, and average age is increasing.
- There are more and more restrictions on where we can walk.
- Few people can be found to assist in running the state bodies, and most are very short of people with the necessary skills.

Perhaps the most interesting point is that a recent study showed that 93% of bushwalkers do not belong to clubs. When you think that we have 11,000 club members in NSW, that means there are 146,000 other bushwalkers out there enjoying the bush in various ways. All of these are potential new members for clubs, if the clubs make the effort to attract them.

Several states have recognised that they are ill-equipped to deal with the current situation. A few years ago, Victoria made radical changes to their organisation, and are powering ahead. South Australia and Western Australia have just had external reviews of their governance and operations. These revealed a number of issues they needed to address, and provided recommendations on how to deal with them.

The Committee of Bushwalking NSW will be considering what is happening in other states, and what action, if any, should be taken in NSW.

David Morrison  
President





## Conservation Matters

The Committee is currently looking at a Draft Submission to the NSW RFS review of the *10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice, 2014*. The Submission was prepared by our Conservation Officer, Sierra Classen, and is based upon guidelines supplied by the NCC. The following, from the RFS website, explains the new rule:

### 10/50 vegetation clearing

New laws are now in place which help people prepare their homes for bush fires in NSW.

You can now find out if your property is in a 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Entitlement Area using our online tool.

The laws allow people in a designated 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Entitlement Area to:

- Clear trees on their property within 10 metres of a home, without seeking approval; and
- Clear underlying vegetation such as shrubs (but not trees) on their property within 50 metres of a home, without seeking approval.
- The new laws are supported by the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice.

(from <http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/1050-vegetation-clearing>)

**If approved by the Committee, our Submission will call for a moratorium on the Rule to enable Bushwalking NSW and the RFS to work together to plan the best strategy for vegetation clearing.**

It is felt that “(m)embers of Bushwalking NSW are intimately acquainted with both remote bushland areas and rural habitats. We experience the impact of bushfires firsthand, but also the impact of bushfire management techniques in the areas where we walk. Our safety and comfort in the bush depend on bushfire management in remote, rural, and even suburban areas. For this reason, it is paramount that bushwalkers be directly involved in the process of ongoing bushfire management...” (Draft Submission, Sierra Classen.)

**We will keep you posted – watch this space!**

**IS YOUR WEBSITE UP TO DATE??**

**IF IT SHOWS OUR EMAIL ADDRESS AS**

**admin@bushwalking.org.au**

**IT IS WRONG!!!**

**That domain will be retired in 2015. Please ensure that BNSW's details on your website are correct:**

**www.bushwalkingnsw.org.au and admin@bushwalkingnsw.org.au**

*Thankyou!!*

### **GETTING YOUR WEBSITE FOUND!**

Last month, I mentioned a few ways you can spread the word about your club, and the importance of a good web site. This month, I am going to talk about getting your web site found by search engines.

The web is increasingly the way people find things nowadays. They do this by searching using Google or Bing for words that relate to what they are interested in.

Google and Bing will index web sites according to the words on them. A web site with lots of photos can be very attractive, but search engines are not able to interpret photos to work out what they are about. Unless there are lots of words as well, it will never appear high in search results. (One club has exactly this problem - their new site has very few words while the old one has lots of words. The old one keeps coming up in search results.)

Once upon a time, you could actually pay a lot of money to consultants to fine tune your web site. You probably get lots of spam e-mail offering to do just this for you. There are also software packages that claim to do this too. How effective they are, well, reports have not been good. Many of these offers are little better than a scam to get your money.

The good news is that you do not need a specialist to get your site ranked highly in search results. All you have to do is use a lot of relevant words on your site. Here are some tips:

- Make sure your site has a reasonable number of words. A couple of good paragraphs on each page would be a useful start.
- Say that you are a bushwalking club, describe what bushwalking is and what your club does.
- Mention any other activities you do, eg, cycling, kayaking, camping, overseas travel. Add a bit of description as well as mentioning them by name - a reader may never have tried it before.
- Mention the places you go to, such as nearby national parks and reserves, towns in the surrounding area, rivers, lakes, caves, etc. The idea is that people in your area are likely to mention those places in their search.
- Talk about some of the gear needed for your activities. People might be looking for somewhere to buy a backpack and come across your site in the search results if you have mentioned backpacks, boots, etc.
- Add alt-tags to all of your photos, with descriptions of what they are about. These words are also indexed by the search engines and can be used to get people to your club's site.

David Morrison, Web Site Project Manager, Bushwalking NSW