BLUE MOUNTAINS UNIONS & COMMUNITY ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

INTRODUCTON: If the pandemic has proved anything it's the vital importance of front line workers, especially those exposed to COVID-19 in aged care and hospitals. The shocking revelations of long term mismanagement of aged care was all too clearly spelt out in the Royal Commissioners' report, whose findings prompted the Prime Minister to proclaim this was a " once in a generation " opportunity to put things right. Unfortunately, despite the now all too well known failings - many of the old problems remain - poor pay, understaffing and inadequate training. So, campaigns in support of aged care workers have been a major focus for the BMUC this year. Led by the irrepressible Jocelyn Hoffman of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association our members have attended rallies and presented radio programs to highlight what remains a national scandal.



Jocelyn Hofman, a registered nurse in a Blue Mountains aged care facility, has been pushing for more nurses in aged care. DOMINIC LORRIMER

Image from the Sydney Morning Herald: https://www.smh.com.au/national/dignity-in-life-and-death-commission-recommends-more-nurses-and-palliative-care-20210301-p576q4.html

It's been a busy year in other ways too:

RADIO: BMUC's radio program ***Rights Rorts & Rants*** on Radio Blue Mountains (89.1FM) broadcast every Friday (4-6pm) has gone from strength to strength and has again given a lifeline for BMUC to connect with the Blue Mountains community. Led by Fran Dyson and Debra Smith the team has covered a wide range of issues at a time of growing inequality in the workforce and immense challenges to the fragile Blue Mountains environment.

We've welcomed legal specialist Mike Holland to the team and his insightful and nuanced contributions have given the program added bite.

PODCASTS: Many of our programs can now be heard as podcasts on Spotify, Anchor, and itunes among other outlets.
https://anchor.fm/rightsrortsandrants



AIRWATCH CAMPAIGN: Along with death and taxes we can add the prospect of bushfires as a certainty of life in the Blue Mountains. This year the BMUC has ramped up its campaign to bring back air pollution monitors and extend their range across the mountains from Lithgow to Glenbrook.

Our aim to is to collect 10,000 signatures to present to NSW Environment Minister Matt Kean. Every resident of the mountains is being encouraged to sign the petition which can be downloaded from https://l.ead.me/airwatch.

With council elections due in September, we'll be contacting candidates seeking their backing for this important campaign.

POLITICS-IN-THE-PUB: Although COVID restrictions have meant that our regular Politics in the Pub sessions were kept on hold for the last 12 months - we hope to be back in action soon.

BMUC is supporting the campaign for a much needed and long overdue **National Integrity Commission**. Ross Jones, who's forming an anti corruption party to run candidates at the federal election, will be the key note speaker at our come back Politics-in-the Pub which we hope to host at The Family Hotel in Katoomba in late July, probably 31st.

SING IT SAY IT: This event again attracted a good crowd at The Family just before Christmas and showcased the rich array of musical talent here in the city of the arts. Thanks to Fran Dyson and Debra Smith for all the work they put into organising this event; Uncle Lex Dadd for his fine Welcome to Country; Willem Hendriksen of Retro Rehash for acting as MC and helping out in many other ways and the Family Hotel for their generous support. The winners were: 1st ($500) FUQ BOI N THA BOIZ, 2nd ($300) TRASH BABY, 3rd ($200) SAM BUCCA.

MAY DAY: This year's march and rally was held at Parramatta to campaign against the removal of yet another historic building - Willow Grove. A BMUC group marched in the spirit of Jack Mundey and the original Green Bans activists. It was great to see many more young people joining this year's rally.



MEMBERSHIP: Our membership is solid - hovering around the 70 mark. We're always open to new members and encourage anyone supporting union ideals to join us at our regular monthly meetings - the first Sunday of the month 10.30am -12 noon in the dining room of the Family Hotel.

SOCIAL MEDIA: We have 774 followers on Facebook, 2,209 on Twitter and our podcasts had 1,236 plays on Anchor.

THANKS: I'd like to place on record my thanks to our secretary Debra Smith who selflessly devotes untold hours to the BMUC. Thanks also to our committee - Paul Wray, Norm Short, Peter Lammiman, Bruce Cornwell, Susan Lammiman and Ann Maree McEwan for all their support. And a special thank you to Merran MacLaren for opening her home again for our annual Christmas party.

MCRN: Once again I'd like to place on record my appreciation to the Mountains Community Resource Network for their ongoing support.

THE YEAR AHEAD: will certainly include a federal election and there'll be no shortage of issues against a background of growing inequality and the growth of insecure work. Our members will be looking to support candidates committed to reversing the wrongs of (to name just a few injustices) low pay/ no pay (wage theft), stagnating wages despite record profits, rampant pork barrelling, corruption and continued environmental degradation. The words STAND UP FIGHT BACK have never been more relevant.

Kerry Cooke,
President, Blue Mountains Unions & Community (Blue Mountains Unions Council Inc) June 2021