PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2025/2026

Blue Mountains Unions Council Inc ABN 91557766185

MOUNTAINS COMMUNITY RESOURCE NETWORK (MCRN)

BMUC was dismayed to receive news of the impending closure of the Mountains Community Resource Network and remain disappointed in the Minns Labor government's decision to defund this important Mountains institution, despite the objections of BMUC and the many other community organisations which have depended on its support.

We wish to thank Kirsten Barnett and other workers of MCRN for their many years of support for Blue Mountains Unions and Community.

Special mention and thanks to Kris Newton for her 15 years of service to the Blue Mountains community as Manager of MCRN. Her leadership extended beyond the community sector to facilitate disaster preparation and recovery.

POLITICS IN THE PUB (PIP)

Politics in the Pub, with decades of support from the Family Hotel in Katoomba, remained a popular and core activity of BMUC. In 2025/2026 we hosted two well attended PIPs, "Global Trade and How to Rig It" outlining US interference in foreign democracies and trade, and "Is Jailing Failing?", which explored better ways to achieve justice and prevent crime.

FILM SCREENING

In this year BMUC ventured into screening films, including "Union Film" and "Venezuela – the Cost of Challenging an Empire". The screening of "Voices of the Valley", hosted in conjunction with Green Left and Blue Mountains Rising Tide, was combined with a submission workshop to stop approval of the Moolarben Coal Mine.

AIR WATCH – PURPLE AIR MONITORS

Our Air Watch team continued their valuable work. They managed 30 previously installed "Purple Air" monitors that were supplied by the Dept of Heritage and Environment with the support of Trish Doyle MP and Penny Sharpe, NSW Minister for Climate Change, Energy, Heritage and the Environment. The monitors are installed on the homes of interested "citizen scientist" residents. Unfortunately, one monitor was lost when a host disposed of it via the BM City Council's recycled rubbish instead of returning it to BMUC for redistribution. This reduced the number of monitors to 29.

The monitors were installed at locations across the mountains, from Lapstone to Lithgow and their readings of air quality can be accessed by anyone via the Purple Air map at https://map.purpleair.com/. Air quality reports have been frequently added to the weather report on our weekly radio show on Radio Blue Mountains. As expected, the Blue Mountains air quality was generally excellent, but public access to the readings of the monitors are particularly important during periods of hazard reduction and bushfire, as we found by the tens of thousands of hits to the relevant website when the initial trial was conducted by the NSW Dept of Heritage and Environment during the 2019-2020 "Black Summer" bushfires.

Blue Mountains Purple Air monitors were promoted on a stall at the 2025 Rhododendron Festival. BMUC members had many discussions and gave out written information in line with our goal to increase community use of the Purple Air map, especially when information about poor air quality is often vital importance to residents and visitors with health conditions directly affected by air quality.

COMMUNITY RADIO AND PODCAST – "RIGHTS, RORTS AND RANTS"

Blue Mountains Unions and Community have been hosting a community radio show since 2018. The show, "Rights, Rorts and Rants", is broadcast on Radio Blue Mountains 89.1FM and livestreamed via rbm.org.au on Friday afternoons from 4pm to 6pm. Selected content is published on a "Rights, Rorts and Rants" podcast via Spotify and other podcasting platforms.

The show continued to help us achieve many of our Objects and Aims by:

- advancing unionism, living standards, social justice and employment,
- assisting in the protection of rights for all wage and salary workers
- exposing corporate and political accountability issues
- championing social justice, union values, and workers' rights
- building connections with and between other community groups and
- giving a voice to local Blue Mountains community campaigns to protect the environment and community assets.

We mourned the passing of one of our presenters, Mike Holland. Mike's voice for political integrity and against corruption can still be heard on the "Rights, Rorts and Rants" podcast in addition to his commentary and insights on topics such as the ongoing influence of Henry VIII on Australian law.

On a lighter note, we welcomed a new addition the radio team, Wil Godfrey who brought his technical skills and a new perspective to our show. Wil also has his own show, "Definitely Not Wil On The Wireless" on Radio Blue Mountains on Sunday afternoons from 2pm to 4pm.

Ann-Maree McEwan did a great job of managing our podcast and the rest of the team, Nick Franklin, Peter Lammiman, Merran MacLaren, Deb Smith continued to provide content and technical skills to the show, with back up support from Fran Dyson and Susanne Rix.

OTHER CREATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS

The creative work of Renee Lees gave us a fresh new logo and look which was not only reflected in our promotional material, such as posters, flyers and online. T-shirts organised by Merran MacLaren featuring a new BMUC logo designed by Renee are very popular with members and raised us some much-needed funds.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Other activities which BMUC members participated in and/or supported include but are not limited to:

- Support for the Blue Mountains Peace Group
- The pro-Palestine Harbour Bridge walk
- A Lithgow group's campaign for public acquisition of the Lithgow Locomotive workshop with the goal of using it to transition the region's coal-dependent economy toward green manufacturing, rail retrofitting, and renewable projects.
- A submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters regarding alleged activities of the Exclusive Brethren church during the Federal election
- The effect of proposed developments on the environment.

Support and participation on these and other matters extended beyond 2025/26 and included the writing of submissions, Politics in the Pub, interviews and discussion on Radio Blue Mountains.

THANKS TO THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE AND BMUC MEMBERS

I would like to thank Sarah Hoyal for her work as Secretary and Renee Lees of the Management Committee for supporting Sarah's work.

Thanks are also due to:

Vice President Jules Vovos
Treasurer Bruce Cornwell
and other Office Holders Peter Lammiman, Merran MacLaren for the full year and Debra Smith until December 2025.

Many of BMUC's successes are due to the participation and support of "ordinary" members who contribute as they are able in one or more ways. This can be turning up and contributing ideas and discussions to our monthly General Meetings on the 1st Sunday of most months, coming to the events we organise at those meetings, putting a hand up for a task, actively taking part in or contributing to the group's activities or subcommittees, promoting our activities with their other networks, or by financial contributions. So, thanks to our members for each and every one of those efforts.

Kerry Cooke

President Blue Mountains Unions Council Inc

3rd November 2026