BLUE MTS UNIONS & COMMUNITY ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

AIRWATCH: The latest phase in BMUC's long running campaign to reintroduce air pollution monitoring across the Blue Mountains and Lithgow was the launch at the Planetary Health Initiative at Katoomba on 1 October 2024. This event was addressed by Blue Mountains MP Trish Doyle, Dr Rosemary Dillon CEO of BMCC, Dr Jennie Condie, a member of Parents for Climate Action and Dr Maggie Davidson, environmental scientist from UWS - all of whom played key roles in getting purple air monitors installed across the mountains and Lithgow. It was also great to have the support of Matthew Riley, Director, Climate & Atmospheric Science, NSW Department of Environment who also attended the launch.

The roll out of air monitors continues, thanks to Ann-Maree McEwen who's played an important role in assisting residents install the monitors in their homes. Many thanks also to Lis Bastian and Saskia Everingham for all their assistance via the PHI. Jenna Conde assisted by reaching young parents from Parents for Climate in the mid-mountains and Mellow Bath.

Overall, the BMUC Airwatch team has approached 61 residents and distributed 27 monitors from 30 we were given by the NSW EPA. The monitors' locations range from Lapstone up the Great Western Highway to Lithgow over to Sunny Corner, Dargan and Mt Tomah. Some now need follow up as they are not operational on the PurpleAir map.

Fortunately, we had no serious bush fires this last summer., so mostly air quality in the Blue Mountains has been good. However, on one occasion in the upper mountains monitors recorded readings of over 400 - this is a level dangerous to health, especially to the very young, the elderly and those with respiratory problems.

Our main challenge now is to improve public awareness of the air monitoring. We want residents to be aware that real time readings are available at your home and your phone within seconds.

COMMUNITY RADIO: Our weekly radio program, Rights, Rorts & Rants (Fridays 4-6pm on Radio Blue Mountains 89.1FM) continues to thrive. During the federal election it enabled us to examine key issues and interview many interesting speakers. Fran Dyson has been at the core of the radio team over many years, and has recently stepped back due family commitments in Sydney. We thank her for all her work in the making RRR the dynamic and eclectic program it is....and look forward to future contributions when she's available.

PODCASTS: Alongside the RRR radio program we have been recording interviews and publishing them as podcasts, giving many of our radio features an extended life. Thanks to Ann-Maree McEwen and Deb Smith for all their work on producing these podcasts. In all, 46 podcasts were made over the last 12 months.

All BMUC podcasts start out as interviews or recordings played on BMUC's weekly radio show Rights, Rorts and Rants (RRR) broadcast on Radio Blue Mountains 89.1 FM. You'll locate the podcasts by searching Rights, Rorts and Rants. With too many podcast topics to mention here the podcasts highlight many interesting topics. Popular podcasts included Politics in the Pub speakers that were recorded, played on RRR and then podcast. An example is an interview Going loco in Lithgow with Michelle Zeibots followed up by the 'Creating Future Jobs Politics in the Pub' event. As an aside this generated a significant event in Lithgow with organisers assisted by BMUC.

A high rating podcast was 'Death by 36,000 cuts' about secure jobs in the Commonwealth Public Service created under Labor and threatened by the Liberal Coalition.

The omnibus collection of 5 podcasts of interviews with Michael Holland about his research on Mr Dutton's nuclear proposal are of special mention and were very popular. Michael undertook detailed investigations while recovering from serious injury. The total audience listens are 68 to date. Podcast titles are 'Mr Dutton's nuclear energy solution'; 'Mr Dutton's nuclear solution update'; 'Dutton's nuclear thought bubble'; 'Dutton's nuclear energy update'; and, 'Bursting Dutton's nuclear thought bubble'.

Also worth mentioning are the interviews of candidates for both the Local Government and the Federal Election and the coverage of housing insecurity with 'A local solution for a local problem' on creating homes for older women in the Blue Mountains (a project creating national interest) and an powerful interview with Jane Caro on public education funding. Finally, acknowledgement was paid to Matt Peacock with 'Matt Peacock Prisoner Rights Activist.'

POLITICS IN THE PUB: Remains a core activity. In November we staged 'Creating Future Jobs' for Lithgow and the mountains. Key speakers Steve Murphy, National Secretary of the Australian manufacturing Workers Union - representing the 'Build Them Here & Save our Skills Campaign' and Dr Michelle Zeibots, Research Director UTS Transport Research Centre. This event backed a campaign calling for the government to take back the idle Lithgow Loco workshop.

In February BMUC followed up this event by supporting the 'Jobs for Lithgow Now' event hosted by the Lithgow Community Power Project - this meeting at Lithgow Workies made clear that manufacturers could be on site in a year.

PEACE CAMPAIGNS: Our members supported the Reflections of ANZAC event as well as regular demonstrations in Katoomba calling for an end to the Israeli/Palestine conflict.

MCRN: Once again we thank the MCRN for their continuing support.

THANKS. The FAMILY HOTEL has been our meeting place for many years now. We thank the Blackburn family for their generous and ongoing support.

My thanks also to the 2024 BMUC Executive members, but particularly to the outgoing secretary Debra Smith for her many years of dedication to BMUC. However, we have not lost her for good as Deb continues on the management committee in 2025-2026.

Kerry Cooke

President BMUC

May 2025