

Mt Kembla Mining Heritage Committee Inc.
Chairpersons Report
February 2005

The past few years have just flown and after reading my report from the Centenary Festival in 2002 (because it is the only one I can find – so my apologies to all) it seems like just yesterday that we all pulled together to show what this tiny village can really do, once we put our minds to a job. We forged some great friendships and raised an awareness in this village and its people, which possibly had not been so strong since the days of and just after the tragic Mine Disaster of 1902.

We incorporated, formed a constitution and we managed to then join forces twice again to do the same thing for the next two festivals, with some real success stories to tell. This was done by a group of extremely busy people who have lives so full one wonders where the time and energy comes from – but what a powerful punch we all manage to pack.

I need to say a special thanks to a few people in particular who have supported me in the past few years way beyond expectation and sometimes reason – they are, my ever enduring husband **Andrew** who has been there **every** step of the way. I could not begin to explain how much support Drew has given from the smallest to the largest ask – he always comes through. To **Phil Donaldson** who has become my bouncing board, my advisor/mentor and companion in adventures into pushing our cause at every person or authority who will listen and at some who don't – but we have managed to do so much behind the scenes to further our cause. Phil never lets an opportunity go by – he is a tower of strength and my other side – the more reasonable one. In **Elizabeth Roberts** I have found the perfect calmness of one who knows exactly who she is and how she can make a difference in the most subtle but meaningful way – she too has listened patiently, advised and directed me through the worst of times and the best of times....Then there is **Lizzie Williams**, the ideas girl, who thinks of things to do with such inspiration and passion, way beyond most of us. Lizzie had the ability to be very hands on too and is passionate about “the Mountain” – it is Lizzie and Andrew I “pay out on most”, as they are there at such close quarters with their love, advice and support. Now to **Chris Jacobsen**, the real hands on doer of the team – Chris has a very active and a very mischievous mind, which enables him to see very few boundaries and to be totally pro active – he achieves so much, identifying what needs to be done next and just getting on with it almost on a weekly basis – Chris has produced so much positive work for the festivals and beyond by just “doing it”. I thank you each for your care and ever enduring support.

Throughout the year each one of the following wonderful events I have had the privilege of being allowed to be involved in – stand out events such as:

- **Brad Williams** and his **Roof Bolting and Coal Shovelling** show, the foreman **Patrick McMahon**, and the Master of Ceremonies, **Phil Diamond** and their tribe of helpers. Our very significant
- **Heritage Display** which **Phil & Clare** so lovingly & passionately put together and work at all weekend, mostly missing other events to do so. Clare with her passion and expertise for recording the history of the people of “the mountain” is outstanding at hunting and collecting this history which will be invaluable when collated and printed. **George Theophanou** makes items from his eclectic collection, available each year for display and **Joanne Reczek** always assists on this weekend with her willing help and her local knowledge is invaluable. **Wendy Richardson and Peter Hutten** are not to be forgotten for their many years of massive contribution to the recording of Mt Kembla's history and are also to be heart fully thanked for their massive input over the years to the success of the heritage aspects of the festival. Then our beautiful and significant
- **Candle Lighting Ceremony in Windy Gully** which has become such a heart felt and meaningful part of the weekend, where again **Wendy** shines and I am sure makes the souls of those buried there rejoice. We are **all involved** in some way in this part of the festival, then our ever growing
- **Poets' Breakfast** which is now receiving entries from all over Australia. This is one of my personal favourites and I thank **Brain Dellit, Greg & Danielle Davis-Cook, Jim & Deborah McCallum** and those who assisted so readily at such short notice. We have also established one of the best

- **Art Prizes** in the region and draw many, many local artists to Mt Kembla to paint and show their talents in a sense of hardy competition. **Paul & Nat Mack** do such a great job to bring the **Art Prize & Ball** together.
- The **infrastructure team** headed up so generously each year by **Tony Pollard** with his team of willing helpers is an absolute essential that goes into making the Festival a smooth flowing success. It is such a major part of our weekend – it's importance can never be underestimated and **Tony Pollard, Steve Pollard, Greg Costello, Chris Jacobsen, Andrew Stevenson** with his **traffic duties**, and all their helpers, are to be heartily thanked for their constant support in this critical area.
- Our **Grand Parade** which **Lizzie Williams & Greg Costello** manage to pull together each year is a festival highlight and sets the theme for our activities
- **Music All over the Mountain** is hopefully about to expand and take our festival to another level with help from Russ Hannah and David DeSanti – but to date **Greg Costello** has to be marvelled at, and congratulated as he has done an unbelievable job single handily to ensure we had musical sound and merriment with minimal funding available. A job very well done
- **Violet Hill Kitchen & Visitors Marquee** being our own information centre has been the hub of our activities in the mountain for the Festival to date. **Tess Pollard & Liz Roberts** with their respective band of helpers did a great job once again this year in securing food and presenting it for sale along with our aging memorabilia and coupled with
- **Heights Food Camp** expertly organise and run by **Barry Purcell & Jenny Donaldson** made significant money for the festival – which supports other events which cost money – so a very important part of our festival activities
- **Bus transport** – one of the single most important parts of the success of the weekend – **Trevor Munn and Barry Purcell** are to be congratulated in organising the bus drivers with such expertise – they get better each year.
- **Stalls & Mt Kembla School Activities** so wonderfully managed by **Paul Denaro and the P&C**. Our special thanks to **Mt Kembla School** here as Peter Houweling is totally behind us, works with us at every opportunity offering strong support each year.

My thanks goes out to our loyal **sponsors**, particularly BHP Billiton Illawarra Coal, Wollongong City Council, Tony Pollard TPE Electrics, Peter DeMaagd Desktop Sign Systems, Mt Kembla Hotel, Kembla Heights Bowls Club, Walter Construction, Wave FM, Accent Communications for our website and West Illawarra who have supported us all the way. A big thankyou to both our **patrons** Mr Matt Waugh & Mr Colin Markham who have been extremely busy with their own lives, but still have the time to support us in many ways we don't get to see immediately.

Then there is the special thanks to all those people who **volunteer** their time on the weekend to assist us in every way they can to ensure a successful weekend for the whole village of Mt Kembla and Kembla Heights.

We have managed to raise the awareness, not just in the Illawarra region but in some cases Australia, of the significance of our little village's history to Australia's major coal mining history studies and the associated struggles, in it's colourful and sometimes tragic history.

I remain just as passionate today, that we commemorate the Mt Kembla Mine Disaster first and foremost on the last weekend of July each year where possible. I still feel sure we can improve on our festival each year and now have a permanent home to house our own belongings and a shed which after repair we can work in and hopefully have some well deserved companionship and good get togethers, while remaining every productive.

I would like to thank every single person involved in the Festival activities in any way and ask that we all make 2005 a winner once again. I also thank each of you for your support in having me as your chairperson.

Cate Stevenson
Tuesday, 15 February 2005