

**Blue Mountains Flexible Community Grants  
Program  
MT WILSON PROGRESS ASSOCIATION INC  
Project Details**



**Premier  
& Cabinet**

**Project Title**

BUSHFIRE PREPARATION, RISK AWARENESS AND EMERGENCY LOCATION SIGNAGE

**What is the activity, service or group that will benefit from this project?**

SIGNS TO IMPROVE SAFETY AND PROPERTY PROTECTION BY COMMUNICATING TO RESIDENTS THEIR RESPONSIBILITY FOR FIRE PREPARATION, ALERTING THEM TO CURRENT RISK AND TIMETABLE FOR ACTION. SIGNS TO CLEARLY IDENTIFY LOCATIONS FOR EMERGENCY INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

**Proposed start date of project**

06/14

**Anticipated finish date of project**

12/14

**Project Type**

Social

**What is the amount of funding being requested in this application**

8246.00

**Project Description**

This project involves the design, creation, installation and management of: Regularly changing (to keep residents interested and watching) signs attached to the Fire Danger Meter at the brigade station with reminders to residents that they need to prepare their family and their properties for bushfire, that it is their responsibility and the time to act for survival is now. The signs will reinforce similar messages delivered by the Community Website, Community Newsletter, workshops and community meetings. The signs will have messages such as 'Your Property, Your Fuel, Your Responsibility', 'Bushfire Season is Over – Clear Fuel Now', 'Bushfire Season Is Coming – What's Your Plan' and 'Bushfire Season Has Started – We Are All Firefighters – Prepare Now'.

Temporary (to meet community concerns) signage clearly identifying locations (fire trails, walking tracks, water sources, vantage points) to assist local crews, combat agencies, Police, Ambulance and SES attending emergency incidents.

**Why is the project needed?**

Only 35% of residents in the two villages are permanent. The area is extremely vulnerable to bushfire risk and residents may not have time to leave early. Not all part timers realise that preparing for bushfire is a shared responsibility between residents, volunteer brigades and paid authorities. During the State Mine Fire many residents collaborated with the brigade by taking on roles in the Catering or Community Engagement Teams. The signs are part of a larger project to continue the dialogue with the community on being proactive to manage bushfire risk.

There is minimal signage to indicate localities in the area. This makes it difficult for emergency services to respond to an incident. The RFS Brigade's 'After Action Review' (AAR) and community survey indicated that many locals were also not familiar with the identity of critical sites. The signs need to be temporary as some cross private property, to retain local character, discourage bike riders and minimise vandalism.

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Contact Details**



**Premier  
& Cabinet**

**Given Name**  
KATHLEEN

**Family Name**  
OAKES

**Position**  
MEMBER

**Business Phone**  
4756 2199

**Home Phone**

**Mobile**

**Fax**

**Email**  
k.oakes@bigpond.com

**Address**  
17 FARRER ROAD WEST

**Suburb**  
MT WILSON

**Postcode**  
2786

**Blue Mountains Flexible Community Grants  
Program  
MT WILSON PROGRESS ASSOCIATION INC  
Location Details**



**Location**

MT WILSON/MT IRVINE RURAL FIRE BRIGADE STATION

**Address**

The Avenue

**Suburb**

MOUNT WILSON

**Postcode**

2786

**State**

NSW

**Electorate**

Blue Mountains

**Council Name**

Blue Mountains

**Blue Mountains Flexible Community Grants  
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Budget Details**



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<b>FUNDING AND APPLICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THIS PROJECT</b>	
Funding requested for this application	8246.00
Confirmed funding from Federal Government	0.00
Confirmed funding from Other Sources	0.00
Confirmed funding from Local Government	0.00
Sub-Total	8246.00
Your contribution (e.g. applicant's contribution, donations, fees and charges, in-kind contribution etc)	
Annual RFS Brigade cost to clear trails	5000.00
Installation of 57 treated pine posts by volunteers Contractor equivalent cost	2500.00
Project coordination 20hrs@\$23/hr	460.00
Ongoing management of signage in perpetuity eg Volunteer hours at \$23.00/hr (10 hrs) for one incident	690.00
Sub-Total	8650.00
(EXPENDITURE - List all related costs by line item (e.g. venue hire, equipment, presenter fees etc))	
Supply and install permanent panel 1810x410mm with logo and laminated print. Includes channelling and	305.00
Supply 12 of composite panels with laminated prints. 1 each 1800x400mm@ \$239.00	2868.00
Supply 57 treated pine posts 100x50mm x 1.5m with channelling for slide in panels @19.00	1083.00
Supply 57 composite panels with laminated prints each 600x200mm @\$70.00	3990.00
Estimated value of volunteer contribution	8650.00
Total	16896.00
Budget surplus or deficit	0

Objective	How will the project do this
<p>How will the project build resilience and capacity within the Blue Mountains community and the local economy?</p>	<p>The Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine Rural Fire Brigade developed a Community Engagement Plan after the devastating windstorm of 2011 when the brigade, at its AAR, noted that communication had been insufficient and residents complained of feeling alienated by not knowing what was happening.</p> <p>The State Mine Fire tested the Plan. Residents received notice of the fire well in advance and at least two updates daily on the fire, brigade strategies and road closures. The messages were delivered by the Community Website, Community Newsletter email list and the Street Coordinators (to those without internet connection).</p> <p>63% of residents present were involved in the response and 40% of these were not members of the local brigade. There was significant property damage with two houses lost but the community was kept well informed and included in the recovery. The Melbourne Cup lunch had the largest attendance ever.</p> <p>Building resilience, however, requires continuing engagement. The community was surveyed after the fire and most responses gave the highest scores to the brigade's performance. However, only 26% of residents felt that their property had been prepared as well as possible and some participants in a 'Writing a Bushfire Survival Plan' workshop commented that they had not included enough detail in their survival plans. These findings are now included in our workshop content and other avenues for messages. The community needs to continue the messages that everyone has a role to play, that residents must take action to prepare for bushfire and that, as the State Mine Fire proved, we may be vulnerable in regard to isolation and age, but we are not helpless. Empowering residents builds resilience.</p> <p>Local signage will increase the efficiency with which emergency services can respond to incidents in our isolated and rugged terrain. The community will manage the signs installation and, learning where critical locations are, be in a better position to give directions.</p>

Objective	How will the project do this
<p>How will the project assist the Blue Mountains community, its people and its businesses recover from trauma and disruption and be better equipped to withstand potential future disasters?</p>	<p>The State Mine Fire proved to us that if the community works together we can recover well. The fire was terrifying but the loss of houses was minimised by the arrival of extra crews, in some instances, with 10 minutes to spare. This does not always happen. If there is confidence that we had some luck there is also a risk of complacency that we will always be lucky and that nothing further is required. More than a third of the residents present did not contribute so we still have those who do not think that preparing and fighting for fires is their responsibility and who do not understand the empowerment and resilience that acting, contributing and taking responsibility can provide.</p> <p>We have to continue with our discourse to encourage action for bushfire preparation and the understanding that everyone has a role to play. Coming from lower bushfire risk areas means it can take time to understand the hazards involved in being an aging population, living in an isolated area and surrounded by bush. Our messages, repeated in various media (workshop, meeting, website, newsletter, signs) are a way of encouraging dialogue within the community and establishing that bushfire preparation is a social norm of life in rural areas.</p> <p>The signs at the brigade station are a quick way of getting messages across. It is easier to absorb visual messages than to read or listen to messages. However, if the message remains the same it is easy to ignore, hence the need to change the messages constantly. By encouraging the community to take notice of the signs we are also making them aware of the current bushfire risk (indicated by the Fire Danger Meter).</p> <p>We know from our experiences of fire, medical emergencies and rescues that lack of local knowledge of trails, tracks, water and vantage points can delay emergency responses. Part time residents have only limited knowledge of critical sights. Signs will increase our capacity to respond quickly to future emergencies.</p>



Objective	How will the project do this
<p>How will the project re-build connections within the community and improve emotional and mental well-being of Blue Mountains residents?</p>	<p>Previous experience shows us that an informed community increases the response effort. It is not so much that we need to re-build connections but rather the value of having connections was well and truly proven in the State Mine Fire. Our need is to maintain, strengthen and expand the community connections forged during the State Mine Fire. We need to reach out and talk with those who stood apart from the effort as next time the fire may be much more destructive and resilience is best built by acting for oneself and helping others. A few residents were quite traumatised by the event but have been able to speak openly and with the support of family and friends in the community have more or less recovered although continuing negotiations over rebuilding are exhausting.</p> <p>The majority of those most affected are part time residents who are now able to prove that insurance doesn't cover everything and that there can be deep attachment even to a garden. Research into the effects of bushfire tell us that homes can be an expression of way of life or personal achievement, are the repositories of memory, emotion and identity and confirm a sense of belonging.</p> <p>We will use our residents' stories of the fire in our discussions with and messages to the community. The signs are part of a wider community engagement plan and are aimed at reinforcing messages of the need to be prepared, not to wait and see what will happen, but to think that it is important and not to be complacent that 'it will never happen to me'. If residents are confident of their ability to respond they will have confidence to help others. This connectedness of the community is the best way to face disaster and bounce back.</p> <p>One of the aims of the temporary signs is to meet a community request for wider knowledge of the significant locations around the two villages. The ability to be able to name locations, even when the signs aren't there, will foster a sense of ownership and belonging for all the community.</p>

**Blue Mountains Flexible Community Grants  
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Objectives**



**Premier  
& Cabinet**

Objective	How will the project do this
How will the project improve productivity and reduce economic hardship in the Blue Mountains community and economy?	

**Blue Mountains Flexible Community Grants  
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Organisational capacity**



**Premier  
& Cabinet**

Year	Description
2014	<p>Responsibility for the signs will be delegated to the Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine Rural Fire Brigade, headed by a Captain and Deputies and managed by an Executive. They are the only emergency service in the two villages. They have a regular inspection program of fire trails, walking tracks and water resources. There are regular training days devoted to making sure all trails and tracks are clear. Captain, Beth Raines, and Community Engagement Officer, Kathleen Oakes, will be responsible for the signs. Both are permanent residents of the community and Beth Raines, having lived all her life in the village, is knowledgeable of local place names. The Brigade is already responsible for the Fire Danger Metre and Total Fire Ban signs.</p> <p>President, Secretary and Treasurer of the Mt Wilson Progress Association are also active members of the Brigade.</p>

**Blue Mountains Flexible Community Grants  
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Project Outputs**



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Beneficiaries/Target Groups	Number of Participants	Benefit to the participants
COMMUNITY	0	Everyone will be better informed, better prepared and better defended
THE RFS BRIGADE	0	Better prepared properties and residents make their job easier and safer
VISITING EMERGENCY CREWS	0	They will be better able to identify crucial locations and resources
PEOPLE IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE	0	They will have a better chance of survival

**What is the long term benefit to the Blue Mountains Community from this project.**

The RFS Brigade Community Engagement Plan has already identified the need for regularly changing signs at the station as a way of improving communication with the community, reinforcing emergency preparation messages, for clarifying responsibilities, for informing residents of important emergency messages and encouraging residents to act. The issue has also been raised at meetings of the Mt Wilson Progress Association as an important community initiative which fits one of the objectives of the Association which is to provide for discussion of issues relating to our local area. The signs are the entry point to further dialogue on the website, in the newsletter, at meetings and social events. The messages on the signs will be complemented by relevant (seasonal) workshops and demonstrations to develop skills and competence.

The long term benefit to the community will be improved property preparation, better bushfire survival planning, greater discussion of bushfire concerns, greater awareness of risk, better understanding of the timetable for action and greater inclusion of all residents in the response to bushfire. If the community understands the importance, not to mention the normalcy, of taking the initiative and responsibility for dealing with the risk of disaster then the problem of preparing for bushfire is seen as a challenge worthy of investment of energy.

If the community recognises the shared goal of preparing for bushfire then it becomes automatic to build on this increasing community strength and share in responding to the emergency and helping others. If taking responsibility for oneself is combined with helping others to respond, then a disaster, in spite of trauma, can be empowering.

Unfortunately, the increasingly warmer climate and the attraction of visitors to the adventure of exploring our wilderness will mean a continuing need for emergency services to provide assistance quickly in our isolated location, no matter how unfamiliar the surrounding

**Blue Mountains Flexible Community Grants  
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Partnerships**



**Premier  
& Cabinet**

**First Name**  
ELIZABETH

**Family Name**  
RAINES

**Name of Organisation**  
MT WILSON/MT IRVINE RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

**Business Phone**

**Email**  
wilsoncaptain@bigpond.com

**Role in Partnership**  
The Brigade will store the signs and manage their display.

**Contribution to project**  
They will erect the posts for the temporary signs and in times of emergency attach those signs that are required.  
They will change the signs at the brigade station every two weeks or monthly, as required.