

Howlong Community Progress Association Incorporated
AGM Presidents Report
Monday 23rd September 2024

The HCPA committee has had a busy year, working on a number of projects and issues which have delivered positive outcomes to the Howlong community.

Last year at the AGM, we changed our membership structure to a one off payment of \$20 for a lifetime membership. This change has seen 105 life members coming on board however we have only 10 businesses who renewed their membership, down from 23 the previous year. Hopefully more people will join and support our association.

The 2023 Christmas festival was a big event for Howlong. In conjunction with the Federation council, the HCPA played a vital role in the planning of this event. The Christmas festival was a great success and as a result we called for people who were prepared to form a committee to plan and run the 2024 Christmas festival. This committee of Clinton Franks, Belinda Gibbs, Robyn Roland, Veronica Husted and Sam Longley runs under the auspices of the HCPA. The committee is doing a great job, however a number of grants that have been applied for to fund this event, have been unsuccessful. We are reaching out to businesses for sponsorship to assist and are receiving good support. Hopefully more sponsorship will still come in, but funding will be tight. If anyone wishes to contribute financially or as a volunteer on the day it will be greatly appreciated.

The Community Emergency Response Team [CERT] continues to provide a great service to Howlong. They now have only 6 members running this service. Unfortunately at present we only have 3 active members with 3 currently unavailable. Another 4 people are at various levels of training which is critical to keep this vital service operational. Since they began operations in 2023 they have attended many call outs and played a vital role in life saving circumstances. They average two call outs a week. The HCPA gave the members small roast dinner hampers to show our appreciation for their commitment to this service.

We met informally with Justin Clancy MP for an update of the many ongoing issues of the township. Items discussed include the Howlong heavy vehicle bypass, walking trail proposal, and ongoing council issues. Other meetings have been with various council staff and a meeting with Professor Drew regarding council rates and council operations.

The cemetery toilet project is finally about to start with Tonkin Plumbing to undertake the first stage of the work. This being the instillation of the septic tank and seepage drains. The concrete foundation will be set out by Jason Kohn and the concrete supplied by Nagles at no cost. The wall structure will be brick and donated by the Cook family, with a local bricklayer volunteering his time. With a generous donation of \$10,000 from the Howlong Local Thrifty Store, plus other donations, we have reached a total of \$18,000 so far. We greatly appreciate all these large contributions.

I have volunteered to replace the cemetery front fence and clean up the gateway. Any assistance on this project is welcome.

Clean up Australia day in March was also very successful with a few trailer loads of rubbish picked up.

John Skinner and I have prepared a 5 page document outlining the potential and benefits of a 2.5km walking trail on and around Figtree common. The common is downstream from the boat ramp at Memorial Park. This project requires a pedestrian bridge crossing over onto the 12 hectare island. This proposal will link into the new walking path from Cross Street. This document highlights the many benefits this walking path would bring to the community. It is important to have a project like this ready to go if funding becomes available.

In conjunction with Corowa Land care, the council and the Howlong community, we coordinated a tree planting morning on the land from the Cross Street reserve to Memorial Park. It was a great effort and the trees, shrubs and native grasses are doing well. A small group of volunteers are continuing to water and maintain these seedlings.

Memorial Park planning upgrade is under way. Council has engaged a company from Albury [Enviro Culture Services] to consult with the community and develop a blue print for this area. The HCPA expect to play a part with this project and we will notify the community for their input at an expected public meeting.

The HCPA held a mid-year update in May. We also instigated a change to wording of constitution to allow us to become a tax deductible not for profit organisation. We are hopeful of gaining this accreditation.

Other projects coming up: -

Howlong has Talent is an event organised by a subcommittee led by Colleen Bell. It will provide an opportunity for young people, with a range of artistic talent, to perform at the Mighty River Room on 20 October, 2pm to 5pm. This event was held 2 years ago and was very successful. We hope this year will again be well supported.

It is Howlong's turn to host the Federation Council Australia Day awards. Funding for the event is from council and is an opportunity to showcase Howlong. Initial planning is working towards the event being held at the Mighty River Room. Hosting the Federation Council Australia day event involves catering and some music entertainment. A committee to help plan and organise this day is needed. Anyone wishing to help is welcome.

The HCPA received a grant from the Federal Government Volunteer Grants program. The grant of \$4,650 allowed the committee to purchase a range of items such as a laptop computer, gazebos, tables, chairs, and a portable Weber BBQ. In the past committee members have donated their own items to use at events.

Another successful grant this year was a \$3,000 Federation Council Community Grant towards the Howlong Cemetery toilet project.

The council election has resulted in Cheryl Cook and Sue Wearne being elected, giving the Howlong community our much needed two councillors. Thanks to Mike Gardiner, Damien Glass and Dave Longley who assisted with the process by putting their hand up on a very successful 'Howlong First' ticket.

Cheryl's work as Secretary for the HCPA the past few years has been exceptional. She has given hours of time behind the scenes, updating web sites, membership, writing letters, planning meetings, leading the CERT drive, etc. Cheryl will stay on the committee for a short time to help transfer tasks to the new committee. Sue will stay on as Treasurer until further notice to continue the work she has so splendidly done the past few years. John Skinner has decided to step down after four years of involvement. He has coordinated the Clean-up Australia Day, much of the planning of the cemetery toilet, street tree assessment document and the walking trail document. He is keen to continue working as a volunteer to see other projects over the line for Howlong.

I wish to thank the Howlong Golf Resort for providing this facility for meetings when required at no cost.

Finally I wish to thank our committee of Robyn Roland, Cheryl Cook, Sue Wearne, Liz Hall, Veronica Husted and John Skinner for their substantial contributions during the year. We do feel that the HCPA plays a very important role for the Howlong community, and will continue to do so for a long time into the future.

Thank you for your attendance tonight.