



CongoNEWS

Spring Edition 2023

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Meeting with our State MP, Dr Michael Holland - August 2023

On Thursday, 25 August 2023, CCA executive members met with Bega electorate's State MP, Dr Michael Holland, at the shire council offices in Moruya. The CCA was keen to update Dr Holland on local Congo issues, outline our association's aims and discuss our current strategic directions, including

investigating grant opportunities to fund community resources.

Here is a brief review of topics raised at the meeting.

1. The reopening of Congo Road north process and timeline were discussed. We informed Dr Holland of the community's strong desire for the northern access to be reinstated as soon as possible, particularly with the hot and dry season approaching with its increased bushfire risk. The CCA reported that the ESC's five-year Bushfire Management Plan was being reviewed in 2023. The current plan was composed in 2018, before the Black Summer fires of 2019-20 and before the road closure in 2021, thus leaving Congo without a community-specific plan that reflected current conditions. With the transfer of ownership of the paper road from Crown Lands to the Council occurring in August, the public submission with its 28-day period for public comment will likely commence in September. Dr Holland confirmed he would be in discussions with ESC staff, offering his support and assistance for a smooth transition through the necessary legal and government processes required.
2. The safety of the Bingi Road intersection was discussed. Dr Holland was very familiar with the condition of the intersection, having used it on various occasions. He understood that this intersection could be a safety concern for Bingi/Meringo and Congo residents and visitors. It was agreed these types of T-intersections where local roads meet the increasingly busier Princes Highway pose a challenge across the electorate. Dr Holland said he would raise community

concerns about the off-road parking, signage, lighting and line of sight for entering onto the 100 kmh Princes Highway from Bingi Road with Transport NSW.

3. We discussed current and future plans, including bushfire preparedness, Community Resilience Teams (CRT), advocating on behalf of members, growing community-wide, positive social connections and supporting local wellbeing, safety and environmental initiatives. Dr Holland expressed his interest in supporting the health and welfare of vulnerable members in our community, particularly the elderly.

Dr Holland was informed, open and approachable on the topics raised. Dr Holland has a busy schedule in the NSW State Parliament and across the Bega electorate. We greatly appreciated the opportunity to share CCA's ideas and aspirations with him.

CCA Annual General Meeting - October 2023

The association's Annual General Meeting was held on Thursday, 9 October 2023, with 15 CCA members in attendance. Several members notified the executive committee of their absence before the event.

Following the meeting's introduction and welcome, members heard a brief report from Geoff Sharpe, CCA's 2023 President, outlining the association's activities, advocacy and events of the past year.

Markus Lessing, CCA's dual executive position holder of Communications and Treasurer, provided the CCA's 2023 financial statement and report. He identified contributions from membership fees of the 78 registered financial members.

Markus noted the generous donations from some CCA members keen to support and progress the association.

The election of the 2024 management committee's office-bearers was put to the members' vote.

2024

Management Committee

CCA President: Belinda Bain

CCA Vice President: Meg Rogers

CCA Treasurer: Markus Lessing

CCA Communications Officer: Markus Lessing

CCA Secretary: Karen Harper

Ordinary Committee Members:

CCA Fundraising Coordinator: Marcus Sandford

CCA Public Officer: Johanna Weaver

Other business items included a brief update on the Congo Road north, notifying members that the ESC will be holding a vote at the November 21 Ordinary Meeting of Council. The Council will consider the public submissions received and vote on the proposal to lodge the survey plan identifying the boundaries of Congo Road with the NSW Land Registry Office. Further discussion was conducted about the need to develop subcommittees to support our volunteer community association's future growth and development. Other topics raised were about attracting more members, offering a greater role in caring for our community's diverse residents, CCA's

grant submission to Fire to Flourish Round 2 and possibly purchasing a defibrillator for Congo.

We take this opportunity to thank Geoff Sharpe, CCA's President 2022 and 2023, who chose not to renominate for a committee position in 2024. On behalf of all members, we thank him sincerely for his willingness to share ideas, offer unwavering support and actively promote our fledgling association. We are thrilled to welcome our new Management Committee member, Meg Rogers and the new (Extra)Ordinary Committee member, Marcus Sandford.

Fresh ideas and strong, active participation are vital ingredients to strengthen Congo's community bonds and grow the CCA. The newly expanded team looks forward to working together for the association. We appreciate all members' offers to contribute directly to the CCA's organisation. Your feedback and suggestions are warmly welcomed.

The [2023 AGM Minutes](#) have been emailed to members to provide further meeting details.

Council's vote to accept the Survey Plan - November 2023

On Tuesday, 21 November, Belinda Bain, the current President of the Congo Community Association, registered to present at ESC's public forum to urge Council to vote to accept the proposed boundary changes of the public road over the formed "track in use" under sections 18-21 of the Public Roads Act and lodge them without delay with the NSW Land Registry Office.

Our recent email to members (22 November 2023) provided details about the Council's vote to approve the survey plan without alteration and the process the ESC will now undertake. This includes the survey plan's registration with the NSW Registrar General, completing an updated risk assessment, undertaking environmental assessments if required and completing physical works on the land (including

removing barriers, clearing vegetation, and grading to a standard unsealed road quality) before the public could use the road.

Council advised in their meeting agenda, "Such activities will not be completed within the current calendar year." The CCA will now notify NSW's Bega MP Dr Holland's office of the Council vote to approve the survey plan and request his support and assistance with the transition process.

Late mail received Friday, 24 November 2023, from ESC

Council advised residents that legal action has commenced, and the process to register the survey plan and steps required to reopen Congo Road north will not proceed until the legal challenge has been resolved. The matter has a hearing date of February 2024.

Congo Calendar Fundraiser- November 2023

Are you looking for a Christmas present for someone who loves Congo's natural beauty and wild seascapes?

Maybe you're looking for a gift for family or friends overseas who are a little homesick for Congo's sunshine, native bush, beaches and crystal clear water.

You may also want to show your support for the CCA in a small but meaningful way. Well, we can help you out!

The CCA has compiled an awe-inspiring calendar for 2024 full of high-quality digital photographic images of Congo, the place we all love. We have cast our net wide to find and select a range of stunning images of Congo's wild, natural beauty and have produced for sale a limited edition A3 calendar for 2023. To ensure a product of excellent quality, the photographs chosen are in full colour, varied in subject matter and include images taken locally by both professional photographers and highly gifted amateurs.

Calendars will be available in early December and will cost \$25. Each calendar purchase includes a small donation to the CCA.

There will only be a limited edition of calendars available, so don't miss out.

It's first in best dressed, so to beat the rush, members can pre-purchase calendars by depositing \$25 into CCA's Commbank Account

Account Name: Congo Community Association Incorporated

BSB 062-575

Account No. 10261212

Please add your name and the word calendar as the payment description to secure your copy.

Calendars (\$25 cash/receipt) will also be available for sale at CCA end-of-year events until sold.

(NB. With prior arrangement, we are happy to deliver your 2024 calendar purchases to any Congo address.)

It's the perfect gift that will be highly sought after and appreciated by those who love Congo as we all do!

End of Year Celebrations - December 2023

With the festive season soon approaching and time to celebrate all things Congo, the CCA thought once again to organise a low-key, relaxed community gathering for all members and their friends. We were also keen to change up the Congo end-of-year celebrations a little and have decided to try and incorporate some fresh, new festive spirit into our neighbourhood.

Please save these dates.....

Friday, 15 December, from 4pm at your front door

Please welcome our Congo Christmas Carolers to your door.

We want to gather a merry band of acapella singers willing to go from house to house singing Christmas carols to delight and entertain Congo folk.

If our choristers call in at your house, please consider offering a small cash donation to support the CCA or greet them with a

treat that they can enjoy as they go on their way. We aim to entertain and spread peace and goodwill.

We are seeking singers, young, old and everyone in between, to swell the ranks and sing up a little Christmas cheer. If you would like to be a Congo Christmas Caroler, please contact the CCA via our [Contacts page](#).

We need your support for this idea to grow wings... so get with the festive spirit and get in touch soon!

Sunday, 18 December, from 4 pm at Congo Playground

For those who have been naughty or nice this past year, Santa will visit Congo Playground during our end-of-year celebrations to distribute small Christmas presents to the children. Further details will be provided as we get closer, so remember to check your email box in early December.

The CCA welcomes all of the Congo community to our end-of-year celebrations at Congo Playground. It is all about gathering together on a summer evening by Congo Creek with friendly company, sharing a little food, having fun and enjoying a relaxed hour or two as the sun goes down.

Love to see you there ... so bring a chair, BYO and plate to share.

Annual Foodie Van Festival - January 2024

We are delighted to announce that the Congo Foodie Van Festival is arriving in Congo again this coming January.

To continue the summer vibes in 2024, the CCA will promote summer community food events, including Elk Espresso Van, Harris Oysters, Cut and Run Pizza, and yummy Whoppa ice creams.

Last year was such a great success with friends, visitors and locals enjoying greeting, meeting and eating together in the great outdoors of Congo Playground. Thank you to all the vendors who have been booked and have already confirmed for a Saturday evening (4-6pm) or Sunday morning (9-12pm) over the weekends in January 2024. They are keen to offer Congo a yummy variety of freshly produced food and drink, so invite your far-flung friends and family and make it a special night or morning. Further vendors will be booked, so we will give you further updates via Facebook email and look out for posters placed up around town.

As Congo's internet connection can sometimes be a little hit and miss for EFTPOS transactions, most vendors have requested customers purchase with cash.

CCA members, residents and visitors who supported our Congo Foodie Festival in 2023 helped to make it a resounding success. We hope to see everyone enjoying each other's company outdoors, catching up with old friends and making new ones.

Bring a picnic rug, your cossies, a fishing rod or a floaty and enjoy an array of food choices over successive weekends in January with your neighbours and friends alongside our beautiful Congo Creek.

Plans for a Long Table Dinner

Saturday, 27 January, from 4pm

There is a members-only dinner event planned for Saturday evening, 27 January 2024. Not to be too "cloak and dagger", but this ticketed, outdoor event is in the planning stage, but we will reveal further details shortly.

It will be fabulous. It will be one-of-a-kind. It will be fun, and numbers will be limited, so please save the date.

Launch of a NEW Congo Bushfire Whatsapp Group

The CCA is currently organising the launch of a new Congo Bushfire Whatsapp group as a Congo community resilience, support and bushfire preparedness measure.

Several members of the Congo community were linked via an informal Whatsapp group during the Black Summer bushfire emergency in 2019/20. This type of communication relies on internet connectivity and operates separately from the electricity grid, which can be unreliable during an emergency. Users could post and share personal support messages and information via the Whatsapp group about the emergency situation.

The CCA is looking to start afresh and organise a new village-wide Whatsapp communication network locals can opt into as part of Congo's CRT (our take on the Red Cross Community Resilience Team concept as discussed at the Members Meet Up sessions earlier in 2023). There will be a form to register and a couple of rules for group users to abide by around the purpose and intent of the Congo Bushfire WhatsApp group, as well as guidance on what is acceptable for group members to post.

Disaster planning, including bushfire preparedness and making and following your own bushfire emergency plans, is a personal responsibility. The Congo Bushfire Whatsapp group will be an informal source of communication that locals may consider joining to receive community-based emergency information and support from friends and neighbours.

More details will be sent to members shortly...but keep up the yard clearing and keep preparing to be fire-ready in the meantime.

The NSW Rural Fire Service provides Pre Incident Plans (or PIPs) for community members to enter details about their property, its occupants and any risk considerations for potential use by relevant authorities during or after a bushfire

emergency. The CCA has contacted the RFS for further information and will inform members about the purpose, collection and storage of PIPs.

Our new CCA Noticeboard

A new community noticeboard has been placed in the Congo bus shelter on Congo Road. It has been a while in the planning. As with all things, the idea is often the easy bit! With Congo's minimal community infrastructure, it was decided that the bus shelter was the best location for the community's noticeboard. It is central to the village and fairly weatherproof. A big thanks to Markus and Marcus for making and installing the board. It will soon have header signage installed to complete the project.

We aimed to provide a place where residents and the CCA could easily post community notices and read up on local news and events. It may also help visitors, kids, and less tech-savvy residents feel connected and informed.

Congo's Surfers Rescue 24/7

Saturday 25 November, 9:00am to 12:30pm

Saturday morning broke with heavy grey skies and drizzling rain. Not quite the plan for Congo's Surfers Rescue 24/7 event. Close to 20 hardy locals headed to Congo Beach to learn and practise basic rescue techniques using their surfboards. This crucial training teaches participants simple yet effective proven rescue techniques designed by Surfing NSW and endorsed by several professional bodies, including NSW Professional Lifeguards and The Australian Lifeguards Service (ASL).

Each of the four rescue techniques demonstrated by trainer Aaron were practised on the sand before attendees headed into the surf in pairs. They performed each rescue technique when in the water, becoming familiar with how to best assist a patient by

selecting the most appropriate rescue technique. The technique selection depends on several factors if the patient is conscious or unconscious.

The second part of the course was CPR. Attendees practised CPR on the practice dummies under the guidance of the Surfers Rescue 24/7 trainer. They also used a training defibrillator and learned tourniquet techniques. Attendees were highly impressed by the training they received. We would also like to thank Surfing NSW's Aaron Foster for his willingness to hold the event in Congo and his excellent tuition.

Organising the free Congo's Surfers Rescue 24/7 event was the work of Phil Stubbs. A mighty big thanks to Phil for coordinating with Surfing NSW. Thanks to Phil and partner, Lisa Patroni for their wonderful hospitality, opening their house for the CPR training, cooking up a BBQ and providing other delicious treats for the hungry attendees. Lucinda Nesbitt's cooking contributions were also greatly appreciated.

Postscript

There is no CCA Members Meet-Up planned for January. Stay safe as you travel or play this festive season.

Merry Christmas to all our members, friends and family. Relax and enjoy the festive time ahead. 🌲🎅