

## GEMBOREE ANNUAL REPORT

The 53<sup>rd</sup> GEMBOREE was quite an achievement and an outstanding success for the Committee and volunteers who worked very hard to put it all together before the opening.

We had positive reports/comments from local businesses, Lithgow City Council, Police, and the Information Centre. They were all surprised at the size of the event and the numbers that attended from all States of Australia and many from overseas. They all agreed the event was well planned and organised. The shopping centre, restaurants, hotels and club all reported good attendances and sales over the four days.

Just over 4000 visitors attended the event and many travelled up by train from Sydney for the day, while other clubs organised tour coaches from both the north and south coast including three coaches from Canberra area, these large numbers of visitors arriving at or near the same time caused some hectic moments for the volunteers selling tickets at the main gate and the need to divert traffic around the coaches during unloading and then assist with the parking.

Car parking facilities were provided for day visitors in the adjoining playing fields at a cost of only \$2, this was a requirement by the Council and Police to avoid congestion of vehicles parking on the streets around the sportsground (average of 300 vehicles per day).

**Venue:** The Tony Luchetti Sportsground Lithgow was the ideal site for this type of event. The layout and conditions provided for 150 powered campsites and approximately 50 unpowered, two additional shower blocks and one toilet block were provided to cater for the numbers and we also had the use of 12 team showers and four toilets under the grandstand if needed (approx. 360 campers).

The main hall of 1000sqm was more than adequate for the 22 traders, all the competition showcases, demonstrations and displays as well as the foyer for the display from the Age of Fishes Museum, the information counter and office, and the "Willunga committee" desk promoting their 2018 GEMBOREE.

We were also provided with 15m x 15m area of the Council's workshop for all our meetings, happy hour, lectures and presentation night and a large covered area for catering/seating opposite the hall.

**Dealers-Hall Layout:** The table layout and set up for 22 traders in general went together like clockwork, we appear to have had the same team from all our GEMKHANA events and they all know what the procedure is and with the early arrival of the hired tables it relieved the stress involving in completing the setup in time. This also included setting up of the tables for the competition showcases.

**Competition:** Another mammoth task with 70 showcases with some borrowed from other clubs to make up for the display of 940 plus entries, a select group of volunteers was locked in their area to set out all these entries for a professional display. The Committee and several judges and assistants worked late into Thursday evening judging and displaying the 153 hand delivered entries, these included, minerals, fossils and carving.

**Registration:** With the arrival of over 150 caravans, campers/tents and motor homes this team was kept very busy. All the sites had been marked out early with a plan and site number of each registered name, our team members were all equipped with "walkie-talkies" and this helped in directing each arrival to their correct site and parking. They also successfully accommodated several arrivals that had not registered.

**Tailgating:** This area was around the Sportsground track, and the Co-ordinators and their team of helpers were out and set-up very early every morning to register and position each of the 70 stalls in the correct locations. Most mornings they experienced thick fog and it was an eerie scene watching the movement and setting up around the track.

**Excursions:** "Mick Lane's Tours and the Blue Mountains Community Group." The bus excursions were a huge success for the day visitors as well as those who wanted a break from the event. The tours were free except where entry fees applied to some historic sites. The tours included the glow-worm tunnels at Newnes, Hill End museum and the walk-in gold mine, Mt Tomah Botanic Gardens, Abercrombie House at Bathurst, visits to Sofala, Ilford and Capertee.

**Field Trips:** The field trips were well attended with a lot of interest from interstate members trying their luck in NSW. Gold panning in Turon River and onto Oberon in search of sapphires with reports of some reasonable finds!!! However, one group got lost turning left instead of right and ended up near Goulburn before they realised their mistake (thought this was a tag along tour!!!).

**Volunteers:** Unfortunately, there are never enough helpers for these events, with a few of us having to take on three or four extra duties to fill the gaps. Gate marshals, entry marquee/ticket sales, door and hall security, parking attendants, emptying garbage bins to cleaning showers and toilets.

All those members from all over OZ who volunteered did a mammoth job in making this event a success and I personally like to thank you all for your help.

**Catering:** Hot food was provided all day by the Lithgow Lions Club and that much needed early morning coffee was available from either "The Travelling Barista" or "Frothy Coffee" and they also had the usual snacks of cakes and sandwiches, etc. The Lions Club also provided the complementary Sunday morning breakfast during the Easter Bonnet parade and the Easter Bilby with Easter eggs for everyone.

**Summary:** After three years of planning, the 53<sup>rd</sup> GEMBOREE was a huge success for the GEMBOREE Committee, the Gem & Lapidary Council and for NSW.

A great deal goes on basically unnoticed with many meetings, planning, negotiations, ordering, etc, with many trips to Lithgow to confirm facilitate and layouts, attending meetings with Council to comply with their requirements and the local Police to ensure a successful event.

With all event planning and organisation there will always be areas that we could improve on, some of these issues are as follows:

Volunteers are a major concern as they are essential for a successful event, and you need some with previous experience as team leaders. We had folders prepared for each duty/activity with columns for name, contact number on site and rotation hours required. Unfortunately, we did not have the volunteers to fill these roles.

Signage needs to be large and easy to read at a distance and installed in as many locations as possible to direct your visitors to the venue. Signage around the venue should be considered also for opening hours, entry costs, directions to catering, tailgating area, first aid, etc (many visitors were not aware that three-quarters of the dealers/tailgaters were outside and didn't visit them at all).

Entry cost of \$8 was considered reasonable before the event, however, this became a nightmare finding \$2 coins to cover the change. Fortunately, we had a \$2 parking cost which helped. (\$10 would be a lot easier for ticket sales and the Treasurer at the end of the day.)

We need to be aware of the ever-changing rules and regulations of your local Council requirements and Police, and the latest requirements for Public Liability Insurance for large events.

Thank you to all 2017 GEMBOREE Committee members and Co-ordinators for your support and co-operation, my acknowledgment also to the many volunteers from all parts of Australia who have given their time over the four days, the Queensland members and the committee of the AFG, and for all the Clubs around Australia for your attendance and support.

Unless one has organised an event such as this, few people would realise what is involved. It has all been worth it to see how the public of Lithgow and other areas of NSW have supported the event.

I appreciate all the help, support and advice from the Lithgow Visitors Centre, Lithgow Council and staff and Lithgow Police for their co-operation.

Colin Wright  
2017 GEMBOREE Co-ordinator