

## **Presidents Report to the 2014 Tallong Community Focus Group AGM**

Over this past year the TCFG's community work started with presenting a Submission to Council requesting funding for safe walkways and a crossing place on Highland Way. This was a community lead action that reflected current needs and highlighted the absence of such a plan of improvements in the past. Unfortunately, due to a lack of funds our request was denied. As this year finishes, Goulburn Mulwaree Council's 2014 Operational Plan has set aside money for Village projects over the next few years. If we are to access any of these funds to improve amenities or the appearance of the village we need a comprehensive plan. The TCFG is drawing on those projects already on the agenda and it is expected that residents will comment on and add to these items. This process will provide our submission to Council and all projects will be prioritised. The Tallong Village Plan includes the completion of safe footpaths and a crossing on Highland Way as well as several improvements to the appearance of the village welcome signs. We intend to publish details of the plan in our newsletter and present photos for discussion at this AGM. We also intend to take the plan to local organisations so that members, residents and local organisations will have opportunities to develop and contribute to the plan.

While working on these issues over the past year I realize that Tallong has never had a systematic plan for improvement nor has the village experienced changing circumstances such as the current increase of the school population. We have many reasons now to support each other, to work together as I have seen organisations and individual residents celebrate Apple Day and participate in our own ANZAC service. Over the past 10 years the TCFG has financially and organisationally supported the Apple Festival and from that event we have all developed a common understanding and willingness to work for the betterment of the village. I hope we can put this good will behind a plan to improve our village. I have attended many inter village meetings over the last year and I am disheartened by the comparisons made by anyone driving down the Highland Way. It seems to many, from what they see of the village, that we just don't care about our village. Please be a part of this process, have your say and do your bit

Projects already on the TCFG's agenda include the welcome signs at each end of Highland Way which are overgrown and surrounded by rubble. Each sign, after clearing its surrounding area could have some stonework at the base, with a raised garden bed and suitable plantings.

To complete the network of safe walk ways in the village we would like to construct a footpath on the railway side of Highland Way from the station parking area to the Railway Parade turnoff. This would involve the cleaning up of overgrown edges, blackberry bushes and pine trees. An additional benefit would be to highlight a couple of magnificent Argyle Apple (native to the old County of Argyle) trees that could be a native symbol of Tallong's apple orchard heritage.

As has been mentioned in previous newsletters and after a meeting on site, with council representatives, it is planned to take up and complete the bush reclamation project carried out by residents on the Bush Block on the Highland Way between Caoura Rd and Memorial Drive. This would be a long term project to make this central block attractive and functional rather than the unsightly waste ground it is becoming. To achieve this we would look to clearing the rubble from the entrance, establish a meandering walkway through the cutting with bush tucker plantings and revegetation of the top section. The corner of Caoura Road and Highland Way (with stairways erected by the previous progress association) can be made into a feature area with sculpture, stone work, signage and plantings. A suggestion has been made to remind ourselves of the last apple orchard in Tallong by calling it the Jim Watling Reserve, Park or Walkway.

Our attention has been directed to the two memorial pine trees at the entrance to Memorial Drive from the Highland Way. It is thought they were planted as part of the village project in 1919 where residents erected a Hall as a memorial to those locals who fought as ANZAC's and particularly to those who died and were buried overseas. These trees are in need of some attention and could be part of the ceremony associated with the ANZAC centenary in 2015.

This year the TCFG committee has also worked effectively with the RFS to deliver a village Christmas Party and with all local organisations supporting our own ANZAC service. The Bush Dance held in July appealed to families at the school and the Apple Festival I am pleased to say despite not having the fine weather we have become accustomed to, was successful and a credit to the volunteers on the Apple Day Organising Committee. Planning has already started for the 10<sup>th</sup> Apple Festival. We hope to invite Tallongites to a community barbeque in November to have a get together and to enlist much needed community volunteers. Next year we plan to have a special centenary ANZAC service already launched by John Lombard with his outstanding articles and photographs, you will have seen published in the Goulburn Post, of his quest to find the graves of Tallong boys buried in France and Belgium. On the 27<sup>th</sup> September 2015 Tallong will be hosting a morning tea for the Kangaroo March re-enactment. We anticipate that the children from the school will be involved and locals will have the opportunity to walk along and participate in the proceedings. Already some local organisations, as occurred in 1915, have volunteered items for the morning tea. It will be a good time to show what the people of Tallong can do.

I would like finish this report with thanks to all my fellow committee members who by their combined efforts make all these events and projects possible.

Margaret Botticchio

President TCFG