

## **WICEN NSW INC. Northern Rivers Region**

### **RCO report to the 2017 AGM for the year April 1 2016 to 31 March 2017.**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to the 2017 WICEN Northern Region AGM.

It has been a steady-as-she-goes year for the region. Our main focus was the enduros and training. There were quite a number of events and activations in the more southern regions, but we did not have any personnel available for these.

There has been good participation in meetings and training. Meeting attendance has again been excellent, considering the distance many personnel have to travel.

#### **MEMBERSHIP**

We have 21 members as at this date. There are some that have yet to pay their subs.

#### **MEETINGS AND TRAINING**

WICEN held formal meetings at the SARC clubrooms on a bi-monthly basis. This again is a successful implementation of the formula of meetings co-incident with SARC meetings, with preceding training sessions.

A representative group visited the VRA Casino Rescue Squad, with a presentation to a meeting about WICEN and our role in the emergency services. This went very satisfactorily. We also had discussions with them to see if they can assist with Level 1 Induction training. It would appear that they are willing to help, but as yet nothing has been organised.

In any case, training is now an uncertain area, as the Rural Fire Service is set to take over training and assessment for VRA personnel. All currently non-inducted personnel have been issued with the existing VRA training documents to peruse, but it is not known if these will still be relevant.

#### **OPERATIONS**

Field operations this year were three successful endurance rides, including the inaugural Jackadgery ride which was very successful.

The Wiangaree ride hosted the Queensland State Championships and despite foul weather, logging and reporting of horse traffic was effected professionally. There were minor hitches with equipment, which were sorted out adequately.

The Girard enduro went smoothly, as expected with this being a well-practiced operation.

#### **TECHNICAL**

The portable-ops trailer has seen some further work, and plans are in progress for it to be completed in the coming year, with an additional equipment box, improved battery storage and a proper mount for the Clark mast.

The Parrot repeater has been set-up at the SARC clubrooms

## **NETS**

The well-established VK2WIR net at 2000 hours local Tuesday continued, via the SARC Lismore two metre repeater, with a preliminary net on 80m on the first net of each month. Typically there are 6 or more participants each week. The WICEN nets are run by Duncan VK2DLR with Chris VK2ACD providing WICEN news on the second round.

Several WICEN members are participating in a SARC digital net on Monday evenings and are gaining valuable skills and practice, particularly with image and file transmission modes, which will no doubt see application in future portable operations.

## **LIASION**

Principally, we liaise with State WICEN, specifically the State Management Committee. We haven't had any official liaison with the SES, RFS etc.

Our first meeting with VRA Casino has happened, as mentioned above.

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

Hopefully the training situation will be sorted out and induction training can get underway. At present there are 7 likely candidates.

An always important area that needs addressing is practicing procedures. Despite good intentions last year, not very much happened.

A repeat item from last year's report - recruitment needs to be continued, lest we fade away with age and falling numbers. There have been a lot of new calls coming via SARC's education program, but this is not translating into WICEN membership. We need to provide a path into WICEN which can accommodate a level of participation that is not too daunting, and not necessarily dependent on radio skills either. Personnel other than radio operators can have important roles in the organisation.

As we start another year, I have been asking myself the awkward question that crops up from time to time: what realistically can we expect for the future of WICEN Northern Rivers? Without the rose-coloured glasses, it looks like our only major role is likely to be assisting with horse enduros and the like. The training requirements now make it uncertain as to working as stand-in operators for the SES and RFS. While we can potentially work in with local VRA, their typical role is road rescue and we are not trained for such situations. Ideally we could find a comms role that is notionally already in the displan and integrate with the other authorities, albeit that on-going liason with the 'big 3' (RFS, SES and Police) presents difficulties for a small group like us without full-time salaried personnel to maintain a constant presence.

Looking beyond the local and State scene, think there are two significant things that need to be addressed, –

- firstly that the WICEN title is unknown to the general public and I would guess to the majority of personnel in the emergency services, and the title is really not relevant since we have no connection with the WIA and there is no real network (the N in WICEN).

- secondly, that there is (apparently) no co-ordination between the various states, who each operate under a variety of arrangements.

However achieving any broad change would be very difficult practically and politically. I welcome any thoughts about these matters.

As I won't be seeking re-election as RCO, I encourage others to think about taking on more responsibility and particularly to address the issue of recruitment, which is something we have in common with SARC. Speaking of the club, its pretty obvious that WICEN and SARC go hand in hand, nevertheless it should be noted that the region could not carry on without the support of the club.

Thanks again to everyone for their efforts, in particular these people (who are also wearing SARC hats), Duncan (Deputy RCO and Treasurer), Paul (Secretary), Geoff (Technician) Ross (Event controller) and to those who have participated in operations and even just turned up for meetings or the on-air nets. Also to the State committee.

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