



UPDATE. January 2020.

From: Steve Noakes, Chairman, Binna Burra Lodge.

The context.

Australia's bushfire season is not yet over. Since the terrible spring/summer of 2019/2020 bushfires started some five months ago, more than two dozen people have been killed and many injured. The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) reports that 'Over 18 million hectares have burned in the Australian bushfire season 2019–2020 as of mid-January ... destroying over 5,900 buildings including over 2,800 homes'.¹ Some reports indicate that over one billion native wildlife have been killed. The Guardian writes: 'Bushfires don't just burn animals to death but create starvation events. Birds lose their breeding trees and the fruits and invertebrates they feed on. Ground-dwelling mammals that do survive emerge to find an open landscape with nowhere to hide, which one ecologist said became a "hunting arena" for feral cats and foxes.'²

Back in early September 2019, at the beginning of this challenging bushfire period in Australia, the first major destruction of houses and buildings was at Beechmont and then at Binna Burra. Eleven local homes were lost, and others damaged. This included homes associated with some long term Binna Burra shareholders and staff. Sadly, our heritage listed lodge and cabins at Binna Burra were destroyed and damage was sustained to the Skylodges and others parts of Binna Burra.

Our preparation for the bushfire was good. Two days before the bushfire hit Binna Burra, we were at near full capacity and all guests and staff were evacuated in an orderly manner. Most importantly, no lives were lost, and no one was injured.

Our response and recovery phases have gone smoothly – with a small remaining staff team doing an amazing job on issues ranging from dealing with customers with existing bookings, transitioning almost 60 staff who had lost their jobs into new career options, dealing with our creditors, suppliers, the Tax Office, a wide range of government agencies mostly at the local and State levels, media, roadworks crews, shareholders and so on.

¹ <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/ten-impacts-australian-bushfires>

² <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jan/04/ecologists-warn-silent-death-australia-bushfires-endangered-species-extinction>

At the same time, our remaining staff were dealing with their own emotional reactions to the destruction of Binna Burra and the impacts the bushfires and months of unhealthy smoke-filled air had on their own individual situations.

Living history.

Binna Burra Lodge has always been a place where the linkage between past and present – our living history – has been important. Let me share an example.

At the time Binna Burra was created in the early 1930s, a destructive fire ushered in a new era of tourism for the Gold Coast and hinterland. Back in 1925, Jim Cavill built a sixteen bedroom timber building, the Surfers Paradise Hotel, in the coastal village called ‘Elston’. Jim’s hotel burnt down the same year when Romeo Lahey and Arthur Groom led the foundation of Binna Burra Lodge (1933). The village of ‘Elston’ was renamed ‘Surfers Paradise’ and it took Jim three years to rebuild it with a small zoo attached.

Hopefully, it won’t take us three years to be able to prepare a vision and a plan, then raise the capital and rebuild Binna Burra Lodge following the destruction we experienced on 8 September 2019. We won’t be following Jim Cavill’s revival strategy of lobbying to rename our destination! The name ‘Binna Burra’ is just fine and with all the publicity about the fire, the brand is probably now at the highest awareness levels it has ever had! Also, while we probably won’t be developing a zoo like Jim did, there may be opportunities for Binna Burra to work more closely with organisations such as the Currumbin Wildlife Hospital Foundation in conserving the native wildlife at Binna Burra. That has already happened with injured wildlife over this extended and terrible bushfire period.

Current situation.

All the tracks within our side of the Lamington National Park, and the remaining infrastructure at Binna Burra remain closed. While an enormous amount of work has been done by the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) and its contractors to make the single access road secure and safe, we still are not expecting to be able to get the necessary equipment in for demolition and other works until March. Hopefully, by April (Easter time) we will be able to recommence trading with our remaining assets – the Tea-House, camp ground, Skylodges, Barn, Pottery Shed, Forestry Cottage and a range of activities.

Recent welcome rain is causing delays on the roadworks. That could impact on the target opening date. With funding support secured from the Queensland Government, work starts soon on the new Via Ferrata³ adventure activity which we plan to open in the second half of this year.

In late January we concluded an arrangement with the Scenic Rim Regional Council and the Beechmont Area Progress Association (BAPA) to take over the operations of the **Headmaster’s Café** on the old school site at the round-about on Binna Burra Road at Beechmont. We only open on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. This is a low risk commercial activity for Binna Burra with many ‘up-sides’ in terms of giving our remaining staff a fresh project to launch and reconnecting face-to-face with customers and people who have an affinity with Binna Burra.

³ www.binnaburralodge.com.au/news/binna-burra-scales-new-heights/

We've introduced the concept of '**solidarity tourism**'⁴ into the national thinking now as part of post-disaster recovery strategies for tourism providers. We're already benefitting from 'solidarity tourism' with our new operations at the Headmaster's Café. This approach prioritises positive attitudes toward nature as well as the traditions and the interests of our local community. It gives both locals and visitors the opportunity to connect and support a place like Binna Burra following the difficulties and challenges that have resulted from the bushfire destruction in our community and at the lodge.

It also provides a place where local community can connect with community after the recent hardships and giving the media an angle to continue to keep the Binna Burra profile 'alive' in the minds of our future customers when we can reopen.

What's happening now?

1. Road access remains a problem. Up until late January we had restricted road access as TMR and the sub-contractors continue their often dangerous work with ongoing instability of the rocks on the cliff face above and below the road. We've been able to keep our small maintenance team on site to undertake necessary maintenance and work with other team members to improve the campground and tents area.
2. Our focus has been on those parts of the business that can generate immediate income when we can reopen. That means the campground, Tea-House, Groom's Cottage & bunkhouse and Skylodges as well as getting the Barn and Pottery Shed available for functions.
3. Money is scarce – we have had no income from trading activities for five months – so we have to be extremely careful to guide the remaining financial resources in the most effective way.
4. Our '**Friends of Binna Burra (FoBBs)**' GoFundMe page is still open.⁵ Contributions of any size are still most welcome! So far it has raised over \$100,000 and is being spent on a heritage and conservation projects agreed between our Management and the Leadership of the wonderful FOBBs volunteers group. Due to access restrictions to the site, we have not been able to have FoBBs volunteers do actual work on site, but Binna Burra staff and a government supported student group have been doing great work on the area where we have the camp ground, the tents, Groom's Cottage and the bunkhouse.
5. For the **Skylodges**, as the body corporate had its own insurance cover, the costs of reconstruction of the damaged areas are covered. We will be welcoming guests back into the Skylodges as part of our post-bushfire reopening.
6. For the **Lodge and cabins**, there is no money left from the \$3 million insurance payout we received after the fire. That money gets chewed up as we paid out creditors (including forward bookings that cancelled), gave confidence to our small remaining core staff team they had an income until we can recommence trading, cleaning up the site, undertaking maintenance work on the overall property and specifically to improve the camp ground area so it is ready for trading and so on.

⁴ www.binnaburrallodge.com.au/news/solidarity-tourism-for-binna-burra/

⁵ <https://au.gofundme.com/f/friends-of-binna-burra-lodge>

7. Our relationship with the **Queensland Government** has been, and will continue to be, crucial to the new era of Binna Burra Lodge. Here are just two examples:

- a) Queensland Government Minister for Innovation and Tourism Industry Development Minister, Hon. Kate Jones, announced in September 2019 that Binna Burra Lodge had been successful in a competitive tender process (Attracting Tourism Fund)⁶ for landmark new tourism experiences – awarding us \$1.4806M for Australia’s first commercial ‘**Via Ferrata**’⁷ - a cliff climbing path which will be a 'game-changer' for adventure tourism in the Gold Coast Hinterland’s Scenic Rim.

The bushfires completely burnt the whole cliff line below the old Maintenance Shed to below Bellbird clearing. That is the location of our Via Ferrata project. After much work between Binna Burra and the responsible State Government officials, subsequently Minister Jones agreed to increase our funding by \$195,000 to help with additional infrastructure costs resulting from the bushfire impacts on the landscape. That brings the project’s total funding support up to \$1.6756M. Initial detailed design work is underway and subject to the outcome of a request for further Government support for clearing/scaling of the cliff post bushfires, we hope to be able to open the key sections of the Via Ferrata in the second half of 2020.

I especially want to thank Board member **Tim Medhurst** for his vision and enormous project management contributions and technical expertise in getting us this far with the Via Ferrata project. As our overall Project Manager, Tim’s got a very busy year or two ahead in our reconstruction and new construction activities!

- b) After the fire we were fortunate to have the Queensland Government Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning, Hon. Cameron Dick, offer to set up a **Binna Burra Recovery Taskforce**.⁸ This has been invaluable for us working with and coordinating between State and local government agencies, including the Queensland Reconstruction Authority.⁹ That Taskforce had a six month life from the State Government which expires in February. The good thing is we now have lots of very useful contacts and networks within higher echelons of government which are important for the recovery of Binna Burra.
8. Similarly, our relationship with the Mayor, Councillors and senior staff of the **Scenic Rim Regional Council** has been excellent and much appreciated. There are numerous local (and State) government planning, building, post-fire recovery, destination marketing, community and other issues we have to deal with every week, and our open lines of communication and the goodwill we have received from Council is hugely appreciated.
9. After the fire we set up the internal ‘**Binna Burra Reconstruction Council**’ which consists of some two dozen people including Board members, remaining staff, the immediate past two Chairmen, our CFO, some locally based past Board members and representatives from National

⁶ www.destq.com.au/resources/funding/attracting-tourism-fund-atf

⁷ www.binnaburralodge.com.au/news/binna-burra-scales-new-heights/

⁸ <http://statements.qld.gov.au/Statement/2019/9/9/taskforce-to-be-established-to-help-binna-burra-lodge-recover>

⁹ www.qra.qld.gov.au/

Parks Association of QLD and the National Trust of Australia. In 2019 that group met about every two weeks and now in 2020, will continue to meet on a monthly basis.

10. We try hard to keep stakeholders informed (example, see ‘News’ on Binna Burra website for our regular media releases www.binnaburralodge.com.au/news/). For those who use online social media (Facebook,¹⁰ Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn), there are weekly, often daily, updates on matters related to Binna Burra. We have been fortunate to have good media connections, so we have been able to maintain the Binna Burra message (brand) out into the public space on a regular basis. We’ll continue to use mailings such as this letter to our shareholders on about a three monthly basis - preferably via email. *For or those without email access we will still use v Australia Post – but, please, if you can arrange an email address even if through your family or friends, that helps our over-stretched administration and postage costs.*
11. Since its inception, Binna Burra has had close relationships with a range of University and education & research institutions and other not-for-profit organisations. That will continue. To help coordinate a lot of the interest of support from many Universities, we will soon finalise a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between **Griffith University** and Binna Burra Lodge. That means Griffith University will become our lead University partner. There are some really interesting initiatives that will come from that strategic, long term ‘knowledge relationship.’
12. We also have a wonderful offer to enhance **astronomy experiences** at Binna Burra with an **observatory** being located somewhere suitable on Binna Burra land. We’re taking a serious look now at that option to add to the Binna Burra experience of observing and learning about celestial objects (stars, planets, comets, and galaxies) and phenomena that originate outside the Earth's atmosphere (such as the cosmic background radiation).

Planning for the next 86 years of Binna Burra Lodge.

- Binna Burra Lodge has always had a strong social/environmental awareness in its organisational culture. The memorial plaque near the Tea-house that is dedicated to one of the 1933 founders of Binna Burra, Arthur Groom, says: *‘To a man who loved and understood the bush and found his happiness sharing it with others’*. I have often said that Binna Burra ‘looks like, smells like, acts like’ a not-for-profit organisation. It’s very clear that at this stage of Binna Burra’s post disaster history that if we were legally structured as a not-for-profit organisation we could tap into various local, state and federal government grant schemes only available to not-for-profit organisations.
- So ... your Board has decided to establish the **Binna Burra Foundation** as our related not-for-profit organisation. As required by law, the Foundation must have at least one member, and that one member at this stage is Binna Burra Lodge Ltd. As we continue along this path, we’ll be putting proposals to our shareholders to ratify concerning the relationship between Binna Burra Lodge Ltd (the current company) and the new Binna Burra Foundation.

¹⁰ www.facebook.com/binnaburra/

- After the November 2019 AGM, we took the opportunity to get some initial shareholder and stakeholder feedback on what they would expect and/or like to see in that area of the property destroyed in the bushfire – that is, the space where the lodge and the cabins used to be. We’re continuing this phase of getting ideas together from our stakeholders, especially our shareholders.
- **How to get your ideas included in the planning process:**
 - (a) **You can send a letter or email to me:**
 For letter, mail to: **Binna Burra Lodge, PO Box 309, Nerang QLD, 4211.**
 For emails, send to steve@binnaburrallodge.com.au
 - (b) **Join us on Saturday 15 February 2020 at the old school site at Beechmont for a half day workshop for shareholders and other stakeholders on the future vision and plans for Binna Burra. Commences 9 am to 12 noon. If you are available to attend, please confirm to Tilsa at accounts@binnaburrallodge.com.au**
- Over 100 people attended the November 2019 AGM. In a survey undertaken at that meeting, 66 shareholders completed a **questionnaire**. Of the 66 who responded, 86 percent were over the age of 50, 74 percent over the age of 60 and 50 percent over the age of 70. Eight (8) percent were less than 50 years old (6 per cent did not indicate an age).

We have to face the reality that within a matters of a few decades, based on this sample of active shareholders who attended the AGM, most of the current shareholders will no longer be with us. While there is something of a tradition of handing Binna Burra shares down to the next generation within a family, individuals will make their own decisions on what becomes of their shares.

- As we discuss the question of what type of ‘new Binna Burra Lodge’ is developed to make it a viable business venture for new generations who can continue on with the ‘spirit of Binna Burra’, it’s important to have ways for cross-generational thinking.

So, we formed a Facebook group called **Millennials of Binna Burra + Generation Z (MoBBz)**¹¹. They are aged in their teens, their 20’s or 30’s. Like FoBBs, some members of the MoBBz are already shareholders. What they have in common is an appreciation of what the ‘spirit of Binna Burra’ means to them. These are young people with a social and environmental conscience. They are internet and social media pioneers and natives.

As we lay the foundations of the next 86 years of Binna Burra, we would be wise to engage the inputs of the MoBBz generations to encourage new and bold conversations with people who have the enthusiasm, energy and skills to initiate technological, social and environmental change for the betterment of Binna Burra and the Lamington National Park.

¹¹ www.facebook.com/groups/975956946110581/?epa=SEARCH_BOX

Finally.

Between 1933 and 2019, history happened at Binna Burra. For our next 86 years **new history will happen** at this special place nestled within the Lamington National Park - recognised on the UNESCO World Heritage list for its outstanding universal natural and cultural values.

Starting in 1933 with the vision of Romeo Lahey and Arthur Groom, when – from amongst their own family and business networks they ‘crowd-funded’ Queensland Holiday Resorts Ltd which built Binna Burra Lodge - **we’re now halfway through a ‘Binna Burra journey’ of 172 years.**

That’s **just a speck in time** in relation to the hundreds of millions of years of the Gondwana Rainforests - the most extensive area of subtropical rainforest in the world.

How fortunate are we to be able to continue the Binna Burra legacy in such an extraordinary area which contains ancient and primitive plants and animals from which life on Earth evolved.

We still have lots of challenges to get Binna Burra back on its feet.

At this stage, we have very limited resources to maintain, improve and present our remaining assets and rebuild that which was destroyed. However, we are getting on with the task with the scarce resources currently available. We have no money to rebuild the types of facilities that were destroyed in the fire (the lodge and the cabins). But, working with our shareholders and other stakeholders, we will harness the wide range of views as well as the remarkable emotional connection so many people have towards Binna Burra.

We’re developing an **updated Masterplan** for the overall land owned by Binna Burra and specifically for what the future will hold on the land where the lodge and the cabins used to be. Then we need to find the money and create something that does justice to the legacy of the spirit of Binna Burra.

We’re focussed on preparing solid foundations for the next 86 years for people across all generations and promoting universal accessibility by improving physical facilities that address the needs of those with mobility, visual, auditory, and cognitive requirements.

We want everyone who is interested to be able to enjoy the Lamington National Park through the spirit of Binna Burra !

Thank you for your continued support to Binna Burra Lodge.

Sincerely yours



Steve Noakes,
Chairman,
Binna Burra Lodge Ltd.

A few photos of our journey since the bushfires.

Gondwana Rainforests contains outstanding examples of major stages in the Earth's evolutionary history as well as ongoing evolutionary processes going back over 300 million years in the Carboniferous period

Rainforests covered most of Australia for 40 million years after its separation from Gondwana



We're halfway through a small journey in time ...
172 years of Binna Burra Lodge, Lamington National Park, Queensland, Australia

1933 - 2019 → The first 86 years → **2019 - bushfire**
 Reset. Reimagine. Recreate. **BRING BACK BINNA BURRA** → The next 86 years → **2019 - 2105**

RECOVERY PHASE
 ORGANISATIONAL FRAMEWORK



BINNABURRALODGE
 LAMINGTON NATIONAL PARK | QUEENSLAND | AUSTRALIA
 #bringbackbinnaburra

Four weeks after the bushfires on 8 September, 2019 which destroyed much of the built heritage at Binna Burra Lodge

While there was some damage, most of the Skylodges got through the fire OK



Location of the heritage cabins destroyed

How hot was the bushfire @ Binna Burra ?

Alloy wheels melt in the Binna Burra fire on 8 September 2019.

In the automotive industry alloy wheels are made from an alloy of magnesium or aluminium.

Melting points:
Magnesium
 650°C, 1202°F
Aluminium
 660.323°C, 1220.581°F

Royal Society of Chemistry
www.rsc.org



State Ministers say the area will 'rise from the ashes' Picture: NIGEL HALLETT

Binna Burra Bell tolls again!
 Historic bell signals the opening of post-bushfire AGM.




Binna Burra Cultural Landscape was listed on the Queensland Heritage Register on 31 December 2002

 Queensland Government

The place:  BINNABURRALODGE

- ✓ is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of Queensland's history.
- ✓ is important because of its aesthetic significance.
- ✓ has a special association with the life or work of a particular person, group or organisation of importance in Queensland's history.

Binna Burra is important in the course of Queensland's natural and cultural history.



Before 8 September 2019



21 November 2019.
The morning mist returns
Photo: Steve Noakes



The big rain returns!

200 ml of rain overnight into Saturday morning, 18 January 2020.

... and it's still raining!



It's simple.
We need the rain forests to produce oxygen and clean the atmosphere to help us breathe.



#bringbackbinnaurra



Headmaster's cafe
Friday 17 January 2020

Thanks for coming through, Oak and Iron crew!

The bar is open!

Headmaster's Cafe

1835 Beechmont Road
Beechmont.

In the scenic rim of the Gold Coast hinterland, Queensland, Australia.

Open 6 am to 6 pm on Friday, Saturday
8 am to 3 pm on Sunday


