



Chair: Elizabeth Milne
Bathurst, 6166
Email: chair@brra.org.za
Tel no. 065-730-0473

CHAIR'S REPORT ON THE YEAR NOVEMBER 2023 TO NOVEMBER 2024

What we hoped to do, what we didn't succeed at, what we managed, what's more or less under way, and what we hope for in the coming year. That last if, of course, we are re-elected!

We see ourselves as having two essential functions. The first is to do what we can to improve the effectiveness of municipal services to the community, mainly through improved communication with municipal officials. The second is to initiate, encourage and support projects and processes that benefit the whole Bathurst community in both the short and longer term.

What we hoped to do, but didn't succeed at:

We hoped to increase our **membership** significantly, but we failed to find someone prepared to take on the membership portfolio on the committee. We still hope to increase our membership, so if anyone is willing to take on this task, please volunteer when we come to elections.

We thought that a community meeting – a **Community Conversation** – every second month would give people a chance to address issues of concern or particular interest. These were planned for January, March, May, July and September. In January Chris Boyd outlined his idea for a Special Rating Area in Bathurst. You can read about this on our website www.brra.org.za. In response to increasing crime in the Village, the March topic was Safety and Security. All the Security professionals came, but it was very poorly attended by the community. Nevertheless, Clinton Millard's very convincing case for establishing an active CPF in Bathurst SAPS Sector 2 (the Village) did trigger a movement that eventually led to just that. In May, the topic of the Community Conversation was Animals in the Roads, intended to focus on cattle, dogs, goats, horses, etc. Only 6 community members attended, and only dogs were discussed. The positive outcome was the establishment of a Village dog data base which records photographs of Village dogs and lists details of their owners. This record is maintained by Barbie Gerber. All Village dog owners are welcome to register their pets. The planned July and September Community Conversations were abandoned.

Clare Rothwell has been focused on investigating special projects and various funding possibilities. We've run into a myriad of obstacles on issues like re-cycling. Bathurst is too remote and too small to be attractive to the bigger commercial organisations in this field. We've also discovered that some potential funders love some of our project ideas, but are not satisfied with our being a non-profit organisation, we need to be a particular kind of non-profit! We plan to keep trying.

What we managed:

Improved municipal relations

We put a good deal of energy into establishing good communication with the municipal officials directly responsible for service delivery in Bathurst. Unfortunately, these relationships had been badly eroded over time, so it was a while before our efforts bore fruit. Setting up the BR&RA Municipal Services WhatsApp group has provided a channel for logging service problems like water leaks and devastated roads. Things within the limits of authority of the local team are now attended to immediately. More about the bigger issues later in this narrative – water, roads and storm water drainage.

Website and Facebook page

Thanks mainly to the efforts of Maya Stricker, we have an active website and Facebook page. If you haven't visited them, please do so. It's a great way to find out more about our Village. [Www.brra.org.za](http://www.brra.org.za).

Safety and Security

We actively supported Chris Boyd and Georg Kukulies' efforts to launch a revitalised Sector 2 CPF, and meanwhile co-opted Danie Boneschans onto the BR&RA Committee to handle the Safety & Security portfolio. He was subsequently elected Chair of CPS2F, so we have effective connection with what is happening in the Safety and Security arena.

Commonage

Bathurst commonage is a 3000+ hectare swathe of grassland and bush that effectively surrounds the Village and is largely the reason for our special rural atmosphere. In 1994 municipal commonages were transferred to the custodianship of local municipalities, but are theoretically managed by a Commonage Management Committee representing both the community and the municipality. Monty Roodt has been working for 18 months to establish such a committee for Bathurst, and has succeeded. It remains to get the group meeting regularly and making and implementing decisions supportive of long term sustainability of this valuable resource.

Attracting Visitors

Bathurst's economy is heavily visitor dependent, so collaboration with Sunshine Coast Tourism is important. Michele Rowley and Robyn Cloete have been elected to represent Bathurst on the Tourism board for 2024/25, and Michele sits on the BR&RA committee to maintain a close connection.

Financial Statement

Thanks to Warwick Lewarne, our Treasurer, we've managed to keep track of our very limited financial resources. He'll tell you more about that later. Warwick also backs up a lot of BR&RA's other activities.

What's more or less under way

An annual Pineapple Festival seemed an appropriate addition to Bathurst's calendar of annual events. Thea Venter joined the committee to co-ordinate the efforts of the group interested in making this happen in late February 2025.

What we hope for in the coming year

Improved water, roads and storm water drainage

For any significant improvements in these crucial areas, budget is needed. For budget to be planned, projects need to find their way into the Integrated Development Plan (IDP). The IDP for 25/26 is currently being developed, to be followed by the budgeting process later this year and early next. Unless outside funding can be found, and it is being sought, no significant development can be expected before July 2025. As far as roads are concerned, it seems likely that it will take 5 or 6 years to repair the ravages of 20 or 30 years of neglect. BR&RA is in conversation with all the relevant Ndlambe officials.

Community Development Centre

Out of discussions about our burnt out town hall, grew the idea of a Community Development Centre. This is envisioned as a genuine multi-purpose centre, accommodating community meetings, offices for volunteer services such as legal advice, computer facilities, library as well as training, and maybe also accommodation for some indoor sports. In principle, this envisioned centre is not absolutely bound to the town hall site, but it is dependent on the establishment of an independent non-profit organisation that manages and maintains it in collaboration with the municipality and that can access international donor funding not available to organs of state. The project needs a driver.

An expanded BR&RA Committee

There are a number of focus areas that it would be useful to attend to in 2025, each effectively needing a committee member to head up the initiative. These focus areas include:

Membership. Increasing our membership, maintaining accurate and up-to-date membership records and improved communication with members are things we need to attend to.

The physical environment and aesthetic impact of the Village, including cleanliness, clear road verges and eradication of invasive alien vegetation. Important if we want to attract visitors.

Township collaboration matters to the long term stability of our community. If enough trust is built up, this can also lead to improved safety and security.

Municipal relations need to be nurtured and expanded into areas like Planning, which we have not yet touched.
