Rascal Inc

Winter Newsletter
August 2007

In this issue

Our Lodge Manager enjoying the good soft snow this year!

USEFUL CONTACT INFORMATION

Office Manager: Angela (and Jack) Cornell 02-6259 5980

Mail Address: PO Box 3154   BELCONNEN DC   ACT 2617

Key pickup address: 30 Pitcairn St   EVATT ACT 2617

Online Bookings & renewals: http://www.rascal.asn.au double click "Member Login"

General Email address   rascal@rascal.asn.au

Your Default Login: use your First Name & Last Name (as you provided to Rascal on your 2007 renewal form. Your password (UNTIL YOU CHANGE IT) is your first name.

Login example: First Name: **Angela** Last Name **Cornell**
                               Password **Angela**

2007/08 Committee Contacts

POSITION	NAME	PHONE - NIGHT	E-MAIL
President	Alan Laird	6161 4708	president@rascal.asn.an
Immediate Past Pres	Richard Emerton	6230 5538	rjemerton@yahoo.com.au
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Assistant Secretary	Lynne Bentley	6257 6719	nlbentle@bigpond.net.au
Treasurer	Linda Swift	6254 4754	Treasurer@rascal.asn.au
Public Officer	Ian McNeill	6288 4303	ianmcneill69@homemail.com.au
Lodge Manager	Mike Stomps	6257 1006	LodgeManager@rascal.asn.au
Committee Member	Clive Styles	6258 7437	thestyles@tpg.com.au
Committee Member	Keith McLaren	6258 6074	kmclaren@promortgage.com.au
Committee Member	Wendy Zarb	6231 8138	wzarb@netbay.com.au
Purchasing Officer	Marg Sharp	6161 4708	PurchasingOfficer@rascal.asn.au
Office Manager	Angela & Jack Cornell	6259 5980	rascal@rascal.asn.au

Close off date for articles for next *NEWSLETTER* is tentatively the end of November – email contributions to the Office Manager at rascal@rascal.asn.au

From the President
Alan Laird

The snow season has certainly got off to a great start and a well rounded middle. This has been reflected in the high level of Lodge bookings. In July and August, lodge occupancy has been very high and this will go some way to alleviate our financial position given our approximately $125,000 expenditure on the new fire system.

The fire system is almost completely installed and operating. The key area missing is the connection of the sprinkler system to the water mains which is awaiting Council action. It now appears that the Council has installed an outlet from their mains, however it is too small. Rascal and its contractors are taking this issue up with the Council.

I'd like to thank Richard Emerton for his enduring dedication in managing (and I hope continuing to manage) the fire upgrade work for the Club.

The on-line booking system is working well and is being constantly being upgraded to respond to user feedback and to make the system more user friendly and functional. One area of feedback that we are working on is that Members sometimes do not recognise how to use their accommodation vouchers when making a booking This area has now been upgraded and hopefully will not cause any further problem. Another area is that sometimes room preferences that Members sought were not reflected in the rooms the Member was allocated, even when the booking was made a long time ago. This problem has a number of causes, some of which have already been addressed but a key one is that room allocations are dynamic and change as bookings are made, edited or cancelled. If a booking is edited, it is treated for room allocation purposes as if it had just been made, rather than when it was originally made. Room allocations are generally prioritised by the date the booking was made or last edited.

On a broader front, the Club is in need of a strategic view about how it wishes to manage the development of the Lodge over the next five to ten years.

There are a number of maintenance items that require attention. These include replacing the bedroom carpet, fixing the water ingress through the outside wall into the bedrooms and from the bathrooms into the adjoining bedroom, replacing bedroom window frames, replacing the sliding door to the deck, as well as a number of other maintenance and 'upgrade' items.

These items are significant in terms of cost and Committee time and effort and require some consideration about how we want to manage them given our current financial situation as well as what we want to do with the building in future years.

Overlaying this is the need to consider the future of the building itself and whether the Club has the desire and capability to extend or rebuild the Lodge, or to leave it unchanged, over the next five to ten years. The Lodge is currently 37 years old and public expectations, but perhaps not Member expectations, have shifted appreciably in that time. New Youth Hostels offer significantly more up-market accommodation that that provided by the Lodge, for example.

Both these issues require Committee consideration in the latter half of this year about how best to move forward.

On a sadder note, and on behalf of all the Rascal membership and Committee, I extend condolences to Michael Stomps and to Angela Cornell for their recent losses.

Lodge Keys – Pickup or Post?

Lodge users have the option of either pick up a set of keys or have a set posted out. If you pay the small charge for postage, $6 for 1 or 2 keys, then you will receive your key(s) with a reply-paid return label sticker included. Note that it usually takes at least a few days for us to mail, and for Australia Post to deliver, the key package. For this reason, the Rascal Rules (and the booking system) do not permit keys to be posted within 7 days of actual commencement of your lodge stay. So for last minute bookings, your only option is to pick up the keys from Evatt.

Note that lost (or otherwise unreturned) keys cost $40 each to be recut (plus a few dollars more for key ring and labelling) – this is a very significant cost to us. Seven keys went missing in 2006 (and nearly twenty in the previous two years before that), at significant cost to Rascal, so please take care to return your key after your stay.

MAKING THE MOST OF THE WEB SITE'S RASCAL MEMBERS PAGES

Members are encouraged to actively use Rascal Members Pages on the Rascal web site to undertake:

- Bookings
- Membership renewal and upgrading of Juniors
- Keeping your contact details current, particularly your email address
- Viewing past invoices should you forget the payment details

Members are also strongly encouraged to make payments using direct deposits into the Rascal account. Details about how to do this are included on the invoices issued by the web site. These can also be viewed after the event from the site's Main Menu.

Rascal Member Pages Upgrades

The Member Pages are frequently upgraded to reflect Member comment, correct errors and to make the pages more user friendly. Some recent changes have been:

- **Redeeming Accommodation Vouchers**
  These pages have been upgraded to make it more obvious that Accommodation Vouchers can be used to offset the cost of voucher-eligible bookings and how to spend your vouchers on that that booking.

- **Room Preference**
  Members can indicate preferences for the room or the floor that they would like for their booking. The booking program seeks to allocate rooms according to the indicated preferences however this is not always possible. Other bookings may have selected that room, or perhaps other bookings have been slotted into your preferred room because that was the only way to fit the bookings into the limited number of rooms we have. The earlier you make the booking the better the chance you have of obtaining the room preference you seek. *However if you later edit that booking, then you will be prioritised as if you have just made the booking.*

  Members are encouraged to use the default "Any Room" setting to provide maximum flexibility in finding rooms for bookings. Given that Room 2 has a double bed Members are also asked whether to 'Include Room 2' in any room allocation decisions for that booking.

- **Room Upgrade**

Room upgrades, which means moving occupants from a 2-bed room to a 4-bed room, has undergone significant modification recently. Upgrades are only offered when there are two occupants of a 2-bed room and where there is a vacant 4-bed room available. Importantly the upgrade occurs in the three day period prior to the First Night of the booking – so you need to download the Room Allocation Sheet JUST BEFORE YOU GO DOWN TO THE LODGE.

- **Dynamic Room Allocation – but not within 3 days of your 1st Night**

As with a manual system, the booking program moves bookings (that is, rooms) around to cater for new bookings and changes to existing bookings. If you had already been assigned to your preferred room, or your preferred floor, then you will not be moved out of it **unless you subsequently edit your booking**.

Room allocations are finalised each day for all bookings beginning in the next three days. An email is sent to each Member who made a booking with the 1st Night in that period. The email indicates the room allocation and attaches an Excel booking sheet showing room allocations for the next seven days. The Excel booking sheet is designed to be displayed in the Lodge foyer.

What this means is that bookings starting four or more days from now may still be moved if a new booking is received or if an existing booking is edited or cancelled. In this way Rascal can provide advance notice to Members about their room allocations and also achieve a reasonably high degree of flexibility to move rooms around to cater for future bookings or edits/cancellations of existing bookings.

I welcome any comments and suggestions about Rascal Members Pages. These can be directed to Webmaster@rascal.asn.au.

Thanks…..Alan Laird

President AND Web-Master

Lodge maintenance and having fun.

I have just returned from a delightful holiday in the July school holidays in the lodge. Rarely do we and our children get such an opportunity to have the best weather and ski conditions in the school holidays and catch up with each other. I have never encountered these conditions even overseas. Those who went to Europe six months ago say Australia is better for skiing this year. We plan to go to Japan in December/ January for touring and skiing but I doubt we will have the same fun we shared with fellow members these holidays. Rascal provides far more than an apartment or hotel room.

The junior members relaxed in the evenings with other juniors and guests of varying ages, playing various games and cards on the lounges and floor upstairs. Electronic gadgetry was happily abandoned in their rooms. The soccer game was only played once or twice. Juniors were happy to be in the presence of their parents. Parents mixed, everyone had a great time.

I have stayed in a few lodges and usually the games room is ill used. No matter what you provide as a children's game room, the children prefer to be in the vicinity of the adults and this is a good thing. The soccer table provides an alternate venue but is only ever used occasionally by juniors.

The external plumbing has all been renewed with plastic, some in the past and the rest recently. Toilets overflowed downstairs early in 2007 and the plumber cleared the pipes. They blocked again in July 2007 and the plumber cleared 2 meters of tree roots from the pipes. The men's toilet still behaves abnormally. We also have periodic men's' shower floor waste blockages.

Herman Obermeir our plumber who replaced the most recent section of external plumbing is not certain where the tree roots are entering the system and travelling internally right up to fixtures. These places could be underneath the building or at the join to the building or in defective external pipe work. One place Herman has suspected for some time is in the previously replaced pipe work directly under the foundations to the new deck. The deck foundations appear to have been placed close to and directly on top of our previously renewed sewer. This can be fixed by a sewer bypass.

A camera through the entire system would give a complete picture to assist in solving the problems. This must be done on a day of zero occupancy.

Partial solution may result by changing the men's toilets to "P" trap rather than "S" trap and sending the pipe work from the toilet straight out the

wall rather than into the floor and having a direct connection to the newly replaced external plastic pipe work without digging up the floor.

We have a toilet cascade overflow problem when men's' and women's' toilets are flushed in unison. We are currently on a tight budget but will progress these matters as most urgent.

We also have leaky shower recesses on both floors and further moisture issues on the same levels that require attention before floor coverings are replaced.

On a positive note the hot water system is not running out under heavy use since we recently replaced one of the tanks. Gastroenteritis has not plagued the lodge since soap and paper towels have been provided at all hand basins. Sleeping has been much more comfortable since all foam mattresses were replaced relatively recently with innerspring mattresses. The new stove allowed our pizza to be cooked in it's separate griller while another family cooked a baked dinner in the oven.

I would like to recommend to Rascal members Lake Jindabyne Hotel's specials at 6pm. Tuesday and Wednesday, chicken schnitzel, Friday, fish and chips, Sunday excellent cook your own steak. There is a all you can eat salad buffet also provided for $6.00, except for the Sunday steak night it is $10. Arrive before 6 to beat the rush and be back in Rascal in 40 minutes after a short healthy walk.

I don't believe LJH is making money out of the food. It keeps the lifties healthy and saves you thinking about what to cook, shopping, packing and bringing food to the lodge, cooking and washing up. Less stress, nutritious, cheaper and more relaxing with more time to enjoy the evenings.

We will be camping in the Snowline caravan park on the grass/dirt/mud without power next weekend as the lodge is booked out and no powered sites are available. This will give us a greater perspective and appreciation of Rascal Lodge.

Michael Stomps
Lodge Manager