



History of the Moss Vale & District Basketball Association Inc.

ABN 59 463 415 535



The birthplace of our district's basketball was a simple storeroom at the back of Bernie's Café, Moss Vale, where in 1958, two people with a passion for the sport, George Benardos and Graeme Phillips, developed the concept of introducing basketball to the district. Now, through sound business principles and financial management, basketball has grown to be one of the major sporting organisations in the Southern Highlands. For more than six decades, the Association has been committed to contributing to the community and while doing so, it has enjoyed the support of people and organisations from all walks of life in the Highlands region and beyond. Integral to the sustained development has been a generosity of spirit demonstrated by financial institutions, government departments, local council, retail outlets, and other businesses, sharing knowledge, time and energy, or providing goods and financial contributions.

The Courts.

In the early years, players gathered in a small Boy's Club Hall, shorter than a cricket pitch, on the current site of Moss Vale Swimming Pool, to play in very cramped conditions where players had to literally shoot through the rafters in order to attempt a goal. Numbers grew and in 1959 the Association moved to the Moss Vale Show Society Pavilion under the leadership of successful business identity, Brian Whyte (inaugural President). During the 1960's, the Association hosted short games, five long nights a week to accommodate all the players. The need to acquire additional playing space was apparent and in the mid 1960's a search was made for a better facility. As nothing suitable was found, a decision was made to purchase land and construct a purpose-built stadium. With the support of local businesses, the Wingecarribee Shire Council, and some generous individuals, under the leadership of Graeme Phillips (President), the stadium opened its doors at Parkes Road, Moss Vale in 1971. This stadium now stands as testament to the courage and commitment of the Board of the day and its members, some of whom still continue to serve.

The growth rate of basketball was remarkable, with games conducted on two courts, five nights a week, enhanced by the introduction of a very strong Junior competition on Saturdays. The Board, now led by Graham Brown (President), embarked on an ambitious program of doubling the size of the facility to two International Standard courts, encompassing four smaller courts, which opened in 1983. In the 1980's, the Association met the challenge of other sports who were competing for members for their night and weekend competitions, yet the MVDBAI continued to operate successfully. As funds allowed, the association continued with improvements to the facility and in 2014, with the help of the local council, \$650,000 worth of upgrades were undertaken including insulation to the main buildings, and the provision of a comfortable observation area and club room (now named in honour of Brian Whyte). Upgrades to both courts have continued in 2022, 2024 and into 2025.

The Association is unique in New South Wales because it is completely owned by its members, and it has the ability to host major sporting and community events. Over the years it has successfully staged regional and state basketball tournaments, hosted touring American senior and junior teams, wheelchair basketball, the Senegal Women's Olympic team, the Korean Professional basketball team, and a number National Basketball League preseason games over the last twenty years. Other major sporting events conducted in the facility have included - Tae Kwon Do tournaments; Volleyball tournaments; Disabled Volleyball exhibitions; Indoor Soccer tournaments, and private and public school's tournaments. Community based clubs also use our facilities to hold their meetings regularly. Each year thousands of people from all walks of life, across the State and beyond, pass through the Association's doors.

The Players.

In almost 70 years of operation, the Moss Vale & District Basketball Association has produced a number of exceptional players and officials. Representatives have competed in State and National tournaments, where they have won numerous NSW Country Tournament Championships as well as senior league titles in 2015 (Youth Men) and 2022 (U20 Women). The Association has proudly produced over 35 players and officials who have represented at State, National and International levels. Former juniors, Brett Flanigan, Simon Cotterill, and Anne Furlong (Robilliard) represented their nation, all accounting for themselves admirably in the National Basketball League as players, and with Brett in a coaching capacity, being named NBL's youngest ever Coach of the Year in 1996. We have also had members playing in the USA College program and as NSW Country representatives. The association draws members from as far afield as Hilltop, Robertson, Bundanoon, Canyonleigh and beyond.

The Future.

With the same vision, sound management and enthusiasm, the Board will face the growing pressure of running a successful, predominantly voluntary organisation and will continue to provide for the sporting needs of the general community of the Southern Highlands. Consideration is being given to expanding the present facility, including multipurpose floors, café, social and administrative areas. The facility could also cater for users of Lackey Park making the area a prominent sporting hub not only in the Southern Highlands but in New South Wales. These new facilities could include a club lounge, dormitory style accommodation for group training, and commercial premises for sports medicine, physiotherapy, or similar businesses.