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November 2013

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President's Report

Last Month (October 2013) marked forty years since I joined the Fire Brigade at Balgownie. Some retained Firies I know have had fifty and some upwards of sixty years in the service with F&R NSW as the service is now known.

So what! Many of you will say. - What I would like to share is some thoughts of my "Fire Brigade" experience to date.

In 1973 to be recruited into the "Volunteer Fire Brigade" or Rednecks as some called us, ("Vollos" had red collars on their tunics) you had to be nominated by an existing Brigade member and satisfy the station Captain your prime reason for joining was to provide service to the Community, respect people's property and put out fires. – Oh! By the way there was some money paid into an account the Captain had and he paid us cash out of that account.

With an old pair of jeans, a spare tunic and a hard hat borrowed from the local steel-works I was set, "just keep out of the way and do as you told" I was trained and ready to save the world.

AFA's & domestic smoke alarms had not been invented in 1973. Seatbelts in motor vehicles only became compulsory in 1971, few roads were divided or had centre "jersey" barriers, no RBT or speed cameras and lots more grass and scrub in our area around Balgownie.

We had less calls back then – by the way - no code 2's! It was normal to expect to be "out" for some time, then back washing and hanging hoses and "rehydrating" from the station fridge. – Yes, many of you could also go on about "the old days". There are many memories, good and bad.

Today the role of a Firie has evolved to one of prevention, education and preparedness. Thankfully, in our area there are less major or serious fires and rescues and the too many fatalities of days gone by. This is I believe due to better education and safety programs in place as well as seat belts, smoke alarms, road barriers, divided roads, RBT's and speed cameras.

With all this improvement has come cost. The core skills we used so regularly in the past eg. Hose, hydrant, pump and rescue skills and associated team skills have in many of us lost their shine.

The training wing of F&R NSW do a great job of teaching us our skills- however, without practice these skills are often soon forgotten.

Aha ! you say this is where he is going.

We drive to emergencies under lights and siren with the increased risks to ourselves and the public to arrive sooner. I believe more time can be saved upon arrival with a well drilled team getting to work efficiently with skill and confidence.

President's Report Contd....

Our commitment to the Communities we serve demands an efficient and professional service. Championships have over many years provided a forum to have friendly rivalry and like in many sports show off skills and teamwork gained as a result of competition.

I would encourage all Brigades to confer among yourselves to rotate a team to attend Championships at a venue near you and members who remain to cover at the station in your absence to perhaps attend next time.

The "events" are constantly under review and reflect current practice and equipment we use day to day. Whilst good fun, carts & reels and museum appliances are long gone.

If you would like to know more, just give me, or a member of the Committee a call.

Congratulations to the new Committee elected at Port Macquarie. Thanks for the work put in over the past year and your continued support of Championships. I would also like to say thank you to all of you who continually arrive and get stuck in when needed, whether at a bushfire, flood, Championship or whatever. To all, Merry Christmas.

Dep. Capt. Greg Fredericks
President

Championships in Review

Director of Championships

As we approach the end of 2013 I have been reflecting on how much has been going on this year. Fire & Rescue NSW and the Firefighter Championship Association have been faced with numerous challenges.

During October we encountered some very unseasonal bushfire conditions which resulted in bushfires in the Blue Mountains that damaged more than a 100 houses and destroyed over 200. This event saw in excess of 100 FRNSW fire trucks pre-positioned and prepared to fight fires from Mount Victoria down to Penrith on Wednesday the 23 of October. 53 fire trucks and 212 firefighters were brought in from Regional NSW and staged over 4 locations in the Blue Mountains in preparedness for what was predicted to be one of the most catastrophic fires the Blue Mountains had seen. Thankfully approximately 6mm of rain was showered over the Mountains during the evening of the 22 of October which assisted in averting the fire fight. This early and intense start to the bushfire season will keep us all on our toes at least until the end of March 2014.

During the last few years Fire & Rescue NSW has been experiencing a Retained firefighter shortage in both availability and numbers. This has required Regional & Metropolitan Operations to heavily focus on recruitment of Retained firefighters. The shortage of Retained firefighters and lack of daytime availability is having a large impact on FRNSW budget and also the capacity of stations to attend Championships. This was evident during our three Regional Championships and one day trial Championships during 2013, in the main the attendances at these Championships have been down. We are hoping that when we achieve greater recruitment numbers not only will we reduce the high cost of standbys but also we will achieve greater capacity for stations to attend Championships as availability at home stations will not be such a barrier to attending Regional and State Championships. The good news is that we are seeing quite a number of new recruits being employed across Regional West 1 and West 2 and considering there will be Championships at Mudgee and Kelso in 2014 which are both in Regional West 2 area we have every opportunity to see greater attendance at Championships during the next years events.

Contd....

Director Championships Report Contd.....

2014 will continue with a healthy Championship program with Mudgee, Unanderra, Swansea holding Regional Championships and finishing up with the State at Kelso. We all need to promote the Championships and encourage people to come along and have a go. 2013 saw a number of new teams attend both Cessnock and Port Macquarie Championships and by all accounts the newcomers had a great time.

The Australasian Championships at Launceston were very successful with 8 teams from FRNSW and the ever faithful NSWRFSS Moombi / Kootingal competing. All had a good time and the competition was hard and challenging especially considering the equipment differences which visiting teams had to adapt to. The event was a credit to the Tasmanian Fire and Rescue and especially Mark Dobson and his team who worked tirelessly to make the 2013 Australasian Championships such a success.

The Firefighter Championship Association has their own team of people working so hard and tirelessly to promote and keep the Championships happening. I see the same faces at each Championship tirelessly setting up the field, working the field as Marshalls, managing the timing systems and administration along with planning for the next event. I must not forget to include the group of competitors that religiously attend Championships and compete at the highest level. In all these groups there are too many names to mention and I would just like to take the time to thank each and every one of you for your hard work and commitment to the Championships and the benefits they bring to Fire & Rescue NSW. In closing I wish you all a very merry Christmas and Happy New Year and I will see you all at Mudgee.

**Assistant Commissioner Rob McNeil AFSM
Director Regional Operations
Director Championships**

Assistant Director of Championships

What can I say the year has come and gone so fast before we know it we will all be meeting again at Mudgee championship on 1 & 2 March 2014,

It has been exciting to see new brigades compete who have never competed at championships and brigades who have not competed for some years their enthusiasm is encouraging for championships.

Congratulations to all brigades who attended the 2013 series of championships including the brigades who represented FRNSW at the Australasian championship at Launceston Tasmania as you are all winners in the eyes of FRNSW, and your continuing support of safety at championships.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a happy New Year to you and your families may the friendships made and the activities of Championships live long in your memories.

See you all again soon

**Garry Tant
Assistant Director of Championships**



Launceston, Tasmania



Secretary's Report

Reviewing 2013 & Looking forward to 2014

The Australasian Firefighter Championship was held at Launceston on 1-3 November 2013 hosted by Tasmanian Fire Service. FRNSW and FCA supported eight teams to represent NSW at Launceston. These teams came from Kelso, Berry, Bega, Trangie, Port Macquarie, Wyong, Glen Innes and Dorrigo Brigades.

A total of 30 teams from Tasmania, Victoria, New Zealand, Northern Territory and NSW competed with the overall winner being MFB from Melbourne. Kelso finished third and Dorrigo fourth with the remainder of our teams finishing in the top half of the field. Congratulation to all FRNSW team who were very competitive on unfamiliar equipment. As you can see from the attached photos, all team members had an enjoyable weekend.

I would particularly like to thank MSA for providing substantial prizes for the eight competing brigades to raffle to raise funds to compete at Launceston. Without their support these teams would have struggled to attend.

Two weeks after the Australasian Championship, Port Macquarie hosted the Region North 1 Championship at Westport Park on the river at Port Macquarie. Surely this is the most scenic location for a Championship track in NSW. Considering the close proximity to the Australasian Championship, numbers were down a bit with six of the eight teams returning from Launceston not able to join us at Port.

We were delighted to see new teams from Gunnedah, Nambucca Heads, Toukley and Merrylands competing for the first time at a Regional Championship. By all accounts these teams had a great time and enjoyed their first taste of Championships.

Again most thanks must go to JVP Don Davidson for his huge effort inviting teams and competitors to compete at Port. I would also like to thank our sponsors MSA and Chubb for their attendance and support at Port which was greatly appreciated by the host brigade, the competing teams and the FCA.

Looking forward to 2014, we have Championships scheduled for Mudgee on 1st & 2nd March, Unanderra on 3rd & 4th May, Swansea on 19th & 20th July and the State Championships at Kelso on 23rd to 25th October 2014.

As reported to the FCA AGM, the FCA Executive is working to secure sponsorship which would enable Championships to continue with greater certainty and financial support for teams competing at Championships. We will report progress on this activity in the next Newsletter.

See you on the track

Trevor Jones
Secretary FCA

CHAMPIONSHIPS HISTORY

Whilst we enjoyed celebrating eighty years of Fire Brigade Championships at Tamworth in 2012 the history of competition in NSW began in the latter part of the 19th Century.

Following the formation of the Board of Fire Commissioners in 1909, Volunteer Brigades lobbied the Board to conduct State Demonstrations, the first conducted at Wagga Wagga in 1932.

The first record of 'fire engines' in the Colony of NSW was in 1822, which were operated by soldiers. Insurance Brigades provided cover to the properties from the 1830's, the Australian Insurance company, the Alliance Insurance Company, the Sydney Insurance Company and London and Liverpool Insurance Company were some of these companies. These companies formed an alliance known as the Insurance Brigade, their priority to protect properties bearing a plaque indicating their commitment to one of the insurance companies. The failure of the Insurance Brigade to respond to all fires prompted the formation of organised volunteer brigades, the earliest probably Australian Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 in the 1840's. By the late 1860's relations between the volunteer companies and the Insurance Brigades had deteriorated. The supporters of insurance brigades spoke of the volunteers as disorganised rabble whilst the volunteers accused the Insurance Companies of being motivated solely by profit.

In 1880 a number of brigades, led by the Insurance Brigade, formed the Metropolitan Associated Fire Brigades. At the same time a United Volunteer Fire Brigade Association was formed.

Both groups sought to maximise their influence and standing within the community. The United Volunteer Fire Brigades held a Grand Intercolonial Fire Brigade Competition at Prince Alfred Park in November 1881. Sixteen visiting brigades attended from Victoria and country areas along with the city companies. The events included engine practice (four, seven and eight men), ladder race, steam engine practice, disabled ladder practice and hose and reel practice, in a format similar to today's Firefighter Championships. The Metropolitan Associated Fire Brigades responded with its First Annual Gathering in March 1882 at The Garden Palace.

'Fighting Fire' – Colin Adrian 1984

**John Hand AFSM
Historian**

From the Editor

Merv and I were fortunate to attend the Australasian Championships in Launceston. Two of the functions were held in rooms at Aurora Stadium overlooking the beautifully manicured grounds where a new drop in cricket pitch had been placed ready for new T20 Big Bash Cricket Competition. Previously only AFL matches were held there, being the home of AFL team Hawthorn in Tasmania.

The Saturday night function was held at the magnificent Country Club Casino where Bega were the highest bidder for a World Champion Axeman's axe.

We spent a few more days in Tasmania and hope to return at some stage to further explore this beautiful state.

I would like to thank all contributors to the newsletters this year.. Please keep those articles and photos coming in to help make the newsletter interesting reading.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to All

Rosemary Reed



CHAMPIONSHIP DATES—2014

Region West 2	1/2 March 2014	Mudgee
Metro South 1	3/4 May 2014	Unanderra
Metro North 1	19/20 July 2014	Swansea
STATE CHAMPIONSHIP	23/25 October	Kelso

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