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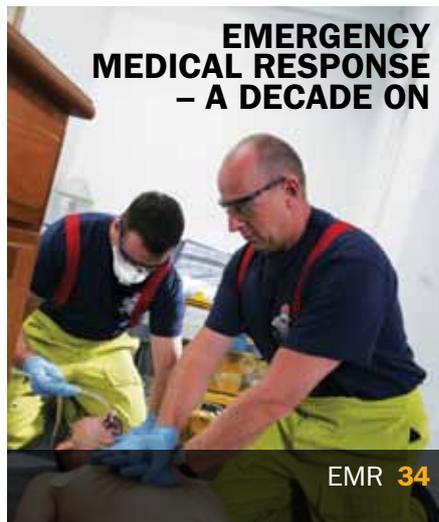
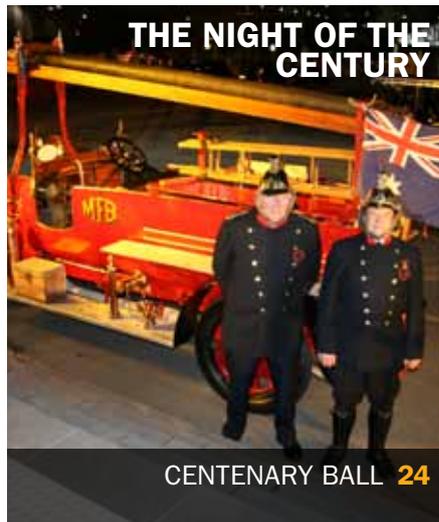
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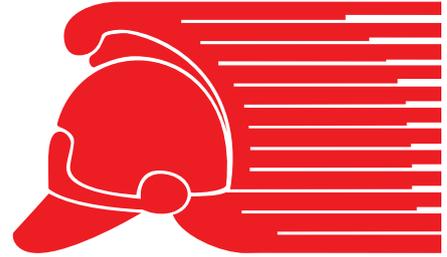


CONTENTS

- 2** Contacts
- 3** Editorial
- 5** National News
- 6** International News
- 9** Aviation Branch
- 10-17** Branch News
- 18-21** National Conference
- 22-23** UFUA Legislative Conference
- 24-28** The Night of the Century
- 30-33** Cover Story
- 34-35** Emergency Medical Response – A Decade On
- 37** 20 Year Milestone for Stewart & Heaton Clothing
- 39** The Easter Tap Dance



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Authorised by P Marshall
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Mick Farrell



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Peter Marshall

From the National Secretary

The challenges of a new environment

Preparing for the 21st annual National Committee of Management meeting, I found myself reflecting on some of the significant challenges that UFUA members have faced over the last decade. Most importantly this national conference would consider a comprehensive agenda to ensure that, as a union, we are collectively well placed and unified to deal with coming events and challenges.

Respective employers often argue about the cost of an effective fire service, one which is well resourced with equipment and personnel who are well paid for the life-threatening work that our members undertake.

The arguments put forward by the employer is often taken out of context with a short term view based on economic performance indicators rather than protection to the community from loss of life and property, not to mention the ongoing effect to Australia's economy due to the effect of business interruption as a result of fire or flood. For example:

- 2003 Canberra fires resulted in 4 dead, 500 homes lost, and significant park lands and forest devastated by the unprecedented fires
- 2005 Eyre Peninsula South Australia resulted in 9 dead, 110 injured, and \$128 million in damage
- 2006 Scamader/St Mary's, Tasmania fires
- 2009 Victoria Black Saturday resulted in 173 people dead, 2000 homes lost, 7000 people displaced, approximately one million animals destroyed by fire, and a conservative estimate of \$4.4 billion in damage and losses
- 2011 Victorian floods which affected 51 communities, many of which had to be evacuated. Substantial damage as a result of the floods.
- 2011 Western Australian fires which destroyed 70 houses
- 2011 Queensland floods which resulted in 35 dead, 70 affected towns, 200,000 people displaced, and \$30 billion estimated damage and loss

In addition to these events in Australia we have seen mega fires in 2006 in Spain/Portugal, in 2007 in Greece, and in 2008 in California, USA.

It is worth noting that on Black Saturday in Victoria the fire danger index was 150 or more on a scale where 50 is considered extreme.

Fire services around Australia, if not globally, whether you believe



National Secretary Peter Marshall.

From the National President

News from near and far

Another "Australian Firefighter", another set of issues and ideas to consider.

The National Committee of Management annual conference has occupied our thoughts for the past month or so, and the meeting itself helped focus us on the recent gains we have achieved through our new-found sense of national solidarity. As you will read, much has been achieved as a strengthening national body, supporting each other – and there is much more to come.

The conference was honoured to have representatives from a number of overseas firefighter organisations, including Alex Forrest who has led the charge for presumptive legislation in Canada and a number of other countries. This is the law that recognises that if firefighters develop certain illnesses it can be assumed that these are work-related. You'll read of our recent meetings with a range of MPs in Canberra on this issue.

Apart from the national scene, there is Branch news. It is at the local level that the union matters most. Whether it is a celebration in Brisbane, a brief skirmish in rural Victoria, a battle in Perth, or a piece of art in Hobart, we all gain from our shared experience. Fresh ideas and war stories are to be shared.

The impending anniversary of 9/11 rekindles strong emotions across the world, and particularly for us as firefighters. While Australian firefighters have participated in the firefighter relay across the USA in recent years, this year they are leaving it to the Americans. But Australia's role in reuniting a US family with their lost father's helmet is a good read. (And don't miss out on your chance to get a commemorative T-shirt. Orders close August 5.)

Also from the United States, a reminder of the importance of unity as the Professional Firefighters of New Hampshire face a battle that we hope we will never see. An arbitrary budget imposed by a hostile State government aims to strip them of many of their rights as workers. We salute them in their struggle.

And on a lighter note we look at the recent centenary ball held by the Victorian branch. A magnificent night of celebration for members old and new.



National President Mick Farrell.



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A time for unity

Firefighters throughout Australia stand with their NSW colleagues in their battle against draconian new workplace laws which will put NSW in breach of international obligations to human rights, including labour rights.

NSW is the latest State to claim budget pressures will force it to cut pay and important conditions without consultation, and without remedy,

Mr Lawrence has written to Mr O'Farrell to condemn the introduction of the Industrial Relations Amendment Bill (Public Sector Conditions of Employment) 2011 into the New South Wales Parliament.

The SA and Tasmanian governments have also warned of cutbacks to services and workers' benefits, as have a number of States in the USA.

(In contrast Victorian firefighters concluded their EBAs last year before the

State election, and WA is believed to be close to finalising their arrangements.)

ACTU Secretary Jeff Lawrence has warned Premier Barry O'Farrell that the entire weight of the union movement will support public sector workers in NSW in opposing the proposed new laws.

The New South Wales Liberal Government must immediately withdraw changes to workplace laws for which it has no mandate, and which will place Australia in breach of international obligations, say unions.

"Every day tens of thousands of hardworking public sector workers provide vital services that the people of NSW rely on," Mr Lawrence said.

"The thanks they get from the O'Farrell government is the removal of their rights at work.

"These laws would hand the State Government a blank cheque, giving them the power to unilaterally set pay and

conditions, with virtually no rights of appeal.

"They are not just frontline workers like police, firefighters, nurses, public transport staff, utility employees, but the tens of thousands of government workers who back them up.

"We haven't seen this type of attack since the Howard Government took away rights at work with their WorkChoices laws.

"This would not only be unjust, but it would be a clear breach of international law and Australia's obligation to respect human rights, which include labour rights."

UFUA NATIONAL

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WHERE THERE'S SMOKE, THERE'S SCANIA.



The New Hampshire battle is a warning to all firefighters that a hostile government can try to steal back the pay and conditions won over decades.

Battleground USA

BY DAVE LANG

Immediately following the events of September 11, 2001 firefighters across the United States were heralded as heroes. New Hampshire, a small New England state located in the north east corner of the country, was no different.

Here the political tide has turned and now firefighters are referred to as thugs and the public enemy.

What a difference an election can make! Prior to the November 2010 election the three New Hampshire branches of government (Governor, Senate, and House) were all controlled by the Democrats. The House of Representatives, a 400-member body (the third largest in the free world), is now controlled by an ultra group of conservative Republicans. The current make up is 297 Republicans and 103 Democrats. The New Hampshire Senate is no different, with 19 Republicans and 5 Democrats. This scenario makes it nearly impossible for the Democratic Governor to pass or reject any pro worker legislation.

When the new legislature took office they immediately began their attack on the workers, public and private sector. Countless legislation was introduced, rolling back workers rights. Collective bargaining at its very core was attacked. In the 1970s public workers were given the right to collectively bargain for wages and working conditions in attempt to settle the labor unrest here. The law was passed after the Manchester firefighters and the Timberlane teachers went on strike. The legislature moved to establish collective bargaining laws. Some 35 years later we are now faced with an attack not seen since the early 1900s when trade unions in this country begin to really take shape.

Every two years the legislature is required to act on a budget to run state government. Unannounced, without any public notice, the budget was amended to require that when existing labor agreements ran out all of the employees would become 'at will' employees, with all wages and working conditions set by the employer. The amended passed as did the



entire House budget. After much discussion the Senate removed the amendment and in its place set up a study committee to study public sector bargaining. As of this writing the budget heads to a conference committee for the details to be hammered out, leaving the collective bargaining rights of public workers in the balance.

Across the United States the very wealthy are funding a national campaign to destroy labor unions with a project known as "Right to Work". On its face it sounds like a harmless concept but in reality it will destroy workers' rights and silence our voice. In States that have passed Right to Work workers' wages are at least \$5000 lower annually than other States. More importantly this legislation makes it impossible to collect dues from workers that choose not to join the union. This sets up a free loader scenario by allowing workers to reap the benefits of the collective bargaining agreement and being represented by the union with the union being allowed to charge for the representation.

This legislation has passed the Senate (19 to 5) and has passed the House by a significant majority. The Governor has vetoed the legislation which now requires a two thirds vote of both legislative bodies to override the veto. The bill currently sits in the House with the Speaker waiting until the right mix of votes is present to override the veto. It has been reported that he remains more than five votes short in successfully passing this legislation. He has for the past several weeks advertised the vote and failed to call it to the floor in fear he would lose.

Further attacks on firefighters include the reduction in pension benefits along with increased charges for the retirements. New Hampshire firefighters, as part of a state wide pension system, have been promised a pension that allowed them retirement after 20 years of service at a minimum age of 45. Their pension would equate to 50% of their highest



36 months of average final compensation. Firefighters pay 9.3% of their compensation into the pension and do not receive any US retirement known as Social Security.

The employers of the State in 1990 purposefully took a pension holiday allowing them to underfund the retirement system. They took advantage of workers by transferring the costs of the system to future generations of workers and now that the costs are due the employers do not want to pay. The House and the Senate at the beginning of the week have agreed to drastically cut the pension benefits of firefighters while charging them more. Firefighters are now being forced to take retirement instead of staying working at the job they love instead of taking the reduced benefits and added costs.

The change requires firefighters to work longer, take less of a retirement benefit and to pay 2.5% more for it. This does nothing more than make our members pay an employer debt. The attack on firefighters also reaches the police, teachers and public workers. All sectors are faced with benefit cuts along with employee contribution increases.

The New Hampshire legislative session will conclude for the year at the end of June, but the attacks continue. Legislation has already been introduced that would totally repeal collective bargaining for public workers, remove our ability to collect union dues through payroll deduction, and remove a firefighter's right to run for elective office.

What a difference an election makes! Members may follow the Professional Firefighters of New Hampshire by going to our website www.pffnh.org, or follow us on twitter @pffnh, or on facebook Professional Firefighters of New Hampshire.

Dave Lang is President of the Professional Fire Fighters of New Hampshire, a state association chartered by the International Association of Fire Fighters, and comprised of 42 local unions of the IAFF, representing firefighters and paramedics.

New York cuts

New York firefighters have turned out to protest the planned closure of 20 companies.

With public safety under attack in cities across America due to budget cuts, New York became Ground Zero as 10,000 firefighters protested the public safety cuts

“Fire fighters across the country have been standing up for taxpayers and fighting public officials who are cutting budgets and decimating public safety programs. In difficult times when people have so much insecurity, public safety is something they expect from their government. It is an investment we must make,” IAFF General President Harold A. Schaitberger said.

As cities around the country struggle to balance budgets, public safety has been a target. Like New York, fire fighters are battling mayors and city councils in cities including Atlanta, Detroit, San Jose, Houston, Cleveland and Tulsa.

“These fire companies are fixtures in

New York City neighborhoods, and Mayor Bloomberg is putting school children, the elderly, homeowners and business owners throughout the city in grave danger,” Schaitberger said.

UK wastage

The UK Observer newspaper reports on a failed scheme which was opposed for eight years by the UK’s Fire Brigade’s Union.

Nearly \$A1 billion of taxpayers money has been wasted on rents for fire brigade sites which remain empty.

The scrapped FireControl call centres scheme means eight empty buildings will never be used for their intended purpose.

FireControl, a private finance initiative to replace England’s 46 emergency call centres with nine regional sites, became mired in technical problems that proved fatal to the scheme. The eight sites outside London have been cancelled, although the London site will go ahead.

But, in spite of the scheme’s partial demise last year, the Observer has established that £342m of taxpayers’ money is committed to paying rent on the empty sites that will never be used to house the new system. Because the properties were purpose-built, it is unclear how they could be converted to an alternative use.

Several of the empty properties are owned by anonymous trusts and companies, two of which are based in the tax haven of Jersey. The rent commitments mean the taxpayer is now paying £1.4m each month on

the empty buildings at a time when the government is implementing swinging cuts.

New Zealand pay freeze

Although the NZ Fire Service is not part of the Public Service and does not receive tax-payer funding, the instruction to give employees little or nothing as a pay increase this year applies as much to the Fire Service as it does to the Public Sector proper.

And, the government lackeys running the Fire Service are only too happy to carry out the instruction.

The explicit government advice – from the Prime Minister – is that public servants (presumably still including firefighters) should not expect big pay raises in line with the rest of the workforce.

Impacting on the Fire Service is the unbudgeted and unfunded amount of more than \$8 million spent on USAR responses to both the Christchurch earthquake and the Japanese earthquake/tsunami.

According to the New Zealand Professional Firefighters Union, it is extraordinary that despite it being common ground that this \$8 million cost was unbudgeted and unfunded, the Fire Service Commission has not even asked for funding to meet this cost.

It appears that firefighters and their families are the ones who are having to effectively meet a large part of the cost of the Fire Service’s involvement in USAR.

Missouri tornado

A massive tornado struck Joplin, Missouri, in late May destroying lives and property. Unfortunately, the very people that the community relies on to assist in situations like this are not themselves immune from the devastation. Six firefighters in the Joplin area have lost their homes.

The Missouri State Council of Fire Fighters has established a Disaster Relief Fund.



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Avalon ARFF Dispute

Members' working hours at Aviation Rescue & Firefighting (ARFF) Fire Stations around Australia vary.

This variance is dependent upon the flight schedules and as a result approximately half work 24 hours on a 10/14 roster system and the other half work what is known as a long day shift roster.

Avalon ARFF members in Victoria have always worked a long day shift roster ever since the opening of the station and were quite happy to do so. With ARFF knowledge and approval members slept overnight on the Station between the day shifts to mitigate any fatigue issues and maximise time off, thereby enjoying a good work life balance.

Enter Tiger Airways with a flight that extended the rostered operational daily hours to around 20 hours per day which ARFF stated was unsafe. The hours in question fell short of the 24 hours required as in the 10/14 roster. But, the 10/14 was a proven safe and certified roster. The question needed to be asked, for a couple of hours per day why not implement an agreed and proven (popular) roster such as the 10/14? What was the problem? Why were these extra couple of hours now deemed unsafe by the ARFF when members already utilised recline time on station and actually had a break in movements, when there were no flights at all over night? The answer appeared simple to us: implement a 10/14 roster.

The ARFF would cite cost in respect to this suggestion, however, as all members know, there is a great argument for having a fire service at an airport for 24 hours per day and subsequently an ability to offset costs if somebody is prepared to do the work.

The ARFF were not disposed to do that work, yet costs were paramount they said. However as we expected the ARFF had an ulterior motive to not implement a 10/14 roster.

This matter was never about a safety issue. The ARFF had commenced an attack on members' conditions of employment. It was well planned, well executed and well resourced. The ARFF attack on members' conditions was directed at recline time and also at what the ARFF now saw as an excellent opportunity to undermine members' working conditions at all the

long day shift stations. If only they could get a roster in at Avalon first (officially) that could be also rolled out around the country, particularly at the new stations on the horizon; they could then save staffing numbers and costs on facilities.

NB: The ARFF had previously done their utmost to undermine the 10/14 roster in Darwin and had been foiled by the UFU.

The dollar signs were flashing. Therefore despite what the ARFF publicly espoused to all and sundry about consulting with the UFU, there was in fact little if any real consultation before they tried to enforce what they termed a 10/10 roster on members at Avalon. This roster consisted of four days on four days off with no recline time involved.

This 10/10 roster if implemented would have had members completing a rostered shift at 0125 hours and that was if the flight was on time. However in reality quite often, those late flights are delayed sometimes for many hours. On the ARFF 10/10 line roster members would have been driving home in the early hours of the morning. The worst possible time to drive for many reasons such as reduced visibility, nocturnal animals roaming the roads in a semi rural area, suspect driver reaction times, a higher level of desynchronisation of circadian rhythms etc etc.

No, this was definitely not about a safety issue because the 10/10 roster that ARFF tried to force members to work was a much less safe roster than the one already being worked.

As previously noted the attack was well planned. It was implemented on the Thursday before Easter. This therefore gave the ARFF five days where everyone (branch secretary/admin/courts etc) was enjoying an Easter break. That is of course except for the furies that were on duty during this period.

The National office in the form of Peter Marshall and Wattie (Joanne Watson) swung into action to assist the Branch President Joe Stenhouse, now acting Branch Secretary, and residing in Darwin. Between them they planned a response to this industrial intimidation.

- Members met and rejected the ARFF direction to commence the 10/10 line roster on the specific date set by ARFF and decided to remain on the roster that was in place.

- The ARFF then lodged in Fair Work Australia (FWA), stating that the UFU had implemented unprotected industrial action at Avalon and wanted that recognised and stopped, and also they sought an order from FWA to force members to work the 10/10 roster.
- The ARFF failed in FWA and members kept working their preferred roster. Therefore that approach by ARFF was clearly unsuccessful. What now?
- The ARFF then lodged in the Federal Court (interlocutory injunction) in a quest to stop the (supposed) unprotected industrial action and in the process began serving ALL members and the union with writs.
- The Interlocutory Injunction failed.
- The Judge set down future dates for a trial.

Certain circumstances then prevailed (Federal Court case pending) whereby senior ASA and ARFF staff finally agreed to meet with the union to consult on this matter properly. We met in Canberra and Melbourne. The result is that Avalon is now working a 10/14 roster (albeit without all of the facilities) for a trial period of 6 months and the Tiger flight is being carefully watched.

- How badly was this industrial situation handled?

It was appallingly conducted. There was no real consultation on the implementation of the 10/10 line roster and as a result the well known and now well recorded bullying ethos of the ARFF rose to the fore. However, the ARFF also failed in their legal quests. Consequently overall, they failed to suppress members' democratic and industrial rights.

What has the ARFF attack on members' conditions achieved for ASA/ARFF?

- A large legal bill with a nil result
- Confirmation that the bullying/harassment philosophy is alive and well
- Disengagement of the workforce
- Ongoing mistrust of any ARFF motives
- Complete and utter failure to work as a team

NB: This exercise at Avalon by the ARFF demonstrates that nothing has been learned from the cultural review.

continued on page 15



Brisbane Labour Day 2011

Queensland's Labour Day was bigger and better than ever for this year's celebration.

We had more than 300 proud firefighters and family members marching through the streets of Brisbane behind the banner of the United Firefighters Union of Queensland.

The Minister for Department of Community Safety, Neil Roberts, and former firefighter and now Member for Chatsworth, Steve Kilburn, marched with the UFUQ and the Premier Anna Bligh visited our marquee later in the day.

The firefighters and their families wore their specially designed 10th anniversary (91.1) UFUQ shirts and hats (which were in high demand not just from our members but also from other unions). As the steaks sizzled the members caught up with old friends and laughed the day away in the UFUQ tent and beer garden with a cold beer while the children had show bags and lots of other children to entertain them.



Thank you to Peter Chalmers (Executive Member) who helped with the transportation, cooking and other various tasks. Also a big thank you to retired member Allan Young for helping out once again and also thank you to all the office staff who did an outstanding job of making sure the day ran smoothly.

Another mention of thank you should be given to all our State Committee of Management delegates and their family members who helped out on the day.

Yours in Unity,

JOHN OLIVER
Branch Secretary
UFU Queensland

UFUA QUEENSLAND BRANCH

Branch President: Steve Bunney
Branch Secretary: John Oliver
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email: ufu@ufuq.asn.au

SA BRANCH

South Australian Firefighters are continuing their campaign against the State Government's cut to workers' entitlements in the last State Budget. Firefighters are playing an important role in the SA Unions campaign to restore fairness for working South Australians.

Secretary Greg Northcott and Industrial Officer (and SA Unions Vice-President) Joe Szakacs are meeting weekly with other officials from key public sector unions in progress of the campaign. As this goes to print the 2011 State Budget is being digested.



The Budget is not one that will do anything to quell the concerns of firefighters, with no new spending for the Metropolitan Fire Service, further job cuts in attached services, and no recognition of the cuts to entitlements.

The Metropolitan Fire Service continues to be slowly suffocated by the efficiency dividends being enforced by Treasury.

The leadership of the State Government is driving a wedge between workers and a Labor Government that should be looking after the interest of firefighters, and time for renewal and change is quickly escaping them.

JOE SZAKACS
Industrial Officer
SA Branch



UFUA SA BRANCH

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National Secretary report continued

continued from page 3

in climate change or not, need to consider whether they are adequately resourced with personnel, equipment and procedures to deal with events that CSIRO research says will happen on a more regular and frequent basis. For example, research has found total fire weather increases of 15 to 40 percent between 1998-2000 and 2001-2007.

The research also found the percentage of annual total fire weather is projected to increase from 0-10% by 2020 and 2-31% by 2050, with the largest changes occurring in northern Victoria.

By 2020 under a high global warming scenario the average number of days with a Fire Danger Rating of "very high" or above will rise from 3 weeks to 3.5 weeks.

By 2050, under a high global warming scenario the average number of days with a Fire Danger Rating of "very high" or above will rise from 3 weeks to well over

a month. Specifically northern Victoria will be subject to an average of 3 months with a fire danger rating of "very high" or above.

University of Sydney researched staffing levels in Victoria and taking into account a population increase and the effects of climate change, a 31 percent increase in the number of firefighters in Victoria would be required between 2009 and 2026.

Another challenge facing the UFUA members is a cycle of change within the industrial landscape with the election of new governments of political persuasion. We now have in Victoria a Liberal/National Party Coalition Government, in Western Australia a Liberal Government and more recently the NSW Labor Government was defeated after 15 years in power. This has resulted in a Liberal Government in NSW with a majority in both Houses of Parliament.

Tasmania also has a minority government that operates through a Labor/Greens coalition.

Of course, the changes of government bring a different philosophy to industrial relations which necessitates a national approach with support being given to branches by a strong and viable national union. This is vitally important to the people whom we represent.

On a Federal level, the political landscape is also set to change. We are all aware of the minority federal government with the balance of power in the House of Representatives being held by a coalition between the ALP, Greens and Independents.

As of July this year, the Senate will change so that the balance of power will be held by the Greens.

This will create both challenges and opportunities for us as a national union, a topic of lengthy discussion at the National Committee of Management.

PETER MARSHALL ■



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Tasmanian Government seeking to cut jobs and services

On February 11, 2011 Premier Lara Giddings announced that Tasmania was facing a \$800 million budget black hole.

The discovery of this black whole was curious; as little as 8 months ago the then Treasurer indicated that the budget was in good shape.

Ms Giddings, in making her announcement, adopted the standard approach of politicians and announced there would have to be job cuts and reductions in services. The number of full time equivalent jobs that she wanted to get rid of was up to 4800 (including 2500 private sector workers). She did not identify what services would be cut. This will include up to 200 Police.

As a result of the announcement by the Premier, the Tasmania Fire Service wrote to employees advising them that the TFS would have to make cuts but it was unable to say what the cuts would be because they did not know how much money would be cut from the budget. Currently \$3.6 million of the total

TFS budget of \$70 million comes directly from the government. The TFS also said it was going to hold meetings to get ideas from staff about how savings could be made.

The union was very concerned that TFS was going to hold meetings, the aim of which was to get staff to suggest ways to cut costs, even though nobody knew what the amount of the cut would be. The union advised members that while they should attend any meetings they should not be drawn into making suggestions about how the TFS could cut costs. In the past the TFS has never positively responded to union member suggestions about cutting costs and now was not the time to be doing the job for management.

Unfortunately during the meetings a number of suggestions were made, by non UFUA employees, that costs could be cut by privatising services, removing or reducing existing conditions of employment and reducing other benefits. These suggestions, which became widely known, caused great concern to UFUA members because the privatisation proposals would have affected them.

The union wrote to the Chief indicating that by holding meetings without being in possession of any detail about possible cuts or indicating that certain things would

not be considered e.g. privatisation, the TFS had created a serious problem which was affecting the morale of fire fighters. The union proposed to the Chief that he issue a notice clearly setting out that privatisation and reductions in conditions and benefits were not matters the TFS was pursuing. As a result the Chief issued a note that went some way to meeting what the union was after.

Currently a number of unions are running media campaigns against the need to cut staff and services. These will culminate on June 16, the day the budget is handed down.

The UFUA has not ruled out considering the running of a similar campaign if there are attempts to reduce staffing numbers or cut conditions and benefits.

Painting for UFU office

In February this year the Tasmania Branch commissioned UFU member Richard Onn to paint a picture for the UFU office. Richard is a firefighter with the Tasmania Fire Service and a talented artist who was a 2009 Archibald Prize finalist.

continued on page 14



SEM Fire and Rescue

May was a nervous time for many UFU members in Victoria because of two unrelated issues

On Tuesday evening May 17 2011 the UFU received news that the directors of SEM Fire and Rescue Pty Ltd had padlocked the gates of their workshop with the intention of locking out all 105 employees. SEM is a Ballarat-based company that manufactures firefighting vehicles.

It would soon be revealed that the company had run into financial difficulty, and rumours spread of the company going into receivership or voluntary administration. The workers and the unions were kept in the dark over the reasons behind the lockout and all attempts to contact the employer failed, including travelling to the home addresses of company officers. The union made use of all its contacts in the finance and accounting world to discover any information we could about the state of the company.

The 105 workers together with the UFU and the AMWU immediately set up a community assembly outside the workplace in Wendouree. Victorian Branch industrial officer Harry Mitchell helped members in passing information back and forward, travelling to Ballarat from Melbourne every day, and bringing his years of experience to the fore.

Also on the ground and critical to the organisation of the assembly were delegates Neil Wright and Garry Britton. During these days of great uncertainty both took the

time to prepare a list of concerns about production so that if the workplace re-opened it could run in the most efficient manner. This list turned out to be of critical importance and would eventually be presented before Commissioner Blair at Fair Work Australia.

There were many other UFU members who showed leadership during these days, and the whole 105 workers remained united.

The UFU and AMWU immediately filed joint applications to Fair Work Australia to stop the lockout. The parties attended a hearing early on the morning of Friday May 20 before Commissioner Blair and presented arguments contesting the legality of the lockout.

The hearing turned out to be a good news story. The company was able to guarantee that on Monday May 23 the gates would be reopened and the company would be back in business. No jobs would be lost. All the workers would be back paid for the days that they had missed during the lockout.

A high level meeting was scheduled to occur on Monday May 23 between Union Secretaries, union delegates and company directors to establish procedures to ensure that there was no repeat of the lockout.

As delegate Garry Britton explained, the week had taken a toll on UFU members. "The worst thing is the not knowing what is going to happen next," Garry said. "It could be good news, or it could be bad news, and you are standing together with everyone waiting.

"You look at the workers around you and you can see them doing calculations in their



UFU delegate Neil Wright (left) and co-delegate Garry Britton at the SEMS dispute.

head about how they are going to pay their mortgages if the news is bad. But then those same people are also offering you support, even if it just a few words or just a conversation. It helps being around people who know what you are going through.

"And in the end we got the good news to go back to work. Both the UFU and the AMWU were tremendous. They were with us 24/7."

Both unions, including delegates Garry Britton and Neil Wright, returned to Fair Work Australia on Thursday June 2 to set up some processes for ensuring greater involvement of the workers in securing the operations of the business. Since then there has been a meeting on June 8 of the consultative committee at which the delegates and union officials began the process of discussions with the company, seeking to improve the company's operating procedures and viability. The next report back meeting before Fair Work Australia is scheduled next

Tasmania report continued

continued from page 13

This remarkable piece of artwork is proudly displayed in the union office.

It depicts (in Richard Onn's words); "...the centrepiece of the artwork is two hands in a firm grip. One hand being that of a firefighter with turnout gear on, the other could be construed to have many guises. This image can have many meanings. For example, it could represent a firefighter rescuing a survivor from a fire, it could represent one firefighter giving a helping hand to another, the Fire Service helping the community or firefighters

banding together in unity. The grip depicted is the strongest grip attainable by two opposing hands. The second image is painted from a photograph at a UFU rally at Parliament House in Hobart in 1997. For me this image typifies the strength in unity tagline. It depicts firefighters from around the State coming together to fight for better working conditions. The UFU rally picture also symbolises the willingness of brigade members to help one another in times of need. The third image depicts firefighters at work. It expresses the synergy that happens when a crew becomes one to achieve the desired outcome. With second

and third images, one is day and one is night. This symbolises 24 hour, seven day a week commitment firefighters give to protecting the community. These three images in themselves will come together to express different aspects of firefighter brotherhood therefore depicting overall 'Strength in Unity'. Fire fighting is not what we do, it is who we are."

UFUA TASMANIA BRANCH

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for June 29 2011. The UFU realises that while our members are back at work, there is more work that needs to be done.

The above achievement by the Unions for members is significant and could only have been achieved through the solidarity and support of all members. In this context the Branch Committee of Management would like to express appreciation towards those members who attended the community assembly that was established at Ballarat in support of the members who were locked out.

Asbestos

Closer to Melbourne there was another serious issue occurring. On April 30 asbestos was discovered in the garden beds at CFA's South Eastern Training Ground. This led to further investigation which revealed asbestos also on the off-road driving range.

The members working at the site were immediately removed and a grievance lodged by the UFU with the employer. All training was suspended.

A series of urgent meetings then took place between the UFU and CFA, at which the UFU stipulated that the industrial hygienist and asbestos removalist must be first endorsed by the Victorian Trades Hall Council. Members were kept updated as information came to hand.

Victorian Branch Industrial Officer Greg Pargeter was involved in those discussions between the CFA and UFU. He said: "the health and safety of our members was

paramount throughout this period. The return of our members to the site was at all times contingent upon obtaining independent professional advice that the site was safe.

"Naturally there was concern about possible exposure. It is critical that the union remains vigilant to all types of threats to health and safety".

The asbestos contamination was identified as existing for some 12 months. This required examining everything that had been in contact with the site during that period, such as CFA vehicles, to ensure they were checked and cleaned. MFB vehicles had also passed through SETG and this required a massive clean-up operation of the MFB vehicles. A thorough inspection was conducted across SETG. Contaminated garden beds at the site were cleaned by licensed asbestos removalists. The main building on site has also now been cleaned by licensed asbestos removalists.

Having received professional advice, the UFU agreed that staff could return to the main facility on May 26, and that training on the PAD areas could commence from Monday May 30.

Members are asked to immediately report any concerns about asbestos to their local delegate or health and safety rep, and the Union office. We would prefer to receive 100 false alarms than to have one site contain asbestos.

Management of training grounds has been an ongoing issue in 2011. As members would know we once had a fully functional world class MFB Training Facility on prime

land that was subsequently sold to a property developer. This ill-conceived decision resulted in the MFB building an inferior facility on land that can only be described as a toxic dump. Hundreds of thousands of dollars of public money has been spent to rectify deficiencies in the new building (as well as remove the toxic contamination) yet the MFB is refusing to release a document which will explain to its employees exactly what occurred and whether there was any impropriety.

The Union has been forced to go to VCAT to seek an investigator's report commissioned by the MFB after a number of allegations were raised about the management of the training facility. Given the significant impact of the ill-conceived decision to sell the previous world class college, and the effect that it has had on the ability to train personnel, one would think that it would not only be in the public interest but also the employees' interest to be informed on exactly what occurred regarding this entire debacle.

Our VCAT application for the FOI documents has been strenuously opposed by the MFB. The matter currently remains before VCAT. What has MFB have got to hide, and what is contained within the document that the MFB are afraid to reveal?

UFU VIC BRANCH

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Aviation report continued

continued from page 9

The cultural review must be costing a small fortune to conduct and with one action the ARFF have rendered the complete programme a farce. It appears it is just another method of ticking a box. What a waste of resources when we have members around Australia working in fire stations that are in desperate need of repair and refurbishment.

There are some positives to come out of this well planned industrial assault on members' working conditions from a union perspective

- The support that was immediately forthcoming from the National office to assist one of the smaller branches in dire need was not only gratifying but underscores the absolute necessity for a well resourced national union.
- The national union was undoubtedly instrumental in the successful outcome of the dispute.
- However the solidarity demonstrated by the UFU members underpinned the whole state of affairs, and they are to be congratulated.
- All members around Australia should not only take heart from this result,

but be ready at anytime to emulate the cohesion and camaraderie that have been displayed. That is what being a union member all is about. We may not win every battle nevertheless the employer is well aware that it will be a battle if and when our members' working conditions come under threat.

UFU AVIATION BRANCH

Aviation Branch President: Joe Stenhouse
Aviation Branch Secretary: Mick Farrell
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As this article is being prepared, the WA Branch is in the middle of a dispute with the Fire and Emergency Services Authority about the next Enterprise Bargaining Agreement.

Interestingly the CEO, Jo Harrison-Ward, took leave for the last few weeks of the difficult negotiations and it seems that she may also have successfully avoided appearing before the major State Government inquiry into the recent catastrophic fires in WA. How convenient.

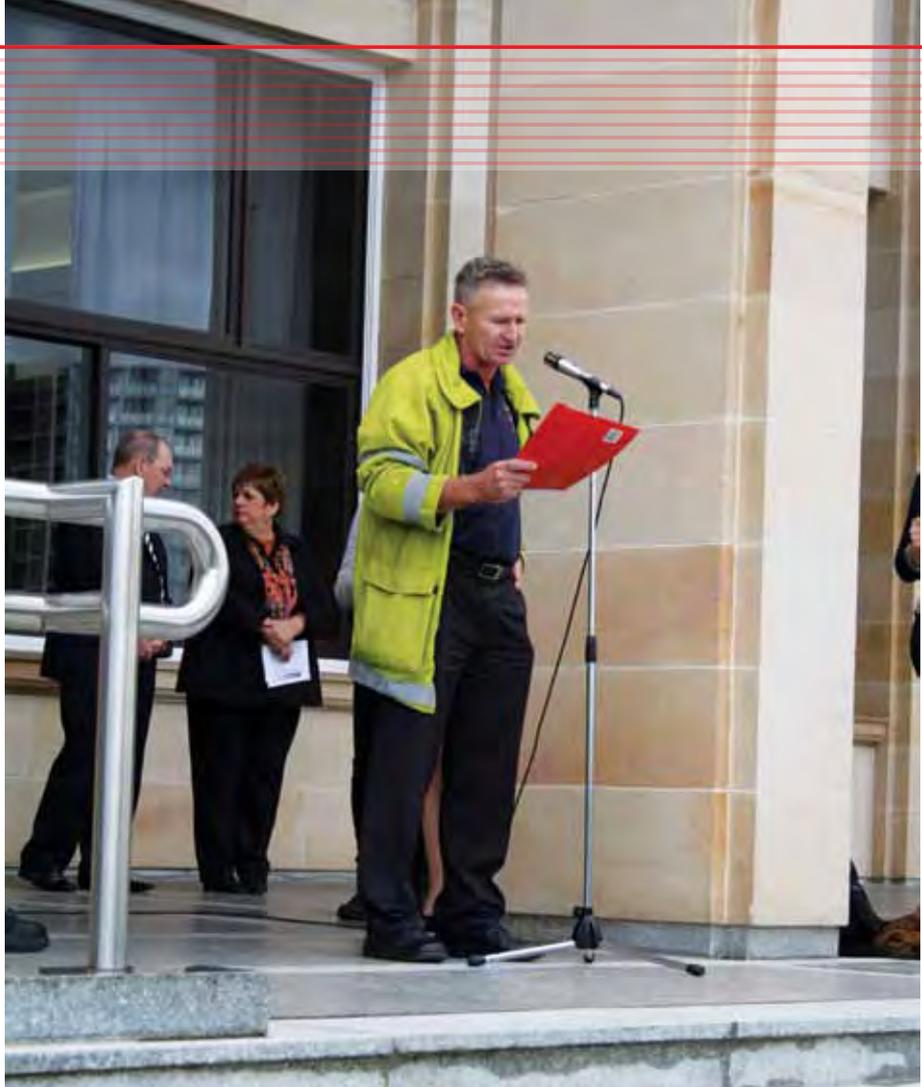
The Acting CEO, Frank Pasquale, has apparently been referring to WA firefighters as 'amongst the highest paid in Australia' – almost implying that the successful increases over the last 6 years of an average of between 25-30% have been due to the administration's largesse and not at all because of Union's success in difficult protracted bargaining and in part successful arbitration (2005 Agreement).

The existing agreement expired on May 24 2011 and the employer has abandoned good faith bargaining. Despite verbal assurances from the Chief Officer, Craig Hynes, that the threatened removal of conditions would be taken off the table and a promise of the full Wages Price Index (WPI) of 13.25%, the employer has delivered two sub-standard offers that rob firefighters and officers of long established conditions.

Management's first offer was so bad that it was rejected at the negotiating table. The second offer again did not deliver the full WPI – it was only 12.95% over 3 years and it still removed existing conditions.

The Branch has delivered a counter offer which we believe will achieve the efficiencies required under the State Government Wages Policy.

Currently we have a number of bans in place including: working to rule; participating



in planning and preparation for CHOGM; no acting up; no use of electronic Station Administration Systems.

Further to this, a rally has been organised at Parliament House and we are keeping the Police Union fully advised given they are getting short shrift in their negotiations with the State Government.

Our members are angry, there has been an impact on recruit training and the one thing that management does not get is that the more pain they inflict, the more united our

members are because the Union is the keeper of our traditions –not the boss – and especially not a civilian-dominated administration that is out of touch with operations.

Watch this space and hopefully we will have better news for the next edition - as well as a report back on the two enquiries established after the recent catastrophic fires in WA.

LATE NEWS: It appears that the WA Branch may have settled on an "in principle" agreement on June 9 2011 that will go to a full ballot by members.





The Premier of WA - Colin Barnett addresses the rally with the Branch President Kevin Jolly and Branch Secretary Graeme Geer looking on.

The Branch Committee and negotiation group believe the rally and industrial action taken by members turned the employer's recalcitrant attitude around. Graeme Geer and Kevin Jolly said that the rank and file members should be proud of the outcome from their actions and attendance at the rally, which is a credit to the unity and strength of our Union.

UFUA WA BRANCH

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 WA Branch Secretary: Graeme Geer
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National conference

Recent achievements and a strong future



The National Committee of Management meeting, held in Melbourne from June 15-18, reinforced the national body's recent gains and furthered the course toward a strong future together.



The benefits of teamwork were a key message from opening speaker David Schwarz, a former AFL footballer who has truly seen the ups and downs of life: coming back as an elite sportsman after three knee reconstructions, and recovering from a well-publicised gambling addiction to become a role model for others.

David's address provided a motivating and optimistic start to the conference, as he spoke of overcoming adversity and the importance of team unity.

National Secretary Peter Marshall reported on the progress of a very successful 18 months of rebuilding the national union to more effectively represent firefighters across Australia.

The progress arose from the comprehensive review of the union in 2008. Some 30 recommendations were made, and all but two were adopted. Progress on these has been rapid.



Progress on these recommendations includes the employment of a national industrial officer, and increased shared resources through the Research Centre.

National industrial officer 'Wattie' Watson says the Research Centre will save money and bring better industrial results.

"The Research Centre allows the Branches to discuss issues and share issues within a protected forum."

"We have often had the same issue arise at different times in different Branches.

"Had they known and been able to share their information they could have saved time and money, and got a better result," Wattie says.

The legislative conference in Canberra (separately reported in this issue) is another achievement of national cooperation. The UFUA also has a new look -- a new logo.

The new-found strength of the national body extends to the network of OH&S coordinators and Branch industrial officers who met with the



National Committee of Management for some sessions of the conference; at other times they ran a separate program.

National Secretary Peter Marshall says recent highlights such as the legislative conference have been achieved thanks to the important groundwork of the past two years.

"The national union is coming out of difficult times, and going from strength to strength," he says.

"The national conference looked diligently at what we've accomplished and what we said we'd do.

"The national union is on track with transparency and accountability. The future looks bright."

"Now we can start to enjoy the benefits of the hard work of past few years.

"We are starting to see the benefits and can focus on achieving even more tangible outcomes for our membership."

Of course, rebuilding the national union includes strengthening our global links.

The national conference enjoyed representatives from the USA, Canada, Ireland and New Zealand, who shared their experiences of recent issues in North America, Europe and across the Tasman.

National Secretary Peter Marshall is chair of the international firefighting unions' Global Alliance. ■

Volcanic ash

The week of National Conference saw airline schedules in chaos across Australia as volcanic ash drifted across from Chile. But the show must go on ...

Canadian campaigner Alex Forrest flew into Sydney after an 18-hour flight, abandoned plans to head for Melbourne, and waited five hours for a flight to Canberra. After his briefing to MPs, he eventually reached Melbourne.

The SA team abandoned their flights and drove east, while Vinnie Males from Canberra, managed a trip across Bass Strait on a cargo boat -- thanks to useful union contacts.

Presumptive legislation

Elsewhere in this issue, you will read of the recent legislative conference in Canberra, where UFU officials met with politicians on a range of issues. One of these was the proposal for "presumptive legislation", that recognises that if firefighters contract certain cancers, it is assumed that this is occupationally-related -- unless the employer can prove otherwise. This saves firefighters having to worry about battling for their workers compensation rights when their priority should be their health and their family.

This issue moved forward during the national conference, thanks to the participation of Canadian campaigner, firefighter and lawyer Alex Forrest. En route to the conference, Alex gave a presentation to a cross-party group of MPs in Canberra. He also gave a presentation to the conference.

And he gave a well-attended media conference on Thursday June 16, with the assistance of Melbourne firefighter Ross Lindley who retired last year through ill health after 26 years of dedicated services to the public. In 2009 he was diagnosed with the blood-cancer multiple myeloma. Ross and Alex were featured in a range of stories in print, radio and on-line.

At the same time, in Canberra, Greens MP Adam Bandt announced that he would introduce legislation to provide this recognition for firefighters under Comcare. The bill will be introduced soon in federal parliament. Meanwhile the early indication of support from politicians across the parties is encouraging.

If the federal amendments are successfully passed, it would be hoped that these would then be adopted under State workers compensation law. A long way to go, but an encouraging start.





Our global allies

The National Committee of Management conference in June welcomed a significant number of international visitors – from New Zealand, the USA, Canada, Ireland and elsewhere. Meet a few of them ...



Alex Forrest
President of the United Fire Fighters of Winnipeg

retired firefighters in the City of Winnipeg. He has remained an active firefighter throughout his years as President of UFFW.

Alex has close to 22 years of experience as a Fire Fighter with the Winnipeg Fire Department and has been President of the United Fire Fighters of Winnipeg, Local 867 of the International Association of Fire Fighters, for more than 14 years. He is a First Responder and has completed courses in Hazardous Materials and High Angle Response. He has also completed the Officer's Training Course of the Winnipeg Fire Department and is currently called upon to Act as an Officer.

Alex is also Canadian Trustee of the International Association of Fire Fighters, an organisation that represents 22,000 Canadian firefighters. The IAFF represents 300,000 firefighters across Canada and the USA. Alex is Chair of the UFFW Political Action Committee and as such he has been very involved in lobbying to attain Presumptive Legislation for firefighters in Manitoba and across Canada. He has a passion to see that firefighters diagnosed with occupational disease receive proper compensation and recognition. Alex worked hard to make Manitoba the first Canadian province to receive

Presumptive Legislation, and assisted in drafting that legislation, which was passed in 2002. Since that time he has lobbied governments and met with and advised Premiers and Ministers not only to extend the "Manitoba Model" to other provinces and other countries but also to improve the coverage provided to Manitoba Fire Fighters. Seven Canadian Provinces now have Presumptive Legislation and Alex has been instrumental in this expansion. In several jurisdictions, including almost every Province in Canada, Alex has assisted in drafting legislation and amendments to the Workers Compensation Acts to provide Presumptive Legislation to firefighters.

During the last two years Alex has been involved in assisting members of the European Union in their pursuit of Presumptive Legislation for firefighters. He has spoken to large gatherings of firefighters and political leaders in Finland, Sweden and Ireland to name just a few. He was recently instrumental when the European Health and Safety Award was given to Sweden.

Alex has given seminars and been a guest lecturer for many firefighter organisations across both North America and Europe. He continues to educate government officials in many jurisdictions about the science that proves a connection between occupational diseases and the occupation of firefighting. ■

Alex Forrest

Alex Forrest joined the Canadian military in 1983 and after being honourably discharged in 1986 served with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Northern Manitoba before joining the Winnipeg Fire Department in 1989.

He obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree and then worked as a full time fire fighter while he pursued a Bachelor of Laws at the University of Manitoba. He was called to the Bar in 1996 but rather than going into private practice he became President of the United Fire Fighters of Winnipeg, an organisation representing more than 1500 active and

NATIONAL CONFERENCE



John Kidd

John Kidd has worked in Dublin Fire brigade for the past 25 years. During his time as a firefighter he always expressed a great interest in representing fighters in employment. Due to his great passion, John was voted in as a shop steward. He was extremely successful in representing his work colleagues, and as a result of that success was elected National Secretary and Chairman of the Irish fire service union, which at that time was part of the Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical

John Kidd
National Secretary of Irish Fire
& Emergency Services
Vice President of European Fire Fighters
Alliance Member of Global Alliance

Union (SIPTU).

In 2009 John and his committee collectively took a different position against the government's policy of privatising the fire and ambulance service, a decision that the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and SIPTU backed, even though 90% of frontline workers objected to this agreement. John became an architect of the 24/7 alliance which was made up of police, fire, ambulance and nurses to campaign to protect their premium pay and pensions. Even though it was a very successful campaign there were still cuts. At this stage John and his committee became very frustrated with the way the leadership of SIPTU in this campaign on public sector pay and conditions.

John decided to go into discussions with the union representing psychiatric nurses in Ireland. They agreed to change their rules to allow fire officers and ambulance staff to join this new association. In December 2010 the new body had 1500 fire and

ambulance staff, mostly from Dublin. This soon grew to 2200 members, representing 85% of the full-time fire officers in Ireland and more than 55% of the ambulance staff. John is currently in negotiations with the retained part-time firefighters who wish to join this association. John and his committee believe that this union will be a very successful association.

John was elected Vice President of the European Firefighters Association and received an award from Kim Nikola who is president of the EUFFA in Ireland. John is an advocate of fire officers' rights on pay, pensions, numbers and conditions which are currently under attack from Ireland's right-wing government who wish to destroy these hard won rights by fire unions around the world. John is a great believer in "stronger together", the logo of the Global Alliance. He believes that the leadership of Global Alliance by Peter Marshall of Australia and Harold Schaitberger of the USA is a great inspiration to him and fire officers in Europe and around the world. He believes it is the best way forward to protect the conditions of brother and sister firefighters around the world. ■



Louis Wright

Louie A. Wright is currently the President and Business Manager of Local No. 42 of the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), a public sector union that represents approximately 1700 public safety workers in the Kansas City, Missouri, metropolitan

Louis A Wright
President and Business Manager,
Local No. 42 of the IAFF
(representing 1700 workers
in Kansas City, Missouri)

area. Louis served in that position from 1981 to 1988, and has served again since his re-election in 1995.

He served on the IAFF International Executive Board from 2000 to 2008 and was one of four IAFF Vice Presidents involved in the early stages of the Global Alliance. He is also an Executive Board Member of the Missouri AFL-CIO and the Greater Kansas City AFL-CIO. He is an active firefighter and licensed Emergency Medical Technician for the Kansas City Fire Department, a department that has approximately 1250 employees. Wright is a Fire Captain assigned to Truck 2, which is one of the busiest areas in the city.

In addition to his fire and emergency service and union credentials, Louis has

served as an elected and appointed trustee on various public sector pension and retirement boards.

Louis also has a Masters Degree in Public Administration, from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government and a Juris Doctorate from the University of Missouri (Kansas City) School of Law. He is licensed by the Missouri, Kansas and Colorado Bars, is admitted to practice in various US Federal Trial and Appellate Courts and is Counsel to the labour law firm of Blake & Uhlig, in Kansas City, Kansas. He also is an Adjunct Professor at the UMKC School of Law, where he teaches Labor Law.

He is widely published and has presented at conferences in the US and elsewhere, including at the Diversity in Emergency Services conference at the MCG in 2007.

Louis Wright currently resides in Old Fire Station #1 at 1215 Union Avenue, in Kansas City, Missouri. ■

UFUA Legislative Conference

A delegation of 16 United Firefighters Union of Australia officials and firefighters descended on Parliament House in Canberra in mid May to introduce the union to politicians and raise five issues that are on the union's legislative agenda.



This was the first “UFUA legislative conference” and was ground-breaking in terms of introducing politicians to the union and the role of a firefighter.

The delegation officially met with 30 politicians and spoke to others while at Parliament House over May 11-12 2011. The UFUA also hosted a function in Parliament House on the evening of May 11 with about 60 politicians and their staff taking the opportunity to mingle with the delegation to learn more about firefighting and the union.

National Secretary Peter Marshall said the experience was very positive and productive for the union and the individuals of the delegation. “Our primary goal was to introduce the UFUA and highlight the role of firefighting. We were thrilled that there was also a fair degree of interest in our legislative programme from Members of Parliament and Senators. We have made new contacts and we have raised the awareness of the life of the firefighter and the risks firefighters take with their health and lives in order to serve the community.”

The delegation included the National President Mick Farrell, the National Secretary

Peter Marshall, Queensland Branch Secretary John Oliver and Health and Welfare Officer Chris Robinson, WA Branch Secretary Graeme Geer and President Kevin Jolly, SA Branch Secretary Greg Northcott, President Barry Luke and Industrial Officer Joe Szackas, Tasmania Branch Secretary Vinnie Males and President Darren Gye, ACT Branch Secretary Dave Livingstone, Victorian Branch President Dave Hamilton, Aviation Branch representative Jon Vaughan and National Industrial and Research Officer Wattie Watson. About half the delegation was in uniform.

Each politician was presented with a briefing kit which outlined the five key areas that the Union wanted addressed.

The five issues presented were:

- Presumptive legislation which would list the cancers and heart disease that internationally are recognised as occupational diseases for firefighters . The Union wants to see legislation that presumes listed cancers and diseases are occupational diseases for Australian firefighters and as a result should be entitled to assistance and compensation without lengthy and costly litigation.
- Lowering the superannuation preservation age to 55 to allow firefighters the choice to retire at that age and to access their superannuation without any tax disadvantage.



- Establishing a professional institute of firefighters which would set national standards for training and equipment, register firefighters and put the industry on the professional footing it deserves.
- Aligning the fire services with other emergency services in order to access fringe benefit tax advantages similar to those enjoyed by organisations awarded Public Benevolent Institute status.
- Broadening the eligibility for military gold card status benefits to firefighters.

“While we did not expect to succeed in our requests with one round of meetings, we were pleasantly surprised with the interest in our issues and the desire from some to be provided with more information on the issues. We met with politicians from all parties and from around the country and found a general respect for the firefighter and

their role in protecting the community,” Peter Marshall said.

“Our delegation was very visible around Parliament as we had firefighters in uniform walking around the House in order to get from one meeting to another. We found politicians and staff alike were keen to introduce themselves and find out who we were and what we were doing at Parliament.

“We also had ACT members park a fire truck in the grounds of Parliament for a short period and some politicians took the opportunity to have a photo taken with the delegation and the ACT firefighting crew.” ■

JOANNE ‘WATTIE’ WATSON

“WATTIE” WATSON IS NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL AND RESEARCH OFFICER, UNITED FIREFIGHTERS UNION OF AUSTRALIA.



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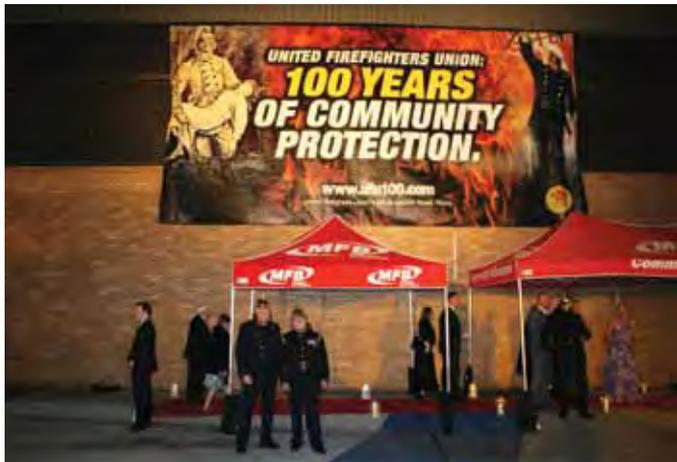
CENTENARY BALL



The night of the century

The centenary ball of the Victorian Branch of the UFU was more than a celebration of the milestones of the union's past 100 years -- it was itself a milestone in the history of the union.





PRIME MINISTER
CANBERRA

MESSAGE FROM PRIME MINISTER JULIA GILLARD

UNITED FIREFIGHTERS UNION (VICTORIA BRANCH)
CENTENNIAL YEAR CELEBRATION 18 JUNE 2011

I am pleased to take this opportunity to offer my most sincere congratulations to the Victorian Branch of the United Firefighters Union on your 100th anniversary.

Very few professions require the same level of courage and determination as is demonstrated so often by firefighters in carrying out their duties. In recognition of this dedicated service, firefighters are held in a unique position of respect and trust by Australians right across the nation.

Congratulations to the Victorian Branch of the United Firefighters Union, not only for steadfastly working to advance the interests of your members, but also for your tremendous contribution to community safety by protecting life and property in Victoria for 100 years.

I wish all members of the Victorian Branch of the United Firefighters Union the very best for your ongoing centenary celebrations and every success for the years ahead.


The Honourable Julia Gillard MP
Prime Minister of Australia

Held at the Peninsula room on Central Pier in Melbourne's Docklands precinct on Saturday June 18, it was an extraordinary night of fellowship, entertainment and emotion.

Guests arrived through a gauntlet of firefighting vehicles, new and historic, before marching down the long red carpet to enter a massive room of 110 tables, set below 100-year flags and a host of video screens projecting historic vision, live entertainment and other messages.

Inside, there was continual entertainment and the buzz of chatter as friends old and new caught up. Socialising with 1300 people was a bit like speed-dating. Outside was a spectacular scene of city lights reflecting off the harbour — a scene enjoyed mainly by the smokers.

After a bracket of songs, dance and spectacle, the brief formalities began with a welcome from UFU Victorian president Dave Hamilton.

The gathering of 1300 included a range of past and present firefighters; friends from the

emergency services, unions, politicians, lawyers and other UFU supporters; and special guests from around Australia and overseas (including the USA, Canada, Ireland and New Zealand).

For just one minute the giant venue was silent as all observed a minute's silence in honour of fallen comrades.

Sharan Burrow, the Brussels-based general secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation, then spoke passionately of the role of the UFU in the local, national and international union movement. Her message: "We are family". And she had flown across the world to be with her family that night.

National and Victorian secretary Peter Marshall then rose to speak and so did the room. A long standing ovation preceded his brief speech — a recap of the history of the union, from the days of 1911 when firefighters worked a 133-hour week and their families lives on station; recognition of retired members; and thanks to those who

had worked to organise the centenary ball, in particular the small, dedicated professional team at the Victorian office. Bouquets were presented, then the party continued.

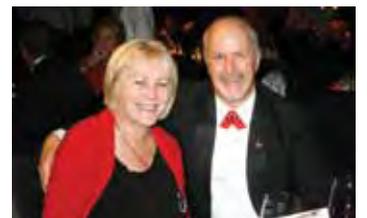
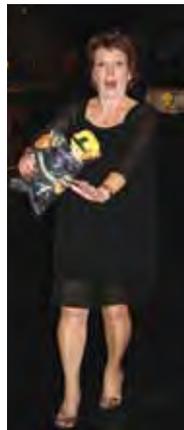
MC David Mann, 3AW radio identity and a long-time friend of the firefighting community, kept the entertainment flowing. Many rose to their feet to join in as the choir sang the union song, Solidarity forever. The Committed offered a high-powered and energetic set, which filled the dance floor to overflowing. Finally, it was the headline act, Cotton, Keays & Morris. Their iconic tunes and thumping beat lifted the energy in the hall to a new level.

Suddenly it was over. Between the entertainment and noisy conversations, 1300 people had also enjoyed a high-quality three-course meal with generous beer and wine. Now they spilled into the cold night to find transport.

Five hours had passed in a flash, but the memories and rekindled friendships will last for years. ■

CENTENARY BALL





CENTENARY BALL



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Rob Frey with James Dowdell.

A million-to-one coincidence has seen a US family reunited with the helmet of their late husband and father, one of the 343 firefighters who died on 9/11.

The helmet that brought Aussie and US firefighters together



Rob Frey (left) and Paul Ritchie at the LA presentation to the Dowdell family.

In August 2010, 16 Australian firefighters combined with US firefighter colleagues in the Tour of Duty run, a relay of 4500 miles, from Los Angeles to New York. We covered the length and breadth of the United States, finishing at the World Trade Centre site on September 11 2010

Earlier, in May 2010, a reconnaissance trip was held. Representatives of the Australian team travelled to New York and met with US firefighters who were participating in this memorial run.

Among those representing the US was James Dowdell.

The Tour of Duty run was of poignant significance for James: his father Kevin Dowdell, a New York Fire fighter was killed in the 2001 World Trade Center attacks.

A few days after we returned to Australia

from the reconnaissance trip, Station Officer Rob Frey, from C shift at Queensland Fire and Rescue Service's Gympie fire station, received a message from a woman who had read the story of the Tour of Duty run. She had dropped off a fire helmet at the fire station for him to have a look at. She said the story that went with this helmet had significance for the Tour of Duty.

An old white battle-scarred heavy leather American Chief's helmet greeted Rob Frey. There were several signatures autographed on it, and also the mark "FDNY Rescue 1 December 1998".

Some of the signatures could be identified; R-1 Gator Forsyth, Woody F. Steven Mackie, Mike Shield, George Heath and Kevin C. Dowdell.

Station Officer Frey contacted the woman

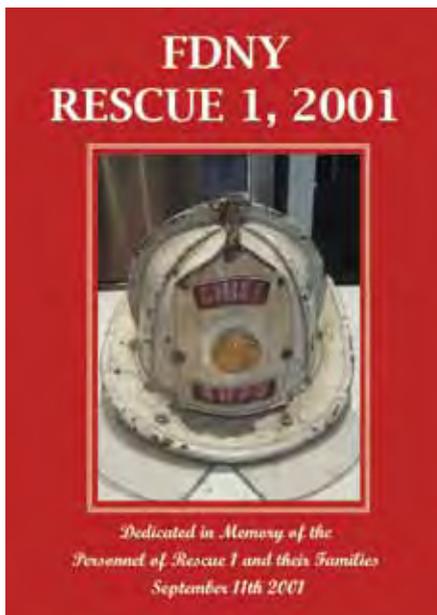




James Dowdell and his mother Rose-Ellen received Kevin's helmet from Rob Frey.



A SIGNAL, A SIGN, A SYMBOL OF THE PAST THAT SIGNIFIED THE COMMITMENT OF THOSE WHO GAVE ALL TO SAVE OTHERS.



to follow up with the story.

In the leadup to the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games her son, Warwick Penrose, a Royal Australian Army member, was attached to the anti terrorism unit of the Special Forces. To gain valuable training experience for this assignment, he was posted to the New York Fire Department, sharing shifts around Manhattan, attending calls on fire trucks, and enjoying their commitment, mateship, humour and professionalism.

The Army contingent spent two months in New York with agencies such as the US Secret Service, EMS, NYPD and the busiest rescue company in the world FDNY Rescue 1.

When it was time to leave, there was the customary exchange of gifts. The Australians presented the Chief of FDNY Rescue 1 with a soldier's slouch hat as a mark of respect, and

the Chief replied with the presentation of the helmet signed by the men of Rescue 1.

A few weeks after the tragedy of September 11 2001, Captain Penrose rang New York to inquire as to the wellbeing of the firefighters he and his team had worked with in 1998.

He was told that some survived and some died. He also learned that all of the FDNY Rescue Company personnel that responded from all five boroughs were killed on that day.

Station Officer Rob Frey was part of the Tour of Duty recon team that first went to America in May 2010. He and James Dowdell had bonded, and James shared stories with Rob and the team about his courageous father.

As Rob looked at the helmet again, he paused, and his eyes started to well – one of



From left, Rob Frey, PM Julia Gillard, and James Dowdell.

Helmet goes to Congress

Kevin Dowdell's helmet was back in the news in March this year when Prime Minister Julia Gillard visited Washington and spoke to the US Congress.

Queensland firefighter Rob Frey and New York City firefighter James Dowdell were in the audience as Ms Gillard related the moving story of how James' family was reunited with his father's helmet.

Gillard paused in her speech to recognise them in the visitor's gallery and the two received a long ovation.

"Together in the hardest of times. Friends for the future," Ms Gillard said.

the names on this helmet stood out. It was the signature of Kevin D Dowdell, James' father.

Across the world, across two separate ways of life, this helmet came into our hands.

A signal, a sign, a symbol of the past that signified the commitment of those who gave all to save others.

This was something that we Australians could give back to a grieving American family who lost their leader, something that demonstrated the goodness of their father and husband, that showed even back in 1998 Kevin Dowdell was doing good things for good people all over the world.

The helmet was given to the Tour of Duty team to give back to its rightful owners via a beautiful twist of fate.

Event Director Leading Firefighter Paul Ritchie, Station Officer Rob Frey and the team presented the helmet back to the Dowdell family at a ceremonial function held just prior to the start of the run. This was held at the Australian Consul General's residence in Los Angeles

Firefighters and military share a unique brotherhood.

The signatures on this helmet will always recall that team from Rescue 1, bound in duty, and will always be a poignant reminder of the dedication to those who gave all. ■



From left, James Dowdell, Rob Frey, PM Julia Gillard, Deputy Chief Kevin Brame of North Las Vegas Fire Department, and Australia's ambassador to the US, Kim Beazley.



Prime Minister Julia Gillard examines the helmet before her address to Congress.

BY ROB FREY, WARWICK PENROSE
AND PAUL RITCHIE,

Emergency Medical Response – a decade on

It's hard to believe that more than 10 years have passed since the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) in Melbourne introduced an Emergency Medical Response (EMR) role. In 1994, the Victorian Government's Public Bodies Review Committee (PBRC) was the first formal forum in which the possibility of firefighters undertaking Emergency Medical Response was raised. In the 1994 report of the Public Bodies Review Committee into the Metropolitan Fire Brigades Board the recommendation was for the MFB to "extend its role to include an emergency medical 'First Responder' role in support of, and at the request of the Metropolitan Ambulance Service."

A first in Australia, back in the mid to late 1990s, the EMR concept was introduced operationally as a pilot in 1998 under the supervision of a government-appointed committee chartered with overseeing the program's introduction. The government also appointed Monash University to undertake an independent study of the success or otherwise of the pilot program. Based on the positive findings of this study, the EMR program was rolled out to all 47 MFB station locations across Melbourne in 2000 and the program was confirmed as a core activity of the MFB within the Metropolitan Fire District (MFD) in October 2001.

The MFB EMR program is run in partnership with Ambulance Victoria (AV). Currently the MFB responds to approximately 4200 EMR events per annum. This has steadily climbed over time from approximately 2600 EMR events in 2000-01. Importantly, the MFB response criteria are strictly controlled in that fire crews are only responded by AV to priority "0" medical emergencies (unconscious and non-breathing) simultaneously with AV paramedics.

The requirement for MFB firefighters to undertake training for the EMR role is voluntary, however >99% of the MFB's approximately 1600 firefighters have undertaken the training. Training consists of an 11-day vocational program conducted as

part of the firefighters' initial recruit course and completed as a first year L1 Firefighter. The MFB has developed a registered training package specific for the EMR role. Skills maintenance training is also an ongoing requirement for EMR qualified firefighters, with monthly Continuing Education sessions being conducted at stations as well as the requirement to recertify by undertaking a two-day training/assessment program every four years.

Among some of the benefits to MFB firefighters in providing EMR are the wage

and allowance increases. The amount of \$33.60 is included into the base firefighter pay rate and an additional allowance of \$1.93 per hour paid for being available to be rostered for EMR duties.

With other Australian fire services viewing the success and benefits of the MFB EMR program, it comes as no surprise that they are considering the possibility of the introduction of EMR also. This month, the Country Fire Authority (CFA) in Victoria has commenced training for an EMR pilot program to be conducted for a 12-month period in the



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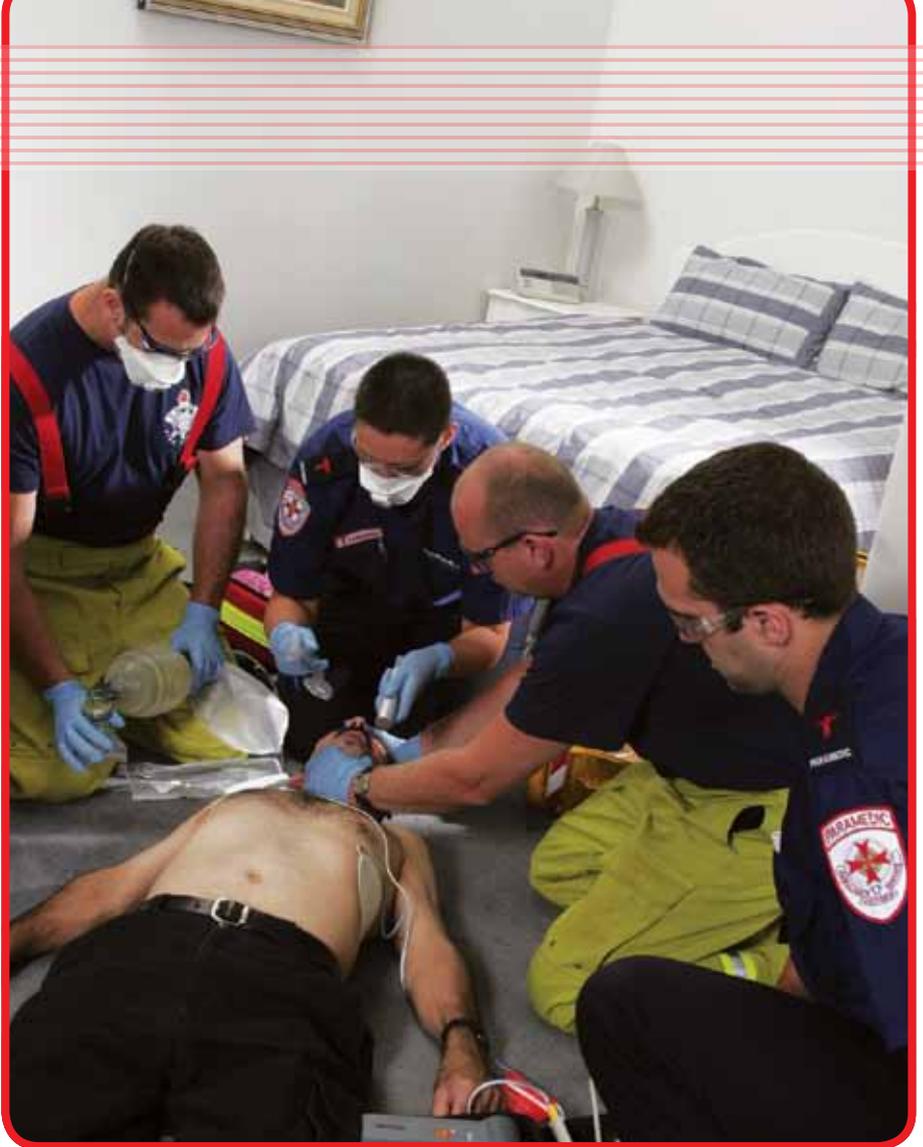


areas of Hallam, Springvale, Dandenong and Shepparton. The CFA EMR program is based on the same registered training package and operational parameters as the MFB program. Over the past 18 months the MFB has received a number of enquiries and study visits from interstate fire service and union representatives including NSW, SA, QLD and WA.

With the MFB EMR program celebrating over 136 patient “saves” to date, as well as the increase in firefighter confidence and ability to perform this challenging role, the benefits of fire service EMR are clearly evident for the City of Melbourne. ■

ALLAN MORTON

ALLAN MORTON IS A STATION OFFICER AND THE COORDINATOR OF THE MFB EMERGENCY MEDICAL RESPONSE PROGRAM.





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20 year milestone for Stewart & Heaton Clothing



Leading supplier of uniforms and protective apparel Stewart & Heaton Clothing Co Pty Ltd (S&H) commemorates 20 years of operation in 2011. From its small base in W.A. the company has grown to become a major player in providing specialist products & services to the fire and emergency services sector across Australia. With offices and warehouses in Perth, Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide & Canberra it has become a significant force in its key targeted markets and in particular the fire services sector.

According to founder and managing director Simon Stewart, the protective apparel

industry has changed dramatically over the last 20 years. “The requirements of the end users, the development of new standards and the availability of high performance raw materials have meant that fire authorities today have access to world’s best protective apparel,” he said.

“When we first began working with fire agencies most Wildland firefighters wore mechanics overalls and most turnout gear was wool.”

S&H have worked closely with fire agencies, firefighters and component suppliers to develop purpose-designed garments to meet the unique needs of Australian firefighters.

According to Simon Stewart, S&H has been at the forefront of the development and adoption of protective apparel standards: “Indeed we were the first company in Australia to be licensed to manufacture garments to the Structural & Wildland Standards, AS 4967 and AS 4824, respectively.

“We have a very strong commitment to Australian manufacturing. Most people are quite surprised to discover that all of the Structural & Wildland garments we supply to Australian Fire Agencies are Australian made.

“By having local design and manufacturing capacity with a short supply chain we believe that the unique requirements of the Australian firefighter will be much better served.”

The next 20 years will be just as dynamic as the last. The enhanced needs for protection, the cost pressures of fire agencies’ budgets, the emergence of overseas suppliers and the development of new raw materials combine to make for exciting and challenging times ahead. S&H as a major Australian player in the sector will continue to work closely with all stakeholders in this vitally important industry to provide the best protection and supply solutions for Australian firefighters. ■

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The Easter tap dance

By Henry Awesome 2011



I've got a mate stationed down south, he tells me it's been on,
At Easter time good will prevails, unless you hail from Avalon.
This mob will do it every time, fair dinkum it's a must,
You never ever should forget, in ARFF we cannot trust,
There was no consultation had on the roster ARFF imposed,
The snollygosters bellowed, you'll work the hours you are told.
The members cried hang on a tick, don't we get some input?
The union said of course you should and put the plans afoot.
A meeting then was called at once for members to express,
Their views about the situation and set their minds to rest.
The meeting thence determined the ARFF roster was a farce.
They really wanted to refer the ARFF to their lemonade & sars.
But cooler heads prevailed that day on pondering bout that stance,
And so began the roster frolic or what's known as the Easter tap dance.
The Canberra bullies then descended to coerce, harass and threaten,
But the members did not weaken, now the ARFF were doin the sweat'n.
The UFU boys were adamant, and worked the roster as was sanctioned,
The ARFF then went into a rage and said you'll face disciplinary action.
A second thought was then obviously had and Easter eggs were bought,
Then, members crushed 'em underfoot; they really meant for nought.
Therefore, there was a stalemate and now the ARFF was in a huff.
We'll kick back hard the ARFF decided and show them we are tough.
The frighteners need to be imposed and show these plebs who's boss,
We'll teach these Avalon upstarts and in the end it'll be their loss.
How dare they think that they can have a say in their working times,
We need to put this all to bed lest other members think those lines.
So, to Fair Work Australia the ARFF did go to seek a little favour,
The UFU defended strongly, consequently the outcome was to savour.
Well now to Federal court said ARFF; we've plenty of money to hand.
We'll sue the union and individual members. It'll prove we are the man,
But the union won again in court and the ARFF were truly dumbstruck.
How did that happen they were heard to say, must be just rotten luck.
Now the members smiled, the union smiled and one thing that can be said:
The UFU membership cannot be bullied, even when it's from the head.

NB: the sentiments expressed by Henry are not necessarily those of the UFU, the BCOM or the membership generally.

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