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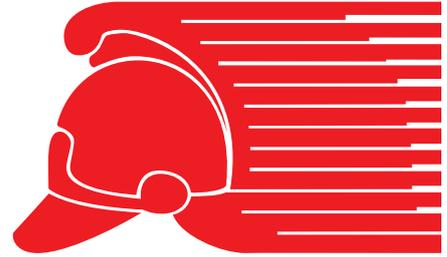
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Cover: After 10 years of campaigning, this year's five-month blitz has finally won legislation to support ACT and Aviation firefighters who contract cancer from occupational exposure. State laws are our next priority. November 24 2011 was victory day when the Senate voted to pass the Bill. From Left Green MHR Adam Bandt, who introduced the Bill, UFU National Secretary Peter Marshall, and UFU National President Mick Farrell.



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National President
Mick Farrell



National Secretary
Peter Marshall

From the National Secretary

The passing of the Fair Protection for Firefighters Bill in the Senate on November 24 was indeed an historical moment in the history of the UFUA and a great day for all Australian firefighters and their families.

As a result of our collective action and unity, we have been able to achieve all the amendments specified in the Senate inquiry report with the exception of lung cancer which will be dealt with by regulation at a later date.

Lung cancer has been deferred while the parties come to an agreement on the correct legal definition of non-smoker. We are confident that the parties through goodwill will be able to agree on a definition in the foreseeable future.

The passing of the legislation, with the inclusion of the Senate inquiry amendments, provides a strong foundation as a template for progressing presumption legislation in other jurisdictions within Australia.

This indeed is something that we all should be proud of.

Being the first attempt at lobbying for legislation that specifically affects firefighters, it is only natural that we have learned a number of lessons along the way – not in the least the value of the global alliance that we established in conjunction with other firefighting unions internationally. Without their experience and assistance we would not have progressed this matter this far.

As stated at the National Committee of Management in June 2011, as firefighters we had underestimated the power of the political capital that the UFUA - as the peak body representing firefighters - has both within the community and within political circles. No truer word has been spoken about the standing of firefighters within the community when it was rated as one of the most respected professions.

Many of us have asked the question, and rightly so, as to the purpose and function of the national union. Acting upon the 2008 comprehensive review of the National Office and the function of the National Union, we are well on the way to achieving legislative change to enable firefighters to access assistance and compensation for occupational cancer – a long-term goal for the union.

For more than a decade the UFUA has had the issue of presumptive legislation on the agenda but limited resources in the national union and office, and lack of unity, put those changes beyond our reach. Tackling those issues head on post the 2008 review put the union in the position where it could concentrate resources on key projects including the presumptive legislation.

Having said that, on reflection, I don't think any of us realised the work and resources it would take to get a Bill through the political process.

The real push for this legislation began in May this year when a delegation of 16 UFUA officials and firefighters, armed with a kit of five issues on our legislative agenda, walked the corridors of Parliament in Canberra for pre-arranged meetings with 34 politicians from all political persuasions.

We further enhanced the understanding and knowledge of who

we represent and the issues that firefighters face with a function in Parliament where approximately 60 politicians and their staff attended.

This was the UFUA inaugural legislative conference and it was a resounding success. Not only did we raise the profile of our proud union, and awareness of issues on our legislative agenda, but we secured a Bill to provide a presumption that some cancers are occupational diseases for firefighters.

On July 4 2011, Greens MP Adam Bandt introduced his private Member's "Fair Protection for Firefighters" Bill. It was an historical moment for the UFUA and all Australian firefighters.

It was also an historical moment for Parliament as it was the first Private Members' Bill to enjoy support from all major political parties and independents. Independent Bob Katter seconded the Bill, Australian Labor Party MP Maria Vamvakinou and Liberal Party of Australia MP Russell Broadbent co-sponsored the Bill.

The fact that the Bill was co-sponsored by all major political parties speaks volumes for the professionalism and dedication of the National Committee of Management, National Executive and indeed the tireless work undertaken by the National Office.

The Bill was then moved across to the Senate for a robust inquiry headed by Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Legislation Committee Chair and Labor Senator Gavin Marshall with Deputy Chair and Liberal Senator Chris Back.

This inquiry included hearings in Melbourne, Canberra and Perth, visits to Tullamarine airport, Geelong Fire Station, and Hot Fire Training with firefighting experience for Senators and committee staff at the Queensland Combined Emergency Services Academy at Whyte Island.

As previously stated in the national communiqué, Queensland Branch members conducted themselves in a highly professional manner, which in my mind, resulted in part in the final Senate report being one of such high quality.

The Committee received 27 written submissions and 17 witnesses appeared at the hearings including the moving testimonies from firefighters with cancer and the widow of a firefighter who had died as a result of kidney cancer.

Those that appeared before the committee were:

- Winnipeg United Firefighters President and IAFF Canadian Trustee Alex Forrest;
- Edmonton Fire Chief Ken Block;
- UFUA National Secretary Peter Marshall, President Mick Farrell, National Industrial & Research Officer Wattie Watson;
- Commander Brian Whittaker;
- Commander Phil Taylor;
- Senior Station Officer Paul Henderson;
- Leading firefighter Scott Morrison;
- Firefighter Ross Lindley forced to retire due to illness;



National Secretary Peter Marshall.

- Station Officer Dean Symmans;
- Janet Reed, widow of Senior Firefighter Robert Reed;
- Craig Sidebottom (solicitor, Slater & Gordon);
- Representatives from the ACT Government, Comcare, and the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR)

It was also during the Senate inquiry that our global alliance came to the fore.

The UFUA sponsored the appearance and attendance of Senior Firefighter and Winnipeg United Fire Firefighters Union President Alex Forrest from Canada three times. Alex, regarded as an international expert on presumptive legislation for occupational cancer for firefighters, provided a presentation to various politicians in Parliament before being a guest presenter at the National Committee of Management in June in Melbourne. He then came out and appeared before the Senate Committee of inquiry on two separate occasions sharing his experience of the development of presumptive legislation in North America as well as discussing the range of scientific studies that demonstrate the link between firefighting and specific cancers as being occupation-related.

In response to issues raised by the Senate committee regarding the experience and cost of presumption legislation, highly respected Fire Chief Ken Block also travelled to Australia where he provided compelling evidence about the benefits of presumptive legislation and the minimal cost implications experienced in Alberta, Canada.

On September 15 2011 the Senate Inquiry report was released which recommended the passing of the Fair Protection for Firefighters Bill and the inclusion of 6 additional cancers to ensure Australian commonwealth law was current with international jurisprudence.

On October 13 2011 the Bill was passed unanimously at its second reading in the House of Representatives.

The UFUA then commenced another round of political lobbying to negotiate amendments including the inclusion of all 13 cancers before the Bill and the Senate inquiry amendments were unanimously passed in the House of Representatives at the third reading on November 3 2011.

And on November 23 2011, the Bill was passed by Senate, again without opposition. It now awaits Royal Assent, that is, the Governor-General's signature.

This has been a remarkable journey and many have noted the speed in which the Bill has moved through the parliamentary process. We have been told it is extraordinary to have legislation introduced and then put to the vote within five months.

But the speed in which the Bill has moved through the process belies the work it has taken to get it this far.

We are forever indebted to many people, not in the least our long-time supporter and former legal advisor Adam Bandt, Labor politicians Maria Vamvakinou and Gavin Marshall, Liberal politicians Russell Broadbent and Chris Back, and their staff, to name a few. Their compassion and drive were instrumental in ensuring success along the way.

Here are a few statistics behind this historic journey:

- UFUA officials have met with more than 120 politicians and advisors – some politicians we have personally met with on a number of occasions.

- UFUA officials have travelled and lobbied politicians in Melbourne, Tasmania, South Australia, Western Australia, ACT, NSW, and Queensland.
- National office was involved in the drafting of the Bill, the negotiation and drafting of the amendments and provided relevant statistics and information to various politicians upon request.
- I have spent more than 45 days inter-state since June 2011 on this issue alone and on many occasions National President Mick Farrell and National Industrial & Research Officer Wattie Watson travelled with me to meet with politicians and government officials in our bid for the Bill.
- Branch Secretaries have been to Canberra at least four times to assist with the passage of the Bill.
- UFUA branches in Victoria, Brisbane and Perth hosted the Senate Committee.
- The National Executive has held numerous information telephone conferences – sometimes a few a week - to keep up with developments.
- On three occasions we have had a strong contingent of at least 80 firefighters from around Australia in Parliament House to witness the introduction and various votes on the Bill. In particular, I acknowledge the ACT firefighters who turned out in large numbers on three occasions to demonstrate the importance of this matter. I also offer special thanks to the 35 Victorian firefighters who travelled more than 18 hours via bus to ensure the UFUA was represented along with their interstate colleagues. The trip was then repeated for the passing of the Bill in the Senate on the 24th November 2011.
- The campaign included a website and social media such as a face book page, twitter as well as national bulletins and significant media coverage in print, radio and television.
- Approximately 95,000 letters were sent to federal politicians through the www.protectyourfirefighters campaign website.
- We have communicated directly with approximately 6000 visitors to the website on two occasions by email updating them about the importance of sending two further letters to secure the additional amendments and passage through the Senate before Christmas.
- National office has written individually to every federal Member of Parliament and Senator four times and sent 6 separate individual emails – that is approximately 885 letters and 1330 individual emails. This does not include the communications with the politicians directly involved with the passage of the Bill.
- We have relied on the help and support of officials and advisors from a number of federal politicians for all aspects from the drafting of the Bill right through to organising the security passes into Parliament for the firefighters who have been present at the various stages of the Bill.

As stated, the assistance from our global alliance partners in this journey has been significant. Australian firefighters have benefited from scientific studies conducted around the globe with some of the most compelling studies coming from North America and the work of firefighter unions over many decades. The evidence of Alex Forrest and Fire Chief Ken Block won over even the most sceptical.

As can be seen from the above, our global alliance of firefighting unions, the IFFUA, was an intrinsic and integral part in securing our

recent achievements.

However, our work is not done. As the global economic crisis deepens it is imperative we continue to communicate with our colleagues around the world to gain a full understanding of the effects on emergency services, in particular firefighters.

The second wave of the financial crisis is a construct where Governments are embracing the right ideology of attacking labour rights and deregulating labour markets – including firefighters.

And Australia firefighters are not immune to these attacks. There are proposed cuts in funding in Tasmania, and a review of commercial operations on the horizon in Western Australia. NSW and Queensland fire services have targeted those with medical conditions and on long term non-operational duties.

The global alliance of firefighter unions recently held a telephone conference to discuss the impact of cut backs and the reduction or lack of social protection for all as well as security of employment for the future, including those employed in emergency services.

During that conference, we also considered the International Trade Union Confederation's following three themes:

1. Social protection for all - pensions, unemployment benefits, health and child protection. (It would be interesting to know how many firefighters in developing countries don't have protection and how many similar benefits are under attack for those that do have them.)
2. A Financial Transactions Tax - having the finance sector paying a small tax that would add globally billions of dollars for employment and social protection
3. Green jobs - we know the risk of climate change and have an interest in the green economy including the building of fire services to cope.

There are potentially challenging times ahead in Australia where we will have to confront possible flow-on effects from overseas of threats to maintain job security, terms and conditions of employment and safe crewing numbers of firefighters.

A common theme that is being seen both within North America and the UK is the potential attacks on firefighter pension schemes. Their struggle is our struggle. It would be foolhardy not to take particular interest in these battles as they are not isolated events and Australia will not be immune.

It is in times of struggle that we fully appreciate strength in unity.

As you will see from the various articles in this edition of the magazine, the UFUA and its branches can punch well above its weight when we work together and face the challenges head on.

But we cannot take the terms and conditions of employment of our members for granted. I recently saw a poster which says it all - united we bargain, divided we beg. That motto should be embraced at all times – not just in times of bargaining.

We have seen what the UFUA can achieve when unified.

The future is in all of our hands to ensure that the collective political capital that firefighters have is not squandered through lack of unity or individual gratification.

We must collectively continue to build upon our strengths so that the legacy that we leave for future generations is a strong foundation for further advancement of our profession and the members we represent.

PETER MARSHALL ■

From the National President

I recently joined members of the National Executive and firefighters from across the country in the nation's capital to witness the passage of the *Fair Protection of Firefighters Bill* through the Senate.

After just a few more administrative processes and formalities are completed, the legislation will be law. All Union Members that participated can pat themselves on the back for a magnificent campaign and a job well done; the new law will have immediate benefit for Aviation and ACT firefighters as both come within the Commonwealth jurisdiction. This hugely significant legislation is arguably the most important condition of employment ever achieved by the United Firefighters Union of Australia.

This edition of *The Australian Firefighter* focuses on the Union's campaign to have cancers recognised as occupational diseases for firefighters. We look at the concept of presumptive legislation, the development of the Fair Protection for Firefighters Bill, the Senate Inquiry and amendments introduced to increase the range of firefighter cancers covered.

So with the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment (Fair Protection for Firefighters) Bill 2011* past the two major legislative hurdles, it's time to pay tribute to our North American colleagues who have pioneered the research and led the way on presumptive protection for firefighters who contract cancers.

Without the US and Canadian International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) and its ground breaking campaigning on firefighter cancers, we would still be battling to convince the federal government and opposition that the Union's claims for the protection of Members are valid.

Our links to firefighter unions overseas have strengthened remarkably in the years since we first discussed an international alliance of firefighter trade unions. Today, thanks to the International Fire Fighter Unions Alliance (IFFUA), the UFUA has links with hundreds of thousands of firefighter union members in North and Central America, the Pacific, Europe and the Middle East.

We established strong links in 2006 with the founding members of IFFUA, who include the UFUA, the IAFF, the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) from the UK and the New Zealand Professional Firefighters Union (PFU).

Three years later, in 2009, the IFFUA founding conference was held in Vancouver, Canada. Some 25 delegates and 23 representatives from firefighter unions across the globe gathered to forge the Alliance and plot a course. The founding unions were joined

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National President Mick Farrell.

Bill a major benefit for ACT firies

ACT and ARFF firefighters have been the focus federally for firefighter national health and safety action since July when legislation to recognise firefighter cancers as occupational diseases was tabled in federal parliament.

A Senate Standing Committee inquiry later, the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment (Fair Protection for Firefighters) Bill 2011 has now passed the House of Representatives. On November 24 the Bill was passed in the Senate. ACT firies have joined firefighters from around Australia to be in Parliament every step of the way.

This ground breaking development, thanks to the efforts of the United Firefighters Union of Australia, will have direct benefit for UFUA Aviation and ACT branch members as firefighters who work within the federal jurisdiction covered by the Bill. It amends the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act of 1988 which covers both ACT and ARFF firefighters.

How it will work

The legislation takes a presumptive approach, so that if a firefighter is diagnosed with any one of cancers listed, and has been employed for a stipulated qualifying period, it is presumed that the cancer was caused by their duties as a firefighter. Assistance, Comcare support and compensation will follow. It is a 'rebuttable presumption', which means an employer or insurer can contest the presumption but the onus of proof is



In July, UFUA members from across the country gathered Canberra to witness the introduction of the Firefighter Protection Bill into federal parliament.

reversed, meaning it will be up to Comcare/ACT Govt to prove that firefighting could not be the likely cause of the cancer.

Inquiry at work

The inquiry into the Bill by the Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Legislation Committee was a cross party group consisting of Senator Gavin Marshall, ALP from Victoria (who also Chaired the inquiry), Senator Chris Back, Liberal Party from Western Australia (and Deputy Chair), Senator Catryna Bilyk, ALP from Tasmania, Senator Bridget McKenzie, National Party from Victoria, Senator Penny Wright, the Australian Greens from South Australia and Senator Matt Thistlethwaite, ALP from NSW.

The Committee made four recommendations, including: that the types of cancer listed by the proposed Bill be expanded to include multiple myeloma, primary site lung cancer in non-smokers, primary site prostate, ureter, colorectal and oesophageal cancers. These cancers, but for lung cancer for non smokers (which will be included by regulation

at a later date) were ultimately included along with the original list of brain, bladder, kidney, breast and testicular cancers and non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma and leukemia.

Links well established

Scientific studies have shown links between the absorption of toxins and carcinogens through the skin of firefighters who attend fire scenes and the contracting of some cancers. This means these cancers are occupational diseases for firefighters, who, as a result, should be entitled to medical assistance, continued income and compensation. However, up until now, firefighters have been denied these entitlements as it has been difficult to prove which fire or fires caused cancer.

UFU ACT BRANCH

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National President report continued

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by representatives of firefighter unions in seven other countries.

This was just the start and with an Alliance commissioned study identifying another 70 unions that also represent firefighters, we continue to work to establish communications and build links with firefighters and their unions around the globe.

There is strength in unity, and the value of our ties with the IAFF and their members has been validated with our win on presumptive legislation for firefighter occupational cancers.

Also in this edition of *The Australian Firefighter*, we look at a story from the United States about an industrial war involving firefighters in Boston. We also travel to Cambodia, where Australian firefighters are conducting training for

local firefighters, providing assistance with PPC rollout and hose and coupling standardisation, and are helping out with community based fire awareness programs.

Strength in Unity among firefighters extends across all borders. It's a benefit for all.

MICK FARRELL ■

Senators learn ARFF realities

As part of the investigation into the Senate 'Fair Protection for Firefighters' Bill, members of the Senate Standing Committee on the Bill were keen to get a better understanding of the role of firefighters.

On August 9, the Committee visited to paid a visit to the Melbourne ARFF at Tullamarine to validate the submission in respect to Aviation firefighters and their work practices.

Senators Gavin Marshall, Chris Back, Matt Thistlethwaite and Penny Wright were shown the station, trucks and equipment before taken to an outlying building where a hot fire rescue was demonstrated.

In our travels and meetings with the various Senators on this subject it was mentioned on many occasions to us that the Senators understood that ARFF members sat around all day waiting for an aircraft accident or incident to occur and to that end perhaps the Legislation could or would be to a degree irrelevant.

In an effort to dispel that perception within our submission both verbal and written we used a statistical example. We submitted the Melbourne ARFF statistics as Melbourne was the location for the first formal hearing along with a brief overview of the ARFF operational characteristics generally as per below.

The Melbourne Aviation Rescue and Firefighting Service (ARFF) Fire Station is one of 21 fire stations established at airports in every State and Territory around Australia. The ARFF is one of the few Federal fire services in the world. Melbourne is one of the major centres; others include Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Cairns and Darwin.

After the Melbourne members put on a structural firefighting exercise to demonstrate their skills in this area, acting S.C Webb addressed the Senators on the ARFF in general. The Senators were impressed with what they saw and what they heard from acting S.C Webb and the Melbourne members. Their participation and demonstration in this part of the inquiry were invaluable and we sincerely thank all those members involved for their efforts and ARFF for making the opportunity available.



Senators visit Melbourne ARFF: pictured from left to right are: ASFC Webb, Senator Penny Wright, Natasha Rusjakovski P.A, Senator Chris Back, Senator Matt Thistlethwaite, Mick Farrell UFUA, and Chair Senator Gavin Marshall.

The Melbourne hearing

Earlier in the day, the UFUA National Secretary and the National President appeared before the hearing and spoke to the UFUA submission. As part of our planning in the pursuance of the legislation in Australia the UFUA flew Alex Forrest out from Canada to assist and speak to the Inquiry at the Melbourne hearing on presumptive legislation. Alex is a career firefighter and the President of the United Fire Fighters of Winnipeg and Canadian Trustee of the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF).

Alex also holds a law degree and has prosecuted presumptive legislation successfully in Provinces within Canada. He has also recently presented a case on presumptive legislation to the European Union and his verbal submission to the Senate Inquiry in Melbourne was powerful. We are very fortunate to have Forrest assist us in this quest. His involvement in this process demonstrates another benefit of our Global Alliance for firefighters in Australia as well as throughout the world.



Valuable support for our presumptive campaign: President of the Winnipeg Branch of the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) Alex Forrest.

Multiple roles

The ARFF primary role is to provide rescue & firefighting capabilities at aircraft accidents or incidents on or near those Airports that have an ARFF service in place. However, most Airports are like small cities and subsequently present the same or similar emergency situations that are faced by all Fire Brigades around Australia.

As a result, ARFF firefighters, although specialists in fighting flammable fuel fires and providing fire and rescue services from aircraft in need, are also qualified in and deal with all the other facets of the firefighting profession such as structure fires, grass fires, motor vehicle fires and emergency medical responses.

To demonstrate the workload and changing demands on ARFF firefighters, the Senate inquiry was provided with operational statistics for the Melbourne ARFF (only) for financial years 2009/10, 2010/11:

| Year | 2009/10 | 2010/11 |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Aircraft Incidents | 16 | 23 |
| Automatic Fire Alarm Responses (AFA) | 696 | 656 |
| Fires | 23 | 30 |
| HAZMAT | 19 | 13 |
| Emergency Medical Responses (EMR) | 668 | 784 |
| Motor Vehicle Accidents (MVA) | 12 | 26 |
| Fuel Spills | 8 | 14 |
| Other Services | 28 | 12 |
| Total: | 1,470 | 1,558 |

UFU AVIATION BRANCH

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Resilience - but what is it?

We've all heard the term 'resilience' and we know intuitively that having resilience is a good thing. But what does resilience really mean? Being resilient or having resilience can be described in many different ways. For instance:

- coping well with stressful situations,
- behaving in a relatively consistent way even when experiencing difficult, challenging or trying circumstances,
- being adaptable,
- resourcefulness, or
- being a good problem-solver.

It's important to note that being resilient does not mean showing no emotion or carrying on as normal when your life is in chaos. Indeed, behaving as though nothing is wrong when this is not the case is not a healthy way to cope with the reality of a situation.



NSW firefighters on the march against devastating state government budget and expenditure cuts.

Dealing with difficulty

Lifeline Australia suggests that everyone remember the following points during distressing, difficult or trying times:

- feeling stressed and emotional during a crisis is normal, so be kind to yourself and others,
- be patient, take regular emotional breaks, switch off the news and take it easy for a short time. This will help you maintain your capacity to cope, don't push yourself or others around you too hard,
- reduce short term expectations, don't criticise others' reactions, and realise that people cope with events differently,
- ensure your physical wellbeing is looked after; eat, drink and rest as best as you can,
- realise that even if you are not directly affected by what's going on, the event may still have an impact on your mental and emotional health and wellbeing, and
- understand that you are not alone, that you can always find caring support from organisations like *Lifeline* on 13 11 14. Their website is at <http://lifeline.org.au>

LSVs: all bets are off

With the Department displaying appalling conduct by threatening to sack numerous injured Members (including Members injured on the job) and citing a lack of available alternative duties positions as part of the excuse, the union has called off any further negotiation over the (LSV) staffing arrangements that were agreed through the Waratah Fire Station settlement.

So there is no confusion, the current, and only, agreed position for the staffing of the LSVs was set out in correspondence between the union and Department last year whereby: "the LSVs would in future be primarily staffed by permanent firefighters and officers on alternative duties. It was also understood that in the event of insufficient alternative duties permanents, other "spare" permanent firefighters could be used to staff the LSV and failing that, that the LSV in question would effectively be grounded until:

a) it could again be staffed by a permanent firefighter or officer on alternative duties; or

- b) it could again be staffed by a "spare" permanent firefighter;
- c) it was required immediately for urgent duties, in which case it could be staffed by a retained firefighter who would respond to the LSV station as he/she would respond to any other incident."

It beggars belief that some of the Members targeted for termination on October 20 are actually still driving the LSVs at the moment.

The Union has filed an appeal against the issuing of dispute orders by Commissioner Ritchie in the first place. The Department breached our agreement, effectively taking industrial action against our members. It is they, rather than the Union, who should be facing prosecution.

The appeal will be heard by a Full Bench of the Industrial Relations Commission (assuming the O'Farrell government doesn't legislate it out of existence in the meantime) on 27 February 2012. The Department's prosecution, which was originally listed for hearing on 16 December has been adjourned pending the determination of our appeal.



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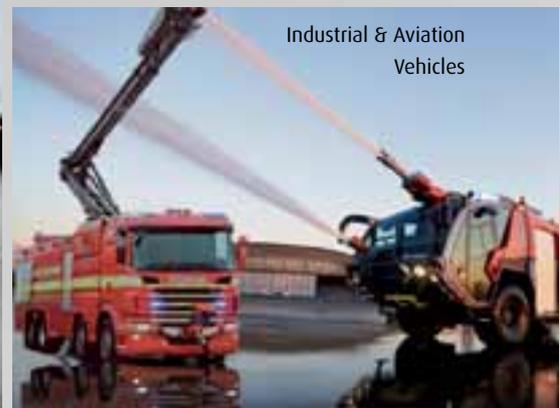
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Queensland has had a very big year in terms of natural disasters, which have seen our members being deployed both across the State and internationally.

As a result of the Queensland floods, a Commission of Inquiry was set up by the Queensland Government to investigate a number of areas and to ascertain if response could be improved and if so, how this could be done. The inquiry included the response of the Emergency Service agencies and of course captured the efforts of the Firefighters of Queensland.

The recommendations out of the Commission's interim report showed that Queensland firefighters performed extremely well under difficult circumstances. It also showed that the QFRS needs to raise the level of training and support of those on the frontline.

This has seen a further call for more firefighters to be upgraded to Level 2 Swift Water Rescue and other training such as Helicopter Winch Operations. The difficulty is that we are now asked to do more in a period outside of an EB and the Union is currently in negotiations with the QFRS over these extra skills and requirements. A review of other procedures and policies that support these operations is currently underway, with the Union heavily engaged to ensure that our members are supported to achieve the best possible results.

We will keep you posted on the developments of this inquiry.

Certified Agreement for Auxiliary Firefighters

As Auxiliary members are aware, your Union wrote to the QFRS on August 4 2011 notifying of our intention to enter into negotiations with the QFRS from August 19 on agreement to cover the wages and working conditions of Auxiliary firefighters in Queensland.

The QFRS did not respond to the Union's

letter by August 19. At the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission on August 29 2011 the Union's Senior Industrial Officer Henry Lawrence was told by officers representing the QFRS that a response to the Union's letter had been sent a week or so prior to that date.

The Senior Industrial Officer contacted the QFRS a number of times subsequent to the 29th August and was told again that the letter was on its way. On the 28th September the Senior Industrial Officer corresponded again with the QFRS in an attempt to elicit a response to the Union's letter of 4th August. Finally on Friday September 30 a reply was received from the Commissioner.



John Oliver with Greens MP Adam Bandt.

Employer's avoidance tactic

The Commissioner's response is that the QFRS has no intention of entering into negotiations with the UFU at this time for an agreement to cover Auxiliary firefighters. The Commissioner is saying that the QFRS has no approved bargaining framework for the negotiation of an agreement for Auxiliary firefighters and is somehow trying to connect the negotiation of an agreement for Auxiliary firefighters to negotiations for a new agreement for permanent firefighters and Communications Centres Officers in 2012. These are stalling and delaying tactics which are not acceptable.

Your Union's State Committee of Management is now determining what action, including industrial action, can be taken to bring the QFRS to the negotiating table to bargain in good faith with your Union.

Personal Exposure Reporting System

As another means to assist members, the Union's electronic Personal Exposure Reporting (PER) system operates to record harmful exposures at incidents.

All information is kept on a secure database linked to your membership

record, so that at any time in the future you will be able to access all recorded exposures. As a number of diseases and illnesses have a long latent onset period, the records could prove vital in assisting you with a WorkCover claim many years down the track.

Additionally, the database provides the Union with raw data of the number of exposures experienced by firefighters, which will assist us in our push for presumptive cancer legislation. The recording of all exposures is vital and could prove invaluable with the success of future WorkCover claims.

The information recorded remains the property of the Union and its members, and no individual details will ever be provided to anyone other than the individual member.

The PER does not replace the internal QFRS reporting requirements (SHE) or WorkCover reporting of injuries. The PER simply provides an additional but invaluable record for the exclusive use of a member.

For full instructions got to <http://tinyurl.com/3csnwwl>

JOHN OLIVER
QLD Branch Secretary

UFUA QUEENSLAND BRANCH

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The UFU SA Branch was recently proud to attend the 2011 Awards Ceremony for MFS Retained Firefighters. The Retained ranks are an integral part of the Metropolitan Fire Service. Retained Stations protect the communities of 16 regional South Australian Towns, from Mount Gambier in the south to Whyalla in the west. Some of the State's most critical infrastructure is protected by our Retained Firefighters.

The 2011 Awards were held at Tanunda in the Barossa Valley. The community of the Barossa is growing around the strong viticulture industry, and the Tanunda station is responding well to its expansion. The crew of Tanunda Station should be congratulated as winners of this year's Chief Officer's Prize as the best Station in the 2011 Audit.

The UFU are proud to support these awards through the UFU Family Friendly Award. We congratulate the crew of the Copper Coast town of Moonta as this year's winner of the UFU Award.

The UFU has again been proud to participate in White Ribbon Day 2011. Firefighters are pleased to be part of the campaign to eradicate all forms of violence



'B' Shift firefighters with SA Premier Jay Weatherill.

against women. This year's event saw prominent South Australians, including new Premier Jay Weatherill, swear never to commit, excuse or remain silent about violence against women.

UFUA SA BRANCH

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Tasmania Branch

Budget Cuts In Tasmania

The State Labor Government has commenced an unprecedented budgetary cuts programme that is impacting significantly on the entire public service.

Emergency services including the Tasmania Fire Service (TFS) have not escaped the impact of the fiscal measures announced by the government. TFS advise the UFU that they need to save 14.3m over the next 5 years.

Secretary Vinnie Males says;

"The Union is cognisant of the impact of the budget cuts as announced by the Premier but we will not accept any diminution of our capacity as a union to continue to provide properly resourced services for the Tasmanian community."

Initiatives being pursued by the TFS include

- Recruitment programme frozen
- Travel restrictions
- Collaborative purchasing
- Call receipt and dispatch current and expanding
- Communications infrastructure sharing
- Interagency protocols
- Co-location plans 40 plus sites
- TasFire Training Closure

TasFire Training Closure

Tas Fire Services has announced the planned wind up of TasFire Training (TFT).

TFS has advised the UFU the closure is due to budget cuts as announced by the State Labor Government. The savings proposed by closing TFT will on TFS accounting amount to \$200,000 per annum. These figures have not been accepted by the Tas branch as either accurate or reliable.

Tas branch has eight (8) members directly affected by this announcement. TFS advised there will be no forced redundancies as a result of the closure. TFS also advised that in the absence of any substantial argument from any party the decision taken by the State Fire Commission on the 24th of July will stand and the TFT will be wound up by June 2012.

TFS documents regarding TFT outline;

- The unit is now part of the Community Fire Safety Division and currently consists of a manager, two sales consultants, six training staff and two clerks located in Cambridge, Youngtown and Burnie. Clients range from sole proprietors to large timber and mining companies and government agencies. TasFire Training's largest client is the Australian Antarctic Division.
- Training services delivered by TFT focus on ensuring employees are equipped to respond appropriately in the event of fire in the workplace. This includes evacuation



procedures, Fire Warden training, fire extinguisher training and live fire training for onsite emergency response teams.

TasFire Training recently ceased providing confined space training after deeming it non-core business. Mainland Fire Services have recently picked up the short fall created since TFS has ceased doing confined space rescue. TasFire Training has also made a decision that prevents tendering for

mainland contracts in fire related training. These issues will be amongst many matters the UFU will be raising with the Tasmania Fire Service when we next meet.

The Union is extremely disappointed with the complete lack of a transparent consultative process by the TFS on this matter. The State Fire Commission approved the closure of TFT in July. The TFS then took six and a half weeks before they told the union. This is totally unacceptable. Union members deserve better. The UFU is in discussion with our affected members.

Recruitment programme frozen

The TFS has frozen recruitment for 2011. TFS chief Mike Brown has assured the community the recruitment freeze would not affect safety. However, he conceded the service was at risk of being "fatigued" from forced overtime if recruiting was further delayed. Mr Brown confirmed 40 recruits were last month told their recruitment process had been put on hold until the Budget situation was known. The UFU Tas Branch is monitoring this situation.

Other Budget Impacts

The Government has identified \$290 million worth of savings needed for next year and \$1.4 billion over the next four years. Major agencies affected are health and education that are required to find \$800 million of the savings. Police and Emergency Management have also been targeted with twenty (20) jobs lost this year and a promised thirty (30) new jobs scrapped. The cuts announced equate to 1,700 full time equivalent public service jobs.

State Fire Commission Representative

Long serving UFU and BCOM member Dale Rayner has successfully nominated as the UFU representative on the State Fire Commission. Dale will bring a wealth of union knowledge to the Commission. Dale is expected to take his seat on the



Commission at the next meeting scheduled for September.

The State Fire Commission is the peak governing and policy group for the Tasmania Fire Service. The Commission's roles include policy formulation for the Fire Service and ensuring there are effective fire prevention and protection measures throughout the state. The Commission also establishes training facilities for all brigades and provides and standardises fire fighting equipment. The Commission is accountable to the Minister.

UFU Rep training

In October the Tasmania Branch will conduct tailored ACTU training programmes in the north and south of the state for all UFU representatives and BCOM members. The training programme is a significant part of the Tasmania Branch investing in the skills and knowledge required to enable our UFU representatives to successfully advocate for their fellow members within their workplaces. The training will be available to all 10 BCOM members and 24 workplace reps.

UFUA TASMANIA BRANCH

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Changes Ahead for the WA Fire Services:

The Keelty Report into the recent catastrophic fires on the fringes of the WA Metropolitan area in February 2011 has triggered significant change for the WA Fire Services.

For some years the Union has been providing advice to a series of Ministers and Governments warning of the flawed generic emergency service delivery model that has grown under the banner of FESA.

11 years ago when WA still had a Fire Brigade, our State had 850 professional career Firefighters in operational fire defence and 40 administrators. In 2010 under FESA, WA has 950 professional career Firefighters in operational fire defence and nearly 400 administrators. The common response from FESA has been that they also administer volunteer Firefighters, the SES and Marine Rescue.

The Brigade administered the Volunteer F&RS and the Bush Fire Brigades have been and are still under the control of various Local Governments. The reality has been that under FESA, operations has been dominated and emasculated by administration. This is not conducive for front line service delivery and optimum planning and resourcing. Hence the response to the catastrophic fires in WA, with nearly 120 structures lost in a 2 year period in 4 significant fires.

Finally, the State Government had to act. The Chief Executive Officer was held accountable by the Keelty Report and was

removed from Office and transferred to another Government Department, in her place the Government have appointed Wayne Gregson APM, previously a Police Assistant Commissioner. The Union have campaigned for a Commissioned Chief Fire Officer and getting a Commissioned Chief Officer will require a change to the relevant legislation.

As the incoming Chief Executive Officer, Wayne Gregson has demonstrated that he has a strong operational focus and a practical approach to settling several long standing disputes. It is clear that the Union will not get everything we ask for but at least now the Union gets a fair hearing and the opportunity to put reasoned and well prepared arguments and cases to the employer.

It is early days but the Union anticipates that some key areas of service delivery will return to operational control – especially the Training Centre.

While the Branch has been dealing with this post Keelty Report changes, there have been some other matters that the Branch is dealing with:

- The Fire Service EBA has been registered in the WAIRC and we have received 12.95% increases over 3 years. 3.95%, 4.5%, 4.5%.
- The Transfield Agreement is being negotiated and the key issues on the table have included reasonable wage increases, improvements to personal leave entitlements and deployment living away from home allowances.
- The Instructor case is still before the WAIRC. The Union has been successful in establishing an Instructor Classification

that includes 4 levels with appropriate pay structures that fit between the classifications of Area Officer and District Officer. We are still arguing the finer details to do with allowances and entitlements.

- Submissions were prepared for the Senate Committee enquiry into the Presumptive Legislation changes to the Commonwealth Worker's Compensation Act. Special thanks to our National Officials and Officers, our members and their families who wrote personal submissions and our members who supported our people and the Victorian Firefighters giving evidence at the Perth hearings.
- Submissions to a State Government Committee enquiry into preparedness for the forthcoming Fire Season in WA - including the preliminary forecasting of resources required over the immediate, short term and next 3 years in WA.
- Preparations for written submissions to another State Government Committee enquiry into the impact of trauma on emergency workers.
- Station visits, individual casework and representation on industrial matters, grievance and disciplinary hearings and welfare matters. All members are reminded of their right to Union representation in such meetings.

UFUA WA BRANCH

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Supporting firefighters with occupational cancers

After an incredible six months, a 10-year campaign for presumptive legislation has just crossed the finish line with the Senate passing the Fair Protection for Firefighters Bill unopposed on November 24.



Presumptive legislation enables firefighters to access assistance and entitlements for cancers contracted due to the exposure to toxins and carcinogens while firefighting.

Firefighters currently face impossible standards of proof if they are to access workers compensation and medical benefits. Most end up out of pocket, out of sick leave, and reliant on family and friends. It is impossible for most firefighters to be able to prove which fire or fires they were exposed and which specific toxins or carcinogens they were exposed to that resulted in the contraction of the cancer.

The Bill reverses the onus of proof, and allows the firefighter to focus on health and family, instead of financial stresses. It presumes that listed cancers are occupational cancers for firefighters.

Presumptive legislation is already in place in 43 out of the 50 US states and seven out of 10 Canadian provinces; Australia has suddenly leapt into third place as European countries and others continue their campaigns.

The impetus for renewed progress on this campaign came at the first UFUA legislative conference in Canberra in May when UFU officials from throughout Australia met with

a number of politicians and their advisors on issues of concern.

The following month was the National Committee of Management conference in Melbourne, and special guest was Winnipeg Firefighters Union President and Canadian Trustee of the IAFF, Alex Forrest, a Canadian campaigner whose unrivalled knowledge on this issue has been of benefit to campaigns in Canada, the USA, and Europe.

En route to Melbourne, Alex stopped off in Canberra to address a group of interested politicians and advisers on the cancer risks faced by firefighters, and the support provided in most of Canada and the USA.

“EVEN AS A 12-YEAR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER I CANNOT IDENTIFY WHAT IT IS LIKE TO FACE THE ISSUES THEY FACE EVERY DAY OF THEIR WORKING LIVES.”

MR BROADBENT



A couple of weeks later firefighters from Australia converged on Parliament House, Canberra, to see the introduction of the Bill, under its formal name, The Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment (Fair Protection for Firefighters) Bill 2011.

In a historic first for this Parliament the legislation was supported by all major political parties being introduced by Adam Bandt (Greens, Melbourne), co-sponsored by Maria Vamvakinou (ALP, Calwell), Russell Broadbent (Liberal, MacMillan), and was seconded by Queensland independent Bob Katter.

Mr Bandt told Parliament: “There are around 70,000 synthetic chemicals in the

average home and when they burn they produce a cancer-causing cocktail. No matter how good a firefighter’s breathing apparatus is, their uniform must be able to breathe. Many firefighters will tell you of coming back from a fire — sometimes even days after a fire — and finding that the black, thick, cancer-producing smoke has found its way through their gear and into their open pores and into their skin.”

Ms Vamvakinou says Parliament has often acknowledged the life-saving work of firefighters: “We also need to acknowledge the human cost that their profession bears on their health and wellbeing, as well as the cost to their families.”

Mr Broadbent, a volunteer firefighter in his rural electorate, said he was proud to associate himself with firefighters right across Australia: “Even as a 12-year volunteer firefighter I cannot identify what it is like to face the issues they face every day of their working lives.”

Later, in the Senate courtyard, the MPs spoke of their support for firefighters, while WA fire Jim McIntosh told the media of his personal health battles and how this would a difference to those affected in the future.

Before the Bill would return to Parliament for further consideration and a vote, a Senate inquiry was held into the issue.



The Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (chaired by ALP Senator Gavin Marshall, with deputy Liberal Senator Chris Back) moved swiftly to set up its itinerary for public hearings.

On August 9 – only five weeks after the first reading of the Bill – the Senate inquiry began its hearings in Melbourne.

Media interest in the hearings was strong with extensive radio, television and print coverage.

MFB Commander (HAZMAT Scientific Unit) Brian Whittaker told the inquiry that, while firefighting clothing has improved over the past decade, firefighters dealing with fires

or chemicals remain at risk of exposure to carcinogenic substances.

MFB Commander of Operations Philip Taylor said firefighters' personal protective clothing can reduce the risk of chemical exposure but not eliminate it. Exposure to chemicals that can initiate occupational cancers is unavoidable.

After hearing from a range of witnesses in the morning – including Canadian Alex Forrest, and UFUA national president Mick Farrell and national secretary Peter Marshall – the inquiry moved to Melbourne Airport, Tullamarine, to learn about structure fires.

The next day the inquiry was in Geelong to learn about vehicle rescues, and fuel

fires before further hearings in Canberra, Brisbane, and Perth.

On September 1, in Brisbane, the Senators were to experience firefighting first-hand when they experienced live fire training at the Queensland Combined Emergency Services Academy, at White Island, Port of Brisbane.

After instruction in breathing apparatus, the Senators entered a black smoke-filled building, and later a compartment fire, a smoke filled container where flashed over the politicians, before decontamination.

The following day, on September 2 in Perth, there was some particularly moving evidence from firefighters and their families.



These included Janet Reed who lost her husband Senior Firefighter Robert to cancer two years ago after 20 years of marriage.

In her submission to the inquiry she says fully supported his career as a fire fighter: "... even though there were times that I feared for his safety, especially with big fires, I never expected to bury him when he was 46 years of age as a result of his death from a disease that was caused by his work."

She says she is now trying to help her children learn to drive, start their apprenticeships and face their 18th and 21st birthdays without their Dad.

"Our house no longer feels like a home anymore without Rob," she said. "Sarah has

had her school ball and has graduated from high school knowing that her Dad wanted to be there with her for those important milestones. I now watch Corey play football without Rob; his Dad was the team runner and had always supported his sport and achievements."

There was also a return visit by our Canadian colleague Alex Forrest, as well as Fire Chief Ken Block from Edmonton who told the committee of the impact of similar presumptive legislation when it was introduced in their province including costs of the compensation scheme and impact on the Fire Brigade.

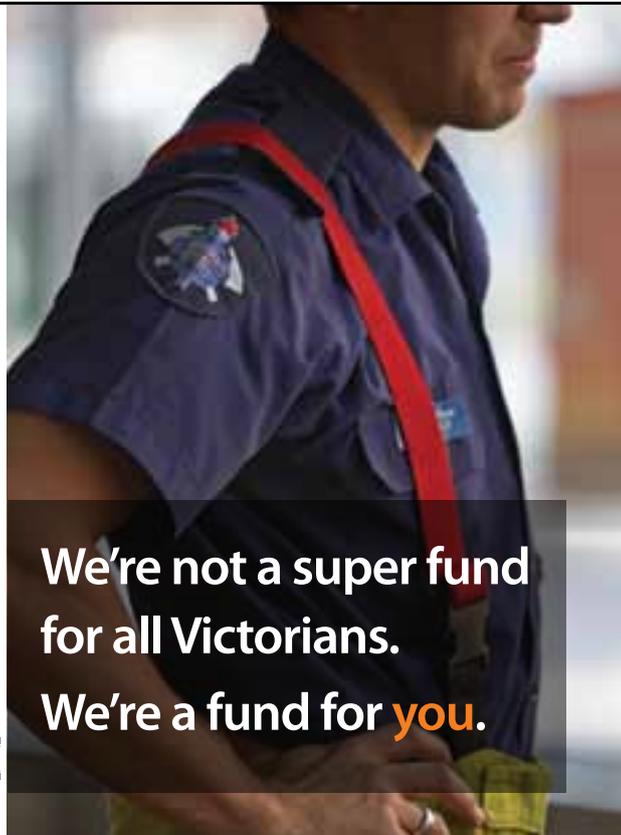
An incredible amount of work had gone into the campaign – and it was a welcome pause

for UFUA national secretary Peter Marshall and national industrial officer 'Wattie' Watson – as everyone waited for the report of the Senate inquiry.

On September 15 the report was released, recommending that the Bill be passed so that cancer is recognised as an occupational disease for firefighters.

While the UFUA had sought recognition for seven types of cancer, the Senate Committee amended this list to extend it to 14 cancers, to bring Australian Commonwealth legislation in line with contemporary scientific evidence and international law.

The Senate inquiry's endorsement was welcome news but we were still not in the home straight.



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Media reports claimed the Coalition was divided on the issue, and there was no word from Labor on its stance.

A website was created to allow the public to write directly to the Federal MPs and ask them where they stood on the issue.

Nearly 100,000 letters were generated.

By the time the Bill returned to the House of Representatives for its second reading, MPs of all persuasions were writing to their constituents to confirm that they would either be supporting or not opposing the legislation.

On October 13 firefighters again converged on Canberra to see the historic vote. On Thursday November 3, the Bill was

considered for a third time by the lower house and sent forward to the Senate.

The Bill covers 12 of the 13 cancers recommended by the Senate inquiry. Lung cancer will be dealt with later.

As we prepared for the Senate vote, the website was cranked up again and supporters were again writing to the MPs, urging them to ask their Senate colleagues to hasten the vote on the Fair Go for Firefighters Bill.

It was welcome news when the Bill was scheduled to be considered by the Senate on November 24 2011 – the last scheduled sitting day of the Parliamentary calendar.

As the Bill awaits approval from the

Governor-General, it is clear that the end is near for firefighters covered by federal agreements, such as Aviation and ACT firefighters.

Once the Bill is made law by Canberra, the work of encouraging State Governments to follow suit will begin.

While there is normally harmonisation between the States on issues such as workers compensation, the UFU will remain vigilant to ensure that all firefighters are protected.

And that firefighters who contract cancer through occupational exposure to toxic chemicals will never again be thrown on the industrial scrapheap. ■

HOT FIRE TRAINING



Australia is only the third nation to achieve presumptive legislation recognising occupational cancer for firefighters – so how did the United Firefighters Union of Australia achieve such a feat as small as comparably small union?

There was a well thought-out and executed campaign – politically and organisationally. But the key behind that campaign was a strong unified union that was galvanised through the process.

There were many facets to the campaign and process and alongside the legislation is now a compelling Senate inquiry report that will stand the test of time and help firefighters achieve similar legislation not just in other Australian states and territories but is already being relied upon around the world.

Having a federal Senate report clearly outline and support the link between firefighting and the contraction of cancers is invaluable and will be a long-lasting legacy for firefighters internationally.

The robust Senate inquiry including a hearing process and an investigation process. The UFUA ensured the Senators and inquiry team got to see and experience first-hand the

dangers of firefighting and the range of duties of a firefighter.

The first day of hearing set out the basis of the claim for presumptive legislation. Through expert evidence from United Fire Fighters of Winnipeg President and IAFF Canadian Trustee Alex Forrest, the Senate Committee was walked through various studies which have demonstrated the link between firefighting and the contraction of some cancers. Commander Brian Whittaker outlined the nature of the toxins firefighters were exposed to and the effects upon combustion. Commander Phil Taylor demonstrated the differences in protective clothing and the inherent inability to fully protect firefighters while fighting fires due to the crucial need for the PPE to breathe to prevent metabolic heat-build up that would be fatal to the firefighter.

The UFUA wanted to give the Senate inquiry team an opportunity to experience the practicalities of that information and organised a series of site visits.

UFUA members can be proud of professional manner in which their colleagues in Geelong, Tullamarine airport, and

Queensland hosted the Senators and inquiry team to give them a taste of the life of a fire.

Each site visit was well planned and presented and opened the Senators' eyes to another aspect of firefighting and the dangers.

Perhaps the most memorable for the Senators and inquiry team was the hot fire training experience in Queensland.

Queensland Branch Secretary John Oliver organised what was described by one Senator as the experience of their lives – one they would never forget. John Oliver and his team facilitated the visit to the Queensland Combined Emergency Services Academy for hot fire training.

Senator Gavin Marshall, (Chair of the Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Legislation Committee which conducted the Inquiry into the Fair Protection for Firefighters Bill), Senator Penny Wright and Senator Sue Boyce, Committee Secretary Tim Watling and Senior Research Officer Natasha Rusjakovski, Senator Marshall's advisor Clancy Dobbyn and UFUA National Industrial Officer Joanne (Wattie) Watson had a first-hand glimpse of the role of a firefighter.



Under the careful and professional guidance of instructors they all were donned in structural PPE and briefly trained in the use of a BA. They were then split into teams and with a firefighter for each visitor, lead through the two-storey custom-designed smoke-house to experience entering a structure filled with smoke.

They were then re-hydrated before experiencing compartmental fire behaviour training which demonstrated the flash-over and combustion that had been explained by witnesses including National Secretary Peter Marshall and National President Mick Farrell at the first hearing.

The hot fire training concept originated with the IAFF and had proven to be powerful education tool. The IAFF generously permitted the UFUA to replicate the concept but with an Australian flavour. The support of the IAFF and the global partners was a key factor to the success of this campaign.

The impact of Hot Fire Training was just as great for the Senate inquiry team during their visit to Brisbane.

All were in awe of the actual effort and skill a firefighter must use when entering

a structural fire. Each remarked on how difficult it must be for a firefighter to enter a smoke-filled building with an unfamiliar lay-out to locate and rescue. The sheer effort to moving about fully clad with a BA emphasised the fitness level of firefighters and there was an acknowledgment from the Senate team that they were not carrying hoses or carrying out victims as well.

The compartment fire behaviour training put into perspective the reality behind the need for firefighters to get into a structure and control the fire within 5 to 10 minutes. Being exposed to flame in such proximity and watching it flash over was a breathtaking experience for the Senate inquiry team.

Every participant was challenged but felt well supported and secure in the hands of the instructors. This was a highly professional and memorable experience and John Oliver and his team is to be congratulated.

Each site visit, Geelong and Tullamarine included, added another layer of understanding and exposed the Senate inquiry team to highly trained and professional firefighters. At each site visit the Senators were welcomed and hosted

throughout and importantly, they left more informed.

These site visits were crucial to the outcome and the ultimate achievement of presumptive legislation. Having experienced a small part of the life of a firefighter first hand, the Senate committee were able to fully comprehend the basis for the need for presumptive legislation and understand the inherent danger of the absorption of toxins and carcinogens through the skin.

Senator Penny Wright spoke of the value of the experience when the inquiry report was tabled in the Senate:

“When the committee had the opportunity to experience firsthand some of the hazards encountered by firefighters in the form of flames and smoke, it brought home too me the degree to which firefighters, by the very nature of their job, are exposed to conditions over which they almost have no control and about which they have little information before they enter the premises to deal with the fire or the hazard. One of the things that I think the committee members all learned was the degree of speed required and the lack of time that is available to assess the risks of the situation.” ■

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FIRIES SAY THANKS WITH HELMETS FOR MPs

While the focus of the presumptive legislation campaign was to demonstrate that firefighters cannot be fully protected from absorbing toxins while firefighting in structural PPE, it was also pointed out that Australian firefighters have access to world-class equipment.



There are many facets to PPE which must meet Australian Standards and withstand rigorous testing to ensure the firefighter can rely on the gear while protecting lives and property.

The HEROS-xtreme helmet has been developed to meet the toughest standards while providing safety in extreme situations, with a unique and newly-developed helmet shell, a world-first fully-integrated explosion-proof lamp, and two visors for every operation.

SASGAR, a leader in mobile fire fighting solution distributors in Australia is the sole agent in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands for all vehicles, pumping system and hose reels manufactured or distributed by Rosenbauer.

The founder of SAGAR has been involved with the manufacture, sales and support of fire fighting vehicles since 1950, and has had a strong relationship with the internationally accredited vehicle and equipment manufacturer Rosenbauer of Linz, Austria, for the past 30 years.

In line with that tradition, SASGAR donated helmets for all of the politicians directly involved in the “Fair Protection for Firefighters” Bill and its progress through parliament.

The four federal MPs who proposed the legislation to look after firefighters who



contract work-related cancer were presented with state-of-the-art Rosenbauer HEROS-xtreme helmets. The Rosenbauer HEROS-xtreme helmets were presented by the UFU to Adam Bandt (Greens, Melbourne), Maria Vamvakinou (ALP, Calwell) and

Russell Broadbent (Liberal, McMillan), who introduced and co-sponsored the Fair Protection for Firefighters Bill, and independent MP Bob Katter who seconded the Bill.

The presentation in the Senate courtyard at Parliament House, Canberra, on Monday September 19 2011, came four days after the Senate Committee investigating the Bill delivered its report, recommending that firefighters who contract many cancers have their condition treated as due to occupational exposure.

The Senators who had taken part in the inquiry were also presented with helmets and those that had taken part in the Hot Fire Training were particularly thrilled to have a reminder of that experience.

The UFU thanks SASGAR for its support in this historic campaign.

Rosenbauer products are recognised for their superior functionality and exceptional design. The company has won many awards, and proudly claims the title of the industry’s technology and innovation leader. ■

AUSSIES IN NEW YORK

In August a group of Australian firefighters travelled to New York for the World Police and Fire Games. Many stayed on for the 10th anniversary of 9/11. But there was more – a hurricane, memorials and an unforgettable Labor Day parade.

PHOTOS AND DIARY EXTRACTS BY PETER LUCAS

MORE: 2011WPFG.ORG



24 AUGUST 2011

Twenty four hours before thousands of competitors arrive for the World Police and Fire Games the news is that Washington DC was rocked by an earthquake late yesterday, and early predictions indicate that Hurricane Irene may impact the coast off New York on Sunday morning.

Police and firefighters I've already encountered from Colorado to Chicago report many of their members are about to depart for the Games.

There is only occasional reference to the 9/11 commemoration in the media thus far.

26 AUGUST 2011

The remaining team members all arrived last night after their 30-hour flight. This morning was the rush to register then off to the opening ceremony at Prospect Park in Brooklyn. Registration was extraordinarily hectic as many members had delayed flights – the queues were 200 metres long in the “Fast Track” lane!

The sight of teams converging on Brooklyn Park was most impressive, and showed some of the colour which the teams would display.

It was a very hot summer's day, so shade was at a premium as it took about two hours

for the teams to find their place then to assemble, through the usual security checks of course.

We were the second up after the one competitor from Andorra.

NY Mayor Michael Bloomberg opened the Games. He said 17,000 competitors had arrived from 76 countries and that he “expected a hurricane of activity” – but not the real thing.

Hurricane Irene has now tracking towards New York, and for the first time since 1954, New York is preparing for significant impact. This has caused the Mayor to close all public transport in New York from 1400 tomorrow

(Saturday) until some point to be determined.

All 30 plus fire appliances located at the NYFD Training college – on an island of Manhattan – are being moved to the Brooklyn Zoo, which is on higher ground.

All events listed for Saturday and Sunday have been cancelled, causing massive disappointment for all of those which have travelled so far to compete – but we are in the business of risk management.

So for the first time in more than 50 years, New York is bracing for the full impact of a hurricane.

The question is: how will all of these hyped up, finely tuned athletes fill these two days?

Preliminary planning indicates that the program will resume Monday afternoon.

27 AUGUST 2011

Hurricane Irene is set to hit here midday tomorrow, Sunday. All New York transit services – trains, buses, ferries – shut down at 1200 today.

Forced evacuations of 250,000 are being ordered, and those in the low lying areas, including lower Manhattan, Coney Island, Long Island and the Rockaways predicted to be impacted, not so much by wind, but the storm surge which will hit at High Tide

Photos taken at Times Square at lunchtime show sand bagging of shops, plus a queue at the Walgreens supermarket. McDonald's is closed. Flights are cancelled as the planes have apparently been moved away from NY airports. All stores, parks, theatres, and many businesses have already closed for the weekend.

The storm surge is predicted at midday tomorrow, Sunday.

UFU members have already travelled to the Red Cross relief centre at 49th Street only 6 blocks away to recce what assistance is needed. Team members have all offered to help, especially as we are self sufficient and can make our own way to/from the centre.

Reports to the organising committee are that all the participants teams have offered any and all assistance.

Members are resisting urge to spend the day in the pub, but in view that there is really nothing else to do, quality fellowship seems to be looming large as the day's key attraction.



NY STORY 1

SSO Eddie McMullen (Highett FS) left his phone on the train to Muster. We were 50 mins from NY, the equivalent of Frankston from the Melbourne CBD. He gave up on it and even borrowed ours to text his family to say it was lost. Amazingly, on our return to the hotel later in the afternoon, there it was. A local found the phone on the train, interrogated it, rang "Wife" (at 0200 – she wasn't impressed) then travelled to our hotel near Times Square to return it. Everyone on Eddie's phone menu knew it had been returned except him. What are the odds of this happening in Australia?



Peter Lucas in eye of Hurricane Irene.
28 August 2011

28 AUGUST 2011

This is the moment that the eye passed over, but as I write the weather is abating, but everything still closed. The Aussies are unbowed of course and all are setting off in every direction to catch this unique sight. Members have been receiving calls from home, but all is OK, especially for Aussie East Coast Emergency workers who have seen quite a bit of rain over the last year.

The state of emergency was lifted from 1500 today (Sunday).

There has been some local TV coverage of our NSW members slinging along the flooded footpaths [sidewalks] in Times Square on Sunday arvo.

While some events have been cancelled, disappointing many, most are planned to be rescheduled. The atmosphere brightens, literally and amongst the competitors, every minute. There are high hopes for some events to start tomorrow, but looks like a full program and perfect weather from Tuesday on.

29 AUGUST 2011

News from the relief centres ...

Hunter College is on the Upper East side, just round the corner from the most prestigious street in the City, Park Avenue. On the Friday night there were 240+ but last night the number had dwindled to 97.

We were the breath of fresh air the staff needed. Many had been working virtually non stop since Friday in the confines of the College. Coupled with the relief centre was the gymnasium, three floors underground, which made a perfect scenario for some enthusiastic first timers to brighten up the place.

Our help was much appreciated, but the main job we did was the Gofer job, most valuable in any dynamic group setting, plus help in the planning for the demobilisation of the centre which occurred this morning. Yes, we got to help clean up.

The Games are full on, with all the team events beginning today, which has turned the hotel into a wasteland.



NY STORY 2

A warning to any Australian speaking person travelling to America. When proceeding through a security check point, bag screening, metal detection wands, security personnel, police etc, do not say: "G'day mate. How ya' goin'?" Because a person (who shall remain nameless) did that and discovered much excitement was generated amongst every security person within earshot. After the excitement died down, they explained it sounded like he said: "I've got a handgun!"



30 AUGUST 2011

If there is one word to describe NY it'd be Resilient. It is as nothing happened. A delightful new first is that since the streets were comprehensively washed down, the only smells prevalent are that of cooking from the many restaurants.

Today the MFB team -- and the CFA's sole rep, Peter Lucas -- travelled to Hampstead, approx one hour from New York proper, for the true Fire Brigade event: Muster. There were two events, the Hose Cart and then the Bucket Brigade.

Initially the MFB members puzzled over the antiquated hose cart, then it was into action. They came a wonderful sixth out of 19 teams, led by 42-year veteran Eddie McMullen, who chose the shortest distance to run -- and so he should.

The CFA's only rep teamed with France #1, ran first up, and were only pipped for third place by the second last team - an agony of waiting.

The Bucket Brigade came next. While we all challenged, the only thing we excelled in was getting wet -- in fact that's what firefighters are naturally drawn to anyway

Tonight the "pending Olympic sport" Dodgeball is run at the convention centre. Our two teams competed last night in the fun event of the games. Basically it is the same as "Brandy" which we all played at school, but with a soft soccer ball type ball. Six games round robin, approximately three minutes each. Our teams did not trouble the finals selection committee, but laughed hard and long throughout, as did our support group when they weren't dodging stray ball. Everyone got involved, whether they liked it or not.



31 AUGUST 2011

Highlights from the World Trade Centre Museum included a recovered turn-out coat, obviously ripped off the fire who was wearing it, one of the only 15 helmets recovered, an exploded BA cylinder, and the memorial photos wall.

With the games timed to coincide with the 10th anniversary of 9/11, the spectre of the anniversary is starting to materialise throughout the city. People everywhere are mentioning it in passing, but more often now.

I have made contact with the local union, and they are welcoming overseas fire and police the opportunity to be with them, when they commemorate 9/11 – not at the WTC, but at their own memorial.



1 SEPTEMBER 2011

The last few days have been a boon for our teammates. This is what I can report. Other results have may have been missed. Here are some:

- John Garvin, SSO, community education: silver, darts, “cricket” doubles with UK Police member
- Tony Branchflower, SSO # 10: gold, Criterion; bronze, hillclimb
- Alan Drury, SO # 6, and Wayne Davis, LF #6: bronze, lawn bowls pair
- Alex Shepherd, SSO # 4: silver, orienteering; silver, darts, “cricket” doubles, with Cleveland FF
- Gary Wright: silver, orienteering

It was also the day of “The Dashes” – the traditional Darts Ashes between Australia and the UK. This event, begun in Adelaide in 2007, then continued in Vancouver 2009, was followed-up here.

It combines a get together between the two teams, who maintain an active interest in darts, and the traditional environment in which it’s played, with an excuse to build professional relationships between Melbourne fire and Westminster police (where “the Bill” hails from).

The trophy, an ashtray, in which the flights of the winning team’s darts were cremated in 2007, remains the ultimate prize.

Until tonight the score was 1/1, but tragically, it fell to the UK, only because our members were absolutely exhausted from a hard day’s medal winning to fully concentrate.

4 SEPTEMBER 2011

Sunday morning saw the ninth annual “Father Mychal F Judge, O.F.M. Walk of Remembrance”. This was begun the year after 9/11 and is traditionally held on the Sunday before 9/11, so it is particularly suited for those seeking to avoid the masses in NY City on 9/11.

Father Mychal was a Franciscan Monk, well known for his work with the homeless, recovering addicts, alcoholics and AIDS patients – as well as his work as chaplain of FDNY.

Those making up the procession each had their own story of how he touched their lives. Australian members may remember his story ... On 9/11 he rushed from the friary to the scene at WTC. After administering the last rites to a firefighter, Father Mychal was hit by debris and killed. He became the first official recorded fatality following the attack.

Starting with a service at the Church of St. Francis of Assisi, which is opposite Engine 1/Ladder 24, the Fire House from which he responded as the Fire Department Chaplain, it proceeds down 7th Avenue, retracing his footsteps on 9/11, stopping at 10 Police Precincts and Fire Houses along the way, ending at Engine 10/Ladder 10 on Liberty St at the WTC site.

Initiated and led by Det. Steven McDonald, shot in the line of duty and left paralysed in 1986, it was joined by a firefighter also paralysed, and his family. It is a big commitment, starting at 1030 and not concluding until 1500, and working from



5 SEPTEMBER 2011



The Father Mychal Judge memorial pumper (donated by Dumont FD, NJ, in memory of Father Mychal for shipping to Lima, Peru, to a rescue company in a Franciscan Parish).

31st street right down to the bottom of the business district.

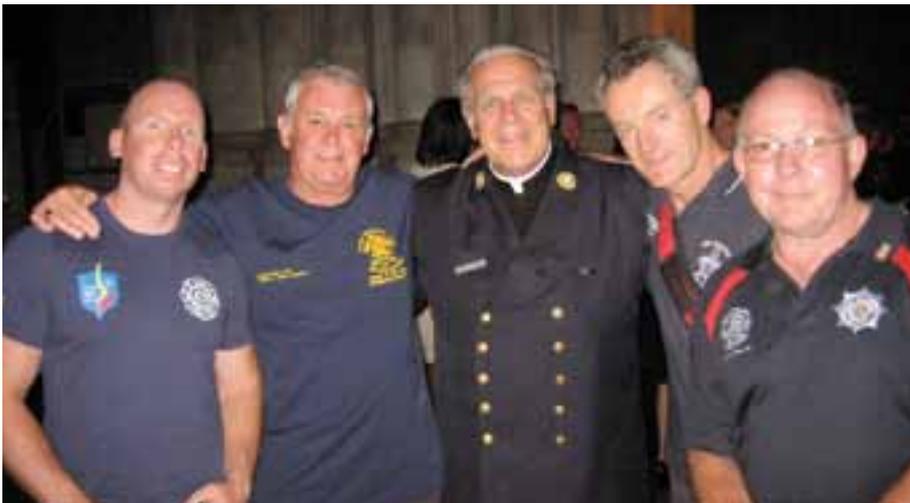
The first year it attracted only 50 or so people, but this year there were 1200 people still with the procession at the conclusion, where the combined pipe bands played at the FD memorial on the wall of 10/10.

This was truly a local event, celebrated by a diverse mix of people under the banner of an extraordinary person who supported

emergency service workers and the their families.

After Victoria's travails of the last few years, this type of support we too understand the value of such support at times of need.

Sunday September 4 2011 was also the closing ceremony. As usual the closing ceremony becomes a big party. With our NZ brothers, the Welsh (with the sun flower hats – why?), and NSW in their floral suits.



Four MFB & CFA with FDNY Chaplain (who coincidentally led the Father Mychal Judge memorial walk yesterday) Rev Christopher Keenan OFM.

Tonight saw the candlelight vigil at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. This was a service aimed at involving the WPPG members in a remembrance of those who fell at 9/11. The aim of the service was to respectfully keep our promise to “always remember” our fallen brothers and sisters.

While the games were interrupted by Cyclone Irene, it was noted that many competitors helped in the relief efforts, but then again that was no surprise to the Dean who opened the ceremony

He also opened with the message that would be carried throughout the evening, that those who perished showed courage and dedication to the welfare of others – it led them to **give their life for strangers**.

On 9/11 417 emergency service workers mostly from FDNY, NYPD, and Port Authority died.

He went on: in fellowship with them we find the courage to carry on their task.

The service then followed the themes of Honour, Remembrance and Gratitude.

Each phase was punctuated with amazing music, beginning with the march in of the combined pipes and drums, to Leonard Cohen's Hallelujah and Ave Maria – the standouts. Numerous chaplains had their turn, but common was the theme of the new challenges we face. From 9/11 to Bali, Spain, London, Mumbai – these are in addition to the normal risks faced by first responders, but no matter the challenge, we will prevail. **This evening, and the forthcoming commemorations are dedicated not only to those who fell, but to those who carry on.**

The last theme was Resolve. That we will always help others without weighing the cost. That we find it easier facing these challenges in the knowledge that our efforts are understood by the international fraternity of emergency service workers.



10 SEPTEMBER 2011

The annual Labor Day march is a massive event for New York. We stepped off at 1030, and the march was still continuing at 1400. It's a combination between festival and political event, celebrating the "Teamsters" and advertising the challenges to unions.

Today also saw the FDNY memorial service at St. Patrick's Cathedral, 5th Avenue. It began with 343 American flags, borne individually as they paraded into the cathedral. The service is for the FDNY families who lost a firefighter in the tragedy. As usual the speeches were heartfelt, delivered by those directly impacted.

In the opening it was outlined that on that day FDNY lost 4400 collective years of service, and the common theme re-emerged that **9/11's lessons are cause for us all to rededicate ourselves to their challenge and to keep our cities safe.**

Another story was around three 9/11 firefighters who, during their last routine inspection of the Cathedral's roof void, wrote their names on a grimy window which was due to be replaced during the Cathedral's renovation. They were all lost, so that window on which their names were inscribed has now been preserved as part of the 9/11 history.



The actor Jon Voigt, Angelina Jolie's father, an apparent big supporter of the Fire Brigade, pinning on his UFU badge.



NY STORY 3

Bob Soulsby, retired MFB firefighter, aged 75, collapsed in the subway en route to the opening ceremony. After 8 hours in hospital, and \$800 in medical expenses lighter, he recovered to win five medals in track and field! He then left New York so we have no photos.



11 SEPTEMBER 2011

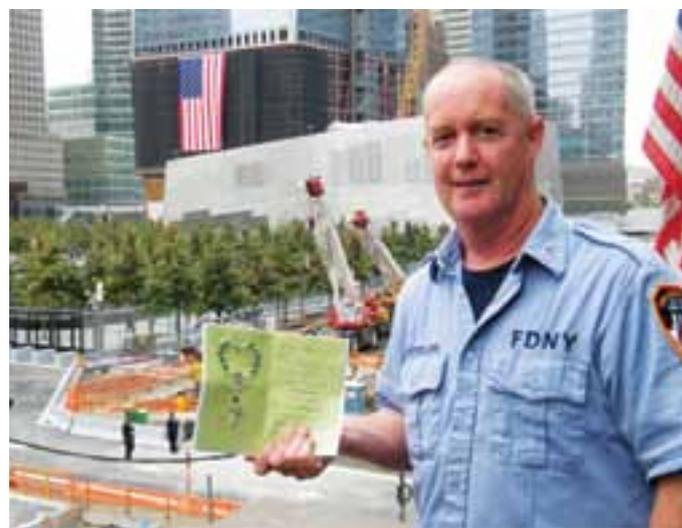
This morning was the FDNY formal commemoration ceremony, held at their memorial on the Upper West side at 100th Street, on Riverside Park: the same ceremony and location as the last nine years.

A very simple ceremony, just for firefighters, families, friends and supporters, as is the norm. Police, Port Authority, the workers and all who fell on the day, along with those who have since (many from exposure to the dust) were remembered also.

The international representation was most impressive, but we were kept on the periphery, as it should be on this day. The monument, stairs and the road in front



The Chief of Department - centre - saluting the passing parade.



were reserved for FDNY personnel, flanked perfectly by their supporters from Fire Services worldwide. Again the flags show the immensity of 343.

9/11 occurred at Alarm Box "Manhattan 8089".

The names of the fallen were then read out, accompanied by the toll of a bell for each, only interrupted for silence at key moments, when the planes crashed, buildings fell. This was a most understated affair, which in fact magnified its power.

The symbolic 343 flags, the 9/11 memorial flag which flew over the site when the rescue and recovery was underway, and overseas firefighters standing in attention whilst the names were read out.

Immediately before the wreath was laid, a sole singer, unaccompanied, sang Amazing Grace.

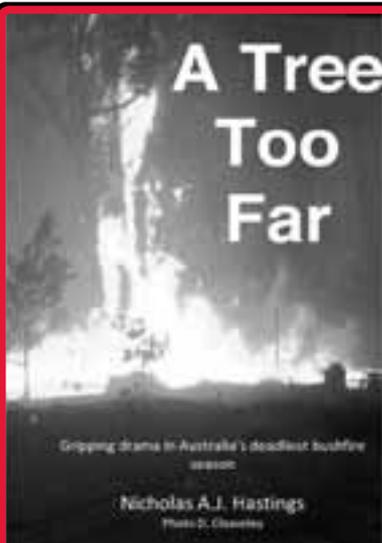
Of course with such a song at such a time many peoples' emotions crystallised, along with the performer.

The 343 wreath was laid, the service concluded, just on a hour after it started.

Australia was well represented, but we all stayed out of the way. No outlandish shirts, hats; we mostly all stood separately. It was clear that we were here exclusively to support the Fire Brigade family.

At dusk the pipes and drums will play at the memorial on the side of Fire House 10/10, Liberty Street, WTC. ■





A Tree Too Far

Nicholas A. J.
Hastings

Set in the lead-up to and events of the bushfires in Victoria on 7 February 2009.

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Cambodia

Australian firefighters who volunteer to equip and train Cambodia's fledgling firefighting service have assisted in a successful firefight in Prey Veng province, 120 km west of Phnom Penh.



The fire broke out on November 4 at 1045 local time in a rural village just outside Prey Veng.

Thanks to the AFIRE Team, a fire with serious potential was contained, restricting the loss to one house and partial damage to another.

The Brigade reported on scene in less than 10 minutes.

The rapid response, coupled with a firefighting force of 36 firefighters, with pumper/tankers of 6000 and 9000 litres respectively and the AFIRE team of Melbourne-based instructors from the MFB and CFA, along with their translators and liaison personnel made up the complement.

It was an impressive response to the emergency, one that any country would be hard pressed to match.

Apart from the save, AFIRE treated the house owner for burns to her feet, and to a villager with a laceration to his face from falling roofing iron.

Community briefing

At the conclusion of the event, AFIRE member, Phnom Penh Deputy Fire Chief



VANNRA briefed the gathered villagers over the fire truck PA system as to what had happened, and that Cambodia's "bad season" was coming, the regular dry and windy period of the year.

He also explained the cause of the fire, and that all of villagers should look and learn from this local emergency.

AFIRE

Why were there so many firefighters, appliances and international instructors at the ready in rural Cambodia?

At the most opportune time, AFIRE was completing its five-year project to equip and train firefighters at every one of Cambodia's 24 provinces.

The training at Prey Veng marked the culmination of a five-year dream, driven by massive efforts to achieve a standard equipped and trained fire brigade for all Cambodia.

The November fire rammed home the need for a fire service, and gave a real validation of the AFIRE project, and especially everyone who has and is still actively support the project.

This instance showed the whole community that their Fire Service is also available to the "poor rural" as well as the cities.

The firefighters were very moved by the villagers' genuine gratitude and appreciation for their prompt, professional and ultimately successful response.

The AFIRE members from Victoria were also very touched by the genuine appreciation from the community as well as that from the Provincial Government whose Executive members, along with National Ministry of the Interior Officers had been observing training and visited the fire scene.

What better advertisement for the AFIRE program? Never a more concrete example could be provided.

The Melbourne Team is SSO Ken Edwards from the MFB Training Department, SSO Shaun McRoberts from CFA Hallam, and Peter Lucas from HQ Operations.

More information at AFIRE.org.au ■

BY PETER LUCAS



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