



RURAL FIRE BRIGADES ASSOCIATION QUEENSLAND INC. ABN. 37 417 474 709

General Manager Annual General Meeting Report 2020

We did more of the good stuff than any other year and it's going to keep going.

The objects for which the Association is established are: -

1. To consider and make representation in matters affecting the welfare and efficiency of Rural Fire Brigades and Brigade Members.
2. To provide financial assistance and support to Rural Fire Brigades and their Brigade Members.

Last year - Satsleeves – 100, Buy Local Grants – 159, Hardship grants – 46, Normal grants – 15, Anglo Coal mop up units - 40, Brigade Specific Donations 10 times forecast, initiated the concept, contributed towards 800 bushfire mapping tablets designed and produced a new type of fire vehicle on time and on budget.

Behind these numbers is a lot of work by RFBAQ reps and staff to ensure that grants are processed and invoices are paid. This has all been done with our current staff numbers and on top of some enormous hurdles such as almost everyone working offsite due to Covid – 19.

And with the 46 hardship grants there are a lot of brigade members who are very thankful for what the RFBAQ does.

Last year we also opened our building, worked with RFSQ to produce place based decision making cards, finalised Legal Status of Brigades after 10 years of work, had nominations for RFBAQ Townsville and Burnett Rep roles and saw the completion of the RFSQ/Blackall Tambo Regional Council PPB purchasing trial that was created by the RFBAQ. We fought Blue Card to a standstill for the moment and changed our grant process so that grants could no longer get lost in Area Offices.

We saw RFBAQ reps out and about in Landcruisers engaging with brigades and members in a way that we have not done before and the collating of the feedback forms will be another way for us to show that we are trying to engage with those brigades that take the time to engage with us. As an aside, at the end of August, GP and Nick Swadling took a Landcruiser up to Tambo to meet with Greendale RFB. The brigade members who attended said that they had never heard of the RFBAQ and did not know who we are or what we do. I had Dave look up if we had supported the brigade with grants previously and within the last 3 years the brigade had received 2 RFBAQ grants and also benefited from the RFSQ/Tambo Blackall grant process we initiated. This is an example of how information that we give to a brigade does not always get through to all brigade members.

In such an unprecedented year of both devastating fire that brought not only calls for more support from brigades and members but also brought unprecedented donations into the RFBAQ and then radical change to an established routine and work environment, I need to specifically thank the people who kept the wheels on the bus

going round and round. Ash and Jess had their worlds turned upside down when both of their weddings had to be cancelled, yet they did not miss a beat. Overseeing more transactions than ever before, processing more brigade grants than ever before and much of it while working from home is a testament to their commitment and professionalism. Simon and Karen from the Contact Centre helped and supported all of our staff while the centre was closed and ensured that every week, every member of staff was individually and personally telephoned to make sure they were alright and ask how they were faring. Jemma on the front desk was only quite new to the RFBAQ, but she was onsite every day and adapted to every change and challenge very well. Dave processed a huge number of grants, fielded more calls and fixed more problems than he can remember and he is still not sure if he is coming or going. In all this last year proves that the RFBAQ has value to brigades and brigade members and that the RFBAQ is a flexible and responsive machine that can and does produce quality outcomes.

This year we have already committed to 7 Landcruisers, 2 Heavy Attacks and 1 Mercedes Benz with a total allocated value of almost \$2 million dollars and that is before we receive normal grant applications, hardship grants or start any special grant programmes or give the 8th Landcruiser to a brigade without a truck.

We may see some large donations continue to come through as the RFBAQ is seen as a trusted organisation for trusts and large donors, but I don't think we will again see the mass outpouring of international and local support that the last fire season generated. I believe that people will be more discerning with their donations and that the RFBAQ has been very open and transparent about what we are doing for the brigades and brigade members.

At the conclusion of the triennial RFBAQ election process and when reps have been elected onto the Management Committee and to all the other position available, we will send an election wrap up with the information to all Brigade Secretaires and Brigade 1st Officers. This will be another way of getting information out directly to brigades that we hope the secretaries and 1st Officers will distribute to their brigade members.

To those Reps who have stood down or retired, I would like to thank you for what you have achieved and to the new reps who are at their first meeting, welcome.