

2022 General Manager Annual Report

Every year we are doing new things and building on former new things to benefit our members who are all the registered Rural Fire Brigades in Queensland.

Free **universal 1st aid** training for brigade members is a signature achievement for the year. This is something that the QFES has been actively fighting against supplying and now it is here. The RFBAQ has been remorselessly slogging away at this and in the end the fire service gave up. There was no large announcement from the QFES, no supporting paperwork and no desire to see it be adopted by brigades due to the extra work involved. It is now the job of the RFBAQ to ensure that brigade members are aware that this is available and make the QFES provide a workable pathway for brigade members to access this lifesaving training.

This is very much the case with the 4wd, 4,000l, 4 seat **Bushfire Heavy**; a class of vehicle that is available in every other fire service to volunteers to meet their local needs but one that the QFES said that they would never build. The vehicle should be ready for the RFSQ Summit in May and then will go around the brigades for feedback as it is version 1.0.

Up to 200 **crew protection sprays** will be retrofitted to medium attacks and all new medium attacks will come fitted with crew sprays, this is another important safety requirement for brigades that the QFES refused to fit for many years and it again was only through RFBAQ persistence and a brigade having them fitted that the QFES unwillingly gave in. As an interesting side note, the first rollout of bushfire crew protection sprays on new QFES vehicles was on Fire and Rescue tankers.

The **FusionCruiser** is a great success, combining the RFBAQ designed Landcruiser with the crew safety learnings from the Innovation Platform. It has produced the safest most practical light attack ever produced and at AFAC in Adelaide other fire agencies were amazed by what we have achieved as an association for our members. This vehicle will stay on the road until it is given away to a brigade next June and the application process paperwork will be distributed in December this year.

The **Innovation Platform** was given to Murphys Creek RFB in August and they are very happy to have a vehicle that meets the needs of the local very hilly terrain and Kunwarara Rural Fire Brigade received a **Landcruiser version 2** following our AGM last year.

An initiative of the RFBAQ, the **Queensland Parliamentary Friends of Rural Fire Brigades** is an event that will allow all Members of Parliament to meet with elected Rural Fire Brigade leaders from across Queensland to gain a better understanding of the 1,400 brigades that defend 93% of Queensland.

RFBAQ Reps meet face to face with politicians regularly at brigade and other various functions and we have created a new environment that lets brigade leaders tell their own community defence stories.

Over 60% of all Members of Parliament said that they were coming and many of those MP's do not have brigades in their electorates, so meeting leaders from across the state will only reinforce the perception of what volunteer firefighters contribute to Queensland. I think if we held a function with only RFBAQ reps then many of the MP's would not have attended as it would be seen as a filtered voice.

We will align this again in 2023 with Yellow Ribbon Day after the yearly sitting dates are advised early in the new year.

This year in addition to our standard grants we have seen brigade members access 16 **Hardship Grants**. 11 of these have been as a result of flood damage, 4 funeral related and 1 for fire damage. This type of grant is direct support to a brigade member and our paperless process for volunteers [s](#) makes applying much easier when they are in a stressful situation.

RFSQ **fully funded fire sheds** is another RFBAQ initiative and to see this expanded from the catalyst of Ogmoo RFB in the Rockhampton Area to 11 million dollars this year is a growth of concept that I would never have imagined. Credit for this massive funding injection is directly attributed to Minister Mark Ryan MP who advocated to treasury. That is why some of the budget papers have the money listed and some do not as it went through at time of printing.

The **5,000l skid** project will commence its ground truthing in February 2023 as in the central west and far west there is an increased risk, decreasing population and a need for change in the equipment provided to brigades. The skid is being manufactured to RFBAQ specifications by Nu Tank in Rockhampton and will have a Honda motor and Davey firefighter pump. Using a local supplier and a trusted Honda/Davey combination will ensure a quicker acceptance by local brigade members and these are all brands that they use everyday and know how to service and maintain with locally sourced parts. If this programme were to be rolled out on a larger scale I would envisage that a series of suppliers would be used that sits with the local east / west economies in Queensland.

The RFBAQ has teamed up with Telstra, RFSQ and a very generous donor to supply and install mobile **phone boosters** in brigades across Queensland. 39 mobile phone boosters have been delivered to brigades and now the brigades are waiting on RFSQ Kedron to organise installation. The spare boosters have been delivered to Kedron to be allocated to brigades that applied and who did not make the initial allocation.

In the agenda for the General Meeting tomorrow you will see a proposal for a **200 x \$5,000 RFBAQ Buy Local Brigade Grants** proposal. This is a \$1 million grants package in addition to our current grant programmes and is 100% fully funded from donations. The previous Buy Local grants

programme was oversubscribed and the brigades found real value in purchasing small items locally and local suppliers and tradies really liked supporting their local brigades.

In addition to these standout achievements there is the daily job of just being an association, with local **RFBAQ Reps** providing direct advice and support to brigades in their areas and the advocacy that goes with that at an Area, Regional and State level. The **RFBAQ office in Gympie and the contact centre** also continue to service RFBAQ Rep needs, provide grant completion and advice to brigades and to connect with Queenslanders through our contact centre to give them the opportunity to purchase art union tickets and or make tax deductible donations.

In this year's report I have also attached a letter from our accountant that is separate from the Audited Report as the final sentence really validates what we are trying to do for the brigades –

From Revenue gained, we would believe the association is still enjoying strong support from the general public, which is the underlying ingredient for the financial success of the association.