

General Manager's Report

FOR OCTOBER 2024 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

In the last financial year, the RFBAQ has provided \$866,163.98 ex GST to brigades through the donation of the FusionCruiser, Buy Local Brigade Grants, Standard Grants, Brigade Resource packs and Brigade Specific Donations.

Over the last 5 years the RFBAQ has provided over \$6 million, which is a phenomenal achievement for a small state-based charity.

That's real, on the ground support and improvement for brigades and brigade members across Queensland and shows that the objects of the Association are being met –

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

The reason we can do this is that we have a mission statement, core central beliefs, direction from a State Executive and Management Committee made up of brigade leaders and a small team of committed staff.

At our AGM last year my report opened with this sentence - Since we came together last year in Townsville the current and future world that brigades operate in to defend their communities across 93% of Queensland is going to change dramatically.

Looking back on the last year that sentence was a huge understatement and it is now obvious to everyone that the profound changes that we forecast as a result of the bad legislative changes have all been true. The Senior Fire Officers and Labor Members of Parliament who repeatedly said that the RFBAQ were spreading false information regarding our statements that brigades will now lose their unincorporated status and become part of the fire service, that all equipment owned by brigades will become property of the State and that brigade money will become State money in the future have gone remarkably quiet post 1st July 2024. That is because everything that we said would happen, did. It's not because we were particularly prescient, it is because we took the time to sit down, read the draft legislation and were able to understand what the change would mean to the 1,400 brigades and brigade members across Queensland.

This is something that very few other people did. Those who did not read the legislation instead chose to repeat what they had heard from the vested interests who drafted the legislation. It is far easier in today's social media driven society to dismiss something that you do not like to hear as untrue / fake news, and that is where the herd went.

In this world it is important to remember that not everything that makes you happy is true and not everything that makes you unhappy is false.

Now what we have in the fire service is a mess and the mess cannot be cleaned up easily and cannot be cleaned up without clear policy direction from government and a fire service leadership team that acknowledges that the service was created to support and empower brigades and communities, not to dictate direction and demand compliance to Brisbane.

The RFBAQ will endeavour to work with whichever flavour of political party that Queensland chooses and will provide consistent advice and advocacy without fear or favour.

Justin Choveaux