



PRESIDENT
ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2012 – 2013

- I no longer feel that I am the subject of the ministerial confidential instruction in relation to the Malone Review and other matters. I received information for matters that I was asked to investigate and I have permission from Ted Malone to speak openly. I will not be naming people for legal issues as I fear for the future of RFSQ paid staff. Anything I do say though I can support with evidence. They can now be made public.

- On 11th September 2012, 55 RFSQ paid staff were sacked. We were advised that all positions would be declared vacant and they would be appointed by merit, not by open forum.

The RFBAQ were invited to possibly have input into their appointments. The RFBAQ commenced 'Operation Yellow' at the General Meeting on 15th September 2012 that I believe was extremely effective and as a result RFSQ staff were advised that their letters of dismissal were suspended. I contacted the Ministers Office requesting that a letter be sent withdrawing the termination notice received by paid staff. The wording remained held and not withdrawn.

- We achieve the review into the Rural Fire Service known as the Malone Review.

Originally the Malone Review panel was going to consist of 7 Senior Urban Officers and a representation of the RFBAQ with no submissions or consultation. Fortunately we have Ted Malone who put his foot down refusing to accept this and nominated the review panel instead.

Ted attended a meeting at Rockhampton where it was brought to his attention that there had not yet been a woman appointed on the review panel. Kerry was subsequently appointed and became a real asset to the review team.

Due to the PAC Report I believed that there was a legal opinion on Rural Fire Brigade's. Ted Malone requested a copy from QFRS and was advised that it did not exist. After requesting it again, Ted was advised that it was not for distribution, they later released it to him.

There were some clear messages received by the review panel. One was the huge bureaucracy that volunteers faced that impacted on how they could fight fires.

Another issue faced was that the QFRS promotions panel system is seriously flawed. For example, there were two Inspector positions whose promotion process was more than questionable. The matter finally came to a head when a promotion panel that had two Senior Offices from QFRS changed the candidates scores in front of witnesses, in order for their favourites to be appointed. This incident will be brought to the Crime and Misconduct Commission.

During in the review process I also received direct attack and it was alleged that I had breached confidentiality as a result of a conversation I had with AG. Ted Malone conducted a serious investigation and found it to be completely untrue. The bureaucracy that we were dealing with would go to any length to seriously damage the Malone Review.

During the Malone Review I investigated several fires after complaints received by volunteers. At this stage thing became nasty, one of our Representatives received a personal threat which has been given to the police.

- Last General Meeting the issue of out of pocket expenses was raised as some volunteers on deployment are on unemployment benefits and do not receive an income. Peter Varley responded to our email to Neil Gallant regarding the issue stating that, *'Rural Fire Brigade Volunteers do not have the ability to claim incidentals when on deployment. The incidental allowance is part of the award condition for paid staff of QFRS. This covers things like*



newspapers and toothpaste when paid staff are sent away overnight. Volunteers are not covered under an award and there is no provision for a volunteers to claim out of pocket expenses’.

- Then there is the matter of David Barbuto, who was stood down from all operational duties due to his diabetes. It came about as he applied to go on deployment and was open and honest about his type one diabetes. Subsequently he was immediately stood down. David tried to obtain justice through the justice tribunal representing himself. He was shocked to learn that they had two solicitors and a private practice barrister representing QFRS. He had to withdraw his complaint as QFRS would be seeking him to cover their costs.
- Brendon Goldsmith was employed by QFRS however because he stood up for the rights of volunteers he was driven out of the fire service. Brendon resigned and went home where he was visited by his local District Inspector who gave him temporary employment. Brendon continued to volunteer and regrettably he was standing in front of his community delivering a Prepare. Act. Survive presentation when he passed away.

Before his funeral the RFBAQ was contacted by RFSQ advising that WorkCover would be too slow to cover his funeral cost so the RFBAQ paid for everything. We advised Brendon’s wife, Tracy Goldsmith, that when the Workers Compensation claim came through that we would not be seeking repayment. She had been advised by QFRS that she would be fully looked after which was completely false. The response received from WorkCover stated that the claim was denied as Brendon Goldsmith had not suffered as a result of his workplace.

- We have evidence that activities of QFRS Training and Emergency Management (TEM) have been trying to rip off brigades. For example, TEM advised QFRS that because the block of land that the brigade was happy to burn for \$1,000 was commercial property, the brigade is not allowed to conduct the burn. TEM then wanted to charge \$14,000 per block.
- The Malone Review that was presented to the Minister’s Office was version 5. What came back was version 6 which was so watered down that Ted Malone called for an urgent meeting to go through both versions to put back in what was needed. This resulted in version 7 that was accepted by cabinet. The day that the Keelty Report was to be released, Ted Malone still had not seen the report. The Keelty Report contained all the changes that the Ministers Office had watered down previously in version 6 of the Malone Review.
- RFBAQ involvement and the Strategic Committees.
I received confidential information that the RFBAQ and Representatives were being set up. Our participation was discussed at the SEM and as the President, I rejected strongly to our continued involvement on the Strategic Committees though I could not tell the SEM why.
- QFRS declined the joint training package that had been set up for brigades and SES as they wanted to create their own training package.
- I wish to thank;
 - JB for taking over the day to day running with CAVFA
 - JT and YT who has virtually taken over my daily duties of the RFBAQ



RURAL FIRE BRIGADES ASSOCIATION
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- General Manager JC, whose dedication to the organisation is without question, a young head with a hundred years of experience
 - TF as our Operations Manager, Tracy you have guided us from the position that was absolutely terrible to now that we can see the light
 - RJ the quiet achiever, with FireLine and Smoke Signals
 - AB who has become the welcoming voice of the Association on the telephone, the professional way you conduct yourself
 - BN has worked day and night on the constitution
 - Last but not least when the Malone Review was killed by the Keelty Review, I needed support in a hurry. AG stepped up taking leave off work supporting right through including writing the RFBAQ response to Keelty Review 'An Examination of the Executive Summary'
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- The acceptance of the Keelty Report, should it be implemented, is the death of Rural Fire Brigades in Queensland.

 - The new Emergency Management Fire Rescue Levy can only be described as the great rural rip off. We face a torrid time ahead of us and it is up to the elected Representatives to set the direction the Association takes in relation to all these matters. I believe that my policy of consultation before confrontation has been seen as a weakness.