



**ANNUAL REPORT 2014**  
**AND**  
**FINANCIAL**  
**STATEMENTS TO**  
**30 JUNE 2014**

United Firefighters Union of Australia  
Tasmania Branch  
379 Elizabeth Street  
North Hobart Tas 7000  
Ph: 03 6234 9331

# United Firefighters Union of Australia Tasmania Branch

## Annual Report 2014

### & Financial Statements to 30 June 2014

#### Secretary's report

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of March this year BCOM appointed me as the Branch Secretary for the remainder of the elected term which will expire in March 2015. It is a position that is steeped in tradition and privilege. I thank BCOM and the UFUA member's for the support provided to me during my time this year as the Branch Secretary.

The role of Secretary would be very difficult to fulfil without the support of all BCOM members. In the main BCOM members provide their time offering support to the union office in many ways including; out of hour's telephone conferences, BCOM meetings, participating in TFS committees and being my sounding board on various matters on a daily basis. In fact one of the most valuable assets that BCOM members provide to the UFUA is their own time and it is provided willingly and always with their best endeavours. Something that is possibly not fully appreciated by the membership on occasion is how much of an effort BCOM members contribute to always trying to maintain and improve on membership conditions and equipment.

Special mention must be made to outgoing Branch Secretary Vinny Males. Vinny stood up in difficult circumstances and supported the union when it was absolutely critical for stability of all that is and has become the UFUA in Tasmania. Well done Vinny your support and endless hours of commitment to the union is appreciated by not only myself and BCOM but the broader membership.

Under Vinny's stewardship the UFUA achieved significant outcomes for the membership. These outcomes include but are not limited to the following as stated by National Secretary Peter Marshall in a letter to UFUA Branch Secretaries;

***I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work that Vinny has done as Branch Secretary and the many achievements of the Tasmania Branch under his stewardship including the reversing of the Tasmania Fire Service budget cuts and of course the enactment of the presumptive legislation to recognise occupational cancer for Tasmanian firefighters. Vinny intends to remain involved on the Tasmania Branch committee and we hope to continue to see him at National meetings.***

Special mention must also go to Darren Gye who was President of the UFUA Tasmania Branch from November 2010 until earlier this year. Darren was an enthusiastic contributor to all UFUA meetings and campaigns. Your efforts and contributions were always appreciated. Well done Darren.

Finally thank you to Chris Tomes who took over the vacant President's position for the remainder of the current term. I speak with Chris on at least a daily basis about all things UFUA and TFS. Chris has provided invaluable support to me during my term and always with the best interests of the UFUA and the membership foremost in any advice that is offered.

## **UFUA National**

The UFUA national office continues to achieve outstanding results for all UFUA branches.

Significant initiatives successfully undertaken by the national union include: the presumptive legislation campaign, state of the art turnout gear and increasing political awareness amongst members.

Matters discussed by the National Executive throughout 2014 included: Superannuation and preservation age for Firefighters, Firefighter Cancer Foundation, National Firefighter Memorial, Climate Change, Training and the professionalism of firefighting, Award modernisation, Safe systems of work, Defence firefighters, National website and UFUA Rules Review.

## **Trainee Firefighters 2014**

The TFS welcomed fifteen new trainee firefighters to the Fire Service at a function on Sunday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August. The trainees commenced their training programme on Monday the 4<sup>th</sup> of August. On behalf of the Tasmania Branch Committee of Management it is my pleasure to welcome the following trainee firefighters to their new career as a professional firefighter and of course as a member of the United Firefighters Union of Australia Tasmania Branch.

Robert Boost, Joanne Conley, Julian Foale, Lynette Gay, Andrew Geard, Mitchell Grace, John Lyons, David Moore, David Mulcahy, Robin O'Brien, Nicholas Perry, Nicholas Rowbottom, Cameron Stuart, Dean Townsend, Alex Wilson

These trainee firefighters successfully completed their training and celebrated their success at the Closing Ceremony to their development programme on Friday the 14<sup>th</sup> of November.

## **Trainee Firefighters 2013**

This year's Annual Report is fortunate enough to be able to announce two trainee firefighter programmes. On 13 December 2013 the following trainee firefighters celebrated their closing ceremony and were welcomed into the Fire Service.

Luke Bateman, Tim Bowden, Peter Bradow, Sandra Eaton, Alex Godman, Jeremy Hughes, Scott Hunter, Andrew Lemm, Laura McCaughey, Darren McGinniss, Scott Meech, Daniel Morgan, Ben Phipps, Stephen Raudino, Adam Stacey, Alexander Wendell-Smith

Well done and hope you have enjoyed your year on station.

## Enterprise Bargaining 2014

Following months of inactivity due to the new Liberal Government policy of “no negotiations with unions” the UFUA successfully lodged an application to the Tasmanian Industrial Commission which enabled negotiations to recommence. At the time of writing this report the Government had not provided clear advice to the UFUA on the Government wages policy. This is not acceptable as we have a long standing commitment to an operative date being the first full pay period on or after 1 December each year. With the Government initially refusing to negotiate and subsequently failing to advise of their wages policy it is not appropriate that UFUA members should potentially suffer a disadvantage on the operative date of any increase should one be available.

The Tasmania Branch has commenced negotiations for the 2014 Enterprise Agreement with the Tasmania Fire Service. Two meetings have been held to date.

### **The 2014 Bargaining Claim comprises the following;**

- Minimum staffing levels;
- Uniform and personal protective clothing;
- History of employer superannuation contributions for firefighters and officers; and
- Lateral entry by experienced firefighters.
- Review of classification descriptions and classification relativities for:
  - Firefighter
  - Station Officer
  - Senior Station Officer
  - District Officer
  - Communications Officer
  - Supervisor, FireComm
- Include award provisions into the agreement. Work will take place to consolidate inconsistent provisions and consider any other provisions that may need to be included or removed from the Agreement.
- Review of Interstate International Deployment Provisions
- Finalise administrative instructions and outstanding matters.
- Wage increase to be claimed for the life of the agreement.

BCOM authorised the following BCOM members to negotiate the claim on behalf of the UFUA membership, Vinny Males, Colin Lockhart, John Holloway, Val Ansett and Greg Cooper.

## CAF's Deployment

A number of UFUA members were deployed to the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire for an extended period of time. The Tasmanian CAF's deployment was very successful with the capacity of the CAFS application providing exceptional results for suppressing the fire and on the performance and capability of the vehicle and the operational crew. The fire broke out in February and lasted for approximately 45 days. The Tasmania Branch successfully negotiated award conditions for professional firefighters who attended the incident. Unfortunately we have not finalised the appropriate rate to be paid for travel to and from the deployment. These discussions are continuing.

## Presumptive Legislation Review

This review is required by the *Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act*. Following discussions at BCOM and a round of General Meetings the Tasmania Branch in conjunction with the UFUA National Office prepared and submitted to the Treasurer a substantial document for the review. The Volunteers representatives developed a petition claiming the current legislation to be unfair and discriminatory because in addition to latency period it has an activity level against a volunteer. I will submit that this activity level is however necessary because Professional Firefighters on shift must respond to an alarm call. Volunteers always have a choice. The busy Volunteers are covered by the legislation due to the fact that they will attend 150 incidents over a five and ten year period. That's fifteen turnouts a year to be eligible for the 10 year cancers, (Breast and testicular cancer), 15 year cancers (Bladder, Kidney, Non - Hodgkin's lymphoma, Multiple Myeloma, prostate, ureter and colorectal cancer, 25 year latency period cancer oesophageal and 30 turn outs a year for the two 5 year cancers being brain cancer and leukaemia. We have not commented publicly on the volunteer petition. We have received advice from the Treasurer noting our submission.

## Change of Government

With the change of government comes a pause whilst new policies and procedures are developed. The UFUA has negotiated for the past 16 years with a Labor Government and will be hopeful of being able to develop a working relationship with the new Liberal Government.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge one of the many achievements of the previous Minister David O'Byrne. Since the introduction of Presumptive Cancer Legislation one professional firefighter and his family have successfully submitted a workers compensation claim. The support for firefighters provided under the new laws is substantial and takes away the worry of medical treatment and wages whilst recovering from serious illness. Well Done David you are very well respected by all professional firefighters for your support for workers. We appreciate your efforts. You have made a difference.

## Liberal Government Initiatives

### ***August 28 Budget***

28.5 million for Fuel Reduction Burning, tenure blind. This is a good initiative that needs a funding commitment beyond the four years as set out in the budget.

2.446 million cost to TFS for transfer of SES from DPEM to TFS. This initiative has been met with mixed reactions but prima-facie appears to have some merit. Unfortunately there does not appear to be any consideration given to ongoing funding. The UFUA met with the Minister shortly after this announcement to discuss and suggest funding models that would support the initiative.

### ***Crown Employees' Salaries Bill***

This legislation was not supported by the Upper House and was opposed by the UFUA and the Broader Union movement. The Bill was finally withdrawn by the Government.

### ***Anti – Protester's Bill***

This Bill was considered by the Union movement to be a very hostile piece of legislation. Originally developed to prevent protestors in forests from interfering with legitimate forestry operations the Bill went further than the original intent. The Bill was broadly opposed and eventually passed the Upper House after being heavily amended.

### ***Corporate Services Review***

The UFUA was notified along with the rest of the TFS on the 6<sup>th</sup> of November of the review of Corporate Services functions by the Secretary of the Department of Police and Emergency Management. This matter has been discussed at the latest round of general meetings where I have been authorised to pursue the reform with the TFS/DPEM, Government and if necessary, the broader community.

## Continuing the Consultation Process

**Consultation:** *means the full; meaningful and frank discussion of issues/proposals and the consideration of each party's views prior to any decision.*

The Tas Branch has presented this definition to the TFS and would prefer to have this matter agreed and captured in an industrial instrument. Consultation is an important process and should be dealt with consistently and thoroughly.

The TFS has advised the UFUA Tas Branch that not everything the TFS undertakes has to be agreed to by the union. We would not disagree with this as a number of issues within the TFS

do not affect the UFUA. What is not acceptable is a failure by the TFS to inform the union of what's going on. This type of approach will eventually lead to confrontation. This confrontation is about to begin. Bans and limitations are on the agenda for the next round of general meetings.

As a major contributor to and stakeholder with the TFS the failure by the TFS to embrace consultation is not welcomed. It is clear to the UFUA the TFS have a degree of work to do to be at the top of their game in this matter.

The UFUA represents members in various areas of the TFS. The majority of our members are employed as professional firefighters, but the UFUA also represents professionals in the TFS who work in;

- Shift work operations
- Brigade management
- Regional operations and volunteer management
- Career and volunteer training
- Community Fire Safety
- School Fire Education
- Building Safety
- Communications and dispatch
- Portable firefighting equipment installation and servicing (TasFire Equipment)
- TasFire Training

The union's strength is in the membership and the capacity of the union to work with our national office, the TFS and the community to achieve outcomes. Full meaningful and frank consultation is a very important part of this process.

## **Superannuation Inequities**

The UFUA has been asked by the membership to investigate with the TFS the reasons behind inequity in employer superannuation contributions for professional firefighters employed by the TFS.

It is apparent that since legislative reform in 2005 relating to Employer Superannuation contributions all professional firefighters employed by the TFS since that time have only been paid a 9% ( currently 9.25%) employer contribution into an accumulation fund. UFUA members employed before this date have maintained a 14% employer contribution rate.

It appears from a report developed by the TFS in consultation with the UFUA that the 3% productivity component of the superannuation contribution negotiated by Public Sector

Unions in 1988 has not been passed onto firefighters who were employed post the 2005 legislative reforms.

The UFUA has received a copy of the draft report and will further investigate this matter as part of the current bargaining negotiations.

## **Bans & Limitations**

17 days of bans and limitations ended on the 16th of Nov. The bans and limitations were necessary to finalise a long standing interpersonal dispute between a Professional firefighter, a Station Officer, and a Volunteer 3rd Officer that escalated on the 27th of Oct when the Brigade Chief from the Volunteer Brigade black banned the Station Officer. This matter was finally investigated to a conclusion by the TFS and the bans and limitations were able to be lifted. Matters associated with this dispute are subject to ongoing discussions between the UFUA and TFS.

## **Extra 9 Project**

This initiative, designed by the UFUA, is developed to include an extra professional firefighter position into the nine districts to support the District Officer and the Field Works Officer. The proposal was introduced to the Minister and the TFS and the UFUA is continuing to develop the proposal.

## **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**

This is an initiative being developed by the UFUA Tas Branch in conjunction with the National Office. The Campaign is designed to understand a number of matters relating to PTSD including;

- Understanding PTSD
- Understanding the prevalence of PTSD in the firefighting industry
- Understanding the prevalence of PTSD in broader emergency response
- Identifying possible causes of PTSD
- Identifying that I may have PTSD
- Identifying possible symptoms in firefighters
- Promoting awareness of PTSD for firefighters
- Providing PTSD awareness in trainee firefighter recruiting programmes
- Preparing firefighters by providing them with coping mechanisms for PTSD with appropriate training and management
- Developing ongoing PTSD wellness programmes
- Providing firefighters with PTSD with appropriate and ongoing support systems



- Introducing compulsory and regular briefings in a confidential environment for firefighters to have with a suitably qualified psychiatric specialist
- Securing adequate funding and commitment from fire services for the support of all the above in policy documents, industrial instruments and budget line items
- Identifying the impact of PTSD for firefighters at work and post-employment with the Fire service
- Undertaking a firefighter specific PTSD research study
- Developing a research paper specific to firefighters
- Securing Presumptive Workers Compensation legislation for firefighters who suffer PTSD

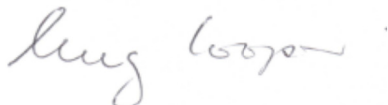
## Conclusion

The union has finished the year in a positive financial position with 355 union members, representing the largest number of members ever involved in the branch. This is very positive and the signs are good for the union moving forward.

I wish to thank our Office Manager Kae Jones for her ongoing support throughout the year. The union office is very small and needs good support and co-operation to function properly. I want to thank Kae for providing both of these attributes to myself, BCOM and all UFUA TAS branch members.

Finally, thank you to all the members for their support and assistance throughout the year.

I extend to you and your families all the best for the festive season.



Greg Cooper  
**Branch Secretary**  
12 December 2014