

**UNITED FIREFIGHTERS UNION OF AUSTRALIA  
TASMANIA BRANCH**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**10 DECEMBER 2010**

1. Introduction
2. EBA 2010
3. UFU National Committee of Management Perth 3 – 5 March 2010
4. UFU Tasmania Branch Conference 16 – 17 March 2010
5. North West Coast responses – media coverage
6. Superannuation
7. Survey of political parties
8. Workers Compensation
9. New Minister for Police and Emergency Management
10. Branch Committee of Management – planning workshop 7 & 8 October 2010
11. UFU Team Meetings
12. Office Refurbishment
13. Conclusion

**1. Introduction**

On 8 November 2010 the Branch Committee of Management received and accepted the resignation of Richard Warwick as Secretary of the UFU Tasmania Branch. Richard had been the Secretary since 1996 and has lead the UFU through a number of issues which included 1/3 on all vehicles, the inception of new turnout gear and an increase in fire fighters wages of 54% during his term. He also was available to members 24/7 and handled a lot of issues for members both personal and work related.

On Richard's departure and with advice from the National Secretary Peter Marshall, the Branch Committee of Management appointed Vincent Males as Secretary and Darren Gye as President. BCOM will now advertise for a full-time industrial officer to replace Richard Warwick. This will take a few months to organise so in the interim the National Office has provided the services of Casey Lee for industrial advice.

## **2. EBA 2010**

On Wednesday 8 December the EBA negotiating team accepted an offer for consideration from the TFS. Over the past few months the negotiating team has discussed a number of issues. The team has formed the opinion it is now up to the members of the UFU to make a decision on whether the TFS offer is acceptable. To this end a number of meetings have been organised around the state to hear members opinions.

These meetings will take place next week on 13,16,17 December. The TFS management will also hold information sessions during this week. They have tried to align their meetings close to the UFUs.

I would encourage all members to attend meetings so as they can make an informed decision.

If a majority or members in all work areas agree the TFS offer will be put to a postal vote on Tuesday 21 December.

## **3. UFU National Committee of Management Perth 3 – 5 March 2010**

The National Committee of Management held its annual conference and AGM in Perth Western Australia.

The National Committee of Management was informed at this meeting that New South Wales would be pulling out of the National Union and given that they had not paid their capitation fees the National Union has been left with a large debt as at 30 June 2010. This financial position that the National Union will find itself in as at 30 June 2010 has been confirmed by the union's auditors who attended this meeting. The auditors also informed that this working capital deficiency has resulted in the introduction of a provision for doubtful debts raised against the membership dues receivable by 30 June 2010. The provision has been raised due to the funds receivable being in dispute with the New South Wales Branch and subject to legal action which is being taken.

The National Committee of Management at this meeting passed a motion for capitation fees to be increased for all other states in order to cover the shortfall in income. The forecast for the 2010/2011 financial year taking into account this capitation fee increase has the National Union returning to a surplus position.

The Tasmania Branch sent a delegation of four to this conference. This was an important decision as we only have one voting right at this conference. Four people from BCOM were able to make an informed decision to support the funding of the national branch of the UFU of A to bring it back into a surplus position. The money will also be able to fund a number of national issues that are currently of great importance and need advancement. These include:

- (a) OH & S
- (b) Presumptive cancer legislation

- (c) Superannuation
- (d) PPC
- (e) Climate change

The decision to raise capitation fees has placed the National Union in a position to be able to represent its members nationally.

Many branches had to levy their members for the extra capitation fees. However the Tasmania Branch has been able to absorb this extra cost. It is good to see that the National Office has taken the appropriate measures to keep the National Union operating.

#### **4. UFU Tasmania Branch Conference 2010 – 16 and 17 March**

The Tasmania Branch held a two day conference of Branch Committee of Management members and Union Workplace Representatives at Rydges Hotel in Hobart on 16 and 17 March this year.

This conference started the EBA process off by giving all workplace delegates the opportunity to have input into a draft EBA claim.

All major political parties were also invited to attend and give a response to the survey questions which were sent to them.

The Tasmanian Liberals and the Australian Labor Party promised to continue wage parity with the mainland states.

All who attended agreed that the conference was a huge success.

#### **5. North West Coast responses – media coverage**

The UFU campaign for a third twenty-four hour fire and rescue crew on the North West Coast attracted a significant amount of attention from the media and included the Branch Committee of Management placing a paid advertisement in the Advocate Newspaper in March this year to set the record straight.

The UFU will continue to work towards securing a safe system of work for its members on the North West Coast.

#### **6. Superannuation**

Correspondence was received from the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) in July this year in response to our correspondence from December 2009 and our further correspondence in April 2010 raising concerns in relation to the State Fire Commission Superannuation Scheme.

ASIC's decision is that they had reviewed the previous complaint and the additional information provided. Following the review of the information provided

their principal conclusion is that it was reasonably open to ASIC, in accordance with its obligations, to exercise its discretion not to take further action in relation to the UFU's complaint.

They also advised that ASIC does not have jurisdiction over the Tasmania Fire Service and the Department of Treasury and Finance which are arms of the Tasmanian State government. They further advised that ASIC does not have jurisdiction over the Retirement Benefits Fund Board (RBF Board) as this is an exempt public sector fund.

## **7. Survey of political parties**

The President of the Police Association of Tasmania, Assistant Secretary of the Health and Community Services Union and the Secretary of the UFU developed a joint questionnaire to be put to all of the major political parties in the lead up to the March 2010 state election. Questions included protecting emergency services workers from assault, maintaining comparable wages with the mainland for emergency services workers, staffing levels and a better deal for sufferers of critical incident stress disorder.

A more comprehensive survey that related only to the Tasmania Fire Service was also developed and put to the major political parties.

The survey results were received on the eve of the UFU two-day conference held on 16 and 17 March 2010.

While the survey responses were somewhat mixed, both the Tasmanian Liberals and the Australian Labor Party promised to continue to pay Tasmanian police officers, ambulance officers and firefighters an average of the pay of their mainland counterparts.

## **8. Workers Compensation**

In late 2009 the Tasmanian Government made significant improvements to the workers compensation system.

An important detail to remember is that the workers compensation system is a no fault system and this means that an employee can have a claim accepted even if the injury was their own fault. The employer can also dispute the claim. If this happens or is likely to happen the employee needs to see the unions' lawyers. This service is free for the first appointment. Further assistance can be the subject of discussions between the member, the UFU and our lawyers. The UFU Secretary/Industrial Officer will always make time to go with a member to see our lawyers.

## **9. New Minister for Police and Emergency Management**

The March 2010 state election saw the appointment of the new Minister for

Police and Emergency Management Lin Thorp.

## **10. Branch Committee of Management planning workshop 7 & 8 October 2010**

Strategic planning, including short, medium and long term, has been identified as areas that require work. The Branch Committee of Management recognizes that it needs to take an active leadership role in this area and develop a level of strategic planning and management skills that adequately reflect where the union's members want us to be.

To assist the UFU to gain those strategic planning and management skills to skillfully represent the interests and achieve the best possible outcomes for members the Branch Committee of Management held a two day strategic planning conference in Hobart on 7 and 8 October 2010 at Unions Tasmania.

An outside consultant was engaged to assist the Branch Committee of Management with the following:

- (a) facilitation of strategic planning and strategic thinking
- (b) drafting a strategic plan
- (c) development of an implementation strategy for the strategic plan
- (d) advice and assistance in putting the implementation strategy into action

We have taken the first step in a long journey and recognize there is a long way to go and a lot of work to do. We will keep our members informed along the way.

## **11. UFU Team Meetings**

In June this year the Branch Committee of Management instigated a schedule of fortnightly Team Meetings with the two union employees. This was based on the TFS feedback sessions model. Eleven meetings have been held to date and have given our staff members the ability to raise and discuss any topic or issue that comes to mind. One significant outcome from these meetings has been the total refurbishment of the UFU Tasmania Branch offices.

Other issues that have been raised include:

- The need for better administrative procedures/policies
- The documentation of those policies including procedures manuals
- Cessation planning
- SOD's for the Administrative Assistant and Secretary/Industrial Officer
- Improved communication
- Improved planning of work priorities

We intend to continue these Team Meetings as we believe it is essential that the employees of the union have a regular forum where they can offer and receive feedback and continue to achieve the best possible outcomes for our members.

## **12. Office refurbishment**

Prior to the refurbishment the office environment could be best described as appalling. Both employees planned and coordinated the refurbishment and the results are amazing. They now have a work place that they look forward to coming to every day and as a union we no longer feel embarrassed bringing someone into our offices.

The refurbishment has included repairs to the outside of the building, new lighting, blinds, painting throughout, new office furniture and replacement of outdated IT equipment. As agreed, our landlord Unions Tasmania is providing the UFU with a twelve month rent holiday to pay approximately one third of the cost back to the UFU. The very modest financial cost to the union is around \$10,000.

Once again our special thanks to Fiona Dawson from Dawson Designs for her professionalism and commitment to the UFU's office refurbishment.

## **13. Conclusion**

On behalf of the membership the BCOM would like to acknowledge the invaluable work that Kae does. Kae often goes above and beyond her duties to ensure the smooth running of our Union office.

So a big thank you to Kae!

It has been a busy and sometimes trying 12 months. However the BCOM has gained an enormous amount of experience. The BCOM have taken on a much greater responsibility for the direction our union takes. We have a strong desire to move forward providing accountability, transparency and strong leadership.

Vincent Males

**Secretary**

10 December 2010