

FRFANZ Chairpersons Annual Report 2016

Welcome to the FRFANZ Annual General Meeting for 2016.

Firstly, I apologise for missing last year's AGM due to the Canadian Fire deployment.

I would like to thank Bruce Kitto for standing in and for the support he has given me over the last year.

This last year has been a very busy time for the committee and I thank them for their efforts through the year and I also extend thanks to the employers who generously allow their employees to participate.

This year has obviously been dominated by change in our industry and preparing for the transition to a new agency, Fire and Emergency New Zealand.

This will be a strong theme at this conference and I encourage you to take advantage of the opportunity to ask questions and raise issues with the officials present so that you can inform the Management Committee of any issues you want us to focus on during the transition phase.

FRFANZ has a large number of volunteer members and understandably there is a lot of work to be done to ensure they are represented well and listened to throughout the transition.

It became clear as we looked at transition issues that both rural and urban volunteers faced many of the same issues and common concerns for the future. I entered into discussions with the United Fire Brigades Association to see if we were able to work closely together on volunteer issues. These discussions resulted in the recent signing of an MOU whereby FRFANZ and UFBA will work together to ensure the best outcomes for our volunteers.

At the signing of this document both the Minister of Internal Affairs, Hon. Peter Dunne and the Chairperson of the Fire Service Commission, Hon. Paul Swain were very supportive and encouraging of this agreement and its contribution to a smooth transition to FENZ.

I anticipate that there will be a considerable work load ahead of us as volunteer issues span all work streams identified by the transition team, in particular the people and assets programs raise a number of issues for volunteers.

I have taken a number of calls from concerned members as transition plans emerge and I am happy for this to continue and I will update those individuals as best I can, but I think we need to do better with communication to our members regarding the changes and I will be working with our partners at UFBA to leverage their capabilities and systems to get information out in a timely manner.

I would like to thank Gavin O'Donnell for his efforts in getting the new website up and running and see that the features such as the forum area could play a lead role in this communication initiative.

This year hasn't just been about FENZ however, we have had all our business as usual functions to contend with as well. The medals continue to be popular and well respected in the industry and I thank our committee members in particular Graeme McIntyre and also life member, Gavin Wallace for their efforts to coordinate the medal scheme.

Special thanks must also go to Morrie Genty who continues to support the committee with uniform sales.

I have been appointed to the ACE funding governance board. This board oversees the delivery of funding from the government to training organisations in the emergency services sector to provide training to volunteers. I am pleased to say that this funding has significantly contributed to improved training outcomes across all fire authorities.

As our industry transitions to a totally new organisation we must look at ourselves and ask what the future holds for FRFANZ as we enter our 30th year. Are we still relevant? Will we fit the needs of our members in this new emergency management world?

My view is that the industry definitely needs a representative professional organisation, not just for volunteers but one that represents all stakeholders and this organisation must do more than lobbying, it must promote education research and networking. There is a need also for a range of welfare, social and sporting activities.

Within the MOU I signed with UFBA is a clause that states that we:

Acknowledge the intent that this MOU may be superseded by an agreement to form a new organisation over time whose scope and intent are broadly defined by this MOU and will be negotiated in good faith by the partners.

I will be seeking your guidance on this and hope that we can agree on a mandate to continue this work over the next year.

As you will have noticed we now use a professional conference organiser to lessen the load on local groups when running conferences. This has resulted in successful smooth running of the conference.

I look forward to the year ahead and the challenges it will bring as we approach our 30th conference and possibility of big changes within our organisation and the wider industry.

I thank you for your attendance and move that my report be accepted.

Kevin Ihaka

Chairperson

Forest and Rural Fire Association New Zealand.