Edition 1 Summer 2009

TURNOUT

This journal is published on behalf of
THE UNITED FIREFIGHTERS UNION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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Maddington Tanker Fire – May 2009

Cover Page – New Fire & Rescue ICV

Letters to The Editor and other contributions preferably with photographs (3MB or greater) to turnout@ufuofwa.net.au

Anyone interested in contributing by way of sponsorship email kielandshari@iinet.net.au

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Welcome to the first edition of the resurrected Turnout Magazine.

It is my intention to provide you with a high quality magazine that will focus on the issues that affect us as UFU of WA members, as well as provide a platform for members to contribute articles and information relevant to our cause.

We need to showcase the UFU and the outstanding efforts of our committee members and others.

IDENTITY

As a junior firie, I used to sit at the dining table in Perth Fire Station and read the stories published in the Turnout Magazine. With a limited attention span at the best of times, I read the articles and a lot of what was read washed over me without really understanding the full content. There were articles about the way the government was trying to change our conditions, about volunteers working alongside career firefighters and articles about the structure of the fire service.

It was a time when we went from being The Western Australian Fire Brigade (WAFB) to The Fire and Rescue Service. I couldn't see a problem with a name change. After all, it was only a name change. A name that reflected more accurately what we did – attend fires and rescues. And this other name, FESA, was just a group of bean counters sitting upstairs doing administration stuff.

I remember our senior man at the time (Senior Firefighter Alec Weary) explaining to a few of us that if this FESA thing went ahead, it would be a massive change for all of us. It was not going to be a change for the better and we should resist it as much as possible. To be honest, at the time, I didn't really give a rat's arse. I had a brand new uniform, a shiny fireman's helmet and was doing my best to get a berth in the most prestigious Firefighter's Calendar.

On reflection how right Alec was!

Back then our Chief Officer would come down to the dining room every Friday with a few other high ranking Fire and Rescue Officers and have lunch with the troops. It gave us a chance to throw some questions at the Chief and have a general chat. When I say "us", I mean the Station Officers and Senior Firefighters. Junior firies were expected to sit and listen. (I must add, it is great to see Chief Operations Officer Craig Hynes recently visit stations and deal with questions. Something which is long overdue)
The Chief and his immediate sub-ordinates were not always well liked, as is often the case with people in positions such as theirs – but they were respected, or should I say the position was respected.

So what do we have today?

A Chief Operations Officer in charge of Career Fire and Rescue Firefighters, Volunteer Fire and Rescue and Bushfire Brigades, SES personnel – both career and volunteer, , Volunteer Marine Rescue, etc, etc, etc...

When FESA first took over there were separate entities within FESA and they used to have their own identities. As firefighters we all knew who our bosses were and that they had appropriate competencies to be able to perform operationally.

My online dictionary defines "identity" as;

1. "The collective aspect of the set of characteristics by which a thing is definitively recognizable or known"
2. "The set of behavioural or personal characteristics by which an individual is recognizable as a member of a group."

Me thinks the separation has become somewhat blurred...

Some of our more experienced comrades have discussed turning things around and getting back what we used to have. A WAFB (FRS) Chief Officer and all the associated ranks underneath this to be FRS. And further to this – the Chief should be a commissioned officer like the WA Police.

What would this mean to us? I am not sure. The Police Commissioner still has to report to someone and still has to be accountable for decisions he makes. Whether our Chief is commissioned or not, we will still be given a budget and told to work within it – and unfortunately, it seems that forms the basis of most decisions being made.

I think if we are to move forward we first need to look at our lost District Officer rank.

Why are the FRS & BFS District Managers wearing non FRS/BFS uniforms? There was a time, a little while ago, when these positions had both FRS and BFS stations in their portfolios and I could understand to some degree the wearing of the 'Fire Services' badge.

Not any more. The distinction has been made by upper management and we now have District Managers that manage FRS and District Managers that manage BFS.

So much would be gained by returning this rank to its operational arm. I say put these guys back in their correct uniform, let them wear it with pride and allow the position to regain the respect it deserves.

NEW UNIFORM

Speaking of uniform, congratulations to Senior Firefighter Kelly Wyeth and others who assisted him in designing and procuring a new Career FRS uniform. Getting the uniform into our lockers has been a long battle for Kelly and the others, but through their persistence and diligence, we now have a uniform which looks professional, is functional and helps distinguish the career FRS members from the rest of FESA.

THANKYOU

A sincere thanks to all that have contributed to this first edition of the revamped Turnout Magazine.

The magazine requires the efforts of many in order to get it to a finished product.

Special thanks to Station Officer Rohan Lewis and his associate Kent Chia from GraphiXworks for the publishing work.

Thankyou to Firefighter Kiel Reed for putting up his hand to be the Sponsorship Co-ordinator. Anyone who knows of a business or someone who would be willing to put some money towards the magazine and get great state-wide exposure in return, contact Kiel on 0416 148 178 / kielandshari@iinet.net.au

If you would like to contribute a story in a future edition or would just like to make a comment to the editor, feel free to do so to turnout@ufuofwa.net.au

Whether you have been in the job 5 minutes or 35 years, I would love to hear from you.

Mosco

It is a great opportunity for the WA Branch to communicate with members through the Branch Journal “Turnout”, many thanks to Danny Mosconi and all the contributors for their work to ensure we revive the Turnout and continue to improve our communications.

The last six months have been incredibly busy and productive. The Union has begun a process of writing up its policies and has re-organised the way it stores and manages information. You will also notice the amount of correspondence that has been issued - it is attached to the Draft Branch Committee Minutes that are posted on our website each month. We have a number of issues that we are in dispute with the Authority about - including staffing levels in the Communication Centre; inadequate facilities and resourcing at the Forrestfield Training Centre, all the competency and maintenance training required to support the un-workable model of Dispersed Relieving that the Authority is trying to roll out; plant, equipment and staffing levels at country stations; and the negotiation of agreed competencies for our classifications and ranks above Station Officer Level 2.

On your behalf I welcome the new Secretary - Graeme Geer, the new Vice Presidents and members of the Branch Committee and thank the members from the previous Committee and Executive of the Union for their hard work and dedication.

I would also like to thank Dave Bowers for his contribution as Branch Secretary over the last three and a half years. The success of our Union over that time was remarkable and will long be remembered.

Given that the Branch hasn’t issued a Journal for over 5 years, it is a good opportunity to educate our more recent members about our history and achievements - particularly over the past 5 years.

It is an honour and a privilege to serve the Union as a Branch Committee member, and there are responsibilities and duties associated with that level of service. The previous Branch Committee stepped up to support the Union in a time of need and many of the members were new to Branch Committee work. There was an EBA to negotiate and the result from the 2006 EBA negotiations proved to be historic - WA Fire Fighters went from being amongst the lowest paid in Australia to the highest paid in Australia. The campaign was run without an Industrial Officer and relied on the expertise of the committee and members - especially those who gave their time and stepped up to be expert witnesses in the battle through the arbitration process for the allowances. The success of the 2006 EBA came primarily through the arbitrated allowances which delivered a higher percentage wage increase than the agreed percentage increases negotiated with the Authority. The Union worked with a skilled and talented legal team who wove the expert witness evidence into a strategic, well prepared and organised legal case.

The 2006 EBA campaign began with an historic rally of Fire Fighters at the Perth Convention Centre followed by a march up St Georges Tce to Parliament House. This showed through the strength of numbers our disciplined determination to be heard and to fight for justice.

We had to demonstrate to the State Labour Government of the time our case and it had a great impact especially when we filed in to the public gallery and turned our backs in disgust on those that would not take us seriously. It certainly set the scene for the battle of arbitration and that was long and arduous. We did not resile from taking on a Government that refused to pay the Fire Fighters of Western Australia a fair and reasonable wage.

That day will go down in our Union history as one of our greatest days and the whole 2006 EBA campaign would rate as one of our greatest achievements.

The 2008 EBA built on the strengths of the 2006 campaign and again positioned WA Fire Fighters at the level of the most highly paid in Australia. This result was remarkable for several reasons - not the least of which was the sudden downturn of the Australian and world economy which has led to reduced wages outcomes and also because usually after a historic and significant increase like the 2006 Agreement, it is hard to continue to deliver real wage increases as opposed to increases based on the CPI or cost of living. However we mustn’t get complacent, your conditions are always under scrutiny and the membership need to be very cautious about changes to work practices no matter how small. The thin end of the wedge is very calculating, and the persons wielding it are not necessarily trust worthy.

There is much to do with negotiations for the 2011 EBA due to commence in May 2010 because this Liberal State Government is on record as saying no back pay will be forthcoming for protracted negotiations.

I’d like to finish with a reference to the Oath of Membership that the Union presents to all new graduate Fire Fighters - the Oath encapsulates the pride we share as members of the United Fire Fighters Union, we are nearly 100% Unionised and those that choose not to join, or who choose to leave our ranks whilst still working as Fire Fighters are the real losers.

Membership of our Union is an honour that is balanced with the responsibility to uphold our values and principles whilst protecting the community and each other. Active union membership is all about looking after each other and anyone who turns their back on those opportunities is a lesser person for that choice. Active union membership sometimes means having to accept majority decisions that

you may disagree with - but are prepared to argue and struggle for within the Union. More is achieved through unity than through dissent.

I encourage you all to further develop your commitment to the Union and each other so that when it is your turn to leave the job and resign from the Union you can look back with pride on the legacy you have built for Fire Fighters of the future, so that they can continue to service the community safely and so that they will carry forward the mantle of the Union that has served us so well.

I take this opportunity on behalf of the Branch Committee to wish all members and their families a safe happy Christmas and new year.

Kevin Jolly
President.

UNITED FIREFIGHTERS UNION OF AUSTRALIA
WEST AUSTRALIA BRANCH

Oath of Membership

I join this Union with pride and accept all responsibilities with honour.

I swear to uphold the values of the United Fire Fighters Union.

I recognise that our commitment to protect the community sits along side our commitment to each other.

I pledge to support my fellow Firefighters through the principles of mateship and active Union membership.

Through Fire and Water,

Strength in Unity.

UNITED FIREFIGHTERS UNION OF AUSTRALIA WEST AUSTRALIAN BRANCH
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Welcome to reintroduction of our Union magazine Turnout. It has been some time since the Union has been able to produce this magazine and a special thanks to Danny Mosconi for picking up this responsibility.

I wish to thank all past committee members for their efforts to establish a strong Union, a Union which has delivered to Firefighters better and safer conditions of work. It is through the support of all members and the special efforts of a few that we will ensure that we continue to improve our conditions at work.

I welcome the new Branch Committee who have stepped forward to continue the great work done by the BCOM.

We have many challenges in the next term including

• Maintaining the identity of Firefighters. Firefighters do a great job for the community and deserve the simple respect to be called and recognised as Firefighters.
• The changing Industrial Relation and OSH&W Laws, Gillard's Federal Fair Work and Buswell's proposed state reforms will require thorough scrutiny and challenges.
• The next EBA - we have done well in recent times but there is a lot to aim for, better medical care, presumptive legislation, earlier retirement, better salary sacrifice options, staffing and resources on the job.
• Better Fire Stations and equipment - with the asset protection required in the urban interface all appliances should have burn over protection.

The list goes on.

I am confident that the new Branch Committee has the skills, enthusiasm and proactive attitude to achieve our goals.

As part of trying to improve the communication and sharing of knowledge, we have initiated the Delegates Training. I am inspired by the Delegates' genuine commitment to help their fellow Firefighters and they should be thanked by all.

I believe the National Union is an integral part of achieving better and safer conditions. We need a properly functioning and resourced National Office to counter the dangerous proposition put forward by bodies like AFFAC, who have proposed that "managers" above SO could be generic emergency managers.

Our Union formed in 1916 and has a proud history; we are preparing to move into the Old North Perth Fire Station (which should occur early in 2010). This is a great opportunity to build on that heritage and I thank Mark Payne for his efforts to get the station ready as our Union Headquarters.

There have been 32 previous Secretaries of our Union (which is the product of the amalgamation of the Officers' and Fire Brigade Employees Unions in 1970).

I am proud to be a Firefighter and thankful to have the opportunity to be the Secretary of our Union.

By being United and not selfish in our endeavours we will continue to have a great Job.

Strength in Unity

CHANGES TO LEGISLATION

The WA Government is reviewing the State's Industrial Relations Act as part of its response to the Commonwealth Government's changes to Industrial Relations law, procedures and institutions. We have supported the Unions WA Submission to the Review and have contributed funds to the advertising campaign being run by Unions WA about protecting the role of the Industrial Relations Commission and to keep the pressure on the State Government not to re-introduce the worst features of Work Choices through the back door.

The Rudd Government has been keen to reduce the multiple jurisdictions and want to streamline the law, procedures and institutions that manage industrial relations and occupational health safety and welfare.

The new Fair Work Commission(FWC) and the legislation that underpins the FWC is better than the Howard Government's Work Choices but is by no means perfect and presents our Union with some problems. Our response to some of the worst problem areas will be further discussed at the Branch Committee and with the National Union and ACTU. We will report on these matters in more detail over the next few months.

The process to review and rationalise the OSH&W legislation around Australia is being closely monitored because we do not want to lose any ground on areas that we have fought so hard to achieve improvements in over the last 20 years.
The Industrial Relations ground is shifting and we will need to campaign hard with both the State and Commonwealth Governments to preserve a framework and laws that protect our best interests.

EBA'S AND AGREEMENTS

The EBA for Transfield has finally been registered and the back pay was processed a couple weeks ago. It was a difficult and lengthy campaign that was frequently frustrated by the employer initiated delays in negotiations. The new Agreement looks quite different to the old EBA and puts more emphasis on competencies; the pay increases deliver a total of 10.75% over 3 years with improvements to sick leave entitlements. This Agreement is registered with the Fair Work Commission (Commonwealth Government) and is in place until September 2011.

The EBA for the Authority is registered with the WAIRC and expires in May 2011. There is some outstanding work that the Union is committed to address within the term of the EBA. In the lead up to the next EBA in 2011, the State Government has directed that all Departments, Agencies including the Authority to commence negotiations 12 months before the EBA expires and they have indicated that they will not approve any back pay.

The Union has begun the process to prepare for the next EBA negotiations, the preliminary survey has been distributed, the returns have been processed and a report prepared. The Branch Committee has formed an EBA negotiating sub-committee and work has begun on the preparation for the next set of claims. There will be further discussions and reports back about this work.

CLONTARF FOOTBALL ACADEMY - "WORK CAMP 2009"

Kevin Jolly initiated talks with the Clontarf Foundation about a well structured, sustainable course or programme for young Aboriginal and Islander people to prepare for entry into career fire fighting or volunteer work in the city, and regional WA. Following preliminary discussions with the Authority, the Union looks forward to further developing this initiative and engaging more firefighters and officers to support and mentor this work with the Clontarf Football Foundation and Colleges.

Mark Payne and I recently attended on Kevin Jolly's behalf, a "Work Camp" run by the Clontarf Football Foundation for boys finishing the school based programme around WA (Perth, Great Southern, West Kimberley, Roebourne, Goldfields) and in Alice Springs.

Approximately 90 young men from around WA and Alice Springs rotated around a series of career tables and talked about different jobs and opportunities in small groups for up to 20 minutes at a time. It was like a combination of a careers expo and speed dating - all with a focus on future job opportunities and career options. There were presentations from groups as diverse as the Defence forces, Police, the Authority, Woodside, Community and Service Industries, and group apprenticeship schemes.

The Authority sent out personnel from Recruitment and SO's Rick Curtis and Lexie Bowring were in attendance. It was magnificent to see the young people engaged in conversation about careers (and volunteering) in the Fire and Rescue Service with SO Curtis and SO Bowring who explained what Fire and Rescue Personnel do at work, what training and fitness levels are required for a career in fire and rescue and the importance of community service and the "team" aspects of life at work in the Fire and Rescue Service.

Special thanks to SO Bowring and SO Curtis for their supreme efforts and there is no truth in the rumour that SO Curtis was talent spotting for FRS Footy teams of the future!

Lea Anderson
Industrial Officer

WATER BOMBING HISTORY: FROM FIXED WING TO HELITACS

Water bombing aircraft were first introduced on a trial basis in the summer of 1996-97 for fire suppression in the Perth rural/urban interface and surrounding forest areas. This operation was termed 'Operation Firebird' and involved using two fixed-wing Dromader agricultural aircraft primarily to apply an aggressive initial attack on reported fires. Objectively a combination of early detection and rapid aircraft response restricts early fire development. The time 'bought' by the aircraft operation effectively provides ground crews additional opportunity for effective suppression on high hazard days. This trial provided the economic, social and environmental basis for a continued aircraft suppression capacity in the southwest. Subsequently, an additional operation termed 'Southern Skies' was established at Bunbury and Manjimup for fire suppression in the Bunbury, Manjimup and broader South West Land Division.

The operation was a joint initiative between the fire agencies at the time, that being the FRS, BFS and CALM with the contributing funding being distributed on that basis. The funding arrangements now for the fixed wing operation are jointly distributed between both DEC and FESA

Department of Conservation (formerly known as Conservation and Land Management (CALM) at the time already managed a fleet of spotter aircraft and an Aircraft Operators Certificate (AOC) they provided the management of the fleet of water bombers from the training through to the dispatch of the aircraft. A critical part of the water bombing operation is the coordination of the aircraft and the link between the air and the ground. This specialist role known as the Air Attack Supervisor was assigned to fire fighters from both agencies. The structure for the water bombing operation was based on the Victorian DSE model. The program required specialist training involved in the coordination of the aircraft then a component of mentoring over the fire ground before full endorsement as an Air Attack Supervisor.

The current fixed wing aircraft fleet include the 802 Air tractor (3200lts capacity); 602 Air tractor (2500lts capacity); and Dromader (2500lts capacity). The fleet is spread out from Jandakot airport in the metropolitan area throughout the south west of State to Bunbury, Manjimup, and Albany.

In 2002, Kings Park and the Darling Scarp were identified as areas of particular concern should the event of a fire occur. Commencing that season, two rotary winged aircraft were introduced, B3 Squirrels (1100lts capacity) known as Helitacs. The helitacs were based at the Perth Domestic airport for deployment to the urban-rural interface. Helicopters are an extremely effective firefighting resource, their advantage being their manoeuvrability, accuracy and fast turnaround time

The positioning of a fire fighter as an air attack supervisor in the water bombing helicopter was also introduced. This resulted in a more improved service by having a fire officer on the fire ground being able to communicate with the air attack supervisor on the arrival of the helitacs

With the proven effectiveness and efficiency of the helitacs, the 2004/05 fire season introduced a further two helitacs into the fleet.

The 2007/08 season trialed a larger helicopter, the S61N Sikorsky that is equipped with 3,785 litre capacity; crew; and can also transport up to 15 persons. The trial proved successful and the S61N is included in the current contract.

Funding for the Helitac operations is apportioned between FESA and the National Aerial Fire Fighting Centre (NAFC). The current contract has been awarded for up to a five year period. There is no Funding for Air Operations from the ESL.

Air Attack Supervisors are seconded to Air Operations as a seasonal FTE for the contracted water bombing period. An EOI is advertised for firefighters to apply.

Prior to each fire season the aircrew are involved in a joint FESA/DEC Air Operations currency training program that is conducted on a rotational basis through the regional areas of the water bombing zone.

In previous years the training has been conducted at Northam, Bunbury, Manjimup and Margaret River. This year the training will be conducted in Jurien Bay. The training involves a 5 day program involving both a theory and practical component. It includes review of SOP's, dispatch procedures, communication plans and rosters for the upcoming season.

The practical component involves the water bombing fleet consisting of fixed wing and rotary water bombing aircraft as well as the coordinating aircraft. Last year's exercise involved up to 9 aircraft simulating actual combined water bombing operations and provides the aircrew the environment to hone their procedural skills to meet the competencies required for their role in air operation.

This program provides the aircrew operating across the water bombing zones with the most detailed and realistic training available in preparation for the fire season and also for the aircrew to mix with all the operators across agencies to foster a safe environment for air operations.

SENIOR FIREFIGHTER KEN SEINOR – RETIRED FIREFIGHTER: 37 YEARS (EXACTLY)

I was born in Kalgoorlie and raised in South Boulder. My education was at South Boulder Primary School and my first year of high school was in 1957 at Busselton Junior High School. I returned to spend the next year and 3 months at Eastern Goldfields High School. I commenced employment at the age of 15 with the Boulder Post Office. I worked initially as a telegram boy but progressed to being a postman and doing mail work and sometimes counter work.

I spent 8 and a half years at the Post Office before leaving to move to Perth in 1967. My first job after arriving in Perth was as an offsider for the fitters and turners at Watson's Foods. I applied for a position at the Fremantle Foundry basically doing the same work I was doing previously. Strange as it may seem, I was sacked from there for standing up for my rights. I gained employment at Mills & Wares Biscuit factory in Fremantle for a time, working on the floor packing biscuits and general work around the factory. I returned to Boulder for my wedding in 1969 and with my wife Lyn returned to the Metropolitan area where we have resided since. During this time raised two children, Nicole and Steven.

My brother Fred was a fireman, as they were known then, and informed me that the Fire Brigade were looking for people to join so I applied. They required 90 men to make up a new and expanded fire brigade. I was fortunate enough to make the cut off and in September 1970 was inducted into the Western Australian Fire Brigade.

At the time the Brigade was made up of three Platoons A, B and C and was working on a 56 hour week, made up of shifts of two days, two nights then two days off. With the advent of the 90 man school the roster changed to what it is to this day, four platoons A, B, C and D. This was the beginning of the 4 on 4 off roster.

This was, as we were told, the beginning of a new era in the Fire Brigade. We were the super fire-fighters of the future (yeah right). I think to all involved, it was an exciting era. I know it was for me. It was a chance for me to have permanent employment and security. Our training was carried out at the Clontarf Boys School on Manning Road, Bentley. Previously the schooling had been done at the Belmont Training Centre, but this would have been too small for such a number of recruits. As you could imagine we were from wide and varied walks of life. We had ex coppers, ex army, former ambulance officers, an Olympic runner, and a farmer, amongst many others. We were truly a rare and wonderful mix to be thrust upon the unwary Fire Brigade.

We were made up of nine squads of ten, all named after colours. I was in squad brown, led by Acting District Officer Maurie Venables.

The School was led by Bill McMahon, who later became Chief Officer of the Fire Brigade.

Training was done very differently to what it is nowadays. We were always struggling to organise pumps for drills. Though it sometimes may have appeared to be chaotic, I think it was organised chaos. Some drills and training would never be allowed to even be thought of now days, let alone carried out. One drill was to lower ourselves down from an elevated piece of pipe attached to a brick wall, which must have been 30 feet high. We employed the chair knot, and the line was attached to the pipe with a rolling hitch. It was hair raising to say the least, but we all survived to tell the tale.

Our first aid was actually done by two of the recruits, John Ree and Bob Wigley. They were the two previously mentioned ex ambulance officers. Maybe this was the forerunner for things to come.

Our BA training was done at the Belmont Training Wing. It was here that we got our first taste of long term breathing apparatus, the proto sets. They used protosorb to remove the impurities from the air we breathed. Very heavy and awkward to wear. These were the sets I used several times in long duration incidents when stationed at Fremantle. We did a lot of the same things as today's recruits would do. Knot tying (not a forte for me), ladder drills, hose lay outs, pump drills, lectures, exams, etc. Some interesting, some boring, but all had to be done. I think it was a credit to the training we were given as we all succeeded. Well almost all. But the lowering of numbers from 90 to 89 had nothing to do with the training staff, but that's another story.

Our wages seemed to expand every week as well. We never seemed to go home with the same amount any successive week. Our Secretary at the time was the legendary Bill Latter. The Fire Brigade was open for change for sure, but I think not in the way our pay claims went.

Our training lasted for nearly three months, from 11th September 1970 until 4th December 1970.

We were allocated our shifts and were never all in the same place again at one time. I was allocated A Platoon at Perth Fire Station along with 5 or 6 other firefighters. We had to stand up in front of the rough, tough firies of many years service and introduce ourselves and give a talk of our past history. This, I think, was as hard as the training itself.

I spent ten months at Old Perth Fire Station before being transferred to Fremantle Fire Station. Fremantle was a station I grew to love and made many good friends. I was taught that no matter what rank or uniform the hierarchy wore, they were just ordinary people like all the firies. There were a few good teachers there too, but that's another story as well.

The men who came through the 90 man school and the men who followed did not become senior fire-fighters until after fifteen years in the job. This possibly was the longest apprenticeship in the world.

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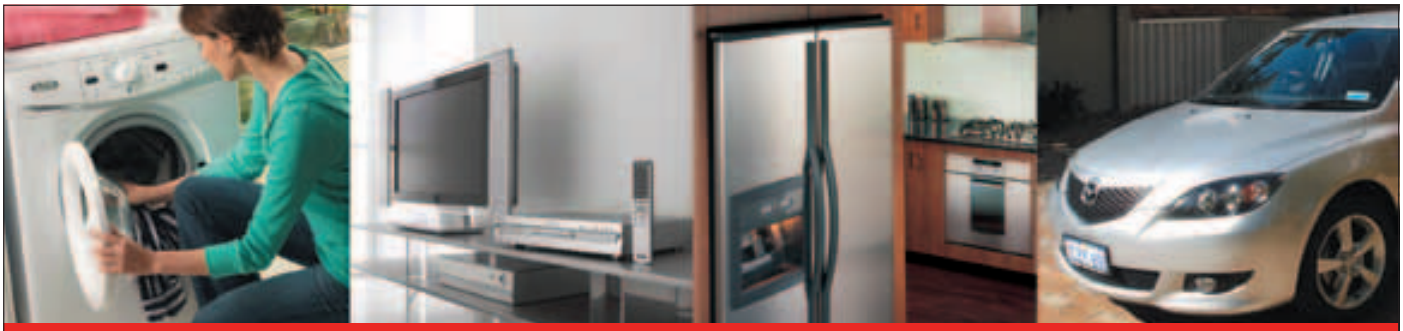

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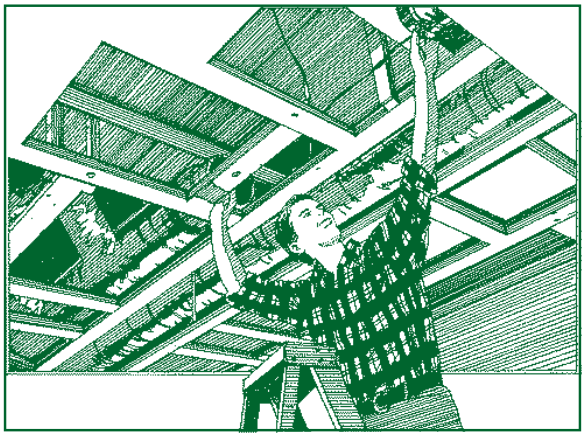

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FIREFIGHTER CLEM CHAN – 7 MONTHS

14th August 2009. A day that holds some significance for 25 firefighters. Why? No, there wasn't any earth shattering or world ending event, but for these 25 it was one of the proudest and most daunting days of their lives.

Graduation from the trainee school to me meant a lot of things. It signified a new chapter in the story that was my life and the ending of another. There was also the acceptance of our instructors that we were now part of the 'brotherhood'. The pride arose from the feeling of achieving something that many aspire to but only a few are able to complete. Yet there was also this nagging feeling. For three months I had been held by the hand and told where to go, when to be there, what to do, and how to do it. Reality and responsibility had suddenly come crashing down upon us! Was I ready to take the training wheels off?

Turning up at Fremantle station C shift for my first day on the job was an exciting and slightly intimidating experience. I was ready to save the world! Or at least Fremantle for my first 2 months were my entire world. Being greeted by the crew of C shift and scatterings of A shift coming off the night, there was a palpable sense of camaraderie and friendship between them all and it would have been all too easy to feel a little isolated and 'small fish'. It was to my great fortune that the boys of C shift Freo are an extremely welcoming and friendly bunch! Having such a strong and extroverted crew to be placed with certainly helped me out to no end in settling in. Of course, there were the usual teething problems with my overenthusiastic nature coming out to play with full weekly BA checks every day, checking every single piece of equipment on an appliance so thoroughly that the daily checks almost took an entire day, putting up the flag, and filling in the log book all wrong! After a while, I came to the realisation that the only way to get anything right was to make a mess of it and then have a Senior come along and fix it up! Being constantly reminded that the only way to learn was to make mistakes certainly started to become a bit of a mantra.

Admittedly, Freo was fairly quiet for a couple of weeks with only the usual DBAs to break up the shifts. Still, even going to a DBA was a good learning experience in terms of remembering to grab your helmet, radio, torch if required, and to shut the light tanker locker before driving off. Further on from learning, it was great doing training, training, and training! Being shown the small intricacies that can occur was good to know and I am sure will be helpful in the long term.

Firefighter Chan at Freedom Marine

I was fortunate enough to get a 'real' job towards the end of my relief at Freo when four boats were set alight at Freedom Marine. Being part of a multi appliance operation was an extremely thrilling and educating experience and it was reassuring to have Senior Firies and SO's always around to reel me in before stepping into trouble…

I have since spent time at several other stations such as Welshpool, Murdoch, and Kensington and have to say that being the junior man fresh out of the school makes every little thing we do seem so monumental, so if we seem a little overeager, its only because we love the job!

RUGBY

A wise man once stated that beer was invented to stop Prop Forwards from taking over the world. So with global domination out of the question a few Rugby fanatics decided it was time to start a drinking club with a rugby problem. So it came to be that the first W.A. FRS Rugby Union Club was born. Although still in its infant stages the idea has grown into a reality with some early scratch matches planned over the coming months and culminating with a highly anticipated debut match against the formidable W.A. Police Rugby side as a pre match Super 14 game next year.

With the concept focused on social as much as it is on Rugby, we would like to encourage anyone who is interested to get involved in a playing, training or supporting role. There will be room for players of all skill levels and we would like to give anyone who is keen for a run the opportunity at some point to pull on the jumper and have a go. We are lucky to have some very experienced players on board ready to offer coaching and advice to all comers.

Contact details:
Mark Hatty
mhatty@fesa.wa.gov.au
0414 683 621

Michael “Pommie” Parker
mparker@fesa.wa.gov.au
0417 955 251

With Rugby played worldwide and Rugby 7’s debuting at the Olympics in 2016, there is no reason why we won’t have the opportunity in the future to travel overseas on tours through Europe, North America, Canada or Asia. Rugby 7’s is also a sporting option at the World Police and Firefighters Games in New York 2011. Local parties who have expressed interest include the Defence Forces and of course W.A. Police.

So if you’re a career FRS member keen for a game, to support or would just like to know more, please feel free to contact Michael “Pommie” Parker or Mark Hatty at the following contact details. We will be formalising a committee soon so interested members can drop us an email. We are also scouting for potential sponsors so any connections would be appreciated.

Yours in Rugby,
Mark Hatty

FIRE & RESCUE MOTORCYCLE CLUB

On Friday October 23rd, 17 Firefighters, Officers and ComCen personnel, gathered at Welshpool Fire Station for a group ride to Dwellingup. Everyone who attended had a great time, meandering through the Hills, stopping at Canning Dam and finishing up in Dwellingup for lunch.

The Bikes above from left to right belong to:
Kelvin Lockwood, Steve Spiers. Paul Paardekooper, Simone Paardekooper, Ken Holyoake, Darryl Sinclair, John Landwehr, Lew White, Ian Dunne, Tim O’Hara, Paul Heal, Ross Onions, Jeff Collins, Ryan Murtagh, Craig Wilson, Daniel Hogg, Jason Dohrmann.

New riders are welcomed, so if you bike come along and play.
For further information please contact Kelvin Lockwood - Wangara A-Platoon.

WA FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE FOOTBALL CLUB Inc

Friday 23rd October saw the WAFRSFC take on the Royal Australian Navy under lights at Fremantle Oval for the "STAR International Cup", this was the first encounter between the two sides and the pre game banter was in full flight. Game sponsor Derrin Rodriguez from STAR International and Station Officer at Success Fire Station was always in our corner despite his relationship with the Navy. The game was the fourth from the newly revamped FRS side having disposed of the WA Police twice and SASR once also in the previous two years.

Going in undefeated was no pressure for the boys who with 8 regulars unavailable saw 6 debutants come into the side in – Mick Lovell, Kane Robertson, Marc Papalia, Marcus Tompkin, Nick Willis and Matt Launder. All contributed well and relished being a part of a great win. With the new faces selection for the "Altitude Cup" against WAPOL in late February will be very difficult. The Captain was Troy Stubberfield with Vice Captains Leon Berthelsen and Clayton Lasscock.

The highlights from the game were many with the FRS taking control of the game from the outset with an aggressive fast start mentality, which saw them kick 5 unanswered goals in the first quarter. The win was never threatened with FRS kicking ahead at every opportunity through great attack from the H/B's and Mids providing our two big forwards with great supply in line with our game plan. The big bodies of Robbie Hansen and Chris Jones could not be held and the pair kicked 8 goals between them.

The final siren couldn't come quick enough for the Navy who had been under the pump from the first bounce with their Captain #9 Simon Horner their best player. WAFRSFC went onto win the game 18.10 to 4.5.

All players contributed with regular rotations and plenty of game time for all, our award winners were: Umpires BOG #5 Chris Sobejko, Navy BOG #1 Leon Berthelsen, 2nd Best #3 Clayton Lasscock, 3rd Best #25 Robbie Hansen and for a bone crunching hit the UFU 1% Award #6 Ben Borrett.

As always we appreciate our sponsors who look after us with their generous donations – STAR International, Royal on the Waterfront and UFU of WA. To all of you thank you very much for your continued support.

The football club has recently become incorporated and has elected a committee to run our affairs. Amongst others the more notable positions are President – Rob Steel, Vice President – Steve Longo, Secretary – Terry Dunlea and Treasurer – Kelly Wyeth. Congratulations to you all.

The WAFRSFC is very proud to announce the return of the annual Fire Fighters Ball, we have booked the Astral Ballroom at Burswood Entertainment Complex for Saturday 17th July 2010, the function will be a black tie event with 3 course meal and full bar with top line MC, guest speakers and live band. The venue can cater for up to 600 people and we aim to fill it so watch this space for booking details. This event will be the Flagship night for Firies and their partners so don't miss out when we release the tickets……..

We will be using these types of events to raise funds for our interstate trip each year to play against an interstate Fire Service, October 2010 will see us travel to Sydney to take on the NSWFB on their home turf.

For our players and support staff we are having a boat cruise on the Swan River on Saturday 6th February 2010, this event is for Firies only and will be a huge day out on board Top Gun II. Choco and Smithy will be co-ordinating the day and will be in touch soon. To the Firies and their families who come along to support us at our games, thank you very much for your continued support. The boys take great pride in wearing the green and gold and carrying on the tradition that was started some 30 plus years ago by many of you our senior men. *By the Supercoach – Rick Curtis*

WA FIRE BRIGADES GOLF CLUB

2009 has and is continuing to be a great year for our golf club. We have averaged over 40 players to our games, with a combination of existing and new members of various handicaps. Visitors are more than welcome to come and join us for a game. We've played at a variety of courses throughout the metro area from Sun City to Mandurah. We have also travelled out of the metro area to catch up with the local firies at Albany and Geraldton, and will finish off our season in Bunbury at the end of November. This year WA is hosting the Australasian Fire Brigades Golf Championships. This will be held in the first week of November at Mandurah CC with over 200 visitors from interstate and NZ. *Jim Bell (Vice Captain WAFBGC)*

Results so far this season;

3rd March at Royal Perth	Daryl Hoad (hcp 7)
23rd March at Wanneroo	Rob Johnstone (hcp 17)
6th April at Mandurah	Brad Jones (hcp 30)
20th April at Sun City	Kevin Foreman (hcp 17)
28/29th April at Albany	Dave Bull (hcp 17)/ Peter Norman (hcp 17)
18th May at Hartfield	Police won the Services Cup from Firies, Navy, Army and Taxi
	Nathan Stevenson had the best score from the Firies
4/5th June at Geraldton	Russ Meaden (hcp 13)/ Gordon Purvis (hcp 20)
15th June at Mt Lawley	Glyn Thomas (hcp 17)
29th June at Lakelands	The Weather
13th July at Gosnells	John Lyons (hcp 16)
27th July at Sun City	Nathan Stevenson (hcp 16)
10th August at Wanneroo	John Lyons (hcp 15)
24th August at Mandurah	Kevin Foreman (hcp18)
7th September at Meadow Springs	Danny Mosconi (hcp 29)
21st September at Royal Fremantle	Ian Bransby (hcp 18)

BUTLER - THE SHED

Years ago fire-fighters must have envisioned so much of what the future had in store for them, imagine your only cutting equipment at a road crash was a hacksaw and crow bar, your only PPE was a thick overcoat or that your breathing apparatus was almost entirely recycled air. Or after a big incident in winter, their pump with no roof just windscreen, rain pouring down all over them, dripping down on them off their wooden ladder, they are returning to their home of rest and solitude, a simple building, lucky if it were made of brick and concrete, none the less it was home, after a hot shower and hot pot of tea, did they sit there and look around and imagine the stations of the future, what the 21st century would house their trucks and living quarters in, what area of the community it would be built. The level of comfort they would live in. Equipment is one thing but imagine a modern building, warm when it's cool, cool when it's hot, complete comfort, inside and out.

Well we at Butler know exactly what they're talking about. Who would have thought 50 years ago the stations of the new modern engineering technological era would be made of, wait for it, refrigeration panels. That they would function better as an esky at sporting event than that as a fire station. Had they put wheels underneath it we would be perfect at large incidents, a fire station and salvos truck all in one. Genius. How disappointed our retired brothers would be. Probably as disappointed as we are!

For those who are yet to see the architectural masterpiece that is 'The Esky'. Two words best sum it up 1. Pleasure and 2. Experience. Not experience of the time kind but experience as in 'Where the hell are we?' And 'What the hell is that?' And pleasure, not only to work alongside my crew and I, but the pleasure we get, too see your face when you first walk in after discovering that the little green shed at the end of 1km driveway is in fact the station. Bit like when you're buying a car and the picture makes it look flawless, only to arrive and see it looks like someone's given it a wash with a belt sander. Same reaction really, Butler's the car in this case.

The drive to Butler is also an experience in itself. It's enough to make the GPS man or lady (or celebrity voice you've chosen) nag you on the way 'Are we there yet? Are we there yet?" or at the very worse once you've logged in your destination, pull out its own power cord and throw itself under an oncoming car. Did I mention the drive way is 1km long, yeah I wasn't exaggerating earlier. We're expecting the large oval size limestone area next to the station to become a small airfield in case any of the south of the river relievers are to take up duties here, a small flight would greatly reduce travel times and hold back over time.

Drilling and training is of the highest importance at Butler and doesn't get much more realistic or in fact life threatening than at an actual incident, seriously, what better part of the community to build a fire station than in a train and bus maintenance facility. When were pumping we have to be careful of the 50,000 volt power cables above, like a fire-fighter to a non-alcohol event, water and 50 odd thousand volts do not mix (we are yet to make electricity firie proof) or the fact our training pad is at the corner of two busy access roads, so we get plenty of practice when putting out road cones, signage and traffic control, mainly because we actually have to. Some days out there you could swear that Garth Tander just did his fastest lap time or the two train cleaners when there leaving are actually Casey Stoner and Valentino Rossi competing for the Moto GP world title on the home straight (for those snaps who have bedded down at Butler you'll know what I'm talking about) I tell you what if the coppers put a multinova out the front I think the revenue will get our station built a lot quicker, or possibly catch the driver who mowed down the junior firie doing his road crash exam, or build the new pump for Ellenbrook, oh hang on , that station's not built yet either, anyway carrying on.

4wd training however is a lot easier and accessible considering the stations surrounded by bush, on a hot Sunday you can watch the crusty like demons fang about outside or 4wd drivers on their way to Yanchep. Another surrounding feature is the limestone, I'm surprised the outside world knows we exist, given that where nearly resorting to old morse code to communicate to the public, friends, family and other fire-fighters or managers, the limestone absorbs any hint of phone reception and any sense of humour most firies out here have when asked 'When's the new station getting built?'.

Some days you could think to tie the station down, given we had our 14th aircon fitted not long ago, in an area not much bigger than the end of your house, on hot or cold days you are led to believe you're in a wind tunnel and with favourable weather conditions, the station could very well fly. Winter is always interesting at Butler. Sometimes we wonder if we should attach buoys to the roof and an e-pirb device, for sea rescue to find us in case were washed out to sea. After a windy night you wake up to your crew sitting around the table, blood shot eyes, with the same drawn out comment each morning after of "Jeez how was last night?!" After minimal rest due to the fact you thought hurricane Katrina came to visit during the night you feel the only fitting reply would be "I don't know Toto, are we still in Kansas?" It's quite cool though in summer, the gym doubles as a sauna, as the afternoon sun beats down on the metal walls outside you walk in there with great intentions to do a work out only to retire back to your locker, grab a towel and hope there's a soup ladle in the kitchen to pour water on the limestone rocks just outside to create a little more steam.

But seriously fitness, both mental and physical, is taken very seriously at Butler. The fitness department went to extreme measures to ensure our leg strength was of the highest calibre, whether that was to ensure we had the leg endurance to keep our foot on the accelerator up our driveway, who knows. But when we asked for a smith machine or squat rack, they fitted a limestone 'dune' out the front, yeah I know, your jealous, bet your asking yourself how many stations in Perth have their own limestone dune out the front to run and climb up..... Not many, one in fact, Butler that's who. And the 100kg tractor tyre we acquired from the limestone quarry next door (that's right, next door) makes for a great all body workout. After a circuit outside under the great big dirty 50 odd thousand volt train cables, we could just about light up a fluoro bulb with our bare hands.

As well as being physically fit for our job, you have to be mentally fit also, and Butler is a mental fitness gym and spa centre. The station was sited directly opposite a small bend in the train tracks, outside the 3 study and rest bays. This makes night shifts a mental workout, ask yourself, can you rest and study while trains ever so slowly grind, screech, squeal, and scream, their way past the station, while your catching your pens as they fall off your desk or your book as it is shaken from your hands!? We can, well, we have too. Whoever said double glazed windows are sound proof should spend a night at Butler, we would have to keep any sharp objects and/or fire arms away from them at all times, and monitor them regularly, but I think we would get the message through that THEY ARE NOT SOUND PROOF!

Even our main study room is found in the gym, not only do you become strong bodied at Butler but what better atmosphere than to build a strong mind. It's easy to work through your FDP or OMP assignments while 3 other crew members are smashing it out in the gym, the loud ear bleeding music, the grunts and hard breathing of pure athletes, each piece of apparatus crashing and banging, the sound of the treadmill getting pounded and the cries of pain coming from those on the rower ,trying to smash some 16yr old in the states on a rowing scholarship to the best rowing school standing at 6ft 6, makes for the best study space, I couldn't concentrate more if I tried.

When you do get a chance for some shut eye at Butler, after the trains planes and automobiles you have to contend with, your last hurdle for some rest is the 40mm between yours and the head of another crew member in the adjacent room. No one said refrigeration panels were sound proof and don't we know it, you can hear every breath as though they were right beside you, with the lights off you could swear you were having a spiritual out of body experience. But you're not, with all the noise day and night not even the dead would come to rest here.

All in all, to the crews at Butler it's our home away from home, or as it could be referred to, our castle. Only there sure as hell aint no serenity, but the trains next door would have to add value. And if more relievers or Joondalup's 2.4 is sent here in the future then that spiral stair case and jousting sticks in the readers mart could come in handy. Years ago when I was sitting on my grandfather's knee and asked "will you visit me Pa at my station of the future when I become a firefighter? Just like you", he replied "Of course I will"..... I'll take him to Osborne Park (just tell him it's Butler).

Written by Brad Wellsteed

Loud and proud B platoon

BUTLER!

DIRTY TURNOUT GEAR - IS IT KILLING YOU?

For both Firefighters and their employers, safety and health should be paramount. Gone are the days of the "leather lung" firefighter— now sophisticated equipment and specialized training are available for the purpose of health and welfare. New rules and techniques are being enforced every day. Some departments require more regular physical examinations, exercises training and some have even restricted or forbidden smoking on and off the job. Almost all departments make the use of SCBA mandatory and many encourage that personal hygiene include maintenance of turnouts and equipment.

Sampling and recording at a fire scene, after the fire was extinguished and the area was cooled recorded the presence of 21 hazardous chemicals in the air. Of the 21, 19 are listed as toxic by inhalation and/or skin absorption. 7 are possible carcinogens. The passive problems of smoke inhalation and exposure after the fire has been extinguished have not received proper attention.

We are all acutely aware of the amount of cleaning being done daily by the professional firefighters to reduce these contaminants. Vehicles, ladders, and hoses are gleaming examples in fact the entire department is usually kept in immaculate condition everything that is except the turnout gear. It's usually hung up or placed in a bag as a blackened badge of experience to identify a seasoned professional.

Carbon particles from the transient smoke and the charred materials at a fire scene contribute to the discolouration of the turnouts. Carbon is a very efficient filtering agent, and it absorbs most of the liquid and gaseous toxins created by superheating most modern construction materials. The carbon is very visible. Not visible but present none the less are the toxins held by the carbon. You can't see the toxins, but some you can smell.

If you can smell smoke on your gear, you are inhaling toxins.

If you wear that gear, your skin may absorb some of the toxins.

But the risk is not just to the firefighter. Anyone who comes in contact with contaminated gear is exposed; including the families of firefighters who transport their turnout gear in the family car or store the gear at home. Passive smoke and cross-contamination may be hazardous to anyone exposed to it.

The solution to this problem may be simpler than you may think. These few easy steps can reduce most of the passive smoke risk:

1. Always wear SCBA
2. With your tunics and SCBA still on, rinse yourself off thoroughly at the fire site to remove gross contaminants and to prevent the toxins from becoming airborne
3. Remove the SCBA and facemask only after the turnouts have been bagged for transport to be cleaned
4. Clean turnouts by the approved method as soon as possible and clean any residue from helmets and other personal equipment
5. Shower thoroughly and wash and rinse hair
6. Avoid wearing any possibly contaminated clothing

There are several valid reasons for aggressive maintenance:

- By removing visible smoke residue you will remove as much as 96% of the liquid and gaseous toxins they may contain
- Carbon partials are abrasive: clean turnouts last longer
- Turnouts are fire resistant but the carbon and chemical residues are not. Dirty gear may be combustible
- Light-coloured gear reflects more heat, but when they are blackened they start to absorb heat. The firefighter's resistance is lessened and stress is increased
- Clean gear will lessen the amount of passive smoke inhaled by the families of firefighters

Emergency turnout gear is available to all firefighters, and dry cleaning can be arranged for quick turn if required. No fire fighter should have to wear dirty contaminated gear which can put themselves and others at risk.

Entering a structure fire without BA immediately after extinguishment can also put you at risk

This is an extract from an article titled "passive smoke: the overlooked risk" published, in the Fire Engineering magazine 1990 by Les Winney, president of the Winsol Laboratories Washington USA

GERALDTON FIRE STATION - Country Staffing and Relieving

As you may or may not be aware, one of the issues that has been ongoing for many years in the Country, is Staffing. Country career staff have continued to campaign for management to develop and implement a suitable and workable relieving system that will allow for the filling of Long Service Leave and extended unscheduled vacancies, utilising Metro reliefs. It has never been intended nor would it be practical to cover short term absenteeism or vacancies with reliefs, as these can be easily covered by Overtime.

Extended, unscheduled vacancies occur for many and various reasons, this is another subject altogether and it is not my intension to address this now.

In normal circumstances, the FTE would fill vacancies that extend beyond a period of weeks, but as has been the case in Geraldton, there has rarely been an FTE available. This creates a situation where extended vacancies are covered by Overtime.

Management have made it clear that they are happy to allow vacancies to be covered by overtime up to a level of 20% of an FTE. In addition to that the overall mentality of management is, as the minister stated in a recent station visit “you guys all love the overtime”. Believe you me, there is an reasonable and unreasonable amount of overtime. When you consider the number of staff with growing families, school holidays, those on A/L or LSL and those that are simply not interested, then at times it can be difficult to find a call-back. This situation is workable in the short term but for vacancies extending over some time, or a number of vacancies on station at once, it starts to wear a bit thin.

This begs the question as to where too from here?

When I joined the job there was a country relieving system in place that was administered by the on shift staff at Perth Fire Station. My recollection of this is that it worked very well, but this has all but fallen by the way side. The current metro relieving pool as it stands has not been designed and nor is it adequately staffed to account for Country Relieving.

Recently, where Country reliefs have been called for from the Metro relief pool and no one has expressed an interest, then a Management Initiated Transfer (MIT) has been adopted. This as you would understand is not the desirable outcome for anyone.

The only real long term solution has to come from a collaborative, negotiated approach from Management and the Union. Ultimately, I see that the filling of country reliefs would be best administered and managed from a metro, station level. For this to occur, it will require a commitment from management to allow for an adequate number of qualified staff within the relieving pool and or an improved and flexible staff deployment communication system. Unfortunately, management have made it all too clear that they are not interested in participating in negotiated operational business plan development, and as such it could be some time before this may come about.

In the short term, what can you and I do?

One of the unforeseen bonuses that has evolved as a result of these MIT’s is that Metro staff have been exposed to some of the differences in the way that we go about our business, both at an Operational and administrative level. This allows for information to be conveyed back to the Metro about some of the issues that Country staff deal with on an ongoing basis. Conversely, it has been a breath of fresh air to have staff come from the Metro and share some of the ways that business is conducted in the Metro.

It is also always good to have a new person on station, to pull the “Participate In Some Stories” out off.

The country career stations have a majority of the specialist deployment capabilities without the staff mobilising numbers, that would normally encounter in the Metro area. We rely on the support of Volunteers and Callbacks when required. This leads to some unique operational and maintenance training situations that requires some lateral and practical thinking.
The additional capabilities include:

- Heavy Rescue.
- Confined Space Rescue
- Hazmat, including Gas Suits, air line etc.
- Portable Pumping.
- Bulk Foam and Monitor.
- And the Country Communication System.

The Country Stations also have many of the risks and hazards as uncounted in the Metro, including Port Facilities (Except Kalgoorlie which has a BIG hole in the ground.) Bulk Fuel and grain storage facilities and airports. Each are located on heavy Haulage and major traffic routes. This provides an excellent opportunity for new and old progressive firies to get away and experience something new, all whilst being recompensed for it. When you consider the varied climates from surf, sun and sand in the North to the near arctic in the South you can see that choices are abound.

It sound like a sales pitch and it is, so next time that you see or hear about a country relief being called for, consider putting your name in the hat, or call the relevant station to enquire.
Remember “UNITED” *Tony Keeping*

As you are aware the Union is the proud owner of the North Perth Fire Station, built in 1926 by Architect K.C. Duncan at a cost of 2,572 pounds. The station was opened on 9 November 1926 and was closed on 28 November 1956; the staff were then transferred to the new Osborne Park Fire Station. From 1957 to 1962 the North Perth Fire Station was used as the first Training School, and also as the Boards Electrical Workshop. A total of 31 trainees graduated from North Perth. In 1962 the Belmont Training Wing was built, and North Perth was then sold in April 1963 to Jury Tolcon Master Bakers. The North Perth Fire Station was the former No 2 Station, the land was originally owned by Louisa Bell McEwen.

Perth Fire Station was built in 1901 Architect Cavanagh & Cavanagh
Fremantle Fire Station was built in 1910 Architect J.L. Ochiltree
Claremont Fire Station was built in 1914 Architect J.L. Ochiltree
Leederville Fire Station was built in 1926 Architect J.L. Ochiltree
North Perth Fire Station was built in 1926 Architect K.C. Duncan

Presently we have electricians, carpenter's, data communication and a few more trades personnel still to start, working to transform North Perth Fire Station from a residential dwelling to the United FireFighters Union of Australia - West Australian Branch office, this will make us the envy of the United FireFighters Union of Australia, and when completed this building will do the union proud for many years into the future. *Senior Firefighter Mark Payne*

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Having worked in the Centre for a considerable time I have seen many changes, mainly in the work load and the staff turnover, especially after the summer fire season.

Being the first edition of turnout for quite awhile, I'll briefly outline how the Comcentre functions and the roles of the staff who work there.

We all work the same shifts as career fire fighters and have a Senior Station Officer who (Shift Operations Officer (SOO) oversees and managers the Centre on a shift basis. Communications System Officers (CSO's) handle all the calls/requests that come into the Centre.

The Comcentre processes all State-wide 000 calls for assistance to either fire/rescue/hazmat/special service, monitors nearly 3500 DBAs and faults through the DBA network, processes all State-wide SES calls for assistance and answers all non emergency calls and requests that come into the centre. Over 5 years ago 000 went state-wide whereas before it was handled by regional areas, we also took on SES call taking/dispatch and the monitoring of the bush fire network (6IP); all these extra activities has increased the work load immensely.

Communications System Officers are civilians, they have completed a intensive training course over a 4 week period and once on shift are closely monitored and mentored by other senior CSO's and the SOO.It's not an easy course and the failure rate is extremely high. Management acknowledges that it can be a difficult role and is looking at ways to reduce the trainee failure rate. Possible solutions could be some of the following.

1. Timely recruitment of suitable applicants.
2. Produce formal TRKs.
3. Good infrastructure/resources for training.
4. Full support from management.
5. Continue to review best practices and make necessary changes where appropriate.

Management has recently announced that the staffing will be 3CSO's and 1 Delta per shift for the quieter months and 4 CSO's and 1 Delta for the fire season. This initiative is certainly a step in the right direction.

During busy surge periods these numbers of staff are clearly inadequate, there are long delays in answering incoming 000 calls/non emergency calls and radio transmissions from incident controllers relaying information, management is aware of these issues and is looking at developing strategies to avoid these delays occurring. Other emergency services are experiencing similar problems.

The dynamics regarding the influx of emergency calls have changed dramatically with the escalation of mobile phones, people are quick to dial 000 and it's common to receive up to 50 or more calls to a car fire on the freeway or smoke coming from the hills. Every call has to be interrogated carefully to ensure that it isn't a new incident

Apart from all the politics, working in the Comcentre is very rewarding and the people are all very dedicated, no different to the navy blue shirts on any station really. During busy periods it can be absolute mayhem but the people make it work, that's a good indication of the quality people that we have working in here.

In each edition I'll finish off with some information that we would like all our crews to know about, this helps us help you, for example whenever you request another agency to attend an incident (Police Ambos', Western Power etc) please give us a brief description WHY you would like their attendance as they need this information to prioritise their calls as well.

Another issue that keeps on rising is OIC's asking Comcentre whether they travel fire call or normal road conditions, Comcentre doesn't determine whether its fire call or normal road conditions, it's the OIC decision based on the information received from Comcentre, obviously there are predetermined procedures currently in place that all Station Officers would be aware of. In special circumstances the SOO may alter this procedure.

Regards

David Wilson SOO D Platoon

DELEGATE TRAINING

The first Delegate Training Course has recently been held over two days. I recently was elected to the Branch Committee; therefore I relinquished the Station Delegate position at Midland FRS, which has since been taken up by Paul Armstrong - well done Paul!

I had been the Station Delegate since the concepts recent reformation, although now being on the BCOM, I felt it prudent that I still participated in the Delegates Training Course, as I was unsure of many details of the operations of our Union.

The training commenced with and was run by Graeme Geer, our Secretary and Lea Anderson, the Industrial Officer. The first thing that I learnt was that our Union is one of a minority, being a service union opposed to an organising union. This means because we have close to 100% of our workforce being members, our union resources are focused on servicing us - the members, as opposed to organising or recruiting employees to join the union.

My original understanding of the delegate's role was to improve the communication between management of the union and the members, but my understanding has now somewhat changed. Steve Watson, the Daglish delegate, suggested when a problem or question arises, rather than the delegate providing the members with the answer or "the fish", teach them to how to fish, thus empowering members and creating a stronger union.

Answers to most issues are all accessible on the UFU web site - we just need to be shown where to look. The UFU rules outline the objectives of the union, and the roles and responsibilities of positions and meetings within our union.

The Award and the EBA shows everyone our agreed conditions of employment, which is continually under attack from FESA.

Other items covered during the training that affect conditions of employment were workers compensation and changes to IR laws, which was outlined by guests from Gibson and Gibson. This firm is retained by UFU and provide a range of free and discounted services to members and their families, including free wills and first consultation amongst others.

John Chatfield who is the OSH Coordinator on the BCOM outlined the history and current OSH structure, supposedly backed by powerful legislation ensuring workers safety, but is continually stalled and hampered by the employer.

Brian Longman gave us an overview of Superannuation and the Firefighters Benefit Fund, which are strongly supported by our Union.

The reason I have increased my involvement in our Union is that I see, like most, that our hard fought conditions are being eroded by the FESA animal!

When I joined the Fire Brigade over 20 years ago, a large number of senior management were uniformed staff that had an understanding of firefighters roles and requirements. Since the birth and subsequent growth of FESA, management now comprises largely of public servants and "FESA-ised" staff. They hide behind the facade of values like respecting each other, acting with integrity and having open two- way communication in the name of "customer service", all the while "bean-counting" and "empire building" quite often to the detriment of the Firefighters primary role - saving life and property.

We all need to take ownership and become more involved in our Union, to ensure the future of the Fire and Rescue Service be guaranteed. *Adam Steens*

BUILT ENVIRONMENT BRANCH

From the number of boom cranes currently operating within the CBD, it is clear that the global recession has not had a major impact on the cities building activity. In fact, building activity has remained steady throughout the global financial crisis with only a small number of larger projects, temporarily put on hold. The Built Environment Branch – (BEB) initially experienced a fall off in the number of new projects which allowed staff to catch up on outstanding inspection and testing work of existing projects. It is envisaged the expansion of the mineral and gas projects in the North West, will increase the building assessment workload, back to levels experienced during the boom years.

Architects and builders are increasingly employing the services of Fire Engineers to address performance based alternative engineered solutions in the design of new building projects. In most cases Fire Engineering provides building owners/managers with possible cost savings and greater flexibility to accommodate new tenants, without incurring costly modifications during the life of the building. The BEB function is to ensure Building Code compliance and the design and installation of the fire detection, suppression systems together with occupant warning systems will meet FRS, Standard Operational Procedures.

The BEB recently advertised for a full time Fire Engineer. Applicants have been interviewed and the successful candidate should be announced shortly. This will allow the BEB provide a point of contact for practicing Fire Engineers to discuss proposals as well as provide a timely response for all building submissions involving Alternative Engineered Solutions.

BEB Officers continue to work closely with operational staff in all regions and to provide advice and appropriate training in the operation of complex fire booster and associated fire suppression systems. BEB Officers also provide advice to industry groups such as the Hydraulics Association to promote the importance of installing fire equipment, such as fire hydrants and hydrant / sprinkler booster systems, in locations that are easily recognizable on arrival at the allotment entry and accessible and operable to firefighters at all times. *Station Officer Rick Tyers*

TANDOORI LAMBSHANKS

3-4 Lamb shanks
1tsp cumin
1tsp ground coriander
1tsp turmeric
1T Minced garlic
1T Minced ginger
1Cup fresh coriander
1Cup fresh continental parsley
6 Shallots
½ Butternut pumpkin (cut into wedges)
125g Tandoori paste
3x400g Tin chopped tomatoes

1. Combine all ingredients except Lamb shanks and tomatoes.
2. Add Lamb shanks and marinate in fridge for 2 hours or preferably overnight.
3. Remove from fridge and add tomatoes. Mix well with paste and Lamb shanks.
4. Cook in Large Ironware with Lid in oven at 160C for 2.5 hrs turning every 30mins.

Serve with Couscous/Polenta, preserved lemon and fresh parsley.

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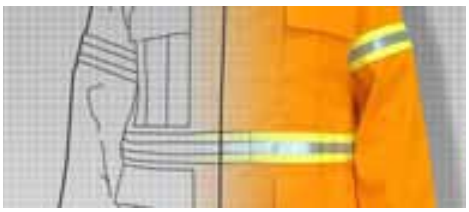

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The opportunity to further your career and achieve higher academic standards by progressing through the range of examinations set by the Institution.

The Institution supports the concept and practice of Continuing Professional Development (CPD), believing it to be essential to effective performance as a professional fire engineer.

Publications

The Institution, in partnership with the Fire Protection Association, produces a monthly journal for all members. The Institution publishes a number of books and monographs and offers substantial discount on these publications.

Conferences, Seminars and Exhibitions

Throughout the year the Institution holds a number of prestigious conferences and one day seminars which all members are invited to attend, at preferential rates.

The International Firefighting Safety Conference 2010

This event will be held in March 22-24 inclusive 2010 (www.firefightingsafety.com) and brings a number of international and local speakers to Adelaide for what will be an exciting three day conference aimed at first responders, incident controllers and corporate risk managers. For more details contact admin@ife.org.au

Anyone wishing to enquire about becoming a member can either contact the WA IFE Secretary

Jim Charters (08) 9593 2763 E-mail ritajim@iprimus.com.au

Or the IFE Australian National Secretary

Andrew Sharrad (08) 8278 9844 E-mail admin@ife.org.au Mob 0419 639 749

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