



## Fire and Rescue Commanders Association (FRCA)

### Newsletter October 2016

#### **Where have we been, where are we going?**

Since our last newsletter the committee's tasks has widened. Although we are still working on aspects related to the collective agreement, we have moved more towards making sure we are well recognised as a key stakeholder in the FENZ transition and planning the Association's future.

#### **Meetings, Workshops, Presentations;**

**Board Presentation:** On the 30th of September Des Irving, Peter Dempsey and myself presented to the NZFS Board. We presented 'who we are' and what our Association had to offer the FENZ transition.

Our theme was that although the Association is small in numbers in comparison to the other stakeholders in FENZ, we have a critical role. We used the analogy that if the FENZ transition was a large vehicle heading in a direction then we, as one component of that engine, were the oil in the gear box. Not large compared to the overall mass but critical to the movement.

We spoke of our vision of "Staff will aspire to the role of Commander" and then our three key attributes that made us unique. Our Engagement, our Knowledge and our Communication capabilities.

**Engagement:** The survey showed 20% of us were 'highly engaged' (1.5 or above on Maslow's Hierarchy of needs), about 40% ( 2.5 score or above ) were 'engaged', 30% (score 3) were 'nearly engaged' and 10% (score 4 ) were 'not engaged'. There were no disengaged (5)

In comparison to other international organisations this level of staff engagement is pretty good. The key message (over 80%) cited 'work overload' reconfirming this as the biggest barrier to a higher level of engagement and ability to do our job. No surprises there as this was much the same as the 2014 survey on Executive officer's effectiveness. We did offer 'the' solution that if 'capacity' was addressed it would potentially lift us well above international averages of employee engagement. This would be highly unique if achieved during a time of organisational change.

**Knowledge:** We presented how the Commander's knowledge in Operations ranged from the strategic level to the people coalface, from implementing new initiatives to making sure a wide range of skills and equipment was maintained for the many different call types.

**Communication:** We are known across all the stakeholders from the coal face level to the management level and are therefore the ideal group to lead a consistent and positive communication plan and provide quick feedback to the transition team FAQs. Although again capacity was our main barrier.

We felt our meeting/presentation went well and a good discussion and lunch followed. Thank you to Paul Swain and the board members for their inclusion. Attached is note from from Paul Swain following this newsletter.

**Blue Print presentation:** On the 28th of September all the Committee was invited to attend a presentation by the Transition team on the FENZ BluePrint . There we met a number of the transition team and had good discussion around the blue print and future communications and relations. Thanks to Sue Sherburd (Stakeholder Engagement Lead) for organising this.

**Principal Rural Fire Officers Association PRFANZ.** Following the above meeting, Des and I spoke at a national PRFANZ meeting to give an overview of who we are. This was followed by an interesting discussion which helped us get a good understanding how our rural colleagues see and feel about the amalgamation of our organisations.

**Associated Agencies Group Meeting 20th September:** This group is chaired by Bill Butzbach Director of the UFBA and has a membership of all the 'associated' agencies such as the UFBA, NZPFU, FRCA, PRFANZ, the Firefighters Welfare society, Fire Service Sports Association and more. About 20 people attended. Although we were late due to plane delays the meeting was very positive and focused on these associated agencies working together to make FENZ happen. There were good discussions covering many aspects of our future and Sue Sherburd from the transition team was there to answer questions from the transitions team perspective. Bill is adapting the Terms of Reference for this group to better align it to the transition period and will put them out soon. There are more meetings and workshops planned and we look forward to being an active member.

#### **Update on employment contract related matters.**

##### **1. Entry Level of A/ACs.**

Task: Developing A/AC entry level, the remuneration progression steps, OSM and ACL for the Commander's role. To be completed within 4 months of signing contract. Now 1 Month overdue.

Progress: The progression steps have been agreed and there have been two workshops around the other components. More workshops planned in this year.

##### **2.Vehicle Policy:**

Task: Update vehicle policy.

Progress. We haven't seen the draft policy which is going to SLT on the 18 October. We know a 4WD vehicle is agreed for the 10% limited private use group and there has been a change to the maximum price cap. If SLT approve it then this will be the starting position for further consultation on this policy. SLT will also consider FRCA's suggestions to the policy which include what government list we can choose from and recommendations on 'fit for use' for the role of the vehicle.

I will try and get some answers before this week's AGM for those of you that have expired three year leases and are over the mileage limit. For the 25% full use you may be able to go with the existing vehicle policy, the price caps and vehicles, but if you're waiting for the 10% 4WD option then hold.

I do understand how much frustrations there is around how long this is taking and have passed this on.

### **3."Two off One on" minimum Executive Call Roster:**

Task: To be completed 4 Months after signing. Presently one month overdue .

Progress: FRCA sent a paper in early September to Operations on our position of the draft 'Executive call and parameters' policies. The process from here is for Operations to redo the Policies that hopefully include our recommendations, then the OLT then SLT approval process starts all over again. We are already past the 4 month agreed point on this so hope that some priority will be given to this historic Safety and Wellbeing issue. Based on the comments from the survey, some of you are still doing continuous weeks on call. This is ridiculous from a safety and wellbeing perspective and having a life. You need to manage this! If you know there is insufficient ACL3s to cover call on the roster, which I know is common, you need to advise your region manager so other arrangements can be made. Your FRMs often don't know unless you tell them. We recommend you max out at 50% on call until this is sorted.

### **Advocacy requests**

We have managed a number of requests from members and in most cases have found a win win outcome. Still outstanding is the non geographic executive officers concern around how their remuneration package was aligned with the 'Hay' remuneration levels, but were not consulted on how their role was assessed to be aligned to a Hay level. HR promised to provide face to face or VC sessions to discuss this but it has not been organised to date. The survey clearly showed a lower level of engagement from the non geographic members, mainly related to lower contractual entitlements and interest in their group compared to the geographic group.

### **Summary**

We have made good progress networking and building our profile with our partners/stakeholders. Importantly we are learning what their perspective is of us, and us of them. Promisingly, we are amalgamating with a lot of professionals with the same culture as us, of simply wanting to do our jobs well.

We have worked through many of our objectives in our present strategic plan but have still not got close to our vision of making our role more attractive to those that would make good Commanders. I don't need to write why. Succession planning is a big risk of the future and we know of about 6 Commanders that have or are going before July next year and estimate about 10 will most likely go. There is not much time left to make sure the best people are ready and willing , for the future Senior Officer roles of the new organisation.

We have promised a high level of engagement in this amalgamation and transition, with a goal of vastly exceeding the average international employee engagement levels. To achieve this we need

support to build 'capability so we can get out of the office and secondly need to tidy up the overdue contractual agreements. So the ball is in both courts to achieve this goal of ultimate engagement by the leaders.

The survey provides very quick and valuable information on our engagement so we will run another survey after the first wave of FENZ presentations is complete. A summary of scores and comments will be out soon.

Finally we need to make decisions on where our Association is going in the future. What in our strategy needs updating? Where do those in the new roles go to for advocacy and/or membership with like minded emergency service professionals? Will our name still be suitable?

Bring an open mind to the AGM.

And for those that don't know Peter Dempsey is retiring very soon. Peter has been our encyclopedia of restructures, HR contracts and history on everything else that matters, and doesn't matter and just an all round contributor to all meetings and workshop and decision. He will be a major loss to the Association and the NZFS, but we wish him well in his retirement. Leave your phone on please Peter!

Regards

**President:** Roy Breeze   **Secretary:** Des Irving

**Committee members:** Dave Stackhouse, Paul Henderson, Greg Crawford, Peter Dempsey, Geoff Purcell

---

**Note: From Hon Paul Swain to FRCA.**

I want to thank NZFRCA President Roy Breeze, Secretary Des Irving, and Committee Member Peter Dempsey for their excellent presentation at the Board's September meeting.

The team outlined the four goals of the NZFRCA's strategic vision, and indicated strong support for the 'leader-led' approach to our transition to Fire and Emergency New Zealand (FENZ).

The Board is pleased the Association is ensuring it is closely involved in planning for the amalgamation of urban and rural fire services. We see this kind of input, along with other similar groups in the sector, as critical to ensure FENZ works for the public, and firefighters, from Day One.

We want to build on the strong foundations of service to urban and rural communities that have been established over many decades, and to do so we need to call on the experience of the fire service personnel who have had a hand in creating these foundations.

The Board appreciates the efforts of the Association's members, who have stepped up to the task of organising 'leader-led' sessions around the country. It's a big task but these sessions are important because we want everyone to have the opportunity to ask questions, and be fully informed on progress towards FENZ.

On that note we look forward to working closely with the Association over the coming months, as we build this new organisation together. The current model has served New Zealand well over the last century. With new legislation at hand, our goal is to build a unified service that can meet the challenges of the next.

**Hon Paul Swain**

Board Chair,

New Zealand Fire Service Commission.