



## Fire and Emergency Commanders Association

### Presidents Report 2020

Kia ora koutou

Each president's report I reflect on the year that was and it always includes how busy we all were. This year is no different but with the added challenge of COVID-19. I want to start by saying well done by all. I think FENZ has faced the COVID-19 challenge very well and by FENZ I mean everyone, from the CEO to the coalface. It has been a team effort, where everything else was put to one side whilst we manage what really matters. It's what we do.

#### **Looking back**

I want to lead into the 'year that was' report by reminding ourselves what FECA was set up for, 'our reason to exist is'?

**Way back in 2014**, a rather diverse group of people got together and became the 'Fire and Rescue Commanders Association' Committee (FRCA). A couple of the originals have retired or moved on now but were replaced by equally dedicated people.

This diversity in the FECA committee have feed many robust discussions on matters that relate to the commander's role. It has meant any matter is looked at from all the perspectives of our members and of the organisation. There was rarely a perfect solution that suits all, but fortunately as a committee we always finished agreeing on the action/s required.

**The first thing we did** was to develop our Strategic Plan 2015 – 2020. We considered then that a big risk to our organisation was our roles were not attractive enough to attract and retain the right people to the leadership positions.

Our plan has dominated our decision making. In brief,

#### **Our Strategic Plan 2015 – 2020.**

##### **Our Vision '*Where we want to be*'**

Staff Will Aspire to the Role of Fire Commander.

##### **Our Mission '*Why we exist*'**

Continually Enhance the Role of 'Commander' to be Professional, Rewarding and Safe.

##### **Our Goals**

- Provide Support and Advocacy to Members
- Increase the Respect of the Association Internally and Externally
- Support our Organisations Vision
- Focus on Leadership to Support our Staff

Our Goals are based on the rational that the organisation must be great before you can have good roles within it. So, it is important we work to support our organisation as we do to enhance the roles for our future leaders.

### **The year that was**

This year has been focused on the Tranche 2/2b processes and the unplanned arrival of COVID 19.

This time last year we were getting your feedback on what should go into the submission for the '*Building Fire and Emergency New Zealand – proposal for our organisational structure and approach to rank*'. We collated your feedback and submitted a comprehensive submission. We provided options on what we felt was the fairest way for redeployment to the new roles and requested more transparency in the selection process.

FENZ acknowledged our feedback and other partner agencies feedback and provided a '...additional and changed proposal for consultation' on the key themes needing clarification. The committee collated a submission to this also.

The final decision by the CEO on the proposals clarified and/or addressed additional points for us but left a few key issues unresolved. FECA requested we go into voluntary mediation to resolve these and FENZ has accepted. This is planned for the 13<sup>th</sup> of October. The meeting will discuss

- Terms and conditions of new roles; and,
- the Technical Competency Framework development process;

Another clarification is being addressed separate to above is

- some additional transparency in the selection process. This is to support those who have been in long term acting roles.

As a backup, we have left our dispute open on the core issues that contribute to some of the above.

Our focus all through this is our original strategies intention to 'retain and attract new leaders' both now and into the future, to support FENZ to reach its best as a leading emergency service.

### **Looking ahead**

We have had several talks with the 'Rural Professional Association'(RPA) leaders about becoming one Association that has a collective coverage of the Tier 4 and 5 managers in FENZ. The intention is this will include operational and support roles thus providing better inclusiveness, greater diversity and acknowledging everyone is important within our association and the organisation.

We also feel it is important that there are not multiple unions/associations representing our leadership level within FENZ.

The first phase has been to offer membership to RPA members that are successful in getting selected roles in the new T2 positions. We welcomed our first RPA member recently. The next step is to formally expand our 'collective coverage' (who can join) and then assess what if anything needs to be changed to the association. All of which will be put to our membership before final decisions are made.

Our base principle is to be professional and this is the right thing to do, Kia Tika, it is our part in developing a more unified organisation.

Our focus over the last year has therefore been mainly advocacy,

**It has been a long road to get here** but, compare it to something I heard recently. A Philippines company carried out a major company restructure. They were in a high rise building and set the fire alarm off. The building evacuated, an announce came over the public-address systems advising that if your swipe card works to get back in, you have a job, if not you haven't. I am not sure if that was an appropriate analogy to my story here, but just had to tell anyway!

**A wee reminder.** We know we needed change in how we work. Particularly as our roles deliver the implementation phase of strategies to get to the coalface. If you think we didn't need change, then hands up those whose job is awesome now! Not many hands. We required mandate for the risks we respond to, not have jurisdiction boundaries and have more empowered ways of working.

**We supported the 8 key areas of change,** we were part of the co design that identified these needs. Now we are in the hard part of having to apply for the roles of the new structure.

**Our focus is now on** supporting you through the selection process, recognising this is the most stressful period for everyone. We will get through this, it is a growth restructure not a reduction restructure. We need to keep looking ahead with an open mind. We can grump our way through to the end of our careers or keep actively involved helping to build our organisation.

But, not having all the 'detail' to visualise the future picture does add to our stress. How do we process what affect these 8 key areas of change will have? What could drop off as we add new responsibilities? How is this new structure going to make any difference to what we need to do to get trucks out the door, keep the crews safe and provide our risk reduction programmes? Are we already doing the above efficiently or are we surviving from day to day?

**It is interesting** that we have all chosen a career where a key attraction of our role is to respond into high stress environments. We are at our best leading a team of people in dynamic and time critical environments often with limited information and lacking the detail. We use our technical knowledge, leadership skills, experiences and preplanning to make decisions. We prioritise the tasks required to be done against the available resources and then set the objectives that are best for all affected by the event. Let's apply this same interest and wisdom to our future.

**We will play a key role** in developing these new ways of working. Let's not hope for the detail now, let's see what we can do with these key areas of change and the new structure. I would rather help paint the future picture than someone paint it for us.

**Your personal priority** at moment is to focus on putting what you already know into some order for your interview. You will have plenty of examples of the competencies required for the new roles. Give me a call if you need to brain storm, you will be surprised how many skills and examples you will have.

### **Our Communication**

Lets stay in touch during this time.

Our **WhatsApp** group contains 'what is happening as it happens'. It is highly likely if you have a question or worry, there will be others out there with the same. Post a question or share something and you will get an answer from one of the committee pretty quickly and a few comments from members. You can even share positive stuff!

You don't have to worry about correct spelling and grammar, as you can tell by my posts. There is no expectation or need to be logged on 24/7 and have the alert notification at full volume. There, rumours can be made, destroyed or confirmed in minutes! Tune in for the next 'bongo alert'!

You can contact myself or any committee members on WhatsApp individually if you don't want to post to the whole group. If you are not into Whatsapp at all, just use text or email, no problem. Check it out.

**National VCs** are used for important updates often requiring your input and will be supported with some prereading.

**Newsletters** take a lot of time to write and most of the information has already been communicated or out of date by the time it comes out, so don't hold your breath.

**Need support**, Darryl Papesch is the FECA Welfare representative and you can also contact any committee member you feel most comfortable to talk to.

### **Almost the end**

I want to finish with a very sincere thank you to all the committee members for their time, commitment, knowledge and diverse opinions on all matters. I feel very confident that you have all been very well represented over this year. No stone left unturned but with consideration for what the organisation must achieve.

A big thanks to Kim McCarthy our administration support who makes things happen with no fuss and lots of professionalism.

Thank you to FENZ leadership, Rhys Jones, Kerry Gregory and Brendan Nally for their communication, availability to discuss our concerns and the very informative partner agency meetings.

To all FECA members, our thanks to you all for the trust in us to represent you and the positive and honest feedback you give us.

We all want to be part of a unified world class emergency service and it will take all of us to get it there. *Whanaungatanga*

Kia Kaha

Noho ora mai

Roy Breeze

President: Fire and Emergency Commanders Association (FECA)

On behalf of the Committee: Des Irving (Secretary), Steve Kennedy (Treasurer), Committee member Dave Stackhouse, Dave Key, John Booth, Geoff Purcell, Darryl Papesch, Daryl Trim, Murray Binning

