



# RFSA



RFSA newsletter

ISSUE 30 – Volume 3/2013

## Special RFSA Conference 2013 Edition

RFSA Conference 2013 brought together more than 500 delegates at Parklands Resort and Conference Centre, Mudgee across Friday 21, Saturday 22 and Sunday 23 June. Attendees included parliamentarians, dignitaries, a program full of both inspiring and educational speakers, informative exhibitors and sponsors, colleagues from interstate associations and most importantly a cross section of RFSA Members from across the state.

Informal proceedings commenced with an Exhibition Launch BBQ lunch on Friday. With more than 40 exhibits, spanned across a venue room and a specially built floored marquee in the grounds, there was plenty to look at and learn about. From trucks and sirens to first aid and drones, there was everything there that the emergency service could need. It was leading technology, with the latest developments from all parts of the world.

The marquee itself was such an impressive sight, apparently locals were speculating that a celebrity wedding may be taking place!

A Welcome Reception on Friday evening provided the opportunity for Members to mix and mingle.

On Saturday morning, the plenary sessions commenced. After introductions from MC Phil Langdon, General Manager, Bernard Cox provided introductions and discussed the role of the Association and how he and his team are getting out and about a lot more to meet Members.

Following this, President (2009-2013) Brian McKinlay AFSM provided an overview of the Association's achievements over the last few years.

Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Michael Gallacher provided the official opening. He also made the welcome announcement that the NSW Government has agreed to a one to two year delay in the implementation of a levy to fund the provision of emergency services (a precis of Mr Gallacher's words is on page 4).

Dr. Judy Esmond shared her research and discussed how to make volunteering a better experience, and ingredients that will increase membership and the satisfaction of volunteers.

Sam Bailey moved everyone in the packed auditorium with his heart moving and heart warming story and provided a reality check of sorts on how we can all overcome the hurdles in our lives, as Sam has done and continue to achieve.

Paul Scott's talk on 'prepare to be challenged, prepare to be inspired' was a thought provoking discussion as he made the delegation think laterally.

NSW RFS Commissioner, Shane Fitzsimmons AFSM provided a perspective on recent fire seasons compared to the bushfires of the 1970s and 80s after major droughts. He showed us while weather conditions were worse than the conditions during these two decades, the areas burnt and level of damage was much lower because of the modern equipment and the level of preparedness of the volunteers and staff.

Dr. Michael Eburn discussed litigation issues and highlighted that in all three recent legal cases on fires in Australia, the State of NSW was named as the defendant, not individuals.

Peter Brookhouse discussed what he has learnt from traditional indigenous fire management on Cape York and how it is starting to be applied to areas in Central and Northern NSW.

George Negus brought back some memories and laughs as he illustrated how the world has changed beyond our thoughts and imagination and reinforced the constant need to adapt to change.

Members left RFSA Conference 2013 feeling inspired, appreciated, up to date on new technology and educated about matters that affect them in their quest to protect the community.

*This Special Edition Newsletter aims to provide an overview of RFSA Conference 2013 presentations and program.*

*Videos and related presentations of all speaker sessions are available on the RFSA website [www.rfsa.org.au](http://www.rfsa.org.au) under the RFSA Conference 2013 tab. More photos can be found under the News and Events tab in Photo Galleries*

### Conference Comments

- Had a great time at the RFSA State Conference and AGM.
- Finally home after a wonderful long weekend in Mudgee at the NSW RFSA Conference. I urge everyone to get behind this organization as they support our RFS volunteers in so many ways.
- Excellent speakers, lots of displays to see, a great dinner, altogether a most interesting weekend. Thank you RFSA!
- Thanks RFSA for a great conference with excellent speakers as well. Last night's dinner was the highlight of the weekend for us, catching up with fellow RFSA Members.

## From the President



Greetings Members,

It is an honour for me to be communicating with you in my first column as the Association's President.

I feel very humbled to be elected to this role and honoured to be representing you.

Whilst it is a new face in this space, my aim is to continue the growth in the ways and means in which the RFSA supports you.

I want to ensure the foundations laid and the direction and momentum achieved under the stewardship of former President Brian McKinlay AFSM is maintained. Thank you Brian for this legacy.

Working alongside me to achieve these things are the returning Directors for 2013 -2015 :

**David Hoadley** AFSM/Vice President NSW RFS Staff, **Alan Holley**/Vice President Volunteer, **Ken Middleton**/Secretary, **Jane Hollier**, **Marcia LeBusque**, **Brian McDonough** and **Brian McKinlay**.

Welcome and congratulations as well to our new

Directors, **Chris Powell** AFSM, Wamboin/Palerang RFB and **Michael Brett**/Treasurer, NSW RFS Region North Office/Casino.

I believe, with our mix of experience, acumen and also with some fresh ideas and approaches thrown in, the Association will continue to prosper.

May I also extend thanks to retiring Directors Ralph Walker and Stephen Raymond who worked tirelessly for the Association and whose contributions and frank assessments have been invaluable.

Upon being elected at the State Council meeting held in Mudgee during the Conference, I've endeavoured to hit the ground running so to speak.

I took the opportunity to attend a State Government Community Cabinet Meeting in Penrith and speak with the State's Treasurer, Mike Baird and by the time you read this I will have wrapped up a tour of our Northern Region's Divisional and Branch meetings.

It was wonderful to meet as many of you as I did at our Conference and it's important to me to meet as many of you as possible. Please come and introduce yourself if you see me at an RFSA event, NSW RFS activity or even in the street. Alternatively you can contact me via email ([tim.arnott@rfsa.org.au](mailto:tim.arnott@rfsa.org.au)) or call me on 0457 728 476.

**Tim Arnott**

## Comments from the Commissioner

*When the Mayor of Christchurch, Bob Parker, was unable to attend the Conference, NSW RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons seized the opportunity to talk with delegates for a longer period of time.*

The Commissioner started by taking a look at the equipment of the past and how basic it was. He focused on the history of fires across NSW and how technological improvements have advanced the fighting of fires and prevented greater losses.

Shane commented that people tend to feel the last fire season they experienced was the worst, which is understandable as they may still be experiencing the impacts. However history shows there have been awful fire seasons in the past 40 years in terms of property and life losses, and whilst the 12/13 season had the potential to be the worst on record, the Service's enhanced ability to fight the fires prevented this from occurring. The Commissioner applauded all the members of the NSW Rural Fire Service for a great effort.

During the period of 7 to 21 January 2013, all sorts of weather records were broken. We saw the worst ever fire danger ratings recorded in the State. There were four statewide fire bans and forty one section 44 declarations, catastrophic fire danger ratings and temperature records being broken. In a two week period there were about 2,000 fires of which 512 were classed as 'significant' fires.

Commissioner Fitzsimmons moved on to discuss hazard reduction rates and its integration into the State Fire Management Plan. He also highlighted that staff make up only one per cent of the NSW Rural Fire Service and volunteers comprise 99 per cent. He also advised that as a whole NSW RFS members need to commit to embracing change or there won't be a NSW Rural Fire Service in the decades ahead.

A video of the Commissioner and a copy of his speaker presentation can be viewed at [www.rfsa.org.au](http://www.rfsa.org.au)

### January 2013 Fires



#### • Losses

- 57 homes
- Hundreds of other structures (outbuildings, sheds etc)
- 14,000 sheep
- 500 cattle
- 3,600km of fencing
- 33,000ha of pasture
- No loss of human life





Winnie Wilson, Honour & Awards Committee Chairperson; 2012 Member of the Year Lance Hartley; Outgoing President Brian McKinlay.



Chris Lord Memorial Scholarship recipient Beth Dalton, Silverdale RFB and April Meredith, Hornsby RFB who was awarded the President's Scholarship.



Paul Scott, NSW RFS Counselling & Support Unit Manager; Jane Hollier, RFSA Director; Simon Topp, Ingleside RFB; Ian Burnet, Clarence Town RFB.



Entertainer Raymond Crowe marvels at the Insepctor Gadget arms of Councillor Paul Cavalier, Mid-Western Regional Council.



Belinda Richards and Daughter and Mum team Ellen and Kylie Ledger, all from Darlington RFB in RFSA Division 3 enjoying the evening.



Alf Manhire, Southampton RFB; Scott Campbell, Lawrence RFB; Col Jealous and Elizabeth Jealous-Scott, both members of Clarence Valley Catering.



Ralph Walker, retiring Director; outgoing President Brian McKinlay; Pat McKinlay and Stephen Raymond, retiring Director.

*The Conference Dinner and Presentation was on Saturday evening 22 June.*

*The auditorium was turned around in a record time and the room was transformed into a stunning setting befitting the elegant dress-code.*

*Throughout the evening Honours and Awards and Scholarship presentations were made, along with recognition of retiring Board Directors.*

*Feature entertainment was provided by 'unusualist' Raymond Crowe who had delegates in awe with his array of curiosities.*



L-R: NSW RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons, outgoing RFSA President Brian McKinlay; Michael Gallacher MP, Minister for Police and Emergency Services; Bernard Cox, General Manager RFSA.



Karen Patton, Scotts Flat RFB, Division 4 participated in the RFSA Panel session where she shared how RFSA support had assisted her and her family. By her side are Liz Philpott (L) and Kerry Spall (R).



Dr. Judy Esmond presented a two-part keynote address which left the delegates thinking and laughing at the same time.



Peter Brookhouse shared some clever indigenous fire techniques.



Dr. Michael Eburn laying 'down the law'.

## Minister Talks ESL

"...now I recognise the RFSA has a strong view with regards to the Emergency Services Levy. No more strongly advocated than by your President and your senior personnel from within the RFSA.

We took a decision at the time that we would submit to the people, models of discussion in terms of a consultation paper and of course that went out.

Following that Brian and Bernard came in and we spoke about the paper and they made their views very strongly known to the government.

That's what I like about our relationship; between my office and the RFSA. It's a robust one.

It's one about accessibility. I know if the guys need to see me they can and they always have access to our office and most senior levels within the Ministry to be able to discuss ideas.

I make no apologies that government is about making decisions and I recognise each and every one of you, as volunteers are passionate about this organisation and want the absolute very best. So too, do I. I want to ensure you get the absolute very best that we can give you. But not only are you volunteers and members of this wonderful organisation, you're also tax payers and I have to walk that thin line between the two, sometimes, competing interests to get to the same goal that each and every one of you want in terms of ensuring the maximum emphasis and commitment is given to rural fire fighting in NSW to ensure you have the equipment and the resources to do the job.

We've taken a decision, as a result of the submissions that were made, both verbal, and in writing, to look closely at what is happening in Victoria following the introduction of their changes to the Emergency Services Levy. That will give us an opportunity collectively to scrutinise the outcomes of Victoria. There is a view that there is no need to rush this through while they are going through this process. To study closely what happens in Victoria and to make sure that if there are unintended consequences as a result of the reforms that most certainly, we collectively have an opportunity to discuss them.

We have not walked away from our position that we do want to see a more equitable spread of responsibility in providing money that we as a government then pass on to you and the other emergency service providers in this State.

We've not walked away from that but the concerns raised by the Association and others have been listened to in government and we are prepared to work with you to see if we can still resolve the issues over the next year to two years. It is important to know that because there was a concern that it was going to be pushed through and I did say that to your Executive that it won't be.

It is important we continue to foster a working relationship to understand where both of us are coming from."

## From the GM



As General Manager of the Association, I feel honoured to be in a role where I can represent the interests of our Members. We should never underestimate the strength of our great organisation. When we band together, the united voice of over 70,000 members will be heard by many.

As I travel around the State and speak to many of you, I see the dedication and passion you have in protecting your communities. For me to do my job properly, it is vital that we have a strong connection to you; our Members. I'm always interested to hear what concerns or issues you have; and what is of most importance to you.

I really do enjoy being able to speak to you and trying to find you answers or a result. Sometimes it is not always the answer or result you may be hoping for but it is important you are being heard and recognised. I give all our Members a commitment that the dedicated staff of the RFSA will do everything possible to support you.

Over the past 12 months, we have actively looked at how we engage with our Members and connect with you. Our aim is to keep up with social media and the changes in technology and to make our newsletter and website more interesting and informative. We now attend more functions than ever before and we're keen to meet with Members on home turf to ensure you are engaged and informed.

In terms of RFSA Conference 2013, we asked Members where they would like this event to be staged and overwhelmingly the response was to 'come back' to Mudgee.

This year is the largest conference we have held, with more than 500 delegates in attendance and when planning commenced, I wanted to ensure the theme wasn't just a catch-phrase - but that it actually was incorporated into the conference program.

Our theme, Recognise, Foster, Support, and Achieve is more than just a play on our name. I strongly believe these words represent what we do for our Members, through a variety of different programs and initiatives.

I look forward to meeting more of you in the next twelve months.

**Bernard Cox**

## Never Going to be the Same Again

**George Negus provided an informative and entertaining overview of the changes he has encountered as a journalist over the last 25 years which just could not have been predicted.**

**Ranging from politics, to spirituality and through to technology, he provided delegates with many examples of change.**

**From the Berlin Wall coming down and the reunification of Germany, to the terrorist attacks on September 11 in the US, he showed how unexpected events can change the world we live in.**

**He even shared recollections of his (in)famous interview with the late Dame Margaret Thatcher.**

**Mr Negus opened our minds to expect the unexpected during the next quarter of a century and highlighted the fact that we must accept unexpected change as normal because 'The World Was Never Going To Be The Same Again'!**



## Judy volunteers study findings

How to attract new members and keeping existing ones is a challenge facing most community and sporting clubs. While there are more than 70,000 volunteers across the NSW Rural Fire Service, this number has remained fairly static for a number of years.

Dr. Judy Esmond, a research fellow at the Centre for International Health at Curtin University has been exploring the reasons why we have the challenge with the first study on volunteers and baby boomers. Her study examined the challenges in attracting, supporting and training volunteers.

There were five key issues identified in attracting and retaining volunteers. These were:

- \* Time
- \* Training
- \* Cost
- \* Recognition
- \* People

In her two part keynote presentation Dr. Esmond outlined an eight stage model for recruiting, retaining and supporting volunteers.

The elements are:

- \* Plan
- \* Recruit
- \* Lead
- \* Recognise
- \* Market effectively
- \* Train
- \* Retain
- \* Feedback

Some of the tips Dr. Esmond included in her talk were:

- Never give up on the ability to learn and discover new things.
- Put out an expression of interest to try something different rather than enforce it.
- A leadership role is to teach others to lead.
- Lead by not doing more but allow other people to do more.
- Become better and better at what we are outstanding at.

*A video of Dr. Esmond's presentation can be viewed at [www.rfsa.org.au](http://www.rfsa.org.au)*

## You Don't Need Wings to Fly - Sam Bailey

You could have heard a pin drop or even some tears trickling down cheeks during Sam Bailey's captivating presentation.

One delegate was overheard commenting: *"my challenges are insignificant compared to those constantly encountered by Sam and nothing is beyond him"*.

Sam is an amazing person who, together with his wife Jenny, brings their moving story to life. The story is one of true inspiration. As a young Jackeroo in Queensland, he thought he was bullet proof and made the decision not to wear a seatbelt on a trip to the local pub. He had a catastrophic car accident and became a quadriplegic with a very challenging future.

However Sam has turned this perceived adversity on its head. He has lived a life that made a mockery of his disability and has inspired others to do the same.

But the Sam Bailey story is not just about one man. It is about an incredibly supportive family and Jenny, Sam's soul mate, who together have combined as a team to crush fear, address negativity and achieve what may be deemed (by others as) the impossible.

Sam has met every challenge head on. Flying an ultralight plane, riding a motor bike, driving farm machinery and snow skiing are just some of Sam's past achievements.

He hasn't stopped conquering challenges though. Sam has also set a goal of being the first quadriplegic to fly a helicopter. Of course there are special modifications which have to be made to the chopper, but thanks to the support of a financial institution, this is becoming a reality.

And it's not just flying the helicopter but where he wants to land it. He wants to be the first person to land a helicopter on Bondi Beach and he has the approval of the local council. Stay tuned for his next adventure as he proves nothing is beyond any of us.

When Sam wound up his captivating presentation, there was a standing ovation from the conference floor.

And nearly every delegate in the room understood that no matter how high life's hurdles are - they are surmountable and that you don't need wings to fly.



### WHAT'S COMING UP

[www.rfsa.org.au/news-media-events](http://www.rfsa.org.au/news-media-events)

#### RFSA Divisional Meetings

- 3 August Division 1 Meeting.  
Ballina RSL Club. 1030 hrs.
- 4 August Division 2 Meeting.  
Woolgoolga Diggers Club. 0930 hrs.
- 4 August Division 10 Meeting.  
Gunnedah Services Club.

#### RFS & RFSA Events

- 6 August CEG Meeting.  
RFS HQ, Lidcombe. 0930 hrs.
- 15-17 August RFS Leadership Forum.  
Dubbo RSL Club.
- 22 August FSJSC Meeting.  
RFS HQ, Lidcombe. 1030 hrs.
- 23 August Board Meeting. TBC
- 24 August State Council.  
Novotel, Rooty Hill. 0900 hrs.

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