UFBA 2016 Conference: Provincial Association Presentation

Warren Maslin, President Canterbury Provincial Fire Brigades’ Association

Mr President, Honoured Guests and Delegates; in a meeting in Wellington this September, I was nominated to speak to this conference delegation on behalf of all the Provinceals. It was agreed at our Annual Provincial meeting with the UFBA Board and Executive that instead of each Provincial Association presenting you with an address to this AGM covering what we have concluded, it was decided we would work together and be more future focussed in a joint presentation that I am proud to be able to deliver to you on behalf of all Seven Provinceals.

Although our organisation, made up of our Provinceals, Sub Associations and the principal body UFBA have been around since 1878, there are proud traditions that need to be maintained and honoured. If we are to survive we also need to think more strategically and be future focused and fit for purpose.

Back to 1878: The prime purpose of the UFBA (in its infancy) was “Establishing an organisation to enable discussion on matters of mutual interest and to form a better means of liaison between volunteer brigades.”

The core purpose of our organisation has not changed. However as we have grown, the industry has become regulated, and needs of our society and community continue to evolve. We are concerned that Provinceals have not been able to keep pace with the change and deliver on our core purpose, being the better means of liaison between brigades. Together with the UFBA we can advocate for and support our members. We need to change our delivery model but not our core purpose to stay relevant.

In recent years, Provinceals have been affected by this pace of change yet have not necessarily responded positively to the change. We have gone from one waterways competition with in a provincial and a sub-association. Now we not only have four competitions (Regions 1 2 3 4) but we are trying to lead training camps, are in Leadership and Governance Training with the UFBA, are dealing with legislative compliance and it is harder to get volunteers to volunteer more time when their lives are increasingly busy.

Yet we are still running our Provinceals the same way we did 50 years ago! This cannot be sustained.

The success of Provinceals has been determined by the leadership skills and drive of the people involved. This has resulted in disconnected Provinceals all working differently and with different levels of success. We need to be system based with each Provincial operating in similar ways not in isolation or changes from AGM to AGM. This has resulted in some Provinceals struggling and a disjointed approach across the country.

1 See the associated Provincial Association Presentation 2016
UFBA has progressed at a different pace and continues to change its structure and system to meet its current and future environment, while representing the needs of their membership more directly at a National level. With the support of the UFBA, the Provincials can grow into a similarly strong and united body, working together with all interested parties in their communities.

Currently the UFBA support us and volunteers through:
- Leadership and Governance workshop attendance
- Assistance with facilitator for business plans
- Attendance at Provincial AGMs
- Annual Provincial leaders meeting with UFBA Board
- Working closely with us on Provincial challenge programmes.

It is Important as we move forward together that this support is continuously reviewed and grown as necessary, and that we support each other as Provincials, through our culture, people, structure, processes and partnerships.

At our annual meeting with the UFBA, the UFBA set up several hours together to brainstorm how we can work better together and be more valuable to each other.

At this meeting UFBA arranged for a facilitator to lead a session with all the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of all the Provincials to develop initiatives/strategies for the future.

Among many things discussed were:
- Are the current Provincials well-structured for 2017 and beyond?
- What is their purpose?
- What are the challenges around Provincial admin/management structures?
- Have demographics/lifestyles changed the availability of the executive?

We established, as a group, that yes our purpose was the same, but we faced challenges in our structure and systems and our effectiveness is affected by inconsistent resourcing.

This resulted in a discussion of how we could be more relevant in the future and make a difference for local communities. We aim to have direct and powerful influence on the decisions that have been made and might affect all our member and their communities, not just up until July 2017 but in the legacy we leave for the future members.

Overall the strategies we agreed on is that the best way forward to make all Provincials more relevant and enhance the relationship between them and the UFBA was to look at new structures and systems to ensure success in the fast paced changes within the industry and our communities.

We, as the Provincials need to be more influential by having:
- Better culture
- Well-resourced, better supported and trained people
- Modern and robust administrative and executive structure common to all Provincials
- Established partnerships with each other and the rest of our community
- Provincials need to be the right size to be effective within their communities, with the right level of support from and for sub associations to give additional connection to local members.

The conclusion of the group was that the future of the Provincials lay in having
- A strong voice speaking together and supporting the UFBA
- Better networks
• Same processes
• Talking and communicating between each other and with the UFBA
• Making sure that the members’ voice across the country is the voice that Fire Service, FENZ and all other stakeholders hear
• Be the trusted source of information, to the community
• Be a reliable voice of the community to UFBA and FENZ
• A place where other agencies can come and work through community issues together.

This big picture was conceptually agreed on in Wellington in September 2016, by the Provincials and is fully supported by the UFBA. We all understand it’s a big job and more work needs to be done in specific areas to take our Provincials to the next level.

Our next steps from here as Provincial leaders are to have regular meetings together, with the strategic thinkers of the UFBA to make these ideas a reality. By working in partnership with all interested parties to influence the future, in the best interest of our members and their families.

While continuing to provide our traditional training, competitions and recognition of service, we aim to be a local resource where ideas and concerns can be fed back to our National Representatives. As well as being a trusted partner for delivering information from the UFBA and other National influencers into our communities.

This growth is change and change is often challenging and takes time to implement, but as members of your Provincial you can support your executive leaders through this time of change, by driving a strong culture of change and development at your brigade level, and getting involved with Provincial activities, which will help deliver on the our original purpose established all those years ago in 1878.

If we all make this choice to grow, the Provincials, the UFBA and no matter what organisation we work within, will continue to have the respect and Mana we currently hold in our communities.

We look forward to your support in underpinning these essential moves to make our Provincials Associations stronger and more relevant.