



**GEORGE VERRY, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

**ADDRESS TO UFBA 2015 CONFERENCE  
SUNDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2015**

**'SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH DIVERSITY'**

**FIT FOR THE FUTURE**

- In this brief space I wish to provide an overview of the direction of the UFBA and our strategies to ensure we are fit for the future
- First a little background ...

**Swain Report**

- As reported yesterday, in 2012-2013 there was a government review of NZFS activities by the "Fire Review Panel" also now called the "Swain Report"
- This was an excellent report
  - 55 recommendations
  - 10 specifically around the volunteer sector of NZFS
- UFBA formally signalled our support to all of these
  - To Minister
  - To NZFSC
  - To NZFS National Commander
- But as we know, except for one or two minor points, nothing happened

## Planning Process

- This frustration prompted us to hasten with our own preparation for what we know must be significant change in the future
- In early 2014 we commissioned a review of our organisation by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC)
- They came up with a range of conclusions and recommendations for our consideration
- We convened workshops of board and senior staff using PwC to facilitate
- And with board, senior staff and other UFBA leaders including provincial leaders and leadership and governance workshop graduates
- From this we distilled our strategic plan – a document on one page
- Rick Braddock referred to this plan yesterday

## The One Page Strategic Plan

- Our vision is: **Better, more sustainable emergency services for New Zealand communities**
- Our purpose is: **Providing effective advocacy and support services for our member brigades and their personnel**
- Our key objectives are:
  - Fit-for-purpose legislation
  - Strong sustainable brigades
  - New UFBA operating model
  - Effective advocacy

- And our values are:
  - Community
  - Volunteerism
  - Independence
  - integrity
  - Sustainability
  - Unity
  - Recognition

### **Our Goals Are Around**

- Strong engagement with members
- To be the voice of change
- Building sustainable brigades
- Supporting learning and development
- Supporting these goals with the best internal processes and resources

### **Business Plan**

- From all this work with a wide range of our membership, we now have a three year business plan to support our strategies and supporting actions
- A number of important initiatives have already been introduced
- I have to say the work we have done has identified that both the challenges and opportunities are enormous
- It is proving an important exercise to evaluate the appropriate timing and value of the initiatives and actions we have lined up i.e. what we focus on first

- However, it is also pleasing and exciting to note that we have already covered considerable ground in some high priority areas

### **Membership Engagement**

- Firstly, and probably the most important, I touch on the growth in our membership engagement – a catalyst for which was the Fire Services Review but also discussion on the operation of canteens
- We have been particularly successful with member consultation through our
  - The Fire Services Review consultation survey - 650 responses to the Fire Services Review consultation survey (an outstanding response!)
  - Our regular newsletter: printed and electronic
  - Website
  - Facebook and Twitter
  - Mass media - press releases, interviews
  - 'Telephone trees' - UFBA leaders around the country (including graduates of our Leadership & Governance workshops) contacting brigades and individuals
  - Through the good work of Provincial Associations
- Our advocacy work, particularly with the work on the Fire Services Review consultation and the operation of canteens, is contributing to an increasing engagement with our members
  - Our website audience has increased by 16% in the last year
  - Over 4,000 subscribers receive our newsletters by email – a 10% increase
  - 2,300 people follow us on Facebook – an increase of 38%
- We are excited by what we have achieved here

## **Fire Services Review**

- You would have seen from our presentation earlier on the Fire Services Review, we did not hesitate to get the best expertise on board – Bill Butzbach and Murray McKee – to ensure our views were represented through the UFBA submission
- Our submission was well researched, soundly based and well presented
- We have received very positive feedback about the strength of the submission – and this is reflected in the recognition of our work by the minister yesterday and the presence of DIA personnel here to support our team

## **Challenges Ahead**

- We have taken steps in regard to our staff resources to ensure we are prepared for the future
- And I am sure we will need to be positive and flexible in ensuring we are able to deliver on our strategic plan
- I would like to revert briefly to a current topic of interest – that is concerns around bullying
- This is, a significant threat to our objective of strong, sustainable brigades
- We propose to commission independent research on this area to ensure we obtain a strong and robust platform to work from for this issue
- In our view there is a significant culture problem
- Often due to a lack of understanding of volunteer motivations and ethos
- The Minister stated yesterday the new fire services organisation will be tasked to ensure all staff work together
- However, I emphasise the UFBA is already strongly proactive in disputes resolution

## **This Conference**

- The theme of this conference is sustainability through diversity - and that has been the focus of our four workshops held yesterday
  - Coaching and mentoring skills
  - Managing difficult personalities and dealing with toxic behaviours at work
  - Building diverse teams
  - Leading a brave new world of diversity
- These workshops are focused on the skills needed to build strong, sustainable brigades
- You will come away with the right tools to help with relevant issues at your brigade

## **Advocacy Charter**

- We recently issued a one page Advocacy Charter to all brigades
- Advocacy is the reason why the UFBA was established almost 140 years ago – we are here to represent and promote the interests of member brigades
- And the need for this support both at a macro and a brigade level continues to grow
- We might feel good about the excellent job we have done so far
- But there are more challenges in this area we need to work on
- At the brigade level we are working on an increasing number of conflicts and similar issues – and reference has been made earlier to instances of bullying
- We have also successfully experienced advocacy success in another area - canteen rules
- But this conference and this year has been more about “the biggie” – the Fire Services Review

## **Personnel Resources**

- As chairman Rick has reported, we have reviewed and strengthened our in-house resources
- And our Past Presidents on Thursday told us we need to throw more at our advocacy
- This is sound advice which we accept
- We continue to grow and use our other informal support resources
- Our 120 Leadership and Governance workshop graduates provide a huge and enthusiastic input to our office efforts, together with growing support from Provincials

## **A Suggestion**

- And can I add another suggestion to you leaders out there - if we are serious about sustainability, you need succession plans
- Make sure your brigade continues to nurture young leaders
- And recognises both change and diversity
- It is interesting to note that 1 in 4 persons in Wellington were born outside of New Zealand – consider the impact this might have on recruitment - and I ask you to ensure you acknowledge and respond to this and changes in attitudes of young people

## **The Year Has Gone Quickly**

- It has been an exceptionally busy year since our last conference
- Of particular note, is our consultation and advocacy on behalf of members during the Fire Services Review
- We will keep focussed on assuring we are fit for the future and to meet membership needs
- Finally I pay tribute to my UFBA team who are all hugely passionate about supporting our brigades and firefighters – Ceara, Jane, Hayley, Kirsten, Lorelee, Tearo and Megan
- And to our extremely supportive and effective board

- And thank you out there for your camaraderie and your support to our overall operation
- You are truly great people to work with

15 November 2015