



UFBA 2016 Conference

Board Report

UFBA Chair Rick Braddock

I have now chaired the UFBA for four years and consider it a great honour to ensure strong independent governance of a membership organisation that continues to flourish after 138 years in existence.

My other main motivation is the ongoing need to advocate for fit-for-purpose fire and emergency services in New Zealand and provide a powerful strategic voice for sustainable volunteerism.

You, our members, and the communities you serve are everything—and that is what drives everything we do.

All the actions we take to deliver excellent advocacy and support services are key to achieving our vision: **Better, more sustainable emergency services for New Zealand communities.**

The theme of this Conference is **Building Strong Foundations**—a reflection of the resilience and adaptability of Canterbury following the devastating earthquakes and the region's ability to embrace change and grow stronger.

For 7 years including pre and post-earthquake, I was a Director of Ngāi Tahu Property and was associated with the Wigram Skies development—this very area where we are having this Conference today. And Wigram Skies is a prime example of success through **building strong foundations.**

In 1997, Ngāi Tahu Property purchased the old Wigram Aerodrome site with a long term plan of subdividing the land and creating a vibrant and sustainable community.¹

In the aftermath of the 2011 Christchurch earthquakes, the Wigram Skies development was delivered at a fast pace.

Construction started in late 2010 to include three primary components—a residential subdivision, the Wigram Business Park and The Landing, the Wigram Skies town centre.

The first residential sections were completed in April 2011. Titles for the last substantial release of sections were issued in August 2016—meaning all the development took under 7 years to complete, more than 8 years ahead of initial forecasts.

The development has an emphasis on community and has delivered according to expectations

The site is highly respectful of its past—both aeronautical and pre-European. Care was taken to foster close relationships with the neighbouring Defence Force and areas of significance are recognised such as the landing place of Charles Kingsford Smith on the first trans-Tasman flight.

Cultural markers at the site also provide a distinct Ngāi Tahu flavour and acknowledge the site's pre-European history including native planting, artworks in reserve spaces, the town centre and many of the neighbourhood names. The history of Wigram remains an integral part of the community and is remembered in the Air Force Museum, historic buildings and street names.

¹ See the associated *UFBA Chair Rick Braddock Presentation—Wigram Skies*

UFBA and the Fire Services Reform: Building strong foundations

A new, strong community at Wigram Skies was created in the relatively short time frame of 2010 to 2016.

I can relate the development of Wigram Skies by Ngāi Tahu Property with the work the UFBA is doing to represent your interests during the fire services reform.

- A long term master plan with an emphasis on community
 - the UFBA represents those who are dedicated to protecting lives and property in their communities
 - we have extensive and effective plans in place for advocacy, consultation and communication
- Development at a fast but constructive pace
 - with a proposed implementation date of 1 July next year for FENZ, the UFBA has made a heavy investment in resourcing and consultation
- Forming valued and effective partnerships
 - the UFBA and FRFANZ combining advocacy into one powerful voice is a significant achievement
- Ongoing consultation with all stakeholders
 - We have effective consultation with member brigades and rural fire forces through a variety of methods
- Acknowledging past history
 - We are continuing with advocacy on issues important to members such as gratuities and the transfer of response assets
- Meeting expectations
 - We are working hard with FENZ on policy and regulations that will underlie the new legislation.

Fire services reform—our actions

I congratulate Minister Hon Peter Dunne for initiating and promoting new legislation to reform our fire services, starting off with the release of the Fire Services Review Discussion Document in May 2015.

Although there have been other reviews of our fire services in the last 40 years, this current reform is the first to result in completely new legislation that will lead to better, more sustainable fire and emergency services for New Zealand communities.

However, the proposed new legislation has brought many new challenges to us as the advocate for our members.

The UFBA has been both innovative and responsive in representing your interests during the fire services reform process. The UFBA Board and management take great pride in the quality and extent of the actions we have taken this year.

Partnership with FRFANZ

Urban and rural volunteer firefighters make up 80 percent of New Zealand's fire services. A significant achievement this year was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding by their representative organisations—the UFBA and the Forest and Rural Fire Association (FRFANZ)—to work together as we transition to FENZ.

The intention behind combining UFBA and FRFANZ advocacy into a single powerful voice representing collective fire and rescue services personnel closely follows the Government's rationale in setting up FENZ.

The aim of our agreement is to unite people, in particular volunteers, who are dedicated to the common cause of protecting lives and property in their communities throughout the country.

I was delighted at a FENZ Stakeholder Transition Seminar following our signing of the agreement when New Zealand Fire Service Commission Board Chair Paul Swain said - "this is an example of the 'new way of thinking' we are looking for in building a completely new organisation."

Fire and Emergency New Zealand (FENZ)

The Fire and Emergency New Zealand Bill was introduced to Parliament on 30 June to repeal the Fire Service Act 1975 and the Forest and Rural Fires Act 1977 and to give effect to a single unified fire services organisation—**Fire and Emergency New Zealand (FENZ)**.

The Bill takes a contemporary approach to legislation and does not prescribe how the organisation is to be structured or managed. Instead it takes an enabling and permissive approach.

On 18 August, UFBA and FRFANZ submitted a joint submission on the Fire and Emergency New Zealand Bill to the Government Administration Committee. The submission was the culmination of a significant amount of work during the few weeks available, covering in-depth research, widespread consultation with volunteer fire brigades and rural fire forces and seeking feedback from members through an online survey.

As a first step—and for ease of reading of understanding—UFBA Director Bill Butzbach and consultant Murray McKee put together a plain language analysis of the FENZ Bill from a volunteer perspective. Our analysis emphasised points in the Bill that our members, in particular volunteers, would consider most relevant.

As the next step, the UFBA and FRFANZ arranged a consultation roadshow covering 14 key areas of the country where, in particular, rural fire forces have a strong presence to make sure their views were reflected in our submission.

To receive feedback from personnel right through the country, we invited individuals to 'have their say' by sending an online survey to over 4,350 individuals on the UFBA database. Within the short timeframe, we were delighted to receive a very strong response—an indication of how important the main issues are to members.

Following the extensive member consultation, we believe our submission presented a sound and thorough examination of the FENZ Bill and addresses issues identified by our organisations and membership in a logical and constructive way.

Our consultation roadshow continued through October to assist members to better understand and make sense of the potential implications of the new legislation.

We also recorded a substantial amount of information at the meetings which will reinforce the quality of the UFBA and FRFANZ contributions to the FENZ transition process.

UFBA/FRFANZ speak at Select Committee

On 21 September, the UFBA and FRFANZ addressed the Government Administration Committee on issues in the FENZ Bill identified by our organisations and members. We came away very positive about the opportunity to be heard.

The hearing provided yet another opportunity to demonstrate the joint commitment of the UFBA and FRFANZ to our arrangement under the MoU to work together.

Significant wins for members

Since the time we filed our submission in response to the Minister's discussion document in May 2015, we have worked many hours with officials in workshops, forums and senior official liaison meetings. We can confidently affirm that we enjoy the confidence of Department of Internal Affairs officials, the New Zealand Fire Service Commission and the FENZ Transition Team and are regarded as a trusted advisor who will deliver on our undertakings.

Numerous positive provisions contained in the Bill are there as a direct result of our advocacy and intervention. We are well positioned to secure the interests of volunteers, their brigades and rural fire forces and the communities they represent when FENZ comes to consider the detailed design of the systems and structures to achieve the objectives of the Bill.

Our interventions and contributions to the reform process to date have served the cause of fire services volunteerism well. The Minister, the New Zealand Fire Service Commission and their officials recognise we have made a positive difference and will continue to look to us for considered, thoughtful and constructive input.

We are confident the fundamental relationship that presently encompasses the community, the volunteer and the brigade will be preserved into the future. Both Minister Dunne and New Zealand Fire Service Commission Chair Paul Swain have urged us to formulate how we consider the 'direct relationship' between volunteers and FENZ relationship should be structured. We are confident the model we propose will have the acceptance of our members.

We are equally confident the rights and privileges fire services volunteers, their brigades/rural fire forces and the UFBA enjoy under the current legislation will continue into the future, albeit under different constitutional arrangements.

Tomorrow we will have a full presentation from our key personnel working on your behalf during the fire services reform.

As key stakeholders, UFBA and FRFANZ will continue to work with the FENZ Transition Team on the monumental task of filling in the organisational design and policy details of the new fire and emergency services organisation.

Extending our effective advocacy

At the highest level, our advocacy focuses on influencing and effecting relevant change for members as a group to our principal stakeholder—the New Zealand Fire Service.

At the next level, we provide a range of support services designed to sustain the needs of individual brigades and to enhance and grow all the elements that make them attractive places to be part of.

Our aim is to build strong brigades that will provide highly-skilled contributions to the health and safety of the communities they serve.

At the other end of the advocacy scale there is currently a shortfall in representing the needs of individual volunteer brigade members. This was highlighted by a recent incident of a volunteer driver involved in a NZFS fire appliance incident where he was charged with careless driving causing injury.

The UFBA will be reviewing the area of volunteer support for individual firefighters on a case by case basis over the next six months.

To date, our strong focus has been on the health of our member brigades as a whole—but there is evidence of a need to support volunteers in disputes/issues outside of their brigade environment.

Constructive relationships

Our extensive advocacy and representation this year has provided the opportunity to further develop our constructive relationship and credibility with the Minister and the Department of Internal Affairs.

We are well underway with developing strong and positive relationships with the newly appointed New Zealand Fire Service Commission Board and the FENZ Transition Team. Our close working relationship with the New Zealand Fire Service continues to require a vigorous but professional approach.

At a governance level, Glenn Williams was elected for a third term as Director last year and the Board appointed him as Deputy Chair. I express my appreciation to all of our Directors for their hard work and commitment to representing the interests of our members.

I commend Director Bill Butzbach and consultant Murray McKee for their considerable contributions to our effective consultation, representation and communications during the fire services reform, in particular, their participation in a major consultation roadshow to ensure we reflect the views of a wide range of members.

I also thank the following organisations and people who contributed so much to the achievements of the UFBA this year:

- The New Zealand Fire Service Commission, our principal funder, and the New Zealand Fire Service for their ongoing support
- The Challenges Committee, Technical Panel, Events Team, local organising committees, officials, and volunteers who manage and run our Challenge programme
- The Challenges Committee Chair Nigel Lilley for the consultation and work involved to prepare variations to the UFBA Regulations relating to Challenges
- The Benevolent Fund Chairman Alan Cockburn and Trustees who administer applications for financial assistance from members in need
- The New Zealand Fire Brigades' Institute Councillors and Examiners, who serve the technical arm of the UFBA
- Sandy Lawson, our Historian who generously contributes his time to support our staff and members
- Russell Anderson, UFBA President, and Vice President Alan Kittelty for their dedication in fulfilling their duties
- The strong and dedicated office team that works extremely hard in support of our organisation and its objectives
- And the key to our credibility—the engagement of our members through their active participation consultation on the fire services reform.

I am confident the UFBA Strategic Plan and the enduring high level principles of our Advocacy Charter are serving member brigades and fire forces well.

However, with the challenges to come over the next three to four years as we transition to FENZ, there is a need to initiate a strategic review. Chief Executive Officer George Verry has coordinated changes to the UFBA staffing structure to provide the necessary resources to undertake this essential work.

The UFBA brings together the collective strength of 536 member brigades and fire forces. Together with FRFANZ, we have a powerful independent and united voice.

We are in a strong position to make sure our members' voices are heard and their needs are met as we continue to work with the FENZ Transition Team on the organisational design and policy details of the new fire and emergency services organisation.

Financial Performance

I commend this year's Annual Report to you. As well as providing comprehensive summaries of the actions we have taken on your behalf during the fire services reform, I am pleased to report a small surplus of income over expenditure of \$70,343.

The majority of this surplus is being invested in an up-to-date and independent IT infrastructure and phone/internet system and developing an interactive database

Our aim is to have systems that are fit-for-purpose to best serve and support our members during the transition to FENZ.

The UFBA is in a solid financial position as we move into the next financial year. Our accumulated funds stand at \$734,951 and our liquidity is strong in that our current assets of \$751,209 exceed our current liabilities by \$447,533.

We assure the New Zealand Fire Service the financial support provided is well spent in supporting the substantial workforce that is represented in our membership.