

## Wednesday 4 February 2014 - Number 604

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### GENERAL

#### Contract announced for new structural firefighting helmets

Last week the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Stuart Ayres, announced that a contract had been awarded to MSA Australia to supply the next generation of FRNSW structural firefighting helmets.

A comprehensive process was undertaken to identify the best helmet to improve operational capability, functionality and safety for firefighters. This included scenario-based trials conducted by FRNSW's technical evaluation team and firefighters from No. 1 City of Sydney Fire Station. The tender, one of the largest of its type in the world, includes provision of technical support, training, asset management and tracking, and helmet recycling and refurbishing.

The new helmets are the most advanced in Australia, and perhaps the world. Their 'jet style' design provides better side impact protection and lower centre of gravity, making them more comfortable to wear. They also incorporate an integrated helmet-mounted speaker boom microphone and earpiece for clearer communication on the incident ground; adjustable eye and face protection; inbuilt lighting and ergonomic design.

Rollout of the new helmets commences in March. See the [intranet story](#) for more details of the helmets and Channel 7 news coverage of this announcement.

#### Home visits helping to save lives

With prevention a core function of FRNSW and part of our mandatory obligations under the *Fire Brigades Act*, I am pleased to announce a new pilot for the Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSC) program. The upcoming pilot, which will run in Metro West 1 and Regional South 2, is aimed directly at reducing fire injuries and fatalities through targeted home visits.

Despite the approaching 10-year anniversary of legislation mandating home smoke alarms, last year's initial HFSC deployments found around 51% of homes in the targeted communities did not have working smoke alarms. I saw this first hand when I participated on one of the deployments. It is critical that we proactively engage with the people we serve and protect, especially those at highest risk of home fires. I strongly urge all stations in MW1 and RS2 to lead the way in prevention and embrace the opportunities that the HFSC program provides. For more information, see the [intranet story](#).

#### Save the date for Open Day 2015

In 2015, Open Day will be held on Saturday 30 May (meaning it's D Platoon's turn at permanent stations to play host). Open Day attracts thousands of visitors to fire stations across the State and is an excellent way to foster and enhance positive connections with the local community, to showcase what we do, and to disseminate important safety information. Although there are some activity guidelines to help provide a consistent approach, how you actually run the day is up to you. A good way to start is to ask A Platoon what worked well for them last year. The Community Engagement Unit is working closely with the Media and Communications Unit to provide fire stations with assistance needed to make Open Day a success. Keep an eye on the intranet for more information coming soon.

## Bulk tanker emergency response exercise

On 22 and 23 January, FRNSW, the NSW Police Force, other agencies and industry representatives and observers gathered at the Transport Industries Skills Centre in Canberra to take part in a complex training scenario involving drilling and decanting of an overturned bulk road tanker. These types of incidents are inherently dangerous and require technical expertise, an awareness of correct procedures and acknowledgement of a shared responsibility by all to ensure that the process is undertaken as safely as is reasonably practical.

The video and learning packages being produced by FRNSW, fellow emergency services and industry responders will allow NSW to lead in developing a state emergency management framework for this type of incident. See the [intranet story](#) for more details and WIN TV news coverage of this exercise.

## Australia Day honours

Four well-deserving FRNSW staff were recognised in the 2015 Australia Day honours. Station Officer Phillip Etienne (25 years service), Station Officer Clayton Allison (33 years) and Bellingen Captain Andre Van Hoeck (37 years) were each awarded the Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM). Station Officer Etienne has helped to develop FRNSW's Canine Accelerant Detection Unit and is recognised as a world leader in the training and use of accelerant detection sniffer dogs. Station Officer Allison has been directly responsible for influencing major improvements to rescue service delivery throughout NSW and has established FRNSW as a world leader in rescue techniques, particularly through road rescue competitions. Captain Van Hoeck has worked tirelessly within the community of Bellingen to reduce the number and severity of emergency incidents, particularly during major flood events. In addition, Senior Firefighter Mark White AFSM received an Order of Australia Medal for his service through the Museum of Fire, a nationally recognised education centre delivering quality fire education programs to children and families.

All four members have demonstrated exceptional levels of service and commitment over many years and I congratulate them on receiving their awards.

## 'Ask The Furies' competition video

At the end of the recent highly-popular Channel Ten series *Furies*, FRNSW Facebook and Twitter followers were asked to submit questions they wanted to ask firefighters for a chance to win an 'Ask The Furies' prize pack. The top questions submitted by viewers were then put to Pyrmont firefighters and their answers were filmed and posted online. Visit FRNSW's YouTube channel to view the ['Ask The Furies' video](#).

## Debrief on Quakers Hill Nursing Home Fire Coronial

On Tuesday this week, I attended the debrief at Huntingwood Fire Station on the Quakers Hill Nursing Home Fire Coronial Inquest. Those attending the debrief included FRNSW officers and firefighters who responded to this incident and subsequently were called to provide evidence, FIRU, Governance and Legal, Fire Safety, Operational Capability and Metro Operations. The debrief identified ways in which we will improve processes and procedures to support firefighters called before courts and inquiries, assistance with making statements, and general support to people who can be personally affected not only by the incident itself, but by the subsequent investigations that can prevent closure. My thanks to all involved for their openness and suggestions. I reiterated my pride in the actions of the responding crews that terrible day back in November 2011, and the subsequent work that resulted in sprinklers being a mandatory requirements in all aged care facilities.

## 10 years of 400 in 4

From its beginnings in 2006, when Leading Firefighter Scott Hanley and Qualified Firefighter Mark Edis first had the idea to cycle from Wagga Wagga to Sydney, the 400 in 4 charity ride has become a huge annual fundraiser for the Burns Unit at Westmead Children's Hospital. In the last decade, the ride has raised more than \$350,000; and in 2015, the tenth anniversary year, the team have set the bar even higher with a fundraising target of \$100,000. This year, almost 30 FRNSW riders will take to the road from Tuesday 10 March to complete four challenging days in the saddle before riding over the finishing line into Westmead Hospital. Planning for, and riding in, the 400 in 4 event is a massive commitment and I am very proud of all those involved. To find out more or make a donation, see the [intranet story](#).

## **Vale: Assistant Commissioner Noel Newson AFSM (retired)**

Last week we received the sad news that retired Assistant Commissioner Noel Newson, who many would remember, had passed away after a long illness at the age of 75.

Noel joined the NSWFB 57 years ago in 1958 as a "volunteer" (retained FF) in Wollongong, and joined as a permanent firefighter in February 1961. He was promoted to the rank of Regional Commander (later called Assistant Commissioner) in 1991. He retired in 1998 after an outstanding career that saw him serve in Sydney, the Illawarra, Tamworth, Fire Safety, Region South, Region South West, and Head Office. I took over from Noel as Regional Commander SW in 1996. In 1997 he was part of the Incident Management Team at the Thredbo landslide, and took charge of many major fires over the years.

Many serving and retired members will attend Noel's funeral at Milton on the south coast tomorrow to provide a guard of honour and a bearer party, and I have been asked to deliver a Brigade Eulogy.

## **INCIDENTS**

### **Fatal house fire in Griffith**

At 1810 hours on Wednesday 28 January, crews were alerted to a house fire in Macarthur Street at Griffith. Before crews arrived a neighbour had heard cries for help coming from inside the blazing house and using a garden hose, had desperately attempted to enter the house but was forced back by intense flames and heat.

Crews from 311 Griffith and 512 Yenda both responded to the call. They reported that the house was well alight upon arrival, with fire having taken hold of the front room of the single story weatherboard cottage with a tin roof. Firefighters in SCBA immediately commenced an offensive attack and entered the small cottage to conduct search and rescue, rapidly bringing the fire under control. Sadly, the occupant of the house had been unable to escape and was located deceased in the front room. The next door neighbour was treated for smoke inhalation and transported to hospital for further observation.

The small cottage was extensively damaged by the fire and investigations continued throughout the night. At this stage, the fire is being treated as accidental and a full report is being prepared for the Coroner. Fatal house fires are always challenging incidents to deal with and I congratulate both the Griffith and Yenda firefighters for their compassionate and professional response to a difficult situation.

### **School fire in Kempsey**

On Thursday 29 January crews were called to a fire at the Melville High School in Bloomfield Street at South Kempsey. The first of many triple zero calls came in at 2048 hours and 345 Kempsey crews quickly responded to the call with three appliances. On arriving, they reported that there appeared to be several buildings alight with the fire threatening to spread to other parts of the school complex. A defensive strategy was immediately deployed as further crews from 424 Port Macquarie were responded to assist. Within an hour, firefighters had successfully contained the fire and prevented spread to surrounding structures.

The school's Learning Support Unit, which consisted of two large classrooms and a staff room, was destroyed, causing about half a million dollars damage. However the firefighting efforts of crews in containing the fire meant that the school could still open the next day. FIRU crews, including the K9 investigators, attended the blaze to assist Police investigating the fire which is currently being treated as suspicious.

This was the first week back from summer holidays for the school students and staff and had the fire not been so successfully contained, it could have proved a disaster for the community. Well done to both Kempsey and Port Macquarie fire crews for preventing what could have been a far more serious situation.

## **ASK THE COMMISSIONER**

**Q.** Can you advise approximately when the water tankers attached to 445 stn Springwood and 301 stn Glenbrook are scheduled for replacement? These two tankers are located in some of the most bushfire-prone areas of the state, yet the appliances are now 21 years old, well outside FRNSW's operational life targets. Has their replacement been delayed by the recent addition of five new tankers to the GSA?

**A.** The tankers attached to 445 Springwood and 301 Glenbrook were commissioned 17 years ago in 1997. Water tankers are targeted for replacement at 20 years of age as front line appliances, and can be kept as reserves after 20 years depending on condition and functionality. Replacement programs for 2016 and 2017 will be developed in 2015, and amount of use as well as age are factors taken into consideration when replacing and cascading newer appliances. A number of tankers will reach 20 years of age in 2017 so plans are being developed for their replacement.

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**Q.** Why is it that only permanent fire fighters have hazmat helmet decals and epaulettes when attached to a hazmat station? Since retained provide a large portion of hazmat response in country areas, shouldn't they be visible and be able to wear the appropriate decals and epaulettes?

Would FRNSW consider the use of hazmat decals and epaulettes for appropriately trained retained firefighters attached to hazmat stations?

**A.** Hazmat decals and epaulettes are allocated to "technician" level firefighters in hazmat or "primary" stations. Hazmat stations in regional areas are predominantly "intermediate" level stations. Good idea though, as this will assist with identification at incidents – we will look at an appropriate identification different from that worn by technicians.

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**Q.** Are there any plans to fit out the remainder of operational appliances with the new high-vis livery and change the branding on such from NSWFB to FRNSW? Some appliances are not due to be replaced for many years and do not go all the way to Sydney for a service where a change-over might occur.

**A.** We have been gradually changing the name on appliances with approximately 80% of the fleet completed. About 45% of the fleet has the Hi-Vis livery. The new Hi-Vis livery is expensive. Given the directive that the name change had to be cost neutral, most of the signage changes have been done with the existing white / red / silver livery. New appliances and those that undergo major mid-life maintenance programs where repainting or major body repairs are required have the new Hi-Vis markings applied. The Hi-Vis livery improves conspicuity but has also become recognised as our "brand". While we would all obviously like to have the entire Fleet updated with the latest look, this is not practical given the enormous size of our fleet and the cost that it would involve, not to mention the many competing priorities. We will continue the current strategy and endeavour to have Fire & Rescue NSW applied to the remainder of the fleet over the next year.

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