



RFSA



RFSA newsletter

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\$1.7 MILLION - A RECORD YEAR FOR GRANTS

It's a record year for the NSW RFSA Grant Scheme with almost 600 applications from NSW Rural Fire Brigades, Support Brigades and Districts submitted.

Approximately 1.7 million dollars in grants has been awarded to enhance the conditions of the over 71 000 rural fire-fighters in New South Wales.

RFSA President, Tim Arnott said the NSW RFSA Grant Scheme was a highly valued support service offered by the Association.

"Brigades are often in need of items that are not covered by direct Government and Council funding so the Grant Scheme offers a means of financial assistance to ensure the men and woman of the Rural Fire Service have access to items and equipment that make performing their duties just that little bit easier," said Mr Arnott.

Funding from the scheme is not directed to fire fighting vehicles or fire fighting equipment that is supplied by NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) and/or local Councils.

"The funding capacity of individual brigades in NSW, particularly smaller brigades in remote locations can be tough," Mr Arnott explained.

"This is why NSW RFSA runs an annual Grant Scheme as part of its support services, to fund these items and ensure RFS brigades have the best ability to protect their local community."

Popular items in the 2014 Grant Scheme were GPS navigation units, reversing cameras for vehicles and portable fridges to store cold drinks for those fighting fires in extreme weather conditions.

Funds from the scheme have also provided a

vehicle for safe transportation for volunteers attending firegrounds and units that provide fire condition scenarios for enhanced training.

"This year, for the first time, we developed a catalogue so brigades could see some of the most popular items they can apply for. It resulted in our largest ever amount of applications," said Mr Arnott.

"We anticipate that we will add more items to the 2015 catalogue and are investigating items such as heavy duty washing machines, dryers and whirlybirds for stations.

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank all community members who purchase tickets in NSW RFSA raffles," said Mr Arnott.

"It's as a direct result of their contribution that the RFSA can fund support services such as the Grant Scheme to the benefit of fire-fighters across NSW."

Below: Members of Kariong RFB, in RFSA Division 4 celebrating the receipt of their NSW RFSA 2014 Grant Scheme advice letter.



FROM THE PRESIDENT



As we move into the latter half of 2014, it's a good opportunity to pause to reflect on the achievements and highlights of the year thus far and look forward to the ways in which the Association will be working to support our Members in the months to come.

In late June, the RFSA held its 2014 Annual General Meeting. In this meeting we covered all important projects and achievements from the 2013/14 financial year, of which I am proud to say, there are many.

One of the most satisfying achievements has been to witness the Association's growth with an 18% increase in Registered Membership during the last year. We can now proudly say we have over 32 000 Members, and this upward trend is one the Association is focussed on continuing.

This growth equates to even more Member's voices being heard and during the 13/14 year, I am pleased to say, a total number of 159 Business Papers have been considered by the Consultative Committees.

There are four RFS/RFS Consultative Committees that serve as a formal mechanism for volunteers and the service to consult on matters of mutual interest.

These committees are Infrastructure Services, Membership Services, Operational Services and Community Engagement.

The core concept of the committees is the

consultative nature, with a body of volunteers and staff operating in the spirit of participation and co-operation, in order to achieve outcomes.

Mid-year is also the time we honour Members who have gone above and beyond with their effort and commitment to the Association, as well as reward those who are considered outstanding representatives of both the RFS and RFSA.

At a ceremony held after the AGM, I was proud to award the 2013 Member of the Year to Division 1 Secretary, Lisa Edmonds. Division 4 Delegate and long-time RFSA Member, John Fitzgerald, was inducted as a RFSA 'Life Member' for his significant contribution over many years. You can read more about both Lisa and John in this newsletter.

I was also thrilled to award the recipients of the Chris Lord Memorial and President's Scholarships. These scholarships are awarded to enhance the professional and personal development of Members so they can provide a higher level of service to the RFS and the community. On behalf of the Association, I congratulate the recipients and wish them the best of luck in their studies.

In closing, we are proud of the sponsorship and services the RFSA has been able to provide to you, our Members, over the last financial year to support the invaluable work you do protecting the community.

Tim Arnott

Save 5%* on your HCF Private Health Insurance Premiums

HCF offers members* great value for money with a range of benefits on private health insurance plans. In fact, HCF has been awarded CANSTAR's national award for Outstanding Value Private Health Insurance for the last five** consecutive years, so why not reassess your options today?

Benefits for RFSA members include:

- Ongoing 5% discount* on all current HCF products
- No hospital excess payable for accidents or dependent children
- Reduced rates for couples and single-parent families
- Free health and wellbeing programs with My Health Guardian
- High benefit limits on dental, optical, physiotherapy, chiropractic and osteopathy

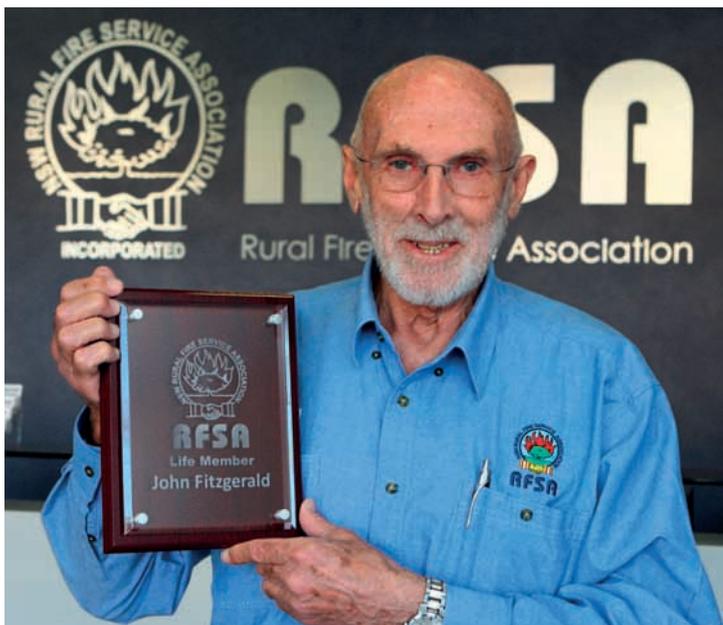
For further details, contact Member Advantage: PH: **1300 853 352** or visit www.memberadvantage.com.au/rfsa

* HCF health insurance products available to Australian residents only. Discount applicable to new and current HCF health policies only.

** Source: www.canstar.com.au.



LIFE MEMBERSHIP HONOUR



Respected and long-standing Member, John Fitzgerald from the Glenbrook/Lapstone RFB, was inducted as a RFS 'Life Member' by President Tim Arnott at a ceremony in June.

"Life Membership is the highest award that can be bestowed on any RFS Member and John most certainly meets the criteria," said Mr Arnott.

"If the Association needs someone to attend a function, John is that man.

"If the Division needs a topic researched, John is the first person asked."

Involved with the Association from its inception in 1996, Mr Fitzgerald floated the concept of a unified representative association long before one was established and was integral to selling the concept to fellow members of the RFS in its early days.

"An earlier entity known as the BBA (Bushfire Brigade Association) was formed and running from 1984-89 but its demise, was due in part, to lack of funding and the tyranny of distance.

"At a meeting in 1996, the FCOA (Fire Control Officer's Association) decided to form a body representing both staff and volunteers," said Mr Fitzgerald.

Mr Fitzgerald currently serves as State Council Delegate for Division 4, which covers the areas surrounding Sydney, and stretches from the Hawkesbury region in the north to the Wingecarribee region in the south and west to cover Penrith and the Blue Mountains. Division 4 represents more than 8,000 Registered Members. John uses his position to support his fellow "firies" and has always put the needs of RFS membership above everything else, even during a most recent stay in hospital.

He has been proud to witness the growth of the RFS throughout the years, not only in the number of Members but also through the support it gives to RFS staff and volunteers. "The award was a total surprise," said Mr Fitzgerald. "Currently the Association is in a position to support the interest and welfare of all Members and I believe the RFS and its Members can look forward to the future with some confidence."

The RFS is honoured to recognise John with Life Membership for his significant, quality and substantial contribution towards the growth and success of the RFS above and beyond the normal expectations of any position he has served in.

Northern Rivers Zone Pre-Season Exercises

Unusually high fire activity did not stop 17 members of the Northern Rivers Zone from participating in a series of training exercises in mid-July conducted by Inspector Daniel Ainsworth.

The round-robin scenarios included navigating to four different locations, and on arrival, the participants were challenged in asbestos decontamination, advanced pumping, practise of their First Aid Skills and formal discussion.

This is the second year these preparative exercises have been held. The day brings crews together in a relaxed atmosphere of co-operation yet the exercises test the brigades' operational readiness for the season ahead.

On the day a representative of the NSW Police Rescue Squad also held an informal discussion on inter-service co-operation.

At the conclusion of the day, participants enjoyed a BBQ prepared by the Northern Rivers Zone Catering Section. All crews enjoyed the exercises and will be back next year to do it all over again.



Inspector Daniel Ainsworth briefs the Northern Rivers Zone Crews.



Crew members extricate an (exercise) injured victim of tree deadfall.



NSW RFS Young Members Group Chairperson, Stephanie Huysmans & Young Members Group delegate, Nathan Barnden at the Association's AGM.



Lynette Fitzgerald attempts the seemingly impossible, placing husband & RFSA Life Member, John Fitzgerald under lock & key at the AGM luncheon.



L-R: Peter Burfitt, Division 4 Secretary and Membership Services Consultative Committee Member, Dave Dobliger at the Association's AGM lunch.



Dr Peter Hendy MP, Federal Member for Eden Monaro & Jason Lewington, Bega Valley Branch Chairperson at the graduation of the inaugural Bega High School RFS Cadets. The Bega Branch was a key driver in establishing the program.



L-R: Sheree Whitehead, Adrian Grabham, Anthony Macvean, Alyce Selwood & Christopher McInerney with their scholarship certificates at the AGM luncheon.



L-R: NSW RFS Senior Family Support Chaplain, Major Kerry Spall, Director Ken Middleton, President Tim Arnott, NSW RFS Senior Chaplain, Major Ian Spall & CEO, Bernard Cox at the Volunteers' Family Day at Cessnock.



Some happy family faces at Cessnock, enjoying the Volunteers' Family Day.



Two more blue t-shirts to add to the wardrobe. The Member Engagement stand updated the details & wardrobes of many members at the Volunteers' Family Day.

Scholarships for Studies Awarded

At a special ceremony held after the RFSA Annual General Meeting, the recipients of the 2014 Chris Lord Memorial and President's scholarships were awarded.

These annual scholarships are given to Members who are considered to be outstanding representatives of both the RFSA and NSW RFS and are awarded with the intent of enhancing the recipient's professional and personal development to provide a higher level of service to the community of NSW.

A total of seven scholarships were awarded this year with grants towards education in areas such as Training and Assessment, Planning for Bushfire Prone Areas and Fire Investigation.

RFSA President, Tim Arnott commended the recipients on their scholarship award.

"The Association is proud to assist these Members in furthering their education and skills. We wish them continued success with their educational study and their roles within the RFS."

2014 RFSA Chris Lord Memorial Scholarship Recipients:

- Adrian Grabham, Eglinton Brigade - Division 8, Certificate IV in Training and Assessment
- Alyce Selwood, Clifton Grove/Ophir Brigade - Division 8, Certificate IV in Training and Assessment Coffs Harbour TAFE
- Anthony Macvean, Ku-ring-gai Brigade - Division 4, Certificate IV in Training and Assessment Open Colleges
- Christopher McInerney, Deua River Brigade - Division 6, Planning for Bushfire Prone Areas Sydney University of Technology
- Richard Miller, Wyong Bridge - Division 3, Certified Fire Investigation Program International Association of Arson Investigation
- Sheree Whitehead, Clifton Grove/Ophir Brigade – Division 8, Certificate IV in Training and Assessment – Western Institute of TAFE

2014 RFSA President's Scholarship Recipient

- Bradley Stewart, Tarlo Brigade - Division 7, Certificate IV Front Line Management OTEN Distance Education

CONGRATULATIONS - 2013 MEMBER OF THE YEAR

Downplaying her achievement as 'just doing my job', Administrative Officer at Northern Rivers Zone Fire Control Centre, Lisa Edmonds, was awarded the RFSA 2013 Member of the Year.

However, Members recognised Lisa for going above and beyond the normal call of duty, describing her as "inspirational" and always willing to share her knowledge and help her colleagues whether that be by ensuring access to information or simply just being there for assistance.

"Lisa has worked tirelessly to ensure the smooth running and advancement of the RFSA in her Division and always contributes in the best interest of Members," said RFSA President Tim Arnott.

"She has made exceptional contributions to the Association's programme and projects throughout 2013, making her a deserved "Winner".

Lisa said she was stunned to be announced and was most excited her husband was there to see her awarded. "It was wonderful for my husband to be able to see the Association and now he knows and understands why I am so passionate about the RFSA," she said.

As part of the recognition, Lisa was awarded attendance to a relevant national or international conference, an opportunity she was most thrilled about.

She said the support and services of the RFSA were excellent and singled out the Volunteers' Family Days as one of the most enjoyable. "It's great for morale building and, in general, the community don't realise the cost and sacrifice associated with volunteering. These days are a great visual representation and source of information which, in turn, builds community support for the volunteers."

The RFSA congratulates its 2013 Member of the Year!



It's Your Newsletter!

The Association is always happy to share Members' unique & interesting stories in the Newsletter.

There's no need to be shy in sending in story ideas & photos, simply email them through to the address below.

Email:
communications@rfsa.org.au



The Association is keen to attend local meetings and outline what it does and offers to support our Members.

If your Branch or Brigade is interested please contact communications@rfsa.org.au or phone 4722 2122

FROM THE CEO



Our Volunteers' Family Days are a popular RFS support initiative and on the last weekend in July, the team and I travelled to Cessnock in Division 3 to host the largest VFD to date.

This year we have had the pleasure of also hosting Family Days in Berry in Division 5, Curlwaa in Division 14 and Nimmitabel in Division 6 with over 1000 Members attending. It was thoroughly enjoyable meeting so many of you from across the state and a fantastic opportunity to have a conversation in an informal environment.

The Association hosts these Volunteers' Family Days to acknowledge the important role Members and their families play at the core of the emergency services. Along with lunch, activities for the kids and entertainment, we bring the NSW RFS mobile shop so those who cannot make it to Penrith have the opportunity to see and purchase clothing and merchandise. We look forward meeting even more Members' families at the Volunteers' Family Days in 2015.

The NSW RFS Grant Scheme is one of the Association's key support services and brigades have now received advice notifying the outcome of their 2014 application.

I would like to congratulate all brigades who

were successful in receiving a grant. And if it wasn't your year this year, applications for the 2015 Scheme will open in February 2015.

The Association's financial assistance to support Members in 2013/14 amounted to over 2 million dollars in the past financial year.

This expenditure was not only through the Grant Scheme but also other support services including Chaplaincy and Family Support, Sponsorships and Scholarships.

It was good to see everyone who came along to the Wollondilly Branch meeting in Division 4 as well as the RFS Division 1 meeting at Ballina. I really enjoy these opportunities that allow me to share what the Association is doing for its Members and it's good to hear your feedback on our current initiatives as well as your thoughts on what we could do better.

We recognise the value of attending evenings such as these, so if you're interested in learning more about the Association and you'd like a representative to come along to an event or brigade meeting please let us know. You can do so by calling (02) 4722 2122 or emailing communications@rfsa.org.au.



Bernard Cox

WHAT'S COMING UP

www.rfsa.org.au/news-media-events

RFS & NSW RFS EVENTS

- 22 AUG CAVFA Meeting, Stamford Plaza, Sydney Airport. 0900
- 23 AUG State Council Meeting, Quality Hotel Powerhouse, Armidale. 0900
- 31 AUG 2014 RangeX Liverpool Zone Operational Exercises, Merriwa. 0900
- 2-5 SEP AFAC 2014 Conference, Shed 6, TSB Bank Arena, Wellington, New Zealand.
- 9 SEP CEG Meeting, Armidale. 0930
- 12-14 SEP RFS State Championships
Pambula Sports Ground, Pambula Beach Road,
Pambula.
- 19 SEP State Board Meeting, RFS Office, Penrith. 0900

DIVISIONAL MEETINGS

- 25 AUG Gosford Branch Meeting
Copacabana Station. 1930
- 28 AUG Wollondilly Branch Meeting
Picton FCC. 1900
- 31 AUG Division 8 Meeting
Young HQ RFB. 1000

32,000 Registered Members Strong

The RFSA is thrilled to advise that the Association's registered membership has now reached 32 000 Members!

"It has been wonderful to witness the growth of the Association, especially in recent years, as we go from strength to strength," said President Tim Arnott.

"I feel that we are now in a better position than ever before to support the interest of all Members as we continue to champion the contribution and welfare of volunteers and staff.

"History has shown many a time that a committed group of individuals with the same ideals can achieve an incredible amount in a very short period of time and the NSW Rural Fire Service Association is a good example of this. The Association has made, and continues to deliver an impressive array of achievements," Mr Arnott declared.

The NSW Rural Fire Service Association was established in 1996 to provide a formal means by which the views of both Fire Control Officers, staff and volunteer firefighters could be collectively expressed to the then Department of Bush Fire Services, in relation to issues such as funding, structure of the Rural Fire Service, personnel and equipment.



The Association views its role to consolidate and represent the view of its Members to the RFS through formal committee processes with the utmost importance. It is represented on the policy advisory committee for the service; a number of RFS working parties and the RFS/ Local Government Liaison Committee; has a voice on all Statutory Committees and attends joint RFS/RFSA Executive Meetings.

In addition, the Association is involved in 39 RFSA Committees and Working Groups that cover areas such as Grants, Scholarships, Honours and Awards, Consultative Committees and Young Members Group.

"The Association's credibility as the authoritative representative of all members of the RFS is demonstrated in our ability to put forward the position of our members in forums such as these, however we place equal importance on offering tangible support and benefits," Mr Arnott said.

"A prime factor in the growth of our registered Membership has been the relevance of the programs we have in place to support our Members. These include our scholarships, Volunteers' Family Days, sponsorship of learning and development and training opportunities and even our presence at brigade meetings and events.

"These events mean we can meet face-to-face with our existing and potential new Members so they learn more about how we support them in protecting the community."