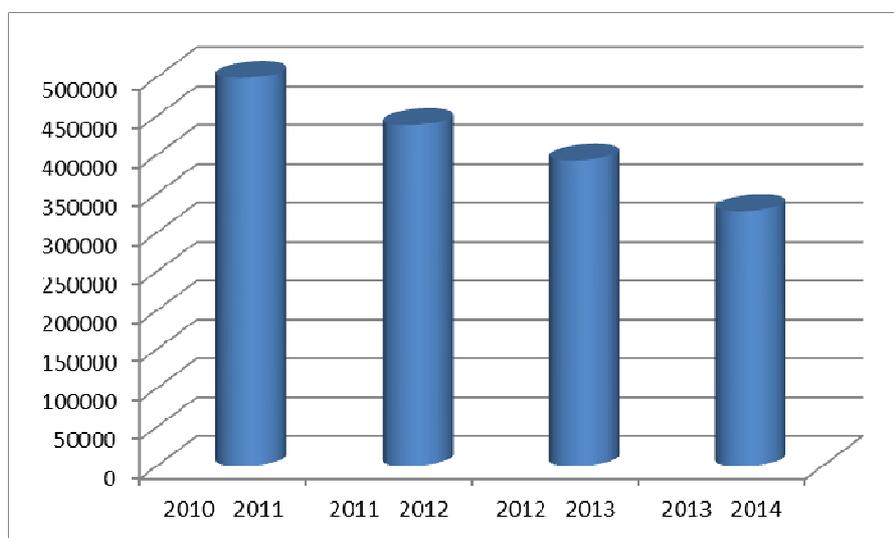




GENERAL MANAGER
ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2012 – 2013

Internally the RFBAQ office has undergone major changes over the previous year with a number of major initiatives now completed. These have improved the profitability of the organisation, improved the working environment and resulted in considerable savings on staffing costs while providing a consistent and high quality product.

An example of the savings made on Head Office staffing costs where from a high in 2010/2011 to this year's forecast will result in a saving of \$170,757.



Commensurate with this, the Contact Centre restructure has seen a reduction in the forecasted management costs of \$78,471 against the actuals in the 2012/2013 year.

I believe that the finalisation of the Contact Centre move to a single site, upgraded work systems, back up servers and redundancy systems, upgraded work stations, new computers and a consultative management system that engages Contact Centre staff in the aims and goals of the Association is now showing dividends in the level of support that the Art Unions are receiving from supporters across Queensland.

Since the Contact Centre was opened in 2007, there has been no co-ordinated or planned reinvestment into the only funding source currently available to the Association. Now with the bulk of the capital outlay completed, the ongoing investment in training and support of Contact Centre staff should see the dividends fully realised in the 2014/2015 year.

I believe that all staff are now fully engaged as to the position of the Association, what their role is, how it is measured and that there is a way for their voice to be heard. The elected Employee Representative Council regularly meets and provides a working framework with supervisors to ensure a fair and equitable work environment that reflects the core Values and Behaviours of the RFBAQ.

As an example of the way that the Association provides a service to the community and supports our staff is in the Emergency Services Leave Policy, which allows 5 paid shifts per year for rural fire brigade volunteers or SES volunteers to undertake response and recovery activities.



The RFBAQ considers that as an organization that relies on volunteer support and actively encourages employers to support staff who may volunteer, we need to ensure that we are able to do the same. In addition, this will assist us in growing the volunteer community employed by the Association.

The previous fire season closely followed by the floods saw many RFBAQ staff exceed the 5 days through local fire fighting and local flood clean-up, followed by extended deployments. In these instances the RFBAQ extended the 5 paid days on a case by case basis.

Consistent monthly reporting through SEM minutes and financials give visibility to RFBAQ Representatives and therefore brigades as to the activities and challenges that face the Association throughout the year. For all Representatives to have timely access to the finances of the Association, and for Representatives to know that queries will be answered openly and honestly with the Association available to volunteers whenever they visit Gympie.

This year also saw the formation of the Council of Volunteer Fire Associations (CAVFA). The RFBAQ were instrumental in the creating of this Association and the setting of its goals and objectives.

CAVFA has commenced with a number of objectives that are seen as representing the welfare and interest of the 230,000 volunteer fire-fighters across Australia.

Matters currently being pursued by CAVFA are - Presumptive Legislation on Cancer - Emergency Lighting on Vehicles (QLD) - Diesel Particulate Diffusers - National Volunteer Respect Act - Sale of Government Radio Frequency Bands - MOU with AFAC - AIMS 4 System.

Tony Abbott's Office has contacted Phil Koperberg (CAVFA Executive Officer) regarding a meeting in relation to the National Volunteer Respect Act.

I believe that CAVFA has a great deal of value for the brigades in Queensland, as a national body has the resources of all states and territories available for both the good of many and for the target support of those in need.

The RFBAQ has faced and overcome a considerable number of external challenges in the last 12 months, and all RFBAQ Representatives and retained staff should be commended for the way in which these challenges have been met.

When we convened in Rockhampton last September it was hard upon the heels of the announcement that Rural Fire in Queensland was losing the majority of its paid staff and closing regional and district offices. The RFBAQ throughout this event mounted a spirited and strategic defence of the paid RFS staff positions that translated into the 91 recommendations of the Malone Review into the Rural Fire Service.

The volume of work that the paid staff undertook in support of the President, SEM, Representatives, brigades and volunteers in the last 12 months was truly mountainous; and I would like to thank all of the paid Association staff for their dedication and long hours in supporting the aims of the RFBAQ.

The way in which the Association dealt with this challenge goes to the heart of the changes both internally and externally within the Association, as every Representative (who are their brigades



RURAL FIRE BRIGADES ASSOCIATION
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elected voice from their districts) had the opportunity to contribute to the policy of the RFBAQ in this matter and being able to provide their vision for rural fire in Queensland which was the basis for the RFBAQ submission to the Malone Review.

It is very disappointing to see that the Malone Review recommendations have been severely amended by the Keelty Report. This report held no consultation with volunteers, brigades or the RFBAQ and went beyond its scope, drastically changing the intent of the Malone Review without having any internal advice on fire outside of that of an urban senior officer.

I am honoured to hold the role of General Manager of the RFBAQ, and I look forward to a another year where policy is set by the SEM and State Executive, and its execution is undertaken by the paid staff working with Representatives and brigades in providing an improved environment for the 35,000 volunteer fire-fighters and the 93% of Queensland which they defend.