



United Fire Brigades' Association 2024 Conference

- Tuhia ki te rangi,
- E tū nei au i raro i te mana, me te manaakitanga o Aoraki maunga
- Nō reira, e te haukāinga nei, tenei taku mihi ki a koutou.
- Kei aku Rangatira, ngā kāpene o ngā waka o Māhuika
- Mihi mai, mihi mai, mihi mai.
- I just wanted to welcome you all here again from me and I also just acknowledged that we sit under the care and the mana of the mountain of Aoraki and acknowledged the home people here as well, as well as acknowledging you all today.
- I just wanted to start off a little bit different and tell a bit of a story as I kick off. In my mihi I acknowledged you as the captains of the waka, the waka of Fire and Emergency New Zealand. You are all captains and leaders across different communities across New Zealand.
- I want to bounce of that as an analogy in how I tell the story.
- You can imagine 1000 plus years and the great migrations coming over to New Zealand, the enormity of that feat and a really slow and ambitious target. Why did they do it? They did it for the future generations of their people.
- So, when I look at Fire and Emergency New Zealand in the last seven years, we have been on a similar journey of how we protect the future generations of our children going forward with Fire and Emergency and what we deliver to ensure we can keep delivering across the country for many years.
- A common question I get as Chief Executive as I move around the country is “are you happy with how far we have come Kerry?”
- When I look at that and I look at any great voyage, our canoe hasn't travelled in a straight line since we left our shores back in 2017. We have been affected by the winds and the tides, in particular COVID, government changes, major weather events across the country and major

fires that have had to deal with that have diverted our course as we have gone along.

- Those of you who have spent time on the water, you know that the horizon is always on the horizon, but setting your compass towards a certain direction otherwise you go around and around in circles.
- You all represent your communities as captains, the key for us as captains as we traverse the oceans of change, we are going through at the moment is to know where we are collectively heading and have the same belief as to why that is important.
- I am asking you as leaders today to stand at the stern of your waka and guide your people, I ask you to propel your waka further so as a fleet we can move together in the same direction.
- We have reached a point in our journey where we can no longer blame the winds and tides and the changes around us but instead rely on our collective leadership and navigation and being the captains of our waka to continue to deliver for NZ in a meaningful way.
- Part of that is celebrating what we have achieved along the way, not always focusing on the end point which moves like the horizon does.
- What are we aiming for right now? For me that is doing the basics well.
- What do I mean by the basics, for me I mean we are prioritising the safety of the people in the waka. This is why your leadership, and our leadership is so critical.
- We will do the basics by ensuring our people are trained, skilled and are ready to keep themselves and your communities safe in their times of need.
- If our crews aren't ready, you and I are putting our people in harm's way and we can't do that to our people, they don't deserve that.
- The basics also includes ensuring we advocate and promote community risk management into our communities, so they don't have to experience fires and are prepared for when they do have fires or different events. Making sure communities are prepared.
- The third of the basics is to ensure that our behaviours within the waka reflect the culture we aspire for. That we are the most trusted organisation in the eyes of the communities we serve but just as importantly with our peers and our people across the organisation.

- It is always a pleasure to attend this conference, I really enjoy it. Rebecca said earlier on to bring us the hard questions and that is what we are here for. You are here to listen, to learn what is happening in the organisation. I will be between the two fire engines in the exhibit hall for as long as people want to talk to me. That's where we will be. Its about approaching things in a different way to get the most value for the questions. Our people on our stands have detailed knowledge on how we are addressing various issues. The workshops will also give you further understanding of what we are doing and why. This is a slightly different approach to previous conferences.
- Almost all of our fire services work is funded by the levy on insurance. Including all of the programmes that benefit and support volunteers, our procurement and capital all sit within the levy.
- This current financial year we are investing around \$214m to support volunteerism. This includes brigade grants, uniforms, volunteer conferences like this one, reimbursements, challenge events, strategic initiatives for volunteerisms and maintaining the \$693 million of volunteer assets that we have across the country.
- This represents a huge amount of investment, and it doesn't even touch on the review undertaken by the UFBA on the social value/public worth of what volunteers put back into our communities of over \$800m.
- We are working really closely with UFBA, and I am really pleased with how the relationship is developing. We fund the UFBA to deliver a number of initiatives, we don't fund their existing just like we don't fund other unions and associations and partners. We do have a service level agreement of services that they provide for us to support volunteerism and provide a strong voice into Fire and Emergency around the volunteer perspective.
- It can sometimes be challenging to get the voice and experience of volunteers into our projects and decision-making. It is important that all of our people can have their say and that multiple perspectives are considered in decision-making.
- In December last year we established a volunteer voice project to understand the best way to engage with, collaborate and make sure that the volunteer voice is being heard across the organisation. We are seeking views on a volunteer voice network.
- The idea of the network is to connect with volunteer's voice with teams right across the organisation to seek your involvement on our wok.

- The network will work as a database of volunteers who can provide us unique and important insights to inform the work we are doing based on skills and experience.
- I am really pleased to say that Fire and Emergency and UFBA have resumed work on the volunteer engagement model project. Formerly model rules. This is an important piece of work to strengthen our relationship between FENZ and our volunteers across the country so we can support our communities better.
- When we were established in 2017 the existing agreements and constitutions of brigades and fire forces were carried forward into fire and emergency. As a result, we now have a range of different agreements, some are outdated and no longer fit for purpose. We need to refresh these, so they work for everyone for the current context and the future.
- This will involve extensive consultation and hearing your voice. I encourage each and every one of you to look for opportunities to be involved in that work and how we set this up for the future.
- We are also looking at how we support the people who support you. Looking at families, we have updated our welcome to the family guide to better reflect the full range of volunteer roles.
- Last financial year we made over 1300 family support allowance payments to volunteers away from home on courses or other eligible activities.
- This payment acknowledges the role of families and the impact on the household of having a family member away and is in addition to any reimbursements for loss of employment income or dependent care costs.

Employers

- Our Employer Recognition Programme is going from strength to strength.
- Our data shows that those brigades with a higher proportion of members enrolled in this programme have lower non-response rates.
- 90 percent of employers believe it is worthwhile for Fire and Emergency to continue to promote the Employer Recognition Programme.
- And 86 percent believe it makes a positive difference to how they feel about their business contributing to the community.
- We have got over half of our volunteers have their employers registered in this programme.

- We know there are still challenges with getting an appliance out the door in many parts of the country, especially during the day. Continuing to celebrate and promote the contribution of employers and self-employed volunteers - who give so much back including time that could be spent on their own businesses which comes at a cost which I also recognise.
- We want to keep that programme going and encourage you all to acknowledge your own employers and their roles in keeping communities safe.
- Contrary to popular belief, our volunteer workforce has remained stable over the past seven years in terms of both applications and leavers. For the past two years we have had more starters than leavers. This indicates a sustained interest, which is essential for maintaining a strong and resilient volunteer workforce.
- I know many people talk about the new generation and not being as open to volunteerism as previous generations, that is not what we are seeing at Fire and Emergency.
- The proportion of women in our frontline volunteer workforce has been steadily increasing having reached 20.2% this year. We are also recruiting more women than are leaving, leading to a gradual rise in the representation of women within our volunteer workforce.
- I understand this doesn't reflect the individual challenges many brigades have getting more volunteers. There is bespoke work happening in this space. We hear you and we are working to support you, but it does mean we are becoming more accessible to the whole population who choose to volunteer and give back to NZ.
- An example where we tried something different is in Tairāwhiti.
- Like many places across NZ, there are a lot of reasons recruitment in Tairāwhiti has been hard, the need to travel to train and a lack of access to medical testing are two of them.
- To make the recruit course more accessible, our team ran key components of the course such as hose running and breathing apparatus training in Gisborne.
- They organised transport for recruits to and from the National Training Centre in Rotorua.
- A Nurse Practitioner was present at the recruitment drive so applicants did not have to travel for their medical.

- They worked with Gisborne Hospital to access services which previously would have required volunteers to travel to Auckland or Waikato.
- It was pleasing to see that the approach successfully bolstered numbers in key brigades across Tairāwhiti.
- We know each District has their own challenges, and we are committed where we can to find solutions.
- There is a good team working really hard looking at different things we can do to make it easier to become a volunteer and sustain volunteerism.
- Making volunteerism accessible is key to ensuring a diverse, modern, and effective volunteer workforce going into the future.
- It is a privilege to attract people, but as a priority we need to make sure that our culture and systems enable a safe, positive, and inclusive experience for all.
- Our goal is that *“Fire and Emergency is a place where you feel you belong. It’s a place where you are supported and enabled to thrive, so collectively we can deliver service to our communities and each other.”*
- For some of you in the room you will feel this already achieved and that is what we do already. Our goal for you is that this continues to be true and enhanced.
- For many in the room you may feel like we are a long way from achieving this and have valid reasons to feel that way.
- It is an achievable and realistic goal, but it will take all of us, working together, to get there.
- And it will take time.
- FENZ is a fantastic organisation full of generous and selfless people, who give so much back into communities through their service, and to the organisation through their service.
- We are not broken, but the actions of a few hurt our people and repeatedly call into question the many. Those people are disrespecting and tarnishing the reputation of us all.
- The vast majority of our people turn up everyday living our values and serving in an inclusive respectful manner.
- We need to continue to build on our strengths and focus on making Fire and Emergency a much better place to work and volunteer.

- In December 2022 the Public Service Commission released an independent review into Fire and Emergency's culture and complaints handling practices.
- The review included 20 recommendations, which the Fire and Emergency Board accepted in full.
- We are going beyond implementing the review's recommendations, recognising that to reach our goal and for it to be successful in the long term, we need to go further.
- People are not going to want to work or volunteer for us if they aren't happy with the culture we have and the environment they will be entering into it.
- We are making good progress.
- In July, Rebecca also mentioned, we launched our Code of Conduct.
- Our Code is built around three key pillars:
 1. The standards of integrity and conduct that apply to all of us as part of the public service.
 2. Ngā Uara, our Values and what they mean in practice for our behaviour and conduct.
 3. Our individual and collective responsibilities in ensuring we provide a safe, positive, and inclusive environment for everyone who is part of Fire and Emergency.
- It describes what good looks like; and it supports us all to make the right decisions.
- Importantly, it also sets out what will happen if we act outside those expectations.
- It is important that all of our people read the Code and complete the online module to be familiar with what is expected.
- To those of you who have already completed and / or led sessions with your brigades. I Thank you for leading the way for our organisation.
- We have also changed the way we manage complaints.
- This is managed independently by Fair Way who now operate an enquiry and complaints management service for Fire and Emergency volunteers, employees, and contractors, called Speak Safe @ Fair Way.
- Speak Safe @ Fair Way is free, confidential, and independent.

- They have a “no wrong door” approach to managing complaints and issues so, regardless of what route you choose to contact Speak Safe @ Fair Way, you will be presented with options around the issue you raise.
- You can also contact them to just get advice. It is not just a complaints service, if you are a manager or bystander, who sees things evolving and not sure what to do they will give you advice on that without making a complaint.
- If you are a victim and feeling victimised by others and want some tools for how to deal with this, call them they provide independent anonymous advice called Kāpehu.
- I encourage you to check out the Speak Safe @ Fair Way stand while you are here for more information in the exhibition centre. DO that on your way to put forward your hard questions Rebecca asked you to put through to me.
- We are working on a number of initiatives to better support leaders at all levels across Fire and Emergency.
- I want to acknowledge our volunteer brigade leaders, we are lucky to benefit from the knowledge, skills and experience you give freely everyday into communities and your brigades.
- As an organisation my reflection would be that we haven’t always supported you well to be successful to be leaders in that space.
- We are addressing this with the new Volunteer Brigade Leader development and review process, which includes a renewable five-year term for newly appointed volunteer brigade leaders, plus tailoring specific Support and Development Plans for our leaders.
- I want to acknowledge the support and input from the UFBA throughout this work and expect that in 2025 we will be able to open this up to existing leaders to opt into if they choose.
- This change in our culture will take time and sustained effort by us all which we are absolutely committed to doing.
- Our people deserve a workplace that is safe, respectful, and inclusive. This is going to be challenging, but I have unwavering faith in our collective strength and ability of all of us to achieve our goal.
- Finally, I want to talk about money.

- Specifically, I want to talk about our focus of ensuring Fire and Emergency will be sustainably funded and able to deliver the services our communities expect now and into the future.
- We are prioritising our costs to ensure we can respond when and where we are needed and help communities when large-scale emergencies happen. That has to be the bottom line of what we do so we have enough funding to do that when communities call on us.
- These 'readiness costs' enable us to respond quickly to our section 11 and section 12 functions under our legislation.
- The two key areas we are focusing on, are our capital investment in our fleet, buildings, IT, and equipment, and how we can have the planning and resourcing to move these forwards. And how we are prioritising our investments to get the best bang for buck. Re-looking at our whole approach to spend and investment as an organisation.
- We are an asset intense organisation with over 600 stations and more than 1200 fire appliances, so alongside just being an emergency organisation, we are a major Fleet operating company and a major property ownership and management company.
- We are the same size as a polytechnic as far as training goes.
- All things funded under the levy that we need to keep a clear eye on, that we maintain and improve our standards.
- In a tight fiscal environment this is our focus. I look at what are we doing for communities and how do we maintain our business into the future.
- Our capital asset programme is cornerstone to our readiness but will take many years to move from the point we are now to our desired outcome across our asset classes.
- I know everyone wants a new truck, new capacity and capability, and lots of challenges around our property, but we need to focus what are we being good at and being good at the basics. We are keeping our people safe, making sure they are trained and are rolling out the door to support our communities.
- Right now, 79 new appliances are currently being built or have been ordered, 49 of those—excluding the cab chassis—are being partly or fully built in New Zealand and 30 are being built overseas.
- Over 90 percent of this financial year's fleet capital budget is ordered.

- When we look at how we are prioritising our investment programme, we are investing in our future state capability, decontamination project, our hazmat command capability and our training function improvement programme, all sit with Dr Steph Rotarangi, and the standing up of the remaining Local Advisory Committees
- We have been given savings targets by the Minister of Internal Affairs so we can afford future cost pressures for the organisation. Something we would be doing anyway to ensure we are spending levy payers' money in an efficient fashion.
- To be clear, our focus is on ensuring Fire and Emergency is financially sustainable, we can afford future known and unknown cost pressures and we are reinvesting into the organisation where it will make the biggest difference in the current fiscal environment.
- We can't invest everywhere where we want to, but we need to ensure we are spending Levy payers' money wisely.
- All government agencies are expected to play their part in reducing cost pressures on New Zealand and we are being treated no different.
- Lastly, before I finish, I want to reiterate how appreciative I am of your commitment to Fire and Emergency and your service to your communities.
- I am proud to lead an organisation that depends on you.
- Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou, ka ora ai te iwi.
- With your food basket and my food basket the people will thrive.
- This whakatauki speaks to the power of collaboration, utilising the skills and experiences of all of us, and that is why it is so important to understand the volunteer voice and perspective.
- The work that the UFBA are doing on behalf of volunteers and with how everyone contributing we will deliver for our communities.
- I look forward to seeing you in the exhibition hall and I do welcome your questions.
- In past years the ELT have sat on the stage and people ask our questions, but ELT don't necessarily have the detailed answers you are looking for. We have brought people with us in the workshops and stands who can answer the detailed questions It's not my job to know if you we are replacing the doors at a specific station because they have been damaged, it is to lead the organisation forward and make sure we are sustainable.

- I feel honoured to lead this fantastic organisation.
- Thank you so much to you, your families, friends, employers for the contribution you all make to keep New Zealand safe. Thank you!