Contested Firegrounds:
paid and unpaid labour in NSW firefighting
between 1850 and 1955

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Discipline of Work and Organisational Studies
Faculty of Economics and Business
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October 2008
Declaration

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

Michael Wright

October 2008
Acknowledgements

This thesis was produced with the assistance of many people. My supervisor, Greg Patmore and Associate Supervisor, Harry Knowles provided me with much appreciated support and guidance throughout the life of this project. Together with everyone working in the Discipline of Work and Organisational Studies, they provided me with the encouragement I needed to complete the task.

I would like to thank the staffs of State Records (Kingswood), Noel Butlin Archives, Charles Stuart University Regional Archives and the State Library, all of who were of great assistance during the research phase of this thesis. I also need to thank the now defunct Horrie Brown Library (RSSS/ANU) for gifting me with a complete set of Annual Reports of both the Fire Brigades Board and the Board of Fire Commissioner of NSW. They have been invaluable.

I also need to thank the NSW Fire Brigades for their assistance in the project. Commissioner Greg Mullins provided me with every assistance, as did Peter Stathis, Maureen Swords (Records) and Julie Wyner (Library). Special thanks to Gary Boyce (Historical Archive Research & Preservation Officer) for providing me with unpublished materials and for proving to me that I was not alone in my fascination for old minute books of defunct boards.

My former colleagues at the NSW Fire Brigade Employees’ Union also deserve acknowledgement for their interest and encouragement. In particular, I would like to thank Comrades Read and Matthews for both their input and translation of firefighting jargon into English. I also need to thank the NSW Nurses Association for providing me with time and space in the last few months of writing.

On a personal note, this thesis would not have been possible without the enormous support of my family. I wish to thank them for their constant encouragement and assistance. Judy and Rose Wright provided invaluable proof reading skills and Andrew Murphy assisted in digitising some of the minute books upon which I relied.
My final thank you is extended to Annie, who has shown unwavering support and encouragement throughout this process. The completion of this thesis owes much to her love and patience.

I wish to dedicate this thesis to my late father, Peter Richard Wright.
Abstract

This thesis examines the development of firefighting in NSW from its establishment as an organised activity in the 1850s to the mid 1950s, when the origins of the contemporary arrangements of firefighting first emerged. In particular, it focuses on the dynamics at play in the relationship between different ‘forms’ of labour in the industry over that period, namely, paid, quasi-volunteer and volunteer firefighters.

Whilst independent volunteer fire companies, largely based in Sydney started off strongly in NSW in the mid nineteenth century, by 1910 they had disappeared from urban firefighting. Following the lead of the Fire Brigades Board (Sydney) [1884-1909], the Board of Fire Commissioners of NSW [1910-] adopted a more British approach to firefighting with unified command and control, with rigid structures and discipline applied across the State. Eventually, its large jurisdiction and financial constraints led to its inability to cope with post WWII urban expansion. This opened the way for volunteers to re-emerge in urban firefighting in the form of bush fire brigades.

Throughout the period studied, there were a myriad of tensions and, at times, sharp conflict between the different forms of firefighters. This manifested itself both on the fireground and in the relationship that the various groups had with their respective ‘managements’. Paid, quasi-volunteer and volunteer brigades used a range of strategies to legitimate their positions as the ‘protectors’ of their communities. Localism was a crucial factor in this context, as tension between centralised and local control was often the root of their differences. The importance of community and localism cannot be overstated, given the spatially embedded nature of firefighting.
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<tr>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Australian Labor Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>AR</td>
<td>Fire Brigades Board (Sydney) – <em>Annual Report</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AR (NSW)</td>
<td><em>Arbitration Reports (NSW)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>ARP</td>
<td>Air Raid Precaution</td>
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<td>ARC</td>
<td>Auxiliary Reserve Corps</td>
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<td>BFA</td>
<td>Bush Fire Auxiliary</td>
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<td>BFAC</td>
<td>Bush Fires Advisory Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>BFEC</td>
<td>Bush Fires (Emergency) Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>BFB</td>
<td>Bush Fire Brigade</td>
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<tr>
<td>BFC</td>
<td>Board of Fire Commissioners of New South Wales</td>
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<td>BFCAR</td>
<td>Board of Fire Commissioners of New South Wales - <em>Annual Report</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>BFC Mins</td>
<td>Board of Fire Commissioners of New South Wales - <em>Minutes</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>CO</td>
<td>Chief Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSURA</td>
<td>Charles Sturt University Regional Archives</td>
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<tr>
<td>CWA</td>
<td>Country Women’s Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>DT</td>
<td><em>Daily Telegraph</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>EN</td>
<td><em>Evening News</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>FBB</td>
<td>Fire Brigades Board (Sydney)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FBEU</td>
<td>Fire Brigade Employees Union of New South Wales [the FBEU’s name changed a number of times during the period studied. It was also registered as the Fire Brigades Association of NSW and the NSW Fire Brigade Employees’ Union. FBEU is used throughout]</td>
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<tr>
<td>FBU</td>
<td>Fire Brigades Union (UK)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FCO</td>
<td>Fire Control Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>FD</td>
<td>Fire District</td>
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<tr>
<td>HBP</td>
<td>Hose Box Post</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICFB</td>
<td>Insurance Companies Fire Brigade</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAFB</td>
<td>Metropolitan Associated Fire Brigades</td>
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<tr>
<td>MFB</td>
<td>Metropolitan Fire Brigade</td>
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<tr>
<td>MLC</td>
<td>Member of the Legislative Council (NSW Parliament)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NES</td>
<td>National Emergency Services</td>
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<td>NMH</td>
<td><em>Newcastle Morning Herald</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSWFB</td>
<td>New South Wales Fire Brigades [the formal name of the BFC’s organisational successor; however it was also used by the BFC]</td>
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<td>NSWGG</td>
<td>New South Wales Government Gazette</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSWIG</td>
<td>New South Wales Industrial Gazette</td>
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<td>NSWPD</td>
<td>New South Wales Parliamentary Debates</td>
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<td>NSWR</td>
<td>New South Wales Reports</td>
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<td>RFS</td>
<td>Rural Fire Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>SFD</td>
<td>Sydney Fire District</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMH</td>
<td><em>Sydney Morning Herald</em></td>
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<td>SRNSW</td>
<td>State Records, New South Wales</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stn</td>
<td>[Fire] Station</td>
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<tr>
<td>SWECCE</td>
<td>State War Effort Co-ordination Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>UAP</td>
<td>United Australia Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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<tr>
<td>UVFB</td>
<td>United Volunteer Fire Brigades</td>
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<tr>
<td>VFB</td>
<td>Volunteer Fire Brigade</td>
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<tr>
<td>VFC</td>
<td>Volunteer Fire Company</td>
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<tr>
<td>WAFBC</td>
<td>Women’s Auxiliary Fire Brigade Corps</td>
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<td>WWII</td>
<td>World War Two</td>
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Chapter 1. Introduction

The protection of the population and the built environment from the ravages of fire has been the subject of much analysis. This is unsurprising as the protection of urban settlements is paramount to the ongoing survival of both capital and labour contained within their boundaries. History is scattered with the devastating economic and social impacts of large-scale urban conflagrations. Some, like the Great Fire of London, were turning points in the life of major cities. The importance of fire suppression is probably only rivaled by the excitement that fire suppression tends to generate – heroic firefighters, ancient and modern have been venerated alongside their technologies. Texts often make an obligatory reference to the ancient firefighting practices of the Greeks and particularly the Romans. The text is generally limited to a brief description of “the first Fire Brigade” and its rudimentary equipment.\(^1\) The context within which firefighting operated during this period is generally left out. For example, around 100AD, the Emperor of Rome rejected the formation of citizen based fire brigades as he considered that they would develop into “subversive organisations”.\(^2\) The heroic men and their spectacular machines overshadowed some of the other, more problematic dynamics of firefighting and its organisation.

Whilst the Emperor’s misgivings pre-date the period covered by this thesis they are, to some extent, equally applicable to more modern times. As an industrial officer with the NSW Fire Brigade Employees’ Union (FBEU) between 1995 and 2008, I was intrigued by the contemporary bicameral firefighting arrangements. NSW presently has two competing firefighting bureaucracies and command systems: the NSW Fire Brigades (NSWFB) and the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS), both departments of the NSW Government. Tensions exist over who controls fire suppression services in specific localities. The tension is typically generated by shifts in land use, particularly where urban growth occurs in what was once a rural area. The usual arrangement for firefighting is that major metropolitan centres and larger regional centres are typically protected by full time paid NSWFB firefighters (in the case of regional centres, often

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aided by NSWFB partially paid firefighters). Significant towns are mostly protected by NSWFB partially paid firefighters organised into ‘Retained’ brigades, whilst ‘villages’ and rural/bush lands are protected, in the main, by volunteer firefighters organised into RFS brigades.

Conflict is most often generated when a specific location evolves from a rural village to a large town or where hinterland areas become merged with large regional centres or metropolitan areas. Such changes manifest themselves in the form of significant population growth combined with an expanding and more complex built environment. As the complexity and time criticality of fire suppression changes in an area, the mix of paid, partially paid and unpaid firefighters is generally subject to debate. Full time NSWFB firefighters (hereafter referred to as permanent firefighters) generally argue that firefighting in urban and regional centres is their province, given the need to quickly respond to more complex firefighting operations. This position creates obvious tensions with both retained and RFS brigades, which generally have a long established association with firefighting in the locality and value the status associated with protecting their communities.

During my tenure with the Union, the conflict between the agencies and their firefighters was described as “one of the great stories of turf warfare in NSW. (...) There is chronic duplication between the two services; they fight terribly and in some cases their stations are side by side and they don’t talk to each other.” In the late 1990s, the Fire Services Joint Standing Committee was constituted under an Act of Parliament to ‘mediate’ the tensions between the services and their representative

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3 The US standard on urban fire suppression sums up the need for quick response neatly: “given that the progression of a structural fire to the point of flashover (i.e., the very rapid spreading of the fire due to superheating of room contents and other combustibles) generally occurs in less than 10 minutes, two of the most important elements in limiting fire spread are the quick arrival of sufficient numbers of personnel and equipment to attack and extinguish the fire as close to the point of its origin as possible.” See National Fire Protection Association, ‘NFPA 1710 Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments’, NFPA, Quincy, MA, 2001, p.15.

4 Sydney Morning Herald (SMH), 25/3/2005, p.3.

bodies (the two firefighting authorities, the FBEU and the representatives of the RFS volunteers, the Rural Fire Service Association).  

On the face of it, two competing services is poor public policy. Unified command and control is crucial during any urban or bush fire - every minute counts in saving life and property from the ravages of fire and other disasters, and unambiguous command and control structures are key to the process.

My experience of, and involvement in, debates over who should control which particular territory led me to ask a series of questions: What were the origins of the current arrangements? Did the current system evolve or was it deliberately created to achieve a particular policy outcome? Have there been any other models of firefighting operation in NSW’s past and how was the work of firefighters demarcated between paid and unpaid labour?

The aim of this thesis is to answer some of these questions through an analysis of the evolution of firefighting in New South Wales (NSW) from 1850 to 1955. In particular, it will focus on the demarcation of work and tensions between paid and volunteer firefighters during this period and the strategies that each of these groups have used to legitimate their positions as the ‘protectors’ of their communities.

Since the colonisation of New South Wales in 1788, the suppression of uncontrolled fire has been a cornerstone of the growth and maintenance of large urban areas, towns and agricultural lands. A key to the suppression of such fires has been the use of labour in firefighting. Firefighting has been undertaken and organised in a large variety of ways: by individuals protecting their property from an outbreak of fire; by ad-hoc and relatively unorganised groups of people from an affected locality or region; by organised ad-hoc volunteers; by organised volunteers operating in their community; by organised volunteers operating outside of their community; by military forces; by police officers organised into fire brigades; by prisoners; by partially paid firefighters; and by full time paid professional firefighters. It would be hard to find another area of work that has so many permutations in form, particularly one that has considered itself a profession since the late 1800s. The industry’s

6 Fire Services Joint Standing Committee Act (NSW), 18 of 1998.
uniqueness is amplified by the fact that, since its inception, these various groups have at times been involved in sometimes serious disputes to demarcate their role and authority, both within the public sphere and on the fireground.7

Overseas analyses of demarcation between paid and unpaid firefighters have viewed the conflict from a purely temporal perspective, that is, as a transition from volunteer to paid firefighter in a particular urban location over time. In NSW, contestation has not merely happened at a particular point in time. Paid, partially paid and unpaid firefighters have co-existed for long periods of time and have often used localist strategies to spatially demarcate their operational and social authority in particular localities at particular times.

Analysing the demarcation between paid and unpaid labour in NSW firefighting is important for a number of reasons. First, it has capacity to inform current debates on the issue. As noted previously, debates still rage over which types of firefighter (paid, partially paid or unpaid) have authority and/or jurisdiction over firefighting in areas of the State, including metropolitan areas such as Sydney.8 Given the currency of this demarcation, understanding it in its previous manifestations may help inform the development of rational public policy on the matter. Secondly, this contestation itself, its spatial manifestations and its reliance on localism make it worthy of analysis. The issue of demarcation between paid and unpaid labour also raises questions and issues over the nature of volunteering, the often unequal provision of public services to various localities, the importance of organisational structures in shaping the conflict and the professionalisation of firefighting. Finally, it may add to the growing literature on firefighting that goes beyond hero-fetishism and contribute to the increasingly more critical debates on volunteerism.

The literatures pertaining to volunteers and volunteerism leads the Literature Review (Chapter 2). The issues of what constitutes a volunteer and the dimensions of volunteerism are discussed at length. There is a general consensus that a volunteer

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7 The term “fireground” is a term used in firefighting to denote an area where active firefighting operations are taking place.
undertakes work of their own volition and without financial reward. A requirement that volunteering takes place in formal structures is added to many definitions. Cnaan, Handy & Wadsworth (1996) refine these dimensions of volunteerism, placing each on a spectrum to measure their proximity to pure volunteering and add a fourth: that the intended beneficiaries of volunteer work should be assessed. Two additional dimensions have been added to their schema for completeness: freedom to volunteer and the ‘intensity’ of volunteering.

After assessing the dimensions of volunteering, Smith’s (1982) useful definitional construct of the “quasi-volunteer” is discussed. A “quasi-volunteer” contributes their labour without “substantial coercion” and is partly remunerated (i.e. “less pay than the market value of services”). The difficulties of the historical nomenclatures in NSW firefighting are then discussed, where Smith’s concept of the quasi-volunteer is applied to distinguish unpaid volunteers, from other firefighters labeled as ‘volunteers’, who are actually partially paid for their services. For the purposes of this thesis, any firefighter with the title of volunteer, who is actually partially paid for their services, (a quasi-volunteer as defined by Smith), will be referred to as a ‘volunteer’ (i.e. designated by single quotation marks). This will assist readability, whilst at the same time, clarify the actual status of the firefighter, or firefighters, in question.

A discussion of the significance of volunteering within Australia generally and within the NSW firefighting industry in particular follows, highlighting the size of the volunteer ‘labour market’: over one third of Australian adults volunteered in 2006, whilst ninety percent of people involved in firefighting in NSW in 2007 were volunteers. Notwithstanding the significance of volunteering as ‘work’, the industrial relations literature, whether unitarist, pluralist or radical, is found wanting in coming to terms with the subject. Labour history as a discipline is found less deficient: the works of Oppenheimer and others have explored both the significance of volunteer work and voluntary associations in an Australian context. Of relevance to this thesis, Wright (2001, 2005) and Brawley (2001) have explored the historical intersection of paid and unpaid work in the predominantly male industries of firefighting and surf life saving.
Whilst Australian firefighting literature is extensive, much of its focus is on ‘heroes’ and equipment, rather than on workers, (paid and unpaid, and their interactions within their organisations and communities. Adrian explores these issues, although his more academic work is limited to post WWII Sydney. Jopson’s (1994) history of the FBEU also discusses tensions between paid firefighters and quasi-volunteers. Whilst Wilde (1991), Murray & White (1995), Page & Bryant (1983) and Wood (1989) provide insights into some of the tensions in other States between paid and unpaid firefighting labour, North American scholarship is perhaps the most advanced with respect to volunteer firefighting. Neilly (1960) assesses the culture and eventual demise of Philadelphia’s volunteer fire companies in the nineteenth century. Fireground competition, mixed with political, racial and sectarian motivations, led to widespread and increasing public disquiet over, often violent, and riotous volunteers. Increasing concern over their behavior, together with emerging technologies such as steam power were the major reasons behind their replacement with paid labour. Greenberg (1998) and Tebeau (2003) while acknowledging competition between the volunteers, sought to place their behaviours and demise within the context of the rapidly changing social and political milieu of the United States in the mid nineteenth century. As Baird (1986) and Kealey (1995) describe, Canada was influenced by similar turbulent times, with sectarianism playing a more influential role. The UK literature is also reviewed, for although it adds little to an understanding of volunteerism, the work of Segars (1989) and Ewen sheds light on the working conditions and culture of permanent firefighters in NSW.

The final part of the literature review discusses the importance of localism and spatial concepts as dynamics in firefighting and its organisation. Rejecting the concept of “space as an objective given”, researchers such as Ellem and Shields (1999) and Westcott (2006) embrace the geographer’s appreciation of spatial practices and apply them to concept of work. Labour historians and sociologists have long appreciated the importance of ‘locality’ in understanding the workplace. Patmore (1999), Eklund (2000 & 2002) and Wright (2001) assess localism, a “sense of place which can influence behaviour”, which operates within localities to defend or to enhance shared interests. Often embedded in local organisations such as progress associations, in particular contexts localism can be a strong tie between divergent groups, utilising the ‘otherness’ of ‘outsiders’ to enforce unity. The concept of “countrymindedness”
(Aitkin (1985)) is then briefly discussed before assessing the research undertaken by both sociologists and labour historians on localism and volunteerism. Teather (1997) examines volunteers and their relationship to locality in rural women's organisations, whilst in Wright (2001), I examine how bush firefighters in the Blue Mountains in the late 1950s, used localism to effectively counter BFC dominance. Following this is a brief discussion by Lozier (1976) and Simpson (1996) who argue that US volunteer fire departments are being fully integrated into their communities through localist practices. Finally there is a brief discussion on the spatially embedded nature of firefighting and the fixed nature of its ‘product market’.

The development of fire services in NSW, prior to significant state intervention in 1884, is assessed in Chapter 3. In the mid-1850s, the insurance industry organised the Insurance Companies Fire Brigade (ICFB) in Sydney, which ended a practice of individual insurance companies organising their own paid brigades. In the same period, the first community based volunteer fire companies also emerged in Sydney. These volunteer fire companies emulated the early North American model of fire protection: self-governed volunteers organised within their respective communities. By the time the state became more active, there were at least twenty-five democratically run volunteer fire companies operating in inner city Sydney and suburban centres. Brigade formation in regional centres was more varied: they often failed for want of organisation and tended to be managed by committees of local businessmen. Accordingly, firefighters in locations such as Newcastle and West Maitland did not have the same control over their organisations and were, in some centres, paid quasi-volunteers who were fully aware of the potential for gains through ‘industrial action’. Chapter Three maps the development of volunteer companies, their operations and the forces that both united them as allies and made them sometimes dysfunctionally fierce competitors on and off the fireground. Like their North American counterparts, competition extended at times beyond friendly rivalry to include violence and riotous behaviour.

The VFCs initially were able to rely on community support using the mantle of selfless citizens protecting their communities. Indeed, there was a strong symbiosis between the VFCs and their communities: the VFCs protected life and property in their localities and in return received financial and material support as well as respect.
However, the strong ties of ‘brotherhood’ between VFCs, strained their relationship with their respective communities. When fireground conflict, excessive pageantry and other rituals of the VFC culture led to dysfunctional fire suppression, the ties of localism came apart, and broad support emerged for more disciplined and unified control in firefighting. This eventually came in the form of the Fire Brigades Act in 1884. As discussed in Chapter 4, through the new Act, the ICFB paid men, with their UK styled regimented and disciplined approach, gained control over the more independent volunteer firemen.

Chapter 4 examines the fortunes of both paid and unpaid firefighting labour whilst they were controlled by the Fire Brigades Board (FBB) in Sydney and other fire boards elsewhere in the State. Established under the Fire Brigades Act, 1884, these new boards were empowered to control the fireground in their respective areas and subsidise volunteer fire companies that complied with internal regulation. With an emphasis on Sydney, this chapter charts the operation of these Boards and the resistance that volunteers put up to avoid losing their independence. The FBB, by this stage, had perversely become the ‘enforcer’ of localism in its attempts to make the VFCs focus on protecting their communities rather than participating in broader volunteer rituals. Some VFCs, like Petersham, still used local influence to partially counter the FBB’s influence in the industry, but localism more generally had waned as a useful mechanism for enhancing or defending the position of the VFCs.

Throughout this period, permanent firefighters employed by Sydney’s FBB grew in numbers and authority. At the same time, autonomous volunteer fire companies and their members dwindled in the city area, to the point where they ceased to operate by 1897. VFCs were abolished completely in Sydney in late 1901 and were replaced by a new type of firefighter: partially paid quasi-volunteer firemen directly employed by the FBB and under the control of its permanent men. Half a century of voluntary service by volunteer fire company members came to an end in Sydney via the increasing control enjoyed by paid firefighters operating under strong legislation that gave them command over the fireground. The chapter also surveys the creation of new fire brigade boards in regional NSW. It discusses the particular tensions that manifested themselves in some country localities between local fire board managements and their operational firefighters. Whilst localism was strong in these communities, where the firemen considered that they were being exploited, localism
broke down and the firefighters withdrew their labour, with quite disastrous consequences in some towns.

The operation of the newly created Board of Fire Commissioners of NSW (BFC), from 1910 to the start of WWII, is assessed in Chapter 5. In summary, this was a hegemonic period for paid firefighting labour in NSW. A new Fire Brigade Act gave this one organisation and its paid firefighters, almost total hegemony over firefighting operations and management. The BFC became the locus of firefighting expertise in NSW and it covered firefighting operations in all metropolitan areas and significant towns across the State. Whilst ‘volunteer’ firefighters and ‘volunteer’ fire brigades operated across the State, their title was a misnomer: ‘volunteers’ and their brigades were actually partially paid quasi-volunteers managed by and under the control of BFC permanent officers. Permanent and ‘volunteer’ brigades were subject to significantly increased command and control from the Sydney. Furthermore, discipline was reinforced through ever strengthening control regimes. This level of centralised authority caused tensions between labour and management, particularly in the 1910s, when the BFC attempted to impose its centralised and standardised approach on to, previously independent, country brigades. Heavily entrenched in supportive communities, some country brigades used localism very effectively to stop changes in the personnel and organisation of their brigades being imposed by the Sydney-based BFC.

Whilst the BFC and its firefighters had a monopoly of control in urban areas and towns, another form of firefighter was developing in rural NSW, in the form of bush fire brigade volunteers. Formed as early as 1900, they were the product of localist agendas to provide fire protection in rural areas, where settlement patterns, and/or financial constraints, made the organisation of BFC brigades unviable. It was not until the latter 1920s that the state made any real attempt to encourage their formation. Notwithstanding this involvement, they remained largely autonomous and community-based bodies, loosely organised by local shires. Bringing into question the issue of volition, participation in BFBs was sometimes less an exercise in free will and more a ‘requirement’ of country citizenship. Demarcation between paid and unpaid labour was not an issue with the formation of BFBs: the pattern of brigade formation, organisational arrangements, the expectation of the citizenry and patterns
of urban development kept contact between paid BFC and volunteer bush fire brigade firefighters to a minimum. Yet the exigencies of WWII would again bring paid and unpaid labour together again on the same fireground.

The final chapter (Chapter 6) analyses the development of firefighting services both during WWII and in the decade following the end of hostilities. War led to a dramatic increase in the role of the BFC in providing for civil defence in the event of NSW being attacked or invaded. More generally, volunteers became a vital part of the war effort and, in this context, unpaid volunteers re-emerged in urban firefighting for the first time since 1909. The Auxiliary Reserve Corps (ARC) and Women’s Auxiliary Fire Brigade Corps (WAFBC), both unpaid, were established in 1940, to bolster existing firefighter numbers in the event of attack. They supplemented the Reserve Corps (paid for attending fires only), which had been established prior to the outbreak of war. Civil defence requirements also invigorated the bush fire brigade movement. Seen now as a statewide concern and a vital part of the war effort, by 1941 the State Government boasted that the movement had 30,000 members, operating out of 1000 brigades.

With the end of hostilities, the ARC and the WAFBC were demobilised by the BFC. However, they retained the Reserve Firemen, who eventually evolved into an unpaid corps of Bushfire Auxiliary Firemen. The Bush Fire Brigade movement had been reorganised and equipped during the war and, in 1949, was given extra impetus with the passing of the Bush Fires Act, 1949. This legislation created an alternative nascent firefighting bureaucracy, with the ability to subordinate the BFC’s permanent officers in certain circumstances. The postwar period also heralded a change in the BFC’s financial position and capacity to meet changes in urban development; it was hampered by increased labour costs, associated with a reduction in firemen’s hours extracted by the FBEU, and increased intervention by fire service funding bodies, the insurance industry and local government, in fire brigade planning decisions. Amidst an energised volunteer sector and the Board’s financial stringency was a process of considerable urban growth, particularly in the outer metropolitan areas of Sydney at the urban bushland interface. With the BFC unable to protect these areas with infrastructure and firefighters, bush fire brigades filled the vacuum. By the mid 1950s the BFC’s hegemonic position was lost: unpaid volunteer firemen, independent of
Board control, were again operating in Sydney and other, increasingly urbanised areas.

Obviously the re-emergence of volunteers in urban areas in the mid-fifties raises the question: Why finish the thesis in 1955? Put simply, institutional word limits necessitated having to stop somewhere – to adequately cover beyond the mid 1950s would have doubled the length of the thesis. Furthermore, I wanted to chart the re-emergence of dynamic volunteerism during WWII and its immediate postwar impacts without necessarily describing and analysing the whole postwar period. As such, the thesis represents, in part, an analysis of the origins of the modern organisation of firefighting, rather than an analysis of the modern period itself. The fact that Adrian has also covered the postwar period to the late 1970s in detail, at least in Sydney is another reason for truncating the postwar period. On a more pragmatic level, for most of my candidature, I was employed by the NSW Fire Brigade Employees’ Union (FBEU). In particular during the late 1990s and following decade, I was involved both directly and indirectly in debates over the boundaries of unpaid labour in the industry. As such, real problems would have existed in gaining the trust of key personnel in the industry and accessing relevant documents. Furthermore, my objectivity would have been in question, given my involvement in the debates over volunteerism.

In the Conclusion, the major themes of the thesis are discussed, including the importance of localism and spatial relations in understanding the industry. The chapter ends with a reflection on the future: that contemporary policy makers learn from the experiences of the nineteenth century so as to stop their perpetuation under the current arrangements, whereby two fire services compete for territory.

Between 1850 and 1955, there were a myriad of tensions and, at times, sharp conflict between the different forms of firefighters. This manifested itself both on the fireground and in the relationship that the various groups had with their respective ‘managements’. Paid, quasi-volunteer and volunteer brigades used a range of strategies to legitimate their positions as the ‘protectors’ of their communities. Localism was an important factor in this context, as tension between centralised and local control was often the root of their differences. The importance of community and localism is unsurprising, given the spatially embedded nature of firefighting.
Chapter 2. Literature Review

Firefighters and their organisational structures have played a critical role in protecting both life and property in New South Wales since European settlement. Furthermore, firefighting has been an industry of contrasting and competing modes of employment. Para-militarised paid workers, controlled by a highly centralised organisation have, at times, competed for ‘turf’ with self autonomous and locally based brigades, consisting entirely of volunteers. Hybrids of these two groups, or quasi-volunteers, have also been part of the industry. Whilst the concepts underlying paid work are generally understood, the dimensions of volunteer labour are less obvious.

In this context, this chapter starts with a review of the literature as to what defines a volunteer and the dimensions of volunteer work. It then examines volunteer nomenclature in NSW firefighting and provides a brief overview of the significance of contemporary volunteering in Australia. The industrial relations and labour history literatures are then reviewed, so as to examine their utility in understanding industries where volunteer labour is present. The following section assesses a range of historical studies of firefighting in Australia, North America and the United Kingdom, with a heavy emphasis on the interrelationships between paid and unpaid labour. Finally, the emerging literatures on localism and the spatial aspects of work are reviewed as a possible framework for better understanding the historical dynamics of firefighting labour in NSW.

2.1. Volunteerism

Before assessing the dimensions of volunteerism, some definitional issues need to be addressed. The meaning of the term ‘volunteer’ has been subject to significant analysis. Whilst at first glance its meaning is well understood, the term has been applied in a wide range of contexts. It can be used to refer to people who choose to be involved in one off and very limited unpaid work, such as helping to pack up chairs after a community meeting. Alternatively, it is also used to describe people who voluntarily dedicate large amounts of time and skill to unpaid work in their community, over their lifetime. Things become somewhat more confusing when the term is used to describe people who are paid or who have little choice but to volunteer.
The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), in its occasional national sample survey on Voluntary Work, defines a volunteer as “someone who willingly gave unpaid help, in the form of time, service or skills, to or through an organisation or group”. Academic discussions on what defines a volunteer adopt a similar approach. Baldock (1998) defines volunteer work “as activities which people willingly contribute without wages, and on a regular basis, to a formal organisation. This definition distinguishes volunteer work from other types of unwaged labours, because it associates volunteer work with formal organisations.” Oppenheimer (1997, 1998) situates her definition of the ‘volunteer’ in the context of the “voluntary principle” and voluntary organisations. The voluntary principle, that of “citizens acting collectively, in association with each other, or individually, for the common good” underscores the actions of the volunteer who “give[s] their own time to an organisation of their choice, without being paid for their services, or expecting financial recompense for their time, effort and good will”. Oppenheimer & Warburton (2000) explore these issues further and discuss some of the definitional ambiguities of the volunteer concept, such as the concept of ‘compulsory volunteering’ used in Federal Government welfare regimes.

Baldock and Oppenheimer capture the main features of most definitions of a volunteer – volition and a lack of remuneration. As B.D. Karl noted, these two elements have long formed the basis of what constitutes a volunteer. They also add, however, that volunteering should occur within an organisational (public) context and that they should be acting for the “common good”. Baldock associates the volunteer with formal organisations, so as to separate unpaid work in the public sphere from unpaid work in the private sphere. The organisational delimiter also provides a

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useful boundary between ordinary acts of generosity and structured volunteerism. It enables us to separate a driver who occasionally picks up hitchhikers from a volunteer driver who ‘works’ for a voluntary organisation that assists the elderly.\textsuperscript{15} More recently, Cordingley (2000) adds additional constraints as to what constitutes volunteering: in addition to these four factors, a volunteer is also required to work in a non-profit organisation and within a designated volunteer position.\textsuperscript{16}

2.1.1. The dimensions of volunteering

Cnaan, Handy et al. (1996) analysed the range of definitions used in the academic literature on volunteerism - they noted that “the distinction between a paid worker and a volunteer is indeed complex” and found that there are four key dimensions in definitions of volunteerism.\textsuperscript{17} They assert that “these four dimensions, with their continuums, constitute a criterion for assessing and comparing all definitions and situations of who is a volunteer.”\textsuperscript{18} Their first dimension is the “voluntary nature” of the work, or more precisely, the level of volition involved in undertaking the work. The “nature of the reward[s]” obtained by the volunteer, the “context or auspices” within which volunteering takes place and the question of “who benefits” from the activity are the other dimensions advanced by the authors to assess who is a volunteer.\textsuperscript{19} By evaluating each of these dimensions hierarchically (i.e. is “the nature of the reward” non-existent, marginal or a significant payment), the dimensions form a continuum “ranging from pure to broad volunteering.”\textsuperscript{20} Whilst their schema has some utility, it is perhaps too broad and, at times nonsensical, as the authors were able to fit “volunteers [who] were forced to volunteer” into their continuum.

More recently, Petriwskyj & Warburton (2007) have suggested that volunteerism should be categorised so as to distinguish between different types of volunteering whilst at the same time developing “a typology that is more inclusive and capable of

\textsuperscript{15} Cnaan and Amrofell, ‘Mapping volunteer activity’, p.344.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p.371.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p.381.
incorporating a broad range of behaviours.” They contend that researchers need to be cognisant of whether the volunteering is formal or informal (i.e. through an organisation or otherwise), whether it is undertaken by individuals or groups and what type of volunteering it constitutes (i.e. philanthropic service giving, mutual aid/self help, activism/advocacy/civic engagement, public/community service or ‘environmental stewardship’).

Notwithstanding problems with the broadness of the scheme devised by Cnaan et al. (1996), it is a useful starting point for an analysis of volunteerism. Two other dimensions of volunteering also assist in understanding the phenomenon: the freedom to volunteer and the intensity (frequency and length) of the volunteering.

The first dimension, volition, refers to the freedom with which people choose to volunteer. The conventional view of a volunteer is that they choose, of their own free will, to participate in voluntary work. Yet, there are situations where elements of coercion exist in decisions to volunteer. For example, is a white-collar criminal who accepts community service in lieu of prosecution a volunteer? They are in a typical volunteer role, but their choice is between punitive outcomes and volunteering. Choice is exercised, but it is a choice between volunteering and a loss of liberty.

Work for the dole schemes also raise interesting questions regarding the volition of ‘volunteers’. The concept of mutual obligation is clearly one at odds with a classic definition of volunteering – indeed the one distinguishing feature of volunteerism is that no obligation exists between the ‘giver’ and the organisation as ‘recipient’. Yet, the long-term unemployed placed in these positions are considered volunteers and receive no remuneration for the work performed from their ‘employers’. Employer-sponsored volunteerism, where employers “encourage and facilitate the participation of their employees in volunteering activities for not-for-profit organisations” is also

22 Cnaan and Amrofell, ‘Mapping volunteer activity’, pp.333-334 considered both frequency and length of each episode of volunteering as important ‘facets’ of volunteering.
23 Question by Cnaan, Handy, and Wadsworth, ‘Defining who is a volunteer’, p.376.
questionable. Whilst around sixty percent of Australian employers allowed their ‘volunteering’ staff paid time off (generally one or two days a year) to participate in such activities, it could be argued that this is an attempt by employers to cynically ‘appropriate’ the leisure time of their employees and harness it in the name of corporate relations and private sector benevolence.\(^{26}\)

The final ambiguity relating to volition is that of the volunteer who has to give their time to provide a vital service that neither state nor market will. An example of this is where the citizenry are compelled to volunteer their services to a volunteer bush fire brigade in circumstances where a paid (or partially paid) service is not provided.\(^{27}\) By the very nature of fires and their lack of concern for property boundaries, individuals are compelled to volunteer their services to their neighbours (& community) in such circumstances.\(^{28}\) Zech (1982), in a study of West German volunteer firefighters, refers to this as the extrinsic motivator of “demand articulation”, where “citizens who voluntarily assist in the provision of a public good or service do so at least in part because they personally feel the service is important and would be underprovided or not at all if they did not participate in its production.”\(^{29}\) As discussed in Chapter 5, the requirement for a locality to provide its own fire services can lead to volunteering motivated by the community’s strong expectations of participation, rather than as an act of free will. Baldock (1998) refers to a similar concept of “compulsory altruism”, which embodies an “ideology that compels women to provide services without receiving anything in return.”\(^{30}\)

Tied in with the concept of volition is the concept of motivation. Whilst the literature on volunteer motivation is voluminous, and beyond the scope of this thesis, the work of Thompson & Bono (1992 & 1993) is of particular relevance. They rely on Marx’s


\(^{26}\) Ibid., p.66.

\(^{27}\) *NSWPD*, 9/6/49, p.2370.

\(^{28}\) An equally interesting issue is why communities continue to volunteer, once the state or the market catches up. A good case study of this phenomenon is bushfire brigades in the Terrey Hills area (see *SMH*, 25/3/2005, p.3).


\(^{30}\) Baldock, ‘Feminist discourses of unwaged work’, p.25.
concept of alienation and the propensity of paid employment to estrange workers from their own labours. They view the motivation of volunteer firefighters as a:

struggle against the alienation which pervades contemporary capitalist society. They do this both in repulsion from the relatively alienated nature of their everyday social relations, and in attraction to the relatively self-actualizing social relations of volunteer fire departments.\(^{31}\)

According to Thompson & Bono, volunteer firefighters self actualize through: their direct relationship with what they produce (i.e. fire suppression and the preservation of life and property); a high degree of what industrial relations theorists would call industrial democracy or job control (e.g. election of management roles and joint decision making) and a high level of social integration within the workplace and more broadly, within the communities that they protect. The authors also see the extrinsic motivators of the need for status and prestige and the possible access to paid employment as significant.\(^{32}\)

The absence of remunerative benefits is one of the classic hallmarks of volunteerism. Yet, like volition, remuneration blurs at the edges. As discussed in the next section, some workers traditionally labelled and thought of as volunteers, are actually employees paid under industrial awards and are subject to union coverage. Volunteer firefighters in the employ of the NSW Fire Brigades have always been referred to as volunteer firefighters in the various Fire Brigades Acts since 1901. Even industrial awards, for a significant period, referred to them as volunteers despite the fact that these ‘volunteers’ received remuneration under them.\(^{33}\)

Another group involved in firefighting, RFS volunteers, may appear easier to classify as they are not paid for their services. The issue becomes a little more complex when one assesses the indirect financial benefits gained from their activities in certain circumstances. RFS volunteers who work for the State Government and other public sector bodies continue to be paid by their employers whilst ‘volunteering’ their


\(^{32}\) Thompson and Bono, 'Alienation, self-actualization'. p.121.

\(^{33}\) \textit{Re. Volunteer Fire Brigade Employees (No.1) 1963 AR (NSW)} 41 at 43-45.
services in work time. The issue of employees being paid whilst active as volunteers made headlines during the 1999 hailstorm ‘crisis’ in Sydney. The issue became one of ‘fairness’ and an implicit recognition of the primacy of paid employment in fulfilling the utilitarian needs of volunteers: “Mr. Carr [then NSW Premier] said he believed Commonwealth employers should give the volunteers the same rights as State Government employers did - by paying them for their working days as volunteers.”

A large percentage of volunteers also gain considerable periods of paid leave for training purposes. Volunteer firefighters gain other concessions such as free access to National Parks in Victoria for personal use. From this, an interesting question emerges: is a person, being paid by the State to perform one public function, a volunteer if they perform another public function whilst continuing to receive wages from the State?

The organisational context (structure) within which volunteering occurs is another important dimension. Most researchers deliberately exclude volunteering outside of formal organisations from their definitions of volunteer activity, so as to separate caring in the private sphere, from more public volunteerism. Yet ad hoc volunteering outside of formal organisations warrants some attention. Again, the NSW firefighting industry provides an example of the impact of unstructured volunteering in the public sphere. For example, during a strike by NSWFB permanent firefighters in 1955, ad hoc volunteers replaced striking paid labour on at least one fireground: “about 40 men, many in pyjamas” helped save a factory in Alexandria.

Cnaan et al refer to intended beneficiaries as another dimension of volunteerism. As they point out, some purists consider voluntary action only occurs when the beneficiaries are strangers and with whom they have nothing in common. Such an approach is nonsensical, as it denies working class people the opportunity to be

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34 Premier’s Department (NSW), New South Wales Government Personnel Handbook, Premier’s Department, Sydney, 2005, ss. 6-19.8.
36 Premier’s Department (NSW), New South Wales Government Personnel Handbook, ss. 6-19.8.
38 see SMH, 17/10/1955, p.1; reference to the senior officers see Sun Herald, 16/10/1955, p.38.
39 Cnaan, Handy, and Wadsworth, ‘Defining who is a volunteer’, p.371.
40 Ibid., p.371.
involved in their own welfare (it even excludes honorary trade union officials). It is also problematic in firefighting, where stopping a fire in a neighbour’s building can stop it spreading across town to your own. Spelling out the actual intended beneficiaries is important: it helps explain the motivations of volunteers in certain circumstances and allows for an exploration of class and regional dimensions of volunteerism. For example, the beneficiaries can be limited to one ‘community’ (e.g. bush firefighters in a rural area) or can be near universal in nature (e.g. the Red Cross / Red Crescent). Focusing on this dimension also highlights situations where the intended beneficiaries do not want the ‘benefit’, such as the rejection of the use of the US-styled Guardian Angels in Sydney in the late 1980s.41

Freedom to volunteer is a concept not often explored in the literature. Many assessments of volunteerism concentrate on motivation as if it were the sole determinant in the supply of volunteer labour. Yet, motivation is only part of the picture: the freedom that a person enjoys from the constraints of economic survival and the labour market also has a bearing on their ability to volunteer. For example, since at least the turn of last century, the vagaries of the labour market have impacted on the availability of volunteers to attend fires.42 A more recent study into emergency service volunteers, commissioned by the Country Fire Authority in Victoria, finds the problem ongoing:

The pressures of a competitive economic climate will also undoubtedly become more widespread within the community over time. These will continue to increase competition within and between industries and consequently limit both employees’ and employers’ ability to participate in voluntary work (i.e., because of the costs associated with reduced productivity).43

41 NSWPD, 15/9/1992, pp.5583-5588.
42 ‘Correspondence from MFB to Captains re. partially paid volunteer system’, 7/12/1901; State Records NSW (SRNSW): Board of Fire Commissioners; CGS 476, Special Bundles 1884-1971 – Volunteer Fire Brigade (1901-1920), [20/14729].
43 Country Fire Authority (Victoria) and Emergency Management Australia, Directions in volunteer development in Australia emergency services: executive summary, CFA, Mt Waverly, Vic, 1998, p.5; A. Birch and J. McLennan, ‘Who’s interested?: the NSW grain belt community survey about volunteering with the Rural Fire Service’, Australian Journal on Volunteering, vol. 12, no. 1, 2007, pp.16, 21 who reported that “competing time commitments of work, business, farming or family” was the most common barrier to joining the Rural Fire Service in West & North West NSW.
The freedom to volunteer is further affected by broader regional economic and demographic changes. A change in the employment prospects in an area over time (or seasonally) or a change in the socioeconomic composition of an area can affect volunteering. For example, Perisher Valley (in the Snowy Mountains) cannot hold onto enough retained firefighters during the summer months, notwithstanding the fire risks associated with this large ‘ski-town’.44

There are other external restraints on the freedom to volunteer. For example, people with particular criminal offences are excluded from volunteering in certain industries, particularly where children are involved.45 The freedom to volunteer is also regulated within the volunteer ‘workplace’. In many instances, ‘employees’ and ‘volunteers’ share the same constraints. Volunteers are subject to employment selection processes as are employees – in most cases volunteers are free to apply to undertake volunteer work but it is the ‘employing’ organisation that selects them. Organisational disciplinary systems often mirror those utilised in large-scale employers. Like employees, volunteers can be terminated by the organisation within which they work. For example Rural Fire Service (RFS) volunteer bush firefighters are subject to local selection processes and often there is a quota on the number of volunteers attached to each Brigade. They are subject to a loose system of statewide discipline, with the Commissioner of the Rural Fire Service having the ability to suspend or reprimand ‘errant’ volunteers. Finally, like employees, they are subject to broad controls as to what they do, and how they do it.46

The final dimension to be considered is that of the intensity of volunteering. Intensity in this case refers to the frequency of volunteering ‘episodes’ and the duration of each episode. Linked to the availability to volunteer, the intensity of volunteering has implications for the viability of volunteers to act as a substitute for paid labour, particularly where training and service delivery requirements require more commitment.

44 Discussion, 27/6/2008, with Greg Matthews, Captain, Temora VFB (also Organiser, FBEU).
45 e.g. Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998 (NSW).
46 e.g. Rural Fire Regulation 2002 (NSW) reg. 10 – Disciplinary Action.
As discussed above, volunteerism has many dimensions that have been fleshed out in the literature. Whilst there is a large body of literature on volunteers and their management, much of it is fairly uncritical and not readily useable in discussions of work. The dialogue is often aimed at promoting volunteerism, rather than analysing its implications for labour.\textsuperscript{47} That is not to say the field is without critical analysis: in 2000, Jeni Warburton & Melanie Oppenheimer edited a series of essays on volunteering in Australia, many of which explored less positive themes often left out of traditional volunteerism literature. Cox (2000) identified a pressure felt to avoid such topics: "being mean about volunteering is the equivalent of spitting on the American flag or abusing motherhood, as if there is some silent barrier to speaking ill of such a noble gesture."\textsuperscript{48} Echoing Zech (1982), Pusey and Warburton and Mutch identify volunteerism as having to fill the welfare void, left by both markets and the state responding to the logic of economic rationalism. This problem is further exacerbated by work intensification within the (paid) labour market, which reduces the supply of volunteers.\textsuperscript{49} Similarly, Lyons and Hocking (2000) identify volition, or the lack thereof, as a significant issue: non-urban volunteers are often motivated by the "logic of necessity".\textsuperscript{50} That is, many non-urban localities throughout Australia have no choice, other than to provide services through volunteer effort primarily because of market / public policy failure. Cox (2000), among other things, explores the darker side of volunteerism and raises a very valid question: are volunteers always acting in the broader community’s interest? She raises the existence of organisations such as the Melbourne Club and Masonic lodges, which promote benefits to chosen members often at the expense of the broader community.\textsuperscript{51} Cordingley (2000)

\textsuperscript{51} Cox, "Light and Dark".
discusses the need for volunteer organisations to respect the rights of paid workers and their unions when using volunteers.\textsuperscript{52}

Cordingley raises a consideration often left out of the volunteering literature: the relationship between paid and unpaid labour. As Cordingley notes, “the non-profit sector does not exist in isolation from other sectors”.\textsuperscript{53} Surprisingly, there has been almost no systematic or critical assessment of the relations between volunteer labour and paid labour in any industry or geographic area. That is not to say that the volunteering literature is totally silent on the issue: quite a number of authors discuss tensions between organised labour in organisations that are proposing to use volunteer staff. However it is often general in nature or a narrow account of survey results.\textsuperscript{54}

2.1.2. Quasi-volunteers, ‘volunteer’ firemen and firefighting nomenclature

Notwithstanding the ability to fit low paid workers into the schema of Cnaan et al. as “broad volunteering”, labeling them simply as volunteers creates problems in understanding their employment status and their relations with other workers. Smith (1982), in his critique of altruism and volunteering, developed the concept of the “quasi-volunteer” who supplies their labour (or other services) without “substantial coercion” and is rewarded for their contribution. What distinguishes a quasi-volunteer from a paid employee? Smith argues that “quasi-volunteers” are workers motivated by altruistic motives to accept “less pay than the market value of services”. He uses the example of a law school academic eschewing private practice out of dedication to academia, with a considerable reduction in earnings.\textsuperscript{55} Whilst it could be argued that Smith’s example of a ‘quasi-volunteer’ is too broad in its scope, it is a useful

\textsuperscript{52} Cordingley, ‘Definition and principles of volunteering and Principles’.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., p.80.
definitional construct to capture firefighters who are both labelled as volunteers and remunerated.

The nomenclature of contemporary NSW firefighting arrangements accurately describes the different types of firefighters involved. Permanent denotes full time and paid, whilst the classification of retained firefighters captures their status, paid a regular retainer to be on call. Similarly, RFS volunteers and CFU volunteers all fit well within the dimensions of volunteerism discussed above. Nomenclature however is more problematic in the period being analysed in this thesis. Table 2.1 describes the main types of firefighters operating between the 1850s and the 1950s.

Table 2.1 – Firefighter nomenclature – 1854-1955

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Remuneration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Firemen</td>
<td>MFB/BFC</td>
<td>1884-1955</td>
<td>Yes (fulltime)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Firemen</td>
<td>Vol. Fire Cos (Syd)</td>
<td>1854-1901</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Firemen</td>
<td>Country Brigades</td>
<td>pre 1909</td>
<td>Yes (retained)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Firemen</td>
<td>Country Brigades</td>
<td>pre 1909</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Firemen</td>
<td>MFB/BFC</td>
<td>1902-1955</td>
<td>Yes (retained)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpaid Volunteer Firemen</td>
<td>Vol. Fire Cos/MFB</td>
<td>1902</td>
<td>Yes (fire calls only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush Fire Brigade Volunteer</td>
<td>Local Govt</td>
<td>1900-1955</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary Firemen</td>
<td>MFB</td>
<td>1892-1899</td>
<td>Yes (retained)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary Firemen</td>
<td>MFB/BFC</td>
<td>1899-1911</td>
<td>Yes (Youth Corps)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reserve Firemen</td>
<td></td>
<td>1939-1952</td>
<td>Yes (fire calls only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary Reserve Firemen</td>
<td></td>
<td>1940-1945</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's Auxiliary Firefighter</td>
<td>BFC</td>
<td>1940-1945</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush Fire Auxiliary Firemen</td>
<td>BFC</td>
<td>1952-1955</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Chapters 3-6.

The main problem for understanding this period and therefore, this thesis, is the varied use of the terms “volunteer” and “auxiliary” in the titles of firemen. For example, between 1854 and 1901 the title “volunteer” referred to unpaid firemen attached to volunteer fire companies. From 1902, all firemen, under the control of the Fire Brigades Board [Sydney] (FBB) labelled as volunteers were paid retaining fees and for attendance at fires and training. From 1910, with the advent of the Board of Fire Commissioners of NSW (BFC), the same misnomer of a quasi-volunteer being labelled as a volunteer was extended across the State. Thus, throughout the period covered by this thesis, the BFC labelled their quasi-volunteers as volunteer firemen. As stated in the introduction, any firefighter with the title of volunteer, who is actually
partially paid for their services and therefore a quasi-volunteer, will be referred to as a ‘volunteer’ (i.e. designated by single quotation marks).

It should be noted that firefighting authorities not only distorted the use of the term volunteer. In the FBB’s 1902 Annual Report, a new transitory class of firemen, “unpaid volunteers” was created. Notwithstanding the moniker of being both “unpaid” and “volunteer” they were paid “fees for work at fires”.56 There are also problems with the use of the term “volunteer fire brigade”. Prior to 1910, it was sometimes used to describe volunteer fire companies comprised of unpaid volunteers, particularly in regulations and more formal communications. It was also the title given to most country fire brigades of that time, many of which paid their ‘volunteers’. After 1910, all references to volunteer fire brigade are to BFC brigades, predominantly constituted by partially paid quasi volunteers (‘volunteers’).

With one exception, as described in Chapter 6, there are no reports of women firefighters before the formation of the BFC in 1910. After that time, the regulations prescribed that BFC firemen were male. As such, the terms ‘fireman’ and ‘firemen’ have been used liberally throughout this thesis to accurately reflect the gender of those involved in structured urban firefighting. Obviously, the term firemen has not been used when referring to the wartime use of women in the Women’s Auxiliary Fire Brigade Corps. Given the less centralised nature of bushfire brigades, the term firefighter has been used to cover their members. One cannot rule out that some women may have been active bush firefighters. Furthermore, women did actively participate in the administration and maintenance of bush fire brigades.

2.1.3. Significance of Volunteerism

Notwithstanding issues of nomenclature in industries such as firefighting, they is little doubt that volunteer work is performed by a significant number of Australians and has a large economic impact. In industries where volunteers are concentrated, the potential impact on the bargaining power of paid workers and their unions may be

56 Fire Brigades Board (Sydney), ‘Report for 1901’, Government Printer, Sydney, 1902, p.3. Note: Annual Reports of the Fire Brigades Board (Sydney) are hereafter referred to with a prefix of AR and the year being reported upon e.g. the Board’s Report for 1901 will be subsequently referred to as AR1901.
considerable. Volunteers exist in vast range of Australian industries and human activities and represent a significant proportion of the Australian population. In 2006, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) found widespread volunteering across Australia: thirty-four percent of Australia’s adult population undertook some voluntary work during 2006, with 5.2 million persons volunteering 713 million hours of unpaid work. The fairly similar percentage of men (thirty-six) and women (thirty-two) who volunteered disguised the segregation of both groups into different activities: volunteering involving organised sports and repairs / maintenance was dominated by men, whereas food preparation was the predominantly performed by women. When compared to previous surveys it showed an upward trend in the number of Australians volunteering (from twenty-four percent in 1995), though the median hours worked by each volunteer dropped from seventy-four to fifty-six hours per year. The rate of volunteering differed according to the ‘remoteness’ of the volunteer’s locality, with those outside of major cities more likely to volunteer and to provide more of their time.\textsuperscript{57}

Table 2.2 – Main types of firefighters in NSW, 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Firefighter type</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Persons</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Permanent</td>
<td>NSWFB</td>
<td>3421</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained</td>
<td>NSWFB</td>
<td>3233</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFU Volunteers</td>
<td>NSWFB</td>
<td>6200</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFS Volunteers</td>
<td>RFS</td>
<td>71441</td>
<td>84.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFS Paid Staff*</td>
<td>RFS</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>84980</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


With respect to NSW firefighting, in 2007, there were close to 85,000 people ‘working’ for the two main firefighting agencies. As Table 2.2 shows, over ninety percent of NSW firefighters were volunteers, with those ‘engaged’ by the Rural Fire Service (RFS) dominating ‘employment’ numbers.\textsuperscript{58} Next were Community Fire Unit


\textsuperscript{58} It should be noted that volunteer numbers provided by the RFS have, in the past significantly over-represented the number of trained firefighters available. For example, in 1997, approximately fifty
(CFU) Volunteers, who are groups of neighbours organised by the NSWFB to assist in preparing for oncoming bushfires and providing basic protection until paid NSWFB firefighters arrive.

As stated previously, major metropolitan centres such as Sydney, Newcastle, Wollongong and larger regional centres (e.g. Tweed Heads, Albury, Bathurst and Broken Hill) are typically protected by NSWFB permanents, sometimes assisted by NSWFB retained firefighters. Significant towns across the State are mostly protected by NSWFB retained firefighters, whilst ‘villages’ and rural/bush lands are protected, in the main, by RFS volunteers. In summary, NSWFB permanent and retained firefighters protect ninety percent of the State’s population, whilst RFS volunteers protect the vast bulk of the State in geographic terms.59

2.1.4. Volunteers and industrial relations

Given the propensity for Australians to engage in volunteer work, it is surprising that the industrial relations literature has, with one exception, failed to address volunteerism. Brosnan & Cuskelly (2000) acknowledge the importance of volunteers in industrial relations and undertake what they label “a first attempt” at discussing volunteers from an industrial relations / human resource management perspective.60 Notwithstanding their work, the main paradigms in industrial relations analysis remain untroubled by volunteers.

The scientific management literature, as exemplified by Taylor (1917), has certainly been silent on the issue of volunteerism. Indeed, the theoretical underpinnings of scientific management make it unsuitable for studying volunteers. First, areas of volunteer activity are generally much more varied and are out of the reach of engineered solutions (e.g. community advice, bush firefighting and nursing). Secondly, (and this is linked to the definitional debate above), both the volition of percent of the reported number of volunteers had not received the training required to actually be involved in firefighting operations. See Council on the Cost of Government (COCOG), Law, order and public safety: service efforts and accomplishments, COCOG, Sydney, 1997, Table 35.

volunteers and their lack of remuneration are not contemplated by the scientific
management approach. Taylor views management as having the right to control the
workplace without dissent combined with workers (i.e. labour inputs) being purely
motivated by economic return and the promise of performance bonuses.\(^\text{61}\) Workers are
free to work anywhere (volition), but the assumption is that these free decisions are
determined purely by economic utility (income). As such, a job being performed
without payment cannot be contemplated in the context of the workplace – these
functions as such would be deemed to be community activities or ‘civic
responsibilities’. In this context, the realm of industrial relations is limited to where
management has unilateral control and the wage-work ‘bargain’ is in operation.

With welfarism (or the human relations school), motivation is the problem for
industry and the "most important single factor in determining output is the emotional
attitude of the worker towards his work and his workmates".\(^\text{62}\) It too has little to say
on volunteerism. This is not surprising, given that one of the hallmarks of
volunteerism is volition - generating consent in a ‘volunteer’ workplace is largely a
non-issue. Where a volunteer has been propelled into the world of ‘work’
unmotivated by economic necessity, then the prescriptive ‘cures’ of the human
relations school will be off target and unnecessary. As discussed earlier in the paper,
this is not to say that there have not been academic studies of the motivation of
volunteers. Nor does it mean that motivational strategies are not used in areas of
volunteer work. Rather, the failure of the human relations school (as an industrial
relations theoretical construct) to deal with volunteers reflects the aim of its adherents
– to generate consent so as to maximise the labour output of [paid] workers, who,
given the choice, would not work without remuneration. The underlying assumptions
of both scientific management and the human relations school do not assign any
benefits to analysing volunteerism. Their ideological 'stablemate', neoclassical
economics, has a similar problem – its adherents cannot contemplate the existence of
volunteers. Markets are meaningless in the context of a free input. As Oppenheimer
(1997) states, “we have to look at the notions of the capitalist market economy which

\(^{62}\) J.A.C. Brown, *The social psychology of industry: human relations in the factory*, Penguin,
Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1954, p.17.
has competition and financial reward as its cornerstone, to understand why voluntary work in the public domain has gone unrecognised for so long." Modern unitarism, in the form of Human Resource Management (HRM) is equally silent. Its contributions to understanding volunteerism have been at the practical "how to" end of the spectrum – personnel management without a payroll.

The pluralist tradition as exemplified by Dunlop is predominantly institution and rule focused – with an emphasis on the activities of institutions and their interaction with each other. This overemphasis on institutions has blinkered many scholars from the study of volunteer work. Volunteers generally have not been organised into representative bodies – they have not formed unions, nor indeed can they under Commonwealth and various state industrial laws. In the minority of cases where volunteers have formed (non union) associations, they have either been undocumented or ignored by industrial relations scholars. Pluralists have argued amongst themselves about the balance of power between employers and workers organised into unions. In doing so, they haven’t noticed that volunteers and other marginalised ‘workers’ are not even on their scales.

Whilst radical approaches to the study of industrial relations have avoided the glorification of institutions and rules, their fundamental reliance on the inherent conflict and accommodation between capital and labour has been problematic for the study of volunteers. Traditionally, Marxist analyses of ‘industrial relations have stressed the 'inherent conflict' found within the employment relationship based on the treatment of labour as a commodity and the struggle of control over the labour process. The generation of this conflict relies on the economic coercion of workers: "The worker must sell his labour power on a market whose dynamics are largely independent of his control. His sole livelihood is dependent on securing employment

63 Oppenheimer, 'Volunteers in action', p.11.
64 see numerous examples in McCurley, The Volunteerism bibliography.
66 The ability to form a registered trade union has always been reliant on its members being employees that conform with the wages/work bargain. Awards and agreements have also been limited to employed persons. For example see s.5 of the Industrial Arbitration Act 1940-1959 (NSW).
in an enterprise controlled by a minority." With volunteer workers, this dependency (coercion) of labour is missing – the effects of capital accumulation and the dynamics of the labour process (e.g. deskilling etc and automation) do not impact directly on the relationship between the employer and the ‘volunteer’. This explains why radical industrial relations scholars, to date, have ignored the impact of volunteers – in a sense they ‘can’t see the volunteers for the conflict’.

Aside from the missing nexus between capital and labour, other factors have led to a silence on volunteers by radical scholars. One such factor is the general distaste by the ‘left’ for volunteerism. Oppenheimer (1997) highlights how one assessment of Australian women volunteers in World War II was blighted by the author’s “rather unflattering view of ‘Lady Bountifuls’, as middle class matrons handing out charity”.70 Baldock (1998) expresses a similar view when she discusses the “serious discomfort” that socialist scholars have with analysing volunteerism given their perception of it as “middle class charity meant to retain control over the working classes.”71 In not addressing volunteerism, one could argue that 'radical' industrial relations theorists have missed an opportunity to critically analyse a workplace devoid of economic drivers.

Scholars outside the constraints of industrial relations have used Marxist concepts to analyse volunteers to good effect (e.g. Thompson & Bono’s (1992) reliance on Marx’s concept of alienation).72 However, as MacDonald (1996) points out, volunteers are generally left out of the sociological analysis of work.73 Macdonald considers that volunteerism should be viewed in the context of the “shadow world” of alternative, informal and non-standard work.74 Industrial relations theorists have also traditionally ignored the economic and industrial realities of Macdonald’s “shadow world”. The analysis of precarious employment is perhaps the first step in this

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69 Frenkel, 'Industrial relations theory', p.10.
71 Baldock, 'Feminist discourses of unwaged work', p.22.
72 Thompson and Bono, 'Alienation, self-actualization', p.116.
74 Ibid., p.31.
direction. Burgess & Campbell (1998) outline what they consider to be the eight dimensions of labour insecurity that make up precarious employment. These dimensions are: employment insecurity; functional insecurity; work insecurity; income insecurity; benefit insecurity; working-time insecurity; representation insecurity & skill reproduction insecurity. Whilst they mention “non-wage employment” in a review of previous writings, they themselves do not incorporate the unwaged volunteer.

Yet volunteers are a group in need of inclusion. Burgess & Campbell (1998) refer to other writers nominating working time insecurity and representation insecurity as the most crucial aspects of precarious employment. If this is the case, then volunteers are one of the most precarious groups in a broadly defined ‘labour market’. It is precisely because they are not considered employees that they are unregulated and lack union representation – this has the obvious consequence of most volunteers being positioned at the insecure end of all eight dimensions. The only possible question is over their status in terms of income insecurity. It could be argued that because volunteers are not economically coerced into the labour market and rely on more intrinsic motivations, that the income insecurity dimension does not apply. Implicit in this, is an assumption that volunteers are either financially independent or that they are employed elsewhere. As MacDonald (1996) points out, this is not necessarily the case: “In localities depressed by high unemployment and long-term economic decline, people excluded from traditional routes into employment still want work, need work and, in this instance, will volunteer to work, in their thousands, for no pay.” By virtue of their volunteer labours being their only labours, they certainly suffer from high-level income insecurity.

Of course, the diversity of volunteers leads to a variation in the precariousness of their employment. NSWFB partially paid ‘volunteers’ only suffer income and working time insecurity, whereas RFS volunteers bare the brunt of most facets of precariousness.

76 Ibid., p.6.
77 Ibid., p.12.
78 MacDonald, ‘Labours of love’, p.37.
2.1.5. Volunteers and labour history

The recognition that volunteers are workers, worthy of analysis, is more advanced in the field of labour history than it is in industrial relations scholarship. However, as Melanie Oppenheimer points out, until 1998, the discipline was equally blinkered. In that year, both Oppenheimer and Joanne Scott questioned why labour history had forgotten volunteer labour as a legitimate area of study. Oppenheimer, in calling for a reframing of what is meant by work, argued that:

Labour history has usually defined ‘work’ as paid work, and the class relationship as between workers and their ideological and economical opposites, the capitalists or ruling classes. Voluntary work has therefore been largely excluded from the framework of labour history.

Oppenheimer also cites the general disdain by labour historians for voluntary work generally, which is related to the Lady Bountiful / middle class stereotypes attached to it. In 2001, the journal Labour History published a thematic section on volunteerism. It covered a wide range of topics including voluntary work and labour historiography, volunteer ‘midwives’ in rural NSW, voluntary work during WWI, volunteers in firefighting and surf lifesaving and women who volunteered for organisations affiliated with ‘labour’. Notwithstanding Oppenheimer’s view that “future directions for scholars are encouraging”, since the thematic edition, labour history literature

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79 M. Oppenheimer, 'We all did voluntary work of some kind': voluntary work and labour history', Labour History, no. 81, 2001, p.1.
80 Oppenheimer, 'Voluntary work and labour history', J. Scott, 'Voluntary work as work?: some implications for labour history', Labour History, no. 74, 1998.
81 Oppenheimer, 'Voluntary work and labour history', p.4.
82 Ibid., p.6; ——, 'Volunteers in action', p.53.
relating to volunteerism has not significantly increased.\textsuperscript{84} Certainly, contributors to \textit{Labour History}, for example, are more aware of volunteer work in their articles.\textsuperscript{85} Voluntary action and voluntary organisations (beyond unions) have also received significantly more coverage, such as a comparative study of the Australian and UK labour movements’ relationship with voluntary action and a thematic issue on cooperatives.\textsuperscript{86}

Volunteers as a form of replacement labour during industrial disputes have also continued to feature.\textsuperscript{87} Traditionally, labour historians have paid attention to the role of ‘volunteers’ as strikebreakers during major disputes and the resistance to them by organised labour. In this approach, the volunteer is considered as an aberrant and transient form of ‘worker’ in direct competition with organised labour, rather than as an active participant within the world of work. Beyond \textit{Labour History}, historical studies centred on volunteering have been limited, with just a few conference papers and theses produced.\textsuperscript{88} Australian monographs on the field have (and continue) to be the preserve of Oppenheimer.\textsuperscript{89}

\textsuperscript{84} Since the 2001 thematic, there has only been one \textit{Labour History} article centred on volunteerism (as opposed to voluntary action) – see M. Oppenheimer, ‘Retooling the class factory: response 2 from monochrome to technicolour: adding the lens of unpaid labour’, \textit{Labour History}, no. 82, 2002.
Like the volunteering and industrial relations literature referred to previously, Australian labour historians have largely ignored the relations between paid and unpaid labour, with only limited studies on firefighting and surf life saving. My previous research analysed the relations between paid and volunteer firefighters in NSW in the 1850s-1880s & the 1950s. I found that the paid firefighters relied on their professional and disciplined image to distinguish themselves from volunteers, who were free of the strictures of the employment relationship and therefore, centralised control. The independent volunteer firefighter was promoted as a virtuous citizen rather than “merely a paid servant” like their employed counterparts. As discussed later in this chapter, the work of firemen was demarcated through spatial delimiters, more so than through boundaries of skill.

Brawley (2001), in a study of Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA), addressed similar tensions. During the 1970s and 1980s, unpaid lifesavers and their voluntarist surf clubs were under threat from the growth of paid lifeguards employed by local government as a response to public liability issues and, to a lesser extent, the availability of volunteers. During this time, the “bathing public were now protected by two aquatic safety organisations at the same time – one unpaid and volunteer, the other paid and professional.” The crisis for the SLSA was averted by local government’s penchant for ‘contracting out’ in the late 1980s: the voluntarist SLSA became a commercial provider of lifeguard services and employed professional lifeguards formerly employed by Councils. It regained control of the ‘industry’ and left space for the SLSA volunteers and their clubs on Australian beaches.

2.2. Historical analyses of firefighting

There is a vast amount of published material covering the subject of firefighting and firefighters, both in Australia and internationally. The aim of this section, in particular, is to focus on how the literature analyses the relations between paid, quasi-

90 Wright, ”Brass Hats ... from Sydney”; — — , ”Angry disputings”.
91 Wright, ”Angry disputings”, p.507.
92 Brawley, ”Surf lifesaving owes no person a living”.
93 Ibid., p.86.
volunteer and volunteer firefighting labour in Australia, North America and the United Kingdom.

2.2.1. Australia

The history of relations between paid and unpaid labour in NSW firefighting remains largely unwritten. That is not to say, however, that the demarcation between fire services and relations between different types of firefighters in certain spatial and temporal contexts have not been covered. In 1984, Colin Adrian produced a detailed centennial history, Fighting Fire! for the then Board of Fire Commissioners of NSW (BFC). Given the breadth of the project, covering the governance, operations, infrastructure, equipment, staffing and major operations of the BFC, it is unsurprising that he only dedicated less than ten pages in total to any discussion on relations between paid, partially paid and unpaid labour over the century. Where he did discuss the relationship between paid and unpaid labour, he concentrated on two periods (late 1860s – early 1880s and the 1950s & 1960s) and only one location, namely, the Sydney metropolitan area.94

Adrian cites the lack of universal fire provision by the Insurance Companies Fire Brigade (ICFB) as the main motivation for the formation of volunteer fire companies in mid nineteenth century Sydney, in the face of rapid urban development and the absence of government action. The relationship between each volunteer company and their professional counterpart, the ICFB, was marked by “heated disputes” over access to water on the fireground, factionalism amongst the volunteer companies and contestation over who controlled the fireground. Apart from a brief mention of political lobbying by the early volunteers, there is little analysis of the methods and actions used by the two groups to maximise their respective positions.95 Adrian merely refers to two rival ‘competitions’ of volunteer firemen, held in late 1881 and early 1882, as indicative of volunteers seeking “to maximise their influence and standing within the community.”96

95 Ibid. pp.19, 26, 28-29, 35-36.
96 Ibid. pp.28-29.
Fighting Fire! and more particularly Adrian’s doctoral thesis (and associated publications) also make reference to the tensions between permanent firefighters, BFC ‘volunteers’ and bush firefighters in outer metropolitan Sydney in the 1950s & 1960s. According to Adrian, “institutional constraints” on the supply of fire services led to an inability to meet demand, stemming from significant growth in the outer suburbs of Sydney. Politically motivated interference by various state governments within the BFC’s domain, such as passing legislation to reduce permanent firefighters hours, which significantly increased staffing requirements and therefore costs, was one such constraint. The domination of the Board by funding bodies, namely the insurance industry and local government and the ability of all Board members to influence “decisions on supply” further constrained the BFC. In combination, they limited the BFC’s capacity to staff new stations with permanents and replace ‘volunteers’ in metropolitan areas or indeed build new BFC facilities in rapidly developing outer metropolitan areas. These constraints created tensions between BFC permanent and ‘volunteer’ firefighters and created space for the growth of volunteer bush fire brigades in outer metropolitan Sydney. As Adrian points out, governance and funding issues have been seminal issues in the history of NSW fire services. However, Adrian’s fairly quantitative analysis largely ignores developments beyond Sydney and, in concentrating on institutional factors, necessarily loses details that are rooted in the locality and the agency of firefighters who are in conflict over control on the fireground and beyond.

The agency of firefighters is something taken up by Jopson (1994) in her history of the FBEU. Her detailed analysis of the Union’s struggle for better hours and conditions of work for permanent firemen, necessarily limits her ability to look at some of the more nuanced details surrounding permanent, ‘volunteer’ and bush fire brigade relations. Nonetheless, she charts some aspects of the permanent and

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‘volunteer’ relationship, particular after WWII. In particular she highlights the often contradictory nature of the Union’s approach during this period: on the one hand they called for unity between firefighters of all tenures, whilst at the same time sought for the eradication their own members, namely, ‘volunteer’ firefighters in Sydney and Newcastle. The FBEU is also the focus of Budai (1999), who analysed its organisation of retained firefighters, particularly in the 1990s. Where the period covered by this thesis is discussed, it is heavily reliant on Jopson.

Whilst firefighters in Sydney have been subject to some analysis, surprisingly, to date there has been no systemic history written on the NSW bush fire brigade movement. Griggs (1994) dedicates a chapter in his monograph, Local Hero, to the historical development of the bush fire brigade movement. The history is fairly concise and concentrates on legislative change and coordinating efforts. There is no analysis of tensions between BFC personnel and bush firefighters. This is unsurprising: the tone of the book, like many others of this kind, is to celebrate voluntary effort rather than to point to some of the more problematic aspects of volunteer labour. Also, unlike the BFC, the lack of a centralised archive of records relating to the movement makes a more rounded history difficult to write. Others, such as Foster (1976) and Correy (1989), followed a similar pattern of analysis. There are also numerous monographs produced by amateur historians that generally chronicle the history of one local bush fire brigade (BFB), interspersing important dates and anecdotes with the heroic activities of key players.

Other states across Australia share a similar pattern of service based histories, supplemented by local histories and other works that touch upon, at best, the

98 Jopson does discuss tensions between paid BFC staff and volunteer bush firefighters (and their emerging bureaucracy) in the late 1980s: see D. Jopson, The red brigade: the official history of the New South Wales Fire Brigade Employee's Union, NSW FBEU, Sydney, 1994, pp.325-327.
demarcation between paid and unpaid labour. The history of Victorian firefighting is discussed by Wilde (1991) and Murray & White (1995); the former being a study of the Melbourne centred Metropolitan Fire Brigade, whilst the latter concentrates on the historical development of the Country Fire Authority of Victoria. Both monographs cover the competition between urban volunteers and an insurance brigade in early Melbourne, which led to the creation of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade and the Country Fire Brigades Board (CFBB) in 1890. The former organisation was comprised of paid firemen, whilst the CFBB (which comprised all town brigades more than sixteen miles from Melbourne) was largely voluntary in nature. Murray & White (1995) go further and assess the tensions of incorporating bushfire brigades into the formal CFBB structures to form the County Fire Authority of Victoria and discuss the Victorian United Firefighters Union’s attempts to curb the use of volunteer firefighters in the late 1960s and 1970s.

The historical development of South Australian fire services is examined by Page & Bryant (1983). They discuss the formation of a centralised South Australian Fire Brigade with paid and partially paid employees and its tensions with independent local volunteer fire brigades. Like NSW, the financing of fire services, local government politics, fierce localism, competition and bureaucratic jealousies were drivers behind these tensions. The role of labour (both through the firefighters union and more broadly) in resisting volunteerism is also a recurring theme. As result of the continuing existence of an independent volunteer brigade in Adelaide’s suburbs, during the Great Depression, professional firemen argued “that Volunteer firemen have no right to be giving free labour, thereby depriving other workman of a living.” A local branch of the Unemployed Bureau went further: “We look upon all volunteers as acting detrimentally to the working class interests and therefore [they

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103 Murray and White, State of fire, chs.9, 10 & 21.

104 M.F. Page and M. Bryant, Muscle and pluck forever!: the South Australian fire services, 1840-1982, Metropolitan Fire Service (SA), Adelaide, 1983, see chs.14, 16, 19-21, 23, 35, 31-34, 36, 37, 39-42 & 44.

105 Ibid. p.356.
are] the enemy of the workers.” 106 The post WWII growth of volunteers, particularly in outer urban areas and country towns under the Emergency Fire Service, led to considerable consternation amongst permanent men and their union. Ellis (2001) concentrates on this latter period in her history of the South Australian Country Fire Service. Whilst the South Australian Fire Brigade encouraged the formation of the Emergency Fire Service in rural areas in the postwar period, it also asserted the primacy of its control over them. To complicate matters, the SA police were active in organising and controlling the EFS. Ellis also gives a good account of the machinations of the various parties, including the United Firefighters Union, in debates over the amalgamation of the urban and rural firefighting bodies in the 1980s. 107

The literature on the Western Australian fire services is mixed. Dufty (1979) is the only monograph written by an industrial relations academic on any Australian fire service, and utilises a Dunlopian systems approach to analyse industrial relations between the Western Australian Fire Service and the various firefighting unions then in existence. Notwithstanding their importance, Dufty barely considers the impact of volunteers on the industrial relations of the industry: his only significant reference is to the impact that volunteer fire brigades in remote locations would have on the efficacy of industrial action by paid firefighters. 108 Others, not constrained by the rigidities of the systems approach, fared far better in looking at the relations between paid and unpaid labour in WA firefighting. Howarth (1999) and Wood (1989) explicitly discuss the implications for full time firefighters (and their unions) of a large volunteer workforce and their resistance against it. 109 Indeed, Wood goes so far as to argue that: “volunteer and permanent sections of the fire fighting service have become so integrated that the one could not be recorded without continual reference to the other”. 110 He dedicates a chapter to the interrelationship between the WA Fire

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106 Ibid.
108 N.F. Dufty, Industrial relations in the public sector - the firemen, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, Qld, 1979.
Brigade Employees’ Union (WAFBEU) and the volunteers and cites “the conflict arising out of support for the volunteer system of firefighters and union ideologies.”

This manifested itself in action, particularly in the interwar period, by the WAFBEU and the sections of the labour movement to abolish volunteers in the Perth area. Like debates in other states, during the Great Depression they sought to argue that volunteers “deprive[d permanent] firemen of their the legitimate living”.

The history of fire services in Queensland and Tasmania are rather anecdotal in nature and are sponsored by the relevant fire services. As a consequence they do not discuss conflict between paid and unpaid labour in their respective industries.

Foster (1976), Luke et al (1978), Pyne (1991) and Collins (2006) all cover the history of bushfire fighting nationally. However, they tend to concentrate on the conflict between different land users (e.g. graziers, agriculturalists & foresters) rather than between types of firefighters.

In recent years, there has also been a significant increase in literature on emergency services volunteers emanating the Enhancing Volunteerism project of the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre (Bushfire CRC), which was established in 2003. Whilst useful in contemporary debates about volunteer retention in Australia’s emergency services, there is little historical analysis in their approach.

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111 Ibid. see ch.4, quote: p.65.
112 Ibid. p.62.
2.2.2. North America

Significant scholarly work has been undertaken in the United States of America (US) with regard to conflict between firefighters, predominantly between volunteers in urban centres in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Neilly (1960) was the first of series of theses on the alienation of volunteer fire departments (brigades) from the populations that they served. Neilly prosaically analysed the development and eventual demise of the “violent volunteers” of Philadelphia between 1736 and 1871; the first paragraph of his introduction is indicative of the tone:

This is a story of violence, the history of a violence of a particular kind, the violence that accompanied the turbulent era of the Philadelphia volunteer firemen. (...) It is impossible to avoid the fact that, as social and political entities, the volunteers often served as the instruments of outburst and riot. The volunteers fought fires, but they also fought each other, councils, or immigrant groups with at least equal relish.

The reference to ‘fighting’ was not mere rhetoric. Neilly refers to numerous episodes where firemen were involved in brawls and riots, at times involving guns and other weapons, with firemen and other groups, sometimes ending with fatal results. He noted some crossover between gangs, such as the pithily named “Killers”, and some of the volunteer departments. Fighting and disorderly conduct was not merely driven by fireground competition for fireplugs and glory; political, sectarian and racial motivations were also at work during this turbulent period of US history. Notwithstanding the efficacy of many of Philadelphia’s volunteer departments to ‘rule’ local government through control of candidates, concern by other leading citizens on the deleterious impact of their actions (including the impact on governance of, and investment in, the city), led to increasing regulation and their eventual


Ibid., pp.71-72, 74-75, 179-180, 182.

Ibid., pp.71-72.

Ibid., chap. 5.
replacement by paid firemen in 1871. \(^{121}\) Neilly argues that the unruly nature of these volunteers was a product of the “hysteria” before and during the civil war period, the ‘ennui’ experienced by urban youth and the unique US political and social experience in that period. Their demise was also facilitated by the introduction of steam powered fire engines and emerging communications technologies. Whilst resisted by some departments, steam power provided a reliable means of pumping large amounts of water over long distances with significantly fewer men. However, their operation and maintenance was much more complex: “Firefighting had become a full time business.” \(^{122}\)

More recent studies have downplayed the riotous nature of nineteenth century US volunteer departments. Greenberg (1998), whilst acknowledging such behaviour, concentrates on the more positive intrinsic qualities of the departments such as selfless service to the community in terms of firefighting, charitable works and the use of the ‘fire house’ [fire station] as a centre of community. \(^{123}\) She describes the volunteer fire department as “perhaps the most noble association” in this era of US voluntary action “free from obvious partisan or economic interest and dedicated to the protection of all, regardless of occupation, ethnicity or religion.” \(^{124}\) Greenberg attempts to distinguish her work from previous scholars by emphasising the “all male culture” of volunteer firehouses, rather than their ethnic or class roots. \(^{125}\) The replacement of volunteer firemen by paid departments was not merely a function of the perceptions or realities of volunteer behaviour: the “fall of republican ideals of citizenship and the rise of the businessman, the family, and reform politics in the mid-nineteenth century” undermined the place of voluntary fire departments in urban centres. \(^{126}\) Greenberg also highlights the impact of both technological change (e.g. steam powered pumpers) and an emerging insurance industry that encouraged a more professionalised industry. Increasing professionalisation enabled more structured organisation and employment relationships, with the “contract of a paid fireman

\(^{121}\) Ibid., pp.73-75, ch.8.
\(^{122}\) Ibid., p.99-104, 200-204, quote: p.104.
\(^{123}\) Greenberg, Cause for alarm, pp.12-14.
\(^{124}\) Ibid. p.14.
\(^{125}\) Ibid. ch.2; for a critique of Greenberg’s male culture approach see D. Grimsted, ‘Blazing culture-lism: cause for mild alarm’, Reviews in American History, vol. 27, no. 3, September 1999.
\(^{126}\) Greenberg, Cause for alarm p.15.
replac[ing] the conquest of fire as the reigning metaphor of firefighting.**127 Some cities like Baltimore rejected the idea of mixed departments made up of paid and unpaid firemen as their “conflict of interests” was deemed to be “too great”.**128 Nonetheless, in the transition to paid departments, volunteers were not immediately replaced with an army of paid fulltime employees. Rather, a small proportion of fulltime paid firemen were based at the station – the rest were ‘on call’ and attended the fireground as required. The poorly paid ‘on call’ firemen enjoyed neither the levels of remuneration of the fulltime men nor the ‘romance’ of the volunteer companies. Together with increased employer resistance to releasing workers to paid firefighting, and low wages, these factors undermined the ability and/or desire of ‘on call’ firemen to attend.**129

Tebeau (2003) goes beyond the nineteenth century in his assessment of the role of firefighters and insurance underwriters in the urbanisation of modern America between 1800 and 1950.**130 Also using St Louis and Philadelphia as case studies, like Greenberg, he also rejects the ‘violent volunteer’ thesis. Tebeau insists that their behaviours were in accord with community standards at the time.**131 Nor was volunteer resistance to steam technology or bureaucratic organisation automatic. Indeed, he cites volunteer companies that embraced steam technology and increasing specialisation in, and regulation of, their work and affairs.**132 As such, his views on Philadelphian volunteers were divergent from Neilly’s assessment. That is not to say that Tebeau failed to identify conflict and competition between volunteer firemen. He placed these tensions in the context of the balance that the volunteer firemen had to make between “brotherhood” with other firemen and the “particularistic expressions and beliefs of individual companies and their communities.”**133 The switch from volunteer to paid departments was sometimes instigated by volunteers, such as Cincinnati), who were heavily involved in the professional management of the new paid departments. Volunteers took up positions as both full time and ‘on call’ firemen.

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127 Ibid. chs.5 & 6, quote: p.165.
128 Ibid. pp.149-150, quote: p.149.
130 Tebeau, *Eating smoke*.
131 Ibid., pp.46-47.
132 Ibid., pp.17, 158-163 & ch.4.
133 Ibid., ch.1, quote: p.47.
Even where cities had decided to switch to pay departments, the transition to employing full time labour was often lengthy. Tebeau illustrates this with Cincinnati, where it took almost twenty years for its fire department to be completely staffed by full time firefighters. In the intervening period, it relied largely on ‘call men’.¹³⁴ Unlike earlier scholarly works, Tebeau work goes beyond the volunteer era in his analysis of urban firefighting and charts the ever-increasing professional control of fire prevention and suppression by full time firefighters. With this professionalisation came an increased focus on regulation and bureaucratic forms of work organisation.¹³⁵

What is missing from Tebeau’s work is any significant analysis of demarcations of work or even tensions between paid firemen, ‘on call’ quasi-volunteers and unpaid firefighting labour. Debates about the relative merits of the differing classes of firefighter are discussed during the volunteer era, but during the paid department era, it is left largely untouched. The only exception to this is a brief description of how “a number of independent volunteer fire companies [that] remained active” in St Louis after the establishment of a paid department continued to attempt to monopolise all water supplies on the fireground.¹³⁶ Whilst he explained that the paid municipal brigades resolved the problem by new methods and technologies to beat the volunteers to the fireplugs, the whole question of competition and tensions between paid and unpaid labour in the paid department era is left open.¹³⁷

Given the vagaries of municipal boundaries and the growth spurts that urban areas are subject to, particularly during periods of rapid suburbanisation, it seems remiss of Tebeau not to have charted the interaction of paid departments with neighbouring volunteer departments on their jurisdictional boundaries. In his final chapter on postwar firefighting, he makes only a brief reference: “the lines between rural and urban fire risk have become blurred with intensifying development on the previously rural fringes of cities.”¹³⁸ Whilst he refers to the impact on firefighting techniques, he does not discuss the tensions of urban areas and full time firefighters encroaching into

¹³⁴ Ibid., pp.158-166.
¹³⁵ Ibid., chs.6 & 8.
¹³⁶ Ibid., p.162.
¹³⁷ Ibid., pp.162-163.
¹³⁸ Ibid. p.335.
the territory of volunteers. Nor does he examine the numerous mixed (paid and unpaid) departments that existed in ‘exurban’ areas. In his case study of Philadelphia, both forms of brigade existed (and continue to do so), yet no discussion is attempted on the subject notwithstanding their usefulness in understanding both (sub)urbanisation and the dynamics of volunteerism in firefighting.

Canada’s experience of early firefighting volunteers appeared no less troublesome than that of their southern neighbours. According to Baird (1986), by the mid nineteenth century, urban volunteer fire companies used their “numbers, social position and (...) hold on a vital community service” to throw “their weight around politically, [and] lost sight of their duties in the heat of keen rivalries.”

Cities such as Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal were all scenes of inter-company rivalries that escalated, at times, into violent clashes. Montreal’s volunteers were seemingly the most problematic. In 1849, they were instrumental in burning down Canada’s Legislative Assembly Building; a mob, led by one of the city’s most prominent volunteers and assisted by a number of volunteer companies, used firefighting equipment to break the parliament’s doors, which eventually led to its destruction. According to Baird, the companies aligned with the Orange Order acted in common cause with ‘Irish-oriented’ brigades during the melee, united by the grievances over the favorable treatment of rebels and the ‘shortchanging’ of those supportive of British rule after the Rebellion of 1837.

Such nonpartisanship was not a feature of firefighting in Toronto. According to Kealey (1995), the city’s volunteers were prominent in sectarian imbued riots in the latter half of the 1850s and early 1860s. In 1855 for example, rivalry between volunteers on the fireground at one incident, escalated into violence, which in turn, led to a major brawl between the volunteers and police who responded to quell it.

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140 Pennsylvania has the most volunteer firefighters in the US and a number were/are adjacent to the Philadelphia Fire Department’s jurisdictional area. (Delaware County Times, 13/6/2005 - http://www.ushistory.org/laz/news/dct061305.htm). Some are mixed stations and have reported tensions between paid and unpaid firefighters (e.g. Elkins Park Fire Company in suburban area to the north of the Philadelphia city reported such tensions in the mid 1970s – see http://www.elkinsparkfire.com/firehouse/members.php (p.5).
142 Ibid., pp.70, 74, 77.
143 Ibid., pp.78-80.
Within two weeks, volunteers were instrumental in a brawl with travelling circus performers, which led to their prominence in a large-scale violent riot and the destruction of the circus tent and wagons. In both incidents, the police were loath to take legal action against the volunteers, as both groups were united by their strong ties as Orangemen. The rowdiness of the companies was attributed to their democratic structures and their control by “men of lower standing”. As Kealey identifies, the volunteers were “insufficiently “subordinate” to the needs of capital, which required both public order and effective fire protection. Paid firefighters soon followed and in 1875, Toronto gained a fully professional fire service.144

2.2.3. United Kingdom

The history of fire protection in the United Kingdom (UK) differs considerably from the US and Canadian experience, in that paid insurance and municipal brigades were established early in most large urban centres. Only outside of these centres was there a reliance on volunteers, but their organisation appears to have been less problematic and less structured than their US urban ‘counterparts’.

Perhaps the earliest comprehensive assessment of fire services in the UK was undertaken in the 1923 Report of the Royal Commission on Fire Brigades and fire prevention, which provided an historical survey of the differing forms of brigades in the UK at the time.145 Brigades set up by the various insurance companies were “the nucleus” of the modern fire brigade system. The consolidation of individual insurance company brigades in 1832, created a single full time insurance brigade in central London, which in early 1866 formed the Metropolitan Fire Brigade with a wider spatial coverage and under municipal control (Metropolitan Board of Works).146 Outside of London, a wide variety of brigade types had operated within particular cities, towns or villages: police brigades (full time, retained or mixed), municipal brigades (full time, retained or mixed), ‘independent’ volunteer brigades (sometimes with full time and retained staff), private brigades (covering individual enterprises)

144 G.S. Kealey, Workers and Canadian history, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 1995 ch.6, particularly pp.190-193; Baird, Firefighting in Canada, p.111.
146 Ibid., p.124.
and insurance brigades.\textsuperscript{147} Thus areas ranged from being protected by full time (often referred to as whole-time) firemen, retained firemen (part time and paid a retainer and/or for attendance at fires) and unpaid volunteers in some towns and villages.\textsuperscript{148}

Whilst satisfied with the protection afforded to larger cities, the Commission noted varying standards of fire cover in the smaller boroughs and urban districts, and in rural areas. It recommended, notwithstanding concerns over the loss of local control, that a statutory responsibility be placed on boroughs and urban and rural districts to develop and maintain fire services. It explicitly rejected the utilisation of ad-hoc authorities, such as the NSW Board of Fire Commissioners and other Australian arrangements.\textsuperscript{149} Such high levels of centralised control were considered appropriate in Australia to meet the requirements of communities in which the methods and traditions of local self-government are less deeply rooted than among ourselves. (...) The introduction of such changes would probably involve the loss of much administrative capacity and experience, long freely and usefully devoted to such work, of those familiar with local conditions and local needs.\textsuperscript{150}

The Royal Commission raised the desirability of determining staffing arrangements (i.e. full time, retained or volunteer or mixed brigades) according to the needs of the area protected and encouraged mutual assistance between adjacent brigades. To aid this approach, they suggested the formation of a ‘Delimitation Commission’ to determine the grouping of fire authorities having regard “to local feelings and susceptibilities, and to local circumstances of various kinds.”\textsuperscript{151}

Thirteen years later, (1936) the \textit{Riverdale Report} built on much of the earlier Commission’s work, and endorsed maintaining a system based on local control. However, it questioned the concept of police brigade members doing anything other than firefighting work, strongly advocated the appointment of reserve firemen, in light of possible wartime defence requirements and recommended minimum standards for


\textsuperscript{148} Laurence, 'Royal Commission on Fire Brigades' pp.124-130.

\textsuperscript{149} Ibid. pp.137-142, 160-161, 163-165.

\textsuperscript{150} Ibid. pp.160-161.

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., pp.140-141, 166, 184-186, 228-229, quote: p.166.
brigades. It recommended that maximum turnout times [i.e. the time between an ‘alarm of fire’ to the fire appliance leaving the fire station] be determined, based on the type of risks in the area (e.g. industrial area with heavy risks: 1 minute, ordinary residential township: 4 minutes and rural areas: 6 minutes). The report emphasised the paramount importance of temporal efficiency: “the one crucial test of any effective fire brigade [is] the time taken to turn out.”152 The report also canvassed the importance of localism in firefighting: when discussing the possible extension of the London Fire Brigade’s spatial jurisdiction, they considered that replacing local volunteers and quasi-volunteers with permanent men would lead to a “loss of local interest.”153

Subsequent, more critical academic works have been (largely) silent on tensions between paid, partially paid and unpaid labour in the United Kingdom, notwithstanding the mix of firefighter types. Segars (1989), in his social history of the “firemen’s progression from the iron grip of a service mentality to an outlook more akin to that of an industrial worker”, unsurprisingly concentrates almost exclusively on paid firefighters.154 Among the multiple insurance brigades of the nineteenth century he noted rivalries, which occasionally broke out into violence.155 Segar also discusses in detail the significant tensions between full time firemen and the WWII (full and part time) Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS) members. Large numbers of AFS firemen were employed to deal with wartime firefighting needs, in light of the potential for aerial and other forms of bombing on UK cities; at the start of the war there were 100,000 AFS firefighters, outnumbering the full time firefighters by a ratio of over twenty three to one. Many were full time, but received less pay than full time firemen. Others acted and were paid in a similar way to retained firemen. Full time firemen were concerned that AFS firemen (and women) undermined their professional status and ‘diluted’ their pay and conditions.156 In 1941, the National Fire

155 Ibid., p.32.
Service was created, which centralised (“nationalised”) fire suppression activities in the UK under one authority. The police brigades were abolished and the nexus between local control and firefighting was broken. As Segars so succinctly put it: “The Luftwaffe finally converted most people (...) away from the ‘local principle’.” After the war, the system was again decentralised but it had created a system favorable to more standardised operations and growth by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU). 157

Concentrating on the history of the FBU, *Forged in Fire* contains a series of articles outlining its history, women firefighters during the war and case studies of disputes and officials. Like Segars’ work, the volume provides rich historical details on the working lives of full time firefighters and the organisation and politics of the FBU. 158 Victor Bailey’s early history of the Union also provides a very good discussion of the tensions between, and the eventual unification of, ‘regular’ and ‘auxiliary’ full time firemen during the war to form the NFS. 159 Another feature that *Forged in Fire* shared with Segars’ study is the near silence with respect to retained and volunteer firefighters in the UK. Retained firefighters are mentioned twice in the main text: in 1928 a conference of the Union extended its membership to include auxiliary volunteers and retained firefighters, whilst in 1977, a significant number of retained firefighters crossed picket lines during the first national strike of full time FBU members, thereby putting full time and retained relations under severe strain. 160 Volunteer firefighters get only one significant mention: in 1918, the National Fire Brigades Union, representing volunteer firemen, offered to strike break in London. 161 Whilst the focus on full time firemen is understandable, the near silence on retained

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160 Bailey, *Forged in fire*, pp.29, 252.
161 ———, ‘Early history of the Fire Brigades Union’ p.24. Adding to the problematic nomenclatures in the fire industry generally, the National Fire Brigades Union was totally unrelated to the FBU, its predecessor organisations or the trade union movement.
and volunteer firefighters is problematic. After all, in 1936, only a quarter of all firemen were full time - the rest were retained, part-time ‘auxiliaries’ or volunteers.162 More recently, an urban historian, Shane Ewen, has written a series of articles again with a primary focus on full time firefighters between the 1870s and WWII. Using municipal government as his focus, he explores a number of themes: controlling strategies in recruitment and discipline for full time municipal firefighters and police; the role of chief officers in the professionalisation of municipal fire services; and the evolution of the NFS. The two UK cities that he primarily uses for his case studies, Birmingham and Leicester, are two of its largest population centres, which tends to push retained and volunteer firemen to the very periphery of his writings.163 Like Segars (1989) & Bailey (1992), retained and volunteer firefighters are mentioned in passing and only in relation to national developments.164 For example, Ewen makes reference to the ubiquitous ‘ill-disciplined’ US volunteer firefighters of the 1840-50s and strong competition between police and insurance brigades in the nineteenth century to arrive first on the fireground, referring to the possible financial rewards attached to such action.165

The most extensive official or academic review of relations between full time and retained firefighters was undertaken by Swabe & Price (1983), in the their study of multi-unionism in the UK fire service. In particular, they discussed the formation of the Retained Firefighters Union (RTU) and the British Fire Service Federation in 1976, as a result of full time firefighter (and FBU) attitudes toward retained firefighters. Whilst its longer-term historical analysis is limited to “the relations between the whole-time men and the retained men has never been perfect”, they do explore some of the underlying tensions between the groups in the mid to late 1970s.

164 For example see Ewen, 'The internationalization of fire protection', p.296; — — —, 'Preparing the British Fire Service for war' p.210; — — —, 'Chief officers and professional identities' p.144-145.
165 Ewen, Managing police constables and firefighters', p.62; — — —, 'Chief officers and professional identities', p.129.
They note that “sections of the FBU have voiced their distrust and resentment very strongly at the annual conferences since the late 70s”, related primarily to retained firefighters’ “unprofessionalism” and their potential to ‘dilute’ the permanents’ professional status and therefore, pay and conditions. According to the authors, the RTU was set up by retained firemen who resented an FBU policy that required junior full time officers to be in charge of a crew even where a more senior retained officer was present. The fact that local press had backed the FBU policy, by labeling retained firefighters as “well intentioned amateurs”, did not help.\textsuperscript{166} While they did at least discuss the tensions in the late 1970s and beyond, they failed to put them in the context of the strike breaking by retained in the 1977 national strike.

As can be seen, the vast bulk of Australian firefighting literature largely fails to critically address the relations between paid and unpaid labour. Whilst more critical work has been done on fire services in the Northern Hemisphere, the particular physical, governance and social issues at play in NSW devalue their comparative usefulness.

\textbf{2.3. Localism and spatial aspects of firefighting}

As discussed in the previous section, traditionally firefighting has displayed a high degree of demarcation between paid and unpaid labour. Whilst this demarcation has concerned the maintenance of professional control through the monopolisation of skill acquisition and work performed, it has often also manifested itself through the organisational control of spatial units. Thus the division of skill between professional and volunteer firefighters has been represented in the shorthand of fire district boundaries, defining organisational control spatially rather than in trade certificates and other demarcation 'devices'. The idea of the demarcation of work being represented spatially is undeveloped in the labour history and industrial relations literature.

Indeed analysing the relationship between space and work is a relatively new concept in these fields. As Ellem & Shields (1999) noted, industrial relations academics have

a “tendency to see space as an objective given”.  

Geographers have long studied the linkages between spatial practice and social and economic constructs, such as work. As Harvey notes, space and its delimitation tends to be treated as a “fact of nature” rather than “the multiplicity of the objective qualities which space and time can express, and the role of human practices in their construction.”  

More recently Westcott’s (2006) asked his fellow industrial relations scholars to recognise the importance of space:

Perhaps industrial relations analysis would be strengthened by a more explicit theoretical recognition of space and scale and how these are constructed and reconstructed by workers and the representative institutions, by capital and by the state.

Rainnie, Herod & McGrath Champ (2008) echo the point. Rather than being seen as “a ‘stage’ for social action”, space and spatial relations should be seen as “sources of power and objects of struggle” in their own right.

Labour historians have been more adept at integrating space into their work in studies of localism and community, and their interrelationship with labour. Localism, or as Patmore (1999) describes it, a “sense of place which can influence behaviour”, operates in the context of economic and social infrastructures that ‘boost local interests or defend a local “way of life” against “outsiders”’. Of particular relevance is his observation that an “employer may challenge localism by making decisions on the basis of a national rather than local economy and ignoring local custom and practice.”  

As Eklund (2000) points out, localism has the ability to transcend other identities, such as class: it is “an ideology that elevates local interests above all

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others”, and involves, in part, the defence of “common resources and facilities that both local labour and local capital desired to protect and, if possible enhance”.172

As Eklund (2000 & 2002) and Wright (2001) discuss, progress associations and similar locally embedded voluntary associations are important mechanisms in advancing localist agendas and, at times, the ‘otherness’ of persons and organisations with differing agendas, not from the locality.173 Mullins (1995), in one of the very few analyses of Australian progress associations, specifically focused on their importance in the adequate provisioning of public services, such as firefighting. Progress associations “fought to obtain state-provided goods and services which were legally their right, but which were in short supply because of limited government expenditure.”174

Overlaid over localism in regional NSW, is a broader ideology, that of ‘countrymindedness’. Aitkin (1985) analysed the ideology of ‘countrymindedness’, which was prevalent in non-metropolitan Australia from the 1890s to the 1960s. The ideology, based on a belief in the primacy of primary production, was comprised of a number of elements. Among them was a belief that “rural pursuits” were “virtuous, ennobling and co-operative”, whereas “city life” was deemed “competitive and nasty, as well as parasitical.” Practical self-reliance was a virtue of rural communities, who saw themselves as more Australian than city folk, with their “British” or more cosmopolitan traits. The concept of ‘countrymindedness’ worked hand in hand with the Sydney versus ‘the bush’ dichotomy and was reinforced by rural institutions, such as the Country Women’s Association (CWA).175

Teather (1997) actually examined the CWA and similar bodies, in her comparative study of volunteers and their relationship to locality in rural women's organisations in Australia, New Zealand and Canada. She asserted that “experience of place, personal

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identity, and membership in an [volunteer] organization (...) are all bound up together”.176 Membership of these organisations increases self worth and generates self-identity that may be unavailable elsewhere. Place is associated with volunteer activity and “is imbued with special significance because of the collective memories associated with these activities in that place through their organization”.177 More recently, Willis (2004), in his study of women’s volunteering in Camden during WWII considered that localism in that locality was invigorated by ‘outsiders’ “attempting to arbitrarily impose city-based decisions”, thereby offending “local sensibilities” and generating resistance. Willis extended Patmore's definition of localism to “include petty provincialism, 'parish pump' issues, self-interest and animosity towards 'outsiders', which are all part of the same social process.”178

Of perhaps more relevance, fire-specific studies of volunteerism and locality also exist. As cited earlier, in my case study of fire suppression in the Blue Mountains (NSW) in the 1950s, I discussed how demarcation of paid and unpaid work was delineated spatially, through the creation of BFC fire districts. Volunteer bush firefighters also created territories through localism in their attempts to capture operational ‘territory’:

[Volunteer bush firefighters had] the ability to work as political and community lobby groups and were integrated into their communities. In a powerful combination, they were able to carry the mantles of firefighter, bushman and ‘local volunteer’, harnessing the ‘spirit of mateship’, compared to the permanent career firefighters from Sydney who were seen to be driven by Regulations and pay. Retained firefighters, whilst sharing the same local roots as the volunteers, were tarred by both their organisational connection to Sydney and their status as paid employees.179

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, I found that “whilst the BFBs were responding to local concerns and dynamics, the BFC continued its pattern of arrogance based on fiscal constraint and metro-centrism. [This] robbed them of both the will to expand their frontiers of control, and the capacity to respond to the demands and politics of

177 Ibid., p.231.
178 Willis, 'The Women's Voluntary Services', pp.16-17.
179 Wright, "Brass Hats ... from Sydney", p.69.
localist concerns.” I also assessed the role of progress associations and the “subterranean world of ‘other organisations’” in taking localism to its extremes: in one case, a progress association hid a cache of publically owned firefighting equipment for local use, rather than surrendering it to the Sydney-based BFC.

Grey & Phillips (2001) note that the threat of bushfires, heighten the sense of localism, generated by the need to maintain rural institutions such as BFBs. Such threats transcend divisions in rural communities, including the “structural cleavage” between farmers and town dwellers. As O’Malley (2006) points out the country was portrayed “as a place of resilience, initiative and individualism without discarding mateship — the church bazaar and the hospital committee, and voluntary bushfire fighting are examples of communitarian virtue”.

An earlier study by Lozier (1976) found that US volunteer fire departments were “the hub of community social life, integrally involved in the community process”, with their 'halls' being crucial to community formation, and their fire engines “object[s] of community identity, pride and ceremonial attention”. Perkins confirmed the role of local brigades in developing community solidarity and identity, and noted that such forces lead to both mutual aid agreements and demarcation disputes between rival organisations. Simpson (1996) placed US volunteer rural firefighting organisations clearly in a localist context:

...they ritually enhance local identity, build moral systems based on locality, and empower residents to overcome natural adversity. They provide a key organisational support for community moral integration and territorial self-definition. [Volunteer fire departments] exemplify the capacity of ordinary residents to plan and initiate action at the local level for the benefit of their communities. The object of such organization, fire protection, is

180 Ibid., p.69.
181 Ibid., pp.64-65, quote: p.65.
territorially inclusive, existentially demanding, and symbolically demanding.\textsuperscript{186}

The strong integration of volunteer firefighters with their communities is not their only relationship with space. Westcott (2006) raises the important point that spatially specific product markets influence the “nature of work relations”. In quoting Walsh (2000), he also identifies that some product markets are spatially fixed, particularly in the services sector: “a building that needs to be cleaned cannot be sent to a low-wage state”.\textsuperscript{187} The product market for urban firefighting is even more spatially embedded. Fire suppression activities always occur in a particular spatial context. With urban firefighting, the product market is the built environment. The time criticality of firefighting operations also ensures that both labour and capital are also anchored locally: for firefighters and their equipment to reach a fire quickly, they must be located within reach of the fire. Whilst NSW firefighting agencies have preferred centralised and unified control since the late nineteenth century, their ability to escape localism is impaired by the nexus between firefighting and space.

The ability to effectively suppress such fires has always been a function of the response time of firefighting personnel, availability of equipment and the 'weight of attack', that is, the level of resources deployed. The temporal imperative of response time, particularly crucial in structural firefighting, is in turn determined by the distance of travel to the fireground (area of coverage), readiness for response (availability of firefighters) and the means of transport (technology). Response time, and therefore access to fire services, is not “a function of simply distance, but also manning, time of day, station type etc.”\textsuperscript{188} Thus of the main groups of firefighters studied in this paper, permanent firefighters had the quickest turnout because they were available to respond as soon as an emergency call was received. ‘Volunteer’ firefighters were the next fastest as they were required, under BFC By Laws, to travel from their residences, which had to be within two miles of the fire station, to the station, so as to turnout on their ‘appliance’ [fire truck]. Whereas bushfire volunteers, unencumbered by legislative or organisational imperatives such as the two mile rule,


\textsuperscript{187} Westcott, 'Markets and the spatial organisation of work', pp.201-202, quote: 201.

\textsuperscript{188} Adrian, 'Evaluating the provision of an impure public good', p. 43.
travelled from their residences, located anywhere, to a station/meeting point to pick up equipment and travel to the fire.\footnote{Fire Brigades Act 1909 (NSW) and By Laws as amended; Bush Fires Act 1949 (NSW).}

The need to provide a time critical response leads to the need for spatially delineated units of fire suppression resources (brigades). Arbitrary spatial divisions between brigades have had implications for the amount of work available, the type of work available [i.e. structural or bush firefighting], the methods used to counter blazes, the levels of training required, the supply of labour (paid, quasi-volunteer or volunteer), and the costs and funding arrangements of firefighting services. These factors have implications for the demand for particular firefighter types: permanent firefighters, quasi-volunteers, organised volunteers or ad-hoc volunteers.

Given the irreducible nexus between physical space and firefighting, geographers and their starting point of physical space provide a useful tool for understanding the industry. For example, Stein borrowed the geographers' concept of 'time-space compression' to represent how steam and water reticulation technologies, together with centralisation of resources, helped solve the spatial and temporal imperatives of fire suppression in nineteenth century Cornwall, Ontario.\footnote{J. Stein, 'Annihilating space and time: The modernization of fire-fighting in late nineteenth-century Cornwall, Ontario', Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine, vol. 14, no. 2, 1996, pp. 3-11.} This thesis will explore some of the other spatial aspects of work in the NSW firefighting industry, with a view to understanding the industry and explaining the dynamics between paid and unpaid labour.

\textbf{2.4. Conclusion}

The volunteerism literature highlights that the boundaries of what constitutes volunteering are elastic. This elasticity has, in the past, created real nomenclatural issues in NSW firefighting, which is one of the reasons why the concept of the 'quasi-volunteer' (Smith (1982)) is used throughout this work. On the whole, the volunteering and industrial relations literatures are found wanting in terms of dealing with volunteers and their inter-relationship with paid workers. Whilst labour history has embraced a wider view of work to include volunteers, with the exception of
Brawley (2001) and Wright (2001, 2005), the relations between paid and volunteer labour are underdeveloped within the discipline. The historical ‘firefighting literature’ is certainly voluminous; however, in the case of Australian literature, the analysis of the relations between paid and unpaid labour are generally relegated to a few pages, overshadowed by larges fire, heroic men and shiny technology. Whilst US historians have undertaken considerable work on the demise of nineteenth century volunteers and their replacement by paid firefighters, there appears to have been little analysis of the relations between the two groups during the transition, or between paid and unpaid firefighters at the urban/hinterland interface. The UK literature, whilst useful for understanding the permanent brigades, was also limited by the almost invisible nature of volunteers and quasi-volunteers.

Spatial factors limit the applicability of overseas studies. Arrangements in NSW were unique, in that for most of the twentieth century, fire services were organised by state governments and many covered large tracts of the state. The NSWFB’s jurisdiction was statewide and its workforce ranged from covered full time (and para-militarised) firefighters in Sydney to retained firefighters (named volunteers) in small inland settlements. North American brigades on the other hand, were organised along municipal lines, whereby responsibility for fire suppression was confined to smaller discrete areas and were subject to more homogenous needs and local cultures. Unlike NSW, in the UK and North America, the town/country divide was unlikely to be an issue within a particular fire service.

Given the spatial organisation of fire services that was prevalent in NSW, the literature relating to localism, “countrymindedness” and the spatial nature of work are particularly useful for understanding the dynamics between the centralised Boards that controlled firefighting for most of the period under study and local fire brigades that were embedded within their communities. Localist agendas and spatial factors guided the formation and maintenance of local brigades and they can explain much of the conflict, which is discussed later, between Sydney based paid fire bureaucracies and country quasi-volunteer or volunteer brigades.

In summary, whilst the more spatially aware literature, such as studies of localism are promising, and much of the other literature reviewed provides useful reference points.
for this thesis, it appears that the dynamics of paid and unpaid labour in NSW firefighting are still on “the road less travelled”.\textsuperscript{191}

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{191} M. Oppenheimer, 'Taking the road less travelled: a perspective on third sector historical research in the Twentieth Century', \textit{Third Sector Review}, vol. 9, no. 2, 2003.
Chapter 3. A “want of unity” - the emergence of organised firefighting and volunteerism (1850-1884)

3.1. Introduction

Between 1850 and 1884, NSW emerged from its penal settlement past and significantly expanded its population and therefore the size and complexity of its urban centres. In the absence of state provision, the colony relied on two sources of fire protection: English style paid brigades operated by the insurance industry and US inspired voluntarist associations of unpaid firefighters. Coming from such divergent points, both geographically and philosophically, they had very different methods of organisation and operation. The Insurance Companies Fire Brigade (ICFB) emphasised centralised command and discipline, with the aim of minimising the industry’s exposure to risk. The volunteer fire companies (VFCs), on the other hand, had a different ethos; they were autonomous and independent bodies, more aligned with localist concerns over fire protection. VFCs and localities were interdependent: the volunteer fire companies were reliant on local financial and other support, whilst their localities benefited from increased fire protection.

The hybrid firefighting system that emerged compounded the already competitive nature of firefighting. Whilst self-management, inter-brigade competition and the bonds of “brotherhood” by volunteer fire companies was initially applauded, these same traits eventually led to their disengagement from the local communities that they set up to protect. Over-zealousness and open conflict on the fireground led to calls for unified command and control over all brigades, which culminated in the passing of the Fire Brigades Act in 1884.

3.2. Context

The development of organised firefighting occurred within a particularly dynamic period of change within NSW. Urban and regional populations grew significantly, a strong local economy was developing and as a consequence, the built environment, the market for fire suppression services, was ever increasing. The ability to meet this demand was hampered, in part, by a highly factionalised colonial political system and an emasculated system of local government.
3.2.1. Settlement, development & infrastructure

Population growth in NSW increased by roughly fifty percent each decade from the 1830s to the early 1850s. By 1851, the colony’s population was 178,668 persons, making it the most populated colony in Australia. The 1850’s saw a dramatic increase in population, nearly doubling to 350,860 by 1861. Nonetheless the colony fell behind Victoria, in light of the extraordinary impact of the gold rushes in the new southern colony.\(^\text{192}\) The rate of increase slowed, but nonetheless, NSW had half a million residents by 1871, and three quarters of a million residents a decade later.\(^\text{193}\)

The significant growth in population and economic development led to a significant growth of the colony’s built environment. Residential, industrial and commercial areas developed significantly over this period, as did public and private infrastructure. In the three decades to 1881, the colony’s housing stock more than quadrupled, from 30,641 to 135,326 dwellings.\(^\text{194}\) Commercial and government buildings were built in earnest during the period and large-scale manufacturing (and processing plants such as meatworks) emerged in Sydney and larger regional centres.\(^\text{195}\) Large infrastructures were being developed across the colony. For example, the state owned railway network in NSW grew from twenty-three (23) to 1631 miles between 1856 and 1884 and linked Sydney to Central West and Southern NSW. The private sector also launched large-scale undertakings such as Mort’s Dry Dock (1854).\(^\text{196}\)

With the expansion of the rail network and the burgeoning movement of people and goods associated with the pastoral industry and the gold rush (from the early 1850s), Sydney became even more important as the transport and mercantile hub of NSW. In the twenty years up to 1881, it has more than doubled in size, with nearly a quarter of a million residents. More than half of them lived outside of the City of Sydney local


\(^\text{193}\) Appendix 2.1.

\(^\text{194}\) Appendix 2.3.


government area, which was indicative of the increasing suburbanisation to the west of the city in suburbs such as Balmain, Redfern, Glebe and Ashfield. Significant development also occurred in other areas: North Sydney, Waterloo and Paddington experiencing significant growth during the period.\(^{197}\)

Notwithstanding Sydney’s significant growth, areas outside of the capital and its suburbs still were still home to a sizeable majority (seventy percent) of the colony’s population; in 1881 over half a million people lived in non-metropolitan NSW. Newcastle was undergoing a process of conurbation, whereby a series of adjacent towns joined to form a metropolitan area. Indeed, by 1891, Newcastle and its suburbs housed close to 50,000 people.\(^{198}\) Other large regional centres were spread across the state and grew significantly between 1861 and 1881: Goulburn, Albury, Wagga Wagga (South), Bathurst, Dubbo (West), Tamworth, West Maitland and Grafton (North) all had populations over 3000 by 1881.\(^{199}\) Bathurst, with a population of 7221 by this stage, was like many of the other towns, in that the coming of the railway, the growth of the pastoral industry and free selection of lands policies combined to generate population and economic growth. In addition, it also benefitted from the gold rush, which led to the rapid formation of other centres such as Temora and Gulgong.\(^{200}\)

### 3.2.2. Political and Social Change

Responsible government came to NSW in 1856, with an elected Legislative Assembly and appointed Legislative Council, which formed a parliament to control executive government. Ministries were established, including the role of Colonial Secretary, which would have oversight of firefighting into the next century.\(^{201}\) It was not the most stable of systems. Between 1856 and 1883, the government changed twenty

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199 Ibid.


201 H. Golder, Politics, patronage and public works: the administration of New South Wales, volume 1, 1842-1900, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2005, ch.6.
times, often alternating between teams led by the same men: Charles Cowper, James Martin, John Robertson and Henry Parkes.\textsuperscript{202} Division over land reform (free settlers versus squatters), free trade, taxation, state development and patronage was the source of much factionalism and instability.\textsuperscript{203} This led to important legislation being delayed, with “select committee mania” often bogging it down until the Government, yet again, was replaced.\textsuperscript{204} As discussed later in the chapter, this political environment led to a delay of some thirty years between fire brigade legislation being tabled in Parliament and the passing of \textit{Fire Brigades Act} in 1884.

Whilst there was instability in the colonial political system, there was an acceptance of a role for a centralised state to provide public infrastructure and other services. Local government, on the other hand, was weakened by the strongly centralised colonial government and resistance against its funding base - local taxation in the form of land ‘rates’.\textsuperscript{205} As noted in the UK \textit{Report of the Royal Commission on Fire Brigades} (1923), local government bodies in Australian colonies, whilst modeled on the English system, was “less deeply rooted” within their communities.\textsuperscript{206} Larcombe argued that a ‘vicious circle’ made local government unappealing during the nineteenth century:

The centralized nature of the first settlement, coupled with the colonists’ unwillingness or inability to introduce municipal institutions produced a type of ‘vicious circle’ or cumulative causative process. Because of the original nature of the colony, the government was forced to see to the needs of all the inhabitants. This only prevented the free colonists from gaining experience in the provision of essential local services, and also strengthened their unwillingness. As a result, there developed a complete dependence upon the government for the provision of public services, local or otherwise, and the same circular process was repeated.\textsuperscript{207}

Nonetheless, the \textit{Municipalities Act} of 1858 finally provided for a statewide system of local government, extending it beyond the City of Sydney. The Act allowed for

\textsuperscript{202} Kingston, \textit{History of New South Wales}, App.2.
\textsuperscript{203} Ibid., chs.3-4; Golder, \textit{Politics, patronage and public works}, Pt.2; T.A. Coghlan, \textit{Labour and industry in Australia - volume III}, Macmillan (1969 reprint), South Melbourne, 1918, pp.1244-1248.
\textsuperscript{205} Ibid., pp.5-21.
\textsuperscript{206} Laurence, ‘Royal Commission on Fire Brigades’, p.160-161.
\textsuperscript{207} Larcombe, \textit{Origin of local government}, p.13.
voluntary incorporation upon a petition of at least fifty residents. Councils were subject to election every three years and were able to levy rates to provide general services, as well as to fund services such as water and sewerage.\footnote{208} Notwithstanding protests regarding financial issues, rates and voting eligibility, within five years a large number of established Sydney suburbs and large towns were incorporated. Other suburbs and towns continued to incorporate throughout the 1860s and 1870s. The effectiveness of local government was severely hampered by financial stringencies, due in the large part to a lack of aid from the colonial government, statutory limitations on the levying of rates and difficulty in raising loans. According to Larcombe, “municipalities were financially ill-equipped even for the simplest functions”.\footnote{209} Unlike its English counterparts, NSW local government bodies were simply not in a position to provide adequate fire services to their electors in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Whilst localist agendas for the delivery of services may have developed during this time in localities across the State, resistance to ‘local taxation’ made local government a poor instrument for their delivery.

Whilst attitudes to taxation were generally fixed, social attitudes were more fluid. From the 1870s, a rising middle class was advocating social and moral reform. They used temperance societies, education and increased police powers against Sydney’s ‘larrikins’; youths, which according to newspapers of the day had “blatant disregard for respectable society and respectable leisure activities.” The aim was to create “a respectable and disciplined citizenry”.\footnote{210} This middle class obsession was shared by the colony’s leadership and created a climate against disorder and riotous behaviour. Fears of such behaviour would play out in the politics of fire provision in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item \footnotemark[208] Ibid., p.261.
  \item \footnotemark[209] Ibid., pp.299-302, quote: p.300.
\end{itemize}
3.3. Early organisation of fire suppression

Notwithstanding the growth in population and the built environment, Sydney was subject to a range of ad-hoc and short-lived experiments in fire protection in the first half of the nineteenth century. The first organised fire ‘service’ in NSW that used specialised equipment and designated personnel, as opposed to buckets and ad hoc volunteers, was operated by the colonial military from the 1820s. Using the first two mechanical fire engines in the colony, it operated out of the George Street Military Barracks. The brigade was unable to adequately protect a growing Sydney, due to poor equipment and understaffing. When it ceased operation in 1840, its plant was taken over by the newly formed police brigades.

Sydney’s police fire brigade operated for only a few years and was staffed by police performing firefighting, as an adjunct to their normal duties for an additional allowance (£8-£12 pa). Its staffing was modest: one inspector two sergeants and eight constables ‘protected’ Sydney. Cost cutting by the Sydney Corporation led to its demise in 1842; the Corporation’s ‘Police Committee’ questioned ongoing expenditures paid to “constables acting as firemen, as the number of men under the Several Insurance Companies in the city renders the presence of constables at fires unnecessary”. The latter reference was to the recently emerged fire brigades established and maintained by individual insurance companies. The first insurance company fire brigade was formed in 1837 by the Australian Insurance Company (near Darling Harbour). Described by Adrian (1984) as a “brigade of sorts”, it was staffed by wharf labourers armed with primitive equipment and only protected buildings insured by the company and delineated, as such, by its ‘fire mark’. Other insurance companies followed the Company’s lead, and that of the English insurance industry.

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211 There are no records of what happened outside of Sydney’s city area.
212 Adrian, Fighting fire, p.13, 16.
214 Adrian, Fighting fire, p.16 & City of Sydney Archives CRS 21/1 p.576 (Report No.81 p.3).
215 Ibid., p.14; A fire mark was a generally a tin plate affixed to a building to indicate that it was insured by a particular insurance company. For examples of fire marks used in NSW see — — —, Fighting fire pp.14-15; for a brief discussion on their role see Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Bushfire season - Background Briefing, transcript, 30/9/2007 (ABC, 2007). [http://www.abc.net.au/rn/backgroundbriefing/stories/2007/2042500.htm]
more generally, and established their own brigades for the protection of policy-holders and profits.216

One such brigade, established in 1842 by the Mutual Fire Insurance Association (MFIA), was taken over two years later by the City Corporation, after its collapse. The Corporation inherited two modern fire engines and two experienced English firefighters, Thomas J. Bown (hereafter referred to as T. Bown) and Edward Harris. T. Bown was in charge of twelve (assumedly part time) uniformed firemen who operated out of the Police Court yards.217 T. Bown and Harris were the first full time paid firefighters in NSW and heralded the emergence of firefighting as a career and, to a lesser extent, as a profession.

After a number of years of stop-start operations, a decision was made in January, 1853 to axe the Corporation Brigade, due to excessive cost and the poor management.218 Notwithstanding extensive public and parliamentary interest in the State being involved in fire suppression activities, three decades would pass before public provision would again re-emerge. The public provision of fire services was made less imperative by the formation of insurance industry brigades and later, volunteer fire companies. Unlike other important services, such as rail transport and water supply that were largely provided by the public sector, the State opted out in favour of corporate or community based private provision.219

3.4. Establishment of Insurance Companies Fire Brigade (1850)

Whilst public sector initiatives foundered in the early 1850s, the insurance industry consolidated and strengthened its provision of fire services. In 1850, at the suggestion of the Imperial Insurance Company, four prominent insurance companies combined to establish a brigade, the Insurance Companies Fire Brigade (ICFB). The insurance industry acted out of self interest; a combined brigade would have been more efficient

216 Adrian, Fighting fire, p.16.
217 Ibid., pp.16-17.
218 Ibid., p.17.
and effective in providing much needed fire protection, thereby lessening the number, and extent, of claims against them.220

Early details on the operations of the ICFB are scant. Between 1850 and 1867, the Superintendent of the Brigade was T. Bown who had been heavily involved in both the MFIA brigade and a fire engine and plumbing business in Sydney (T.J. Bown and Co.).221 In 1868 his nephew Charles Bown (hereafter referred to as C. Bown) took over as Superintendent of the Brigade.222

Adrian asserts that upon the retirement of T. Bown, the ICFB employed twelve “full-time firemen” as well as a foreman, watchman and three engineers.223 Yet there appears to be no evidence of twelve full time employees and information extracted from contemporary sources would indicate otherwise. In 1876, the Superintendent reported that, with the exception of one man on ‘day duty’ and another on ‘night duty’, all firefighters in the Brigade were part time and were retained to turn out to fires as needed. By this time, the Brigade numbered twenty-six men and was divided into two sections: the Fire Brigade and the Auxiliary Fire and Salvage Company, which provided salvage services and training to the main brigade.224 With the exception of the Superintendent, who was paid an annual salary of £250, all were paid a retainer of 10s. a week for their services and, in addition, were paid 1s. 6d. per hour for attendance at fires that took more than three hours to extinguish.225

The part time nature of the ICFB is borne out by the fact that members of the Brigade had other employment or certainly were able to be involved in other ventures. Indeed in June 1867, five members of the Brigade formed the Fire Brigade Omnibus Company and initially ran eighteen horses and three omnibuses, with the latter serving Glebe Point and Redfern. At night, they provided the horses to the Brigades for hauling the fire engine at short notice, rather than having to procure them from

221 Adrian, Fighting fire, pp.26-27; New South Wales Parliament, 'Select Committee (1854)', p.6.
222 Adrian, Fighting fire, pp.17, 18, 26, 27 & 39.
223 Ibid., p.27.
224 Empire, 6/8/1866.
225 New South Wales Parliament, 'Select Committee (1854)', Evidence by T. Bown, p.16. In addition, the 2nd Officer was paid a small annual allowance of £12 10s.
elsewhere, often with considerable delays. Thus, the part time firefighters supplemented their part time incomes with compatible income generating activities. According to the various 1868 Sands Directory, the other occupations of ICFB men included cabinetmaker, engineer and two poulterers. Even C. Bown was listed as a plumber and gasfitter in the 1870 edition, rather than as the Superintendent of the Brigade. Other, more peripheral, workers also assisted the ICFB: both men and boys often assisted in the haulage of fire engines through the streets of Sydney. Whether they were paid or not, is unclear.

3.5. Organised Volunteerism – City of Sydney

In the mid 1850s, a number of factors contributed to the development of a new form of fire brigade in the colony, namely, the volunteer fire company (VFC). The collapse of the Corporation’s brigade and the lack of will by legislators to set up a long-term viable public sector replacement brigade, were probably most significant. This combined with the inability, or unwillingness, of the insurance industry to set up a more extensive system of fire protection essentially created a vacuum within which the voluntary sector could (had to) emerge.

Up until this point, the Colony’s attempts at organised fire protection had followed trends from Britain (i.e. provision by the insurance industry and local authorities). However, as Royal Commission on Fire Brigades (UK) outlined, when the provision by insurance companies was found wanting in the home country, strong municipal and local police organisation was able to fill the void. However, problems with the administration of the City of Sydney and the absence of local government beyond it, made this option difficult for the colony. In the absence of effective fire protection in Sydney and other NSW towns, the other primary mode of organisation of fire

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226 SMH, 14/11/1866.
228 Empire, 1/6/1870. See Greenberg, Cause for alarm, pp.76-78 re. use of boys by US volunteer fire companies.
229 see Adrian, Fighting fire, p.19.
230 According to Ibid., p.19, a significant reason for the formation of volunteer fire companies was the “failure of the Insurance Brigade to respond to all fires”. Yet there appears to be no evidence that the ICFB ever declined to attend to non-insured premises within its reach. Indeed in 1881, the then Superintendent Charles Bown stated that no distinction had ever been made in his 24 years with the Brigade between insured and uninsured property (DT, 19/1/1881).
231 Larcombe, Origin of local government, chs.4, 5; Laurence, ‘Royal Commission on Fire Brigades’.
protection - the volunteer fire company - was ‘imported’ from the United States and first implemented in Sydney in 1854.

Table 3.1 - Volunteer Fire Companies in City of Sydney – 1854-1884

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteer Fire Co.</th>
<th>Formed</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>1884 FBB Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.1</td>
<td>1854</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Unregistered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.2</td>
<td>1856</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Registered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt Printing Office</td>
<td>1862</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Not registered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.3</td>
<td>1875</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Disbanded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.4</td>
<td>1875</td>
<td>South Sydney</td>
<td>Registered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.5</td>
<td>1875</td>
<td>Surry Hills</td>
<td>Registered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hook and Ladder</td>
<td>1877</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Disbanded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>1879</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Disbanded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North City</td>
<td>1880</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Disbanded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent</td>
<td>1880</td>
<td>Broadway</td>
<td>Not registered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surry Hills</td>
<td>1880</td>
<td>Surry Hills</td>
<td>Registered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyrmont &amp; Ultimo</td>
<td>1881</td>
<td>Pyrmont</td>
<td>Unregistered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre Royal</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Registered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Brewery</td>
<td>1884</td>
<td>Surry Hills</td>
<td>Registered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Appendix 3.1.

The first volunteer fire company was initially a private brigade, set up in the early 1840s, to protect the Royal Victoria Theatre in Pitt Street. In October 1854, the theatre’s new lessee Andrew Torning, an actor / scene painter by trade and member of the theatre’s brigade, supplied a fire engine and renamed the Brigade the Victoria Volunteer Fire Company No.1. It provided fire suppression services to all in the community and was funded, at least in part, by subscriptions and benefit nights. As a result of such support it was able to move to its own premises in Pitt Street in 1857 and was the renamed the Australian Volunteer Fire Company No.1, reflecting its broader coverage and premier status. As a result of an unspecified disagreement within No. 1 Company, a new brigade, No.2 Company, led by William Camb, was formed in 1856 and operated out of the northern end of Philip Street.

Surprisingly, after the formation of No.2 VFC, only one additional brigade formed in Sydney city in the subsequent nineteen years, in spite of the thirty-one percent

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232 See Adrian, Fighting fire, p.30.
234 The unspecified disagreement is alluded to by Torning in Empire, 12/1/1871.
increase in population within the city between 1861 and 1871. In 1862, the Government Printing Office Volunteer Fire Brigade (GPOVFB) was formed to protect its offices, other government buildings and private infrastructure within its vicinity. The Government Printer himself was generally the Honorary Captain of the brigade. The brigade was the first of a number of early volunteer brigades that were formed by an employer to primarily protect its property and the same time offering protection to the neighbourhood. It differed from the others in that it was set up by a state run institution. Nonetheless, it acted in common cause with the other brigades (insurance and VFCs) at fires and participated in demonstrations of firemanship (as discussed below).

In the decade commencing 1875, city based volunteerism grew significantly. As Table 3.1 shows, eleven volunteer fire companies sprung up within the City of Sydney’s boundaries in that period. Five were very much like No.1 & No.2 VFCs and based in the city area (e.g. Nos. 3-5, City & North City VFCs). Others operated in inner city suburbs such as Surry Hills, South Sydney and Ultimo/Pyrmont. In an initiative similar to the GPOVFB, large breweries on the edge of the city (Kent Brewery - Broadway and Standard Brewery - Surry Hills) created brigades that operated in a similar fashion to the GPOVFB. Another type of company formed during the period - the Hook & Ladder Company, which specialised in the use of ladders and mechanical fire escapes, to aid in the saving of lives from burning buildings. By December 1877, the company, under the guidance of Torming, had a set of ladders in operation and was planning the purchase of a mechanical fire escape from London.

The most significant brigade to form within the City of Sydney during this period was the City Volunteer Fire Company (known as No.3 VFC). Formed in January 1875, it was provided with a manual fire engine by AS&N Co., amid fears of conflagration.

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235 Appendix 2.1.
237 For details on the Kent Brigade, see SMH, 29/11/1880.
238 SMH, 25/4/1877, 28/4/1877; Adrian, Fighting fire, p.247 cites 1880 as the formation date of the Hook and Ladder Co.
generated by a recent devastating fire at Windsor. Founded by ex-members of No.2 VFC, it advocated common cause with other fire companies, including the Insurance Brigade and advocated the formation of suburban volunteer companies in growing suburbia, such as Glebe and Redfern.\textsuperscript{239} Amid tensions between No.2 and the newly formed No.3, further splits occurred: two of the ex No.2 VFC members returned to their old company, disowning No.3 in the process, whilst a third, resigned to form a new company based in Sussex Street.\textsuperscript{240} Nonetheless the new Brigade, led by Mr. J Swadling (Superintendent) and assisted by W.S. Kelly (Foreman), prospered.\textsuperscript{241} In September 1875, it formed a branch station at Woolloomooloo, which was moved shortly thereafter to Oxford & Bourke Streets.\textsuperscript{242}

3.6. Organised Volunteerism – Suburban Sydney

Outside of the City of Sydney, the first suburban volunteer companies did not form until the 1870s. Whilst Parramatta Volunteer Fire Company formed in 1859 (see below), in the middle of the nineteenth century it was considered a separate settlement. January 1875 marked the beginning of a flurry around the formation of suburban volunteer companies. What encouraged their formation at this point in time? Obviously, localist concerns over the protection of property within the suburb would have been at play, heightened by fear. The nearby town of Windsor had recently suffered a massive conflagration, which destroyed dozens of homes, as well as a significant number of commercial and public buildings.\textsuperscript{243} The emergence of No.3 VFC may also have been a factor. Having advocated the extension of volunteer companies into the suburbs, the leaderships of other more established VFCs (particularly Andrew Torning of No.1 VFC) sought to emulate (or thwart?) the new company’s endeavours. Within weeks of No.3 VFC’s formation, Torning had

\textsuperscript{239} SMH, 9/1/1875; Empire, 30/1/1875; SMH, 13/2/1875.
\textsuperscript{240} Empire, 27/1/1875 & 28/1/1875; SMH, 1/5/1875, 8/5/1875, 12/11/1875.
\textsuperscript{241} SMH, 5/1/1876.
\textsuperscript{242} SMH, 16/9/1875 & 2/3/1876.
attempted to organise the Redfern and Waterloo Volunteer Fire Company; it would seem without success.\footnote{SMH 20/1/1875; Whilst Adrian, \textit{Fighting fire}, p.258 shows Waterloo forming in 1875, it actually formed in June 1877 – see \textit{SMH} 29/6/1877.}

The first suburban volunteer company to form was in Balmain. In January, workers at the Mort's Dock and Engineering Works formed themselves into a Volunteer Fire Brigade and were set up to fight any fire in the suburb. Mort’s provided the VFC with an engine and encouragement, no doubt to ensure that their significant assets on the Balmain Peninsula were protected and that their labour supply was stable.\footnote{SMH, 27/1/1875.} In a classic localist compact, both labour and capital collaborated to protect ‘their’ shared built environment. Within months, the Newtown and Camperdown Volunteer Fire Brigade was formed with encouragement of Torning, Camb and C. Bown, under the control of C.J. Lane.\footnote{SMH, 11/3/1875, 17/4/1875, 24/3/1875, 8/5/1875.} Organisation for a VFC in Glebe commenced in late April, again with the encouragement of Torning.\footnote{SMH, 17/5/1875.} Whilst local protection may have been a drier for such formations, the advocacy of VFC proponents, like Torning, should not be underestimated. Later in the year, the Woollahra Volunteer Company formed, representing the first brigade in the eastern suburbs of Sydney.\footnote{SMH, 29/3/1877, 30/5/1877, 19/6/1877, 23/6/1877; \textit{Evening News (EN)}, 23/6/1877, 29/6/1877, 6/7/1877; St Leonards VFB may not have actually operated until at least 1879 according to its Honorary Secretary – \textit{EN}, 22/1/1879.}

After a lull of a few years, more suburban VFCs formed in 1877 and spread across Sydney Harbour to protect the rapidly growing area of St Leonards (North Sydney) and the isolated Manly area. At the same time, closer to the city, the Mt Lachlan VFC was formed to protect Waterloo and Redfern and the Glebe brigade was reformed, having lapsed since its original formation. With the exception of Glebe, which was supported by C. Bown, the formation of these brigades was again encouraged or supported by Torning.\footnote{Adrian, \textit{Fighting fire}, p.258.}

As Table 3.2 shows in the following half-decade, another five suburban brigades formed, primarily to the west and south of the city (Paddington, Redfern, Petersham, Alexandria and Burwood).
Table 3.2 - Volunteer Fire Companies in Suburban Sydney – 1859-1884

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteer Fire Company</th>
<th>Formed</th>
<th>Status 1884</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parramatta No.1</td>
<td>1859</td>
<td>No jurisdiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balmain / Morts Dock</td>
<td>1875</td>
<td>Registered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newtown &amp; Camperdown</td>
<td>1875</td>
<td>Registered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glebe</td>
<td>1875</td>
<td>Registered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woollahra</td>
<td>1875</td>
<td>Unregistered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manly</td>
<td>1877</td>
<td>Unregistered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Leonards</td>
<td>1877</td>
<td>Registered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterloo / Mt Lachlan</td>
<td>1877</td>
<td>Disbanded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paddington</td>
<td>1878</td>
<td>Registered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redfern / Hudsons</td>
<td>1879</td>
<td>Registered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petersham</td>
<td>1881</td>
<td>Registered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandria</td>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Registered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burwood</td>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Registered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Appendix 3.2.

The areas protected by the new companies were subject to major increases in population (and therefore risk) during the 1870s, as estates were subdivided for suburban development. Redfern was protected by a similar arrangement to Balmain. In July 1879, Hudson Bros, a local large-scale engineering firm provided the engine, with most of its ‘volunteers’ being its employees. Like the Balmain (Morts) Brigade, local capital protected its plant and the local community, whilst labour protected their jobs and their homes.

In the early 1880s, a flurry of other brigades formed, although they did last long. The Young Australian Volunteer Fire Brigade formed in late 1881. Based in Surry Hills and comprised of eighty-two 18-20 year olds, it disappeared soon after formation. In addition, a number of hose reel companies were set up in inner suburban areas, such as Waterloo, Alexandria, Redfern and Darlington during the period. Darlinghurst Gaol also formed its own brigade in 1882, which, according to one source, was staffed by prisoners.

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251 *EN*, 22/7/1879; *SMH*, 29/10/1879.
254 *EN*, 28/10/1882.
In Sydney’s hinterland only two well established towns formed volunteer fire companies prior to 1884: Parramatta (1859) and Windsor (1863). Other large centres, like Penrith and Liverpool, had to wait for the formation of the Fire Brigade Board (1884-1909) before they were provided with organised fire protection.

3.7. Country NSW – paid and unpaid

In country NSW, the development of volunteer fire companies was less systematic than that of Sydney. The earliest country fire brigade recorded was at Goulburn, whose first fire protection was implemented in 1854, when local business supplied a fire engine, requiring up to fourteen men to operate. In the same year, efforts were made to organise a more formal fire brigade. By 1873 it would appear that this was not achieved. After a potentially disastrous fire in the centre of town, the Goulburn Herald declared that “We have no brigade, no organisation whatever” due to municipal and insurance industry indifference. It was not until 1876 that a volunteer fire brigade was formed to replace the largely defunct semi-private Brigade.

Table 3.3 - Country NSW - Station Formation - 1854-1883

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brigade</th>
<th>Formed</th>
<th>Brigade</th>
<th>Formed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goulburn</td>
<td>1854</td>
<td>Tamworth</td>
<td>≤1878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle</td>
<td>1856</td>
<td>Deniliquin</td>
<td>1878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albury</td>
<td>1863</td>
<td>Grafton</td>
<td>1880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maitland, West</td>
<td>1869</td>
<td>Wagga Wagga</td>
<td>1880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>1869</td>
<td>Dubbo</td>
<td>≤1881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill End</td>
<td>≤1871</td>
<td>Corowa</td>
<td>1881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Macquarie</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>Temora</td>
<td>1881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wollongong</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>Forbes</td>
<td>1882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grenfell</td>
<td>1875</td>
<td>Honeysuckle Point</td>
<td>1882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulgong</td>
<td>1875</td>
<td>Lismore</td>
<td>≤1883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lambton</td>
<td>≤1876</td>
<td>Young</td>
<td>≤1883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mudgee</td>
<td>1877</td>
<td>Bourke</td>
<td>≤1883</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Appendix 3.3. Note: It is assumed that this is a complete list of brigades that formed between 1854-1882. However, others may have formed that have not been found during the research or listed in the various editions of the Statistical Register (see Bibliography).

Formed in 1856, Newcastle Fire Brigade had a more ongoing existence than Goulburn. Newcastle’s firemen had the honour of being the first to threaten

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255 Adrian, Fighting fire, p.20; Empire, 26/10/1869; SMH, 16/2/1869 & 8/3/1867.
256 Goulburn Herald, 30/7/1873.
258 SMH 20/9/1866 & 22/7/1870.
industrial action; at a special meeting in September 1873, members of the Newcastle Volunteer Fire Brigade voted to “refuse to turn out” until their equipment was upgraded to actually function effectively. Talk, of what amounted to a strike of volunteer labour, led to a threat to organise strikebreakers: “they will find that men can be found not only to man and work the engines, but, if need be, open the door with the blacks’ key.”

Whilst their refusal to turn out was inferred to be extortionate by some, the Brigade had a very different view:

"For a long time we have had, on the occasions of fires in this city, to submit to the jeers and gibes of the mob that usually congregates on such occasions, and are taunted because fires are not sooner got under; but this is not the fault of the Brigade, but due simply and solely to the very imperfect appliances at our command."

Newcastle firefighters again threatened industrial action in 1876, when the committee that governed its management, decided to pay them for attending fires and drills, but at a lesser rate and with inferior conditions than those afforded to the nearby West Maitland Brigade. Regional benchmarks rather than local protection held sway with the brigade: members decided that “[t]hat the Brigade do not turn out for practice or fires unless worked by the same rules as the West Maitland Fire Brigade.” The Committee acceded to the demands of the firefighters and in doing so “regretted” that it “was in such a strait that it must give way to the Brigade.”

Dissent regarding such payments continued throughout the year. In the context of remuneration issues at Newcastle, it is interesting that the nearby Honeysuckle Point brigade boasted that it was “strictly volunteer”.

As alluded to previously, West Maitland Fire Brigade, which formed in 1869, appears to have been the first brigade, other than the ICFB, to pay its members individually for attending fires and training (‘drills’). Members received 2s.6d. for attendance at regular training drills, where they would hone their firefighting skills. For attendance

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259 *Newcastle Chronicle*, 1/11/1873.
262 *Newcastle Morning Herald (NMH)*, 17/8/1876.
263 *NMH*, 18/8/1883.
264 *SMH*, 29/11/1869.
at fires, they received 2s. for the first hour and 1s. for every hour thereafter. Unlike his ‘counterpart’ in Sydney, the Superintendent was paid per attendance as well, receiving double the rate of ordinary members of his Brigade. The only salaried officer was the engine-keeper who received £20 per annum. Allowance was also made for the payment of ad-hoc volunteers, who were essential in times of large-scale conflagration. Surprisingly, the payment for drill attendances was not so much related to the wage/work bargain. Instead, it stemmed primarily from the temperance sensibilities of local elites:

The 2s.6d. per member for each practice was considered better for the members, because they could go and get a nobbler [spirits] after practice, if they liked, as the town committee would have nothing to do with refreshments, and the members attend better when there is something – no practice no pay – and the superintendent, whoever he may be, can manage them better.265

There appears to be no definitive pattern of brigade formation in the country. Certainly West Maitland, Newcastle and Goulburn needed urban fire protection, as they were considerable centres of both population and commerce. Yet other equally large centres, such as Bathurst and Kiama did not form brigades until 1887 and 1900 respectively. Indeed much less populated settlements, with considerably less fire risk, formed brigades, such as Corowa with a population of just 495 persons. The existence of local government structures appears to be a precursor to brigade formation. The majority of country brigades formed after the passing of the Municipalities Act, 1858 or were set up in towns that had already been incorporated. There were exceptions such as Temora, Grenfell and Gulgong, which grew rapidly during the gold rush. Presumably, the need for services outpaced issues of local governance. Outside of the region centred on Newcastle, all but three of the brigades formed in or to the west of the Great Dividing Range, predominantly in towns reliant on the pastoral industry and other agriculture, such as wheat farming.266 Whether their proximity to bush and agricultural fires raised their consciousness of urban fire is uncertain.267 It is likely

265 Newcastle Chronicle, 1/11/1873.
267 The area between Albury/Corowa and Gulgong is near what Pyne described as Australia’s southeast “fire flume”. See Pyne, Burning bush, pp.26-38, 277.
that the formation of Corowa and Deniliquin may have been influenced by their Victorian neighbours, where well organised and effective urban fire brigades had formed in many rural centres. In the absence of any overall pattern, the formation of the country brigades was most likely as a response to a large or threatening fire in the town (or region) encouraged by concerned, more risk averse, citizens.\textsuperscript{268}

How did the country fire brigades differ from their Sydney counterparts? The major difference was that some of them, like Newcastle, were managed by committees of local businessmen and/or council representatives, whose composition differed from the operational arm of the brigades.\textsuperscript{269} This delineation of control and operation led to disputes over the resourcing of, and/or payments to, brigades as is evidenced by the Newcastle experience. Certainly the Newcastle firefighters behaviour and expectations were closer to that of ordinary waged workers, than any of the Sydney volunteer companies (and even the ICFB). As a consequence of this management structure and the necessary incentives that such a structure required, these Brigades were more likely to make payments to individual firemen and/or engine keepers than those that were self managed, through more voluntary mechanisms.

3.8. Volunteer Brigades – organisation and operations

The concept of the volunteer fire company encapsulated more than just working without remuneration. Emulating North American volunteer fire companies as described by Tebeau & Greenberg, they were also voluntary organisations in their own right and were, apart from some of the larger country brigades, self managing. VFCs were invariably formed through the calling of a public meeting, with the subsequent creation of a committee to manage its affairs. Formation meetings were often attended by local businessmen, members of parliament, local government representatives and other volunteer fire company officers. Whilst the politicians saw obvious local political advantage in attending, the motivation for other VFCs officials was generally the building up of a volunteer movement in Sydney and beyond. Sometimes their involvement may simply have been about crowding out rival organisations, as was the case in the 1880s. VFC officials, like Torning, whilst they

\textsuperscript{268} Murray and White, \textit{State of fire}, pp.30-33.
\textsuperscript{269} \textit{Newcastle Daily Pilot}, 28/6/1876.
traded on localist fears over fire protection, had a wider agenda – that of the volunteer firefighting movement in the Colony. 270

Once established, VFCs were self-governing, creating their own rules and holding annual elections of office bearers. Elected positions such as Secretary, Treasurer and Collector were administrative in nature and facilitated the ongoing maintenance of the brigade as an organisation. Others such as Superintendent or Captain managed the operational aspects of brigades, including their performance at fire incidents. 271 As discussed later, the VFCs were very protective of their self-management. As Greenberg (1998) found, volunteer fire companies “provided a man with a community”. 272 However, so did work for the colony’s other workers in industries such as coal mining. However the significant difference between communities of workers and VFC members was that until the mid 1880s, they controlled the rules and entry into their communities. As Thompson & Bono (1993) found in more recent US volunteer fire departments, the “[r]elations of production within volunteer fire departments more closely resemble those found in worker cooperatives than those found in capitalist enterprise.” 273 At least one nineteenth century Sydney VFC was very close to the cooperative model, with the issuing of shares to its members. Whilst VFCs operated within localities, they formed their own communities within localities, and as discussed later, were part of a broader movement, beyond the boundaries of locality. 274

Volunteer fire companies made much of their unpaid status. Whilst some of the country brigades paid members a retainer and for fire call attendance, all of the Sydney city and suburban brigade members worked without payment. That is not to say that some would have rejected pay if it were offered. A local carrier involved in the formation of Manly VFC declared “that the working men of Manly, would to a

270 e.g. No.3 VFC: SMH, 9/1/1875; Glebe (reformation): SMH, 29/3/1877; St Leonards: SMH, 25/6/1877; Mount Lachlan: EN, 6/7/1877; Pyrmont & Ultimo, DT 24/3/1881; Petersham: EN, 29/9/1881; Standard Brewery: SMH, 26/6/1883.
272 Greenberg, Cause for alarm, p52.
273 Thompson and Bono, 'Work without wages', p.329.
274 EN, 28/10/1882.
man, be ashamed to put in a claim for any reward.” However he added: “If the companies thought they had earned it let them give it without being asked. (Cheers) The working men wanted none but voluntary offerings.”

Indeed, the establishment and ongoing operation of the VFCs was funded, in part, by “voluntary offerings” from insurance companies, local businesses and householders, who “subscribed” to individual brigades. Companies elected or appointed collectors to ensure the ongoing collection of these subscriptions. The reliance on subscriptions, to some extent, undermined the self-autonomy of the individual companies. Insurance companies and other subscribers could threaten to cease subscribing in order an influence an aspect of a VFC’s operations. For example Glebe VFC did not participate in a torchlight procession because of threats by subscribers to stop contributions if their appliance was “unnecessarily taken out of the district.” Yet, reliance was a two way street. There were reports of collectors obtaining subscriptions using duress: when canvassing, they sometimes inferred that a company might be less eager to protect non-subscribers. One insurance company official went so far as to state that the “manner of collecting subscriptions will inevitably lead to terrorism, especially in the suburbs and country towns.”

Funds were also received from member subscriptions and fees; for example, the Pyrmont & Ultimo VFC charged members 1 shilling per year and an ‘initiation fee’ in 1881.

There was one source of funding that was very problematic. Under the Sydney Building Act, which was passed in 1837, payments were made to “engine keepers” who were the first (30s.), second (20s.) or third (10s.) to arrive at the scene of a fire. At the time the statute was enacted, only the military-based brigade and Australian Insurance Company Brigade had formed, both of which had their own incentives of compulsion and corporate profit respectively. Why provision was made for these payments is unclear. Whatever the reason, the Act set up a future regime whereby the competition it encouraged, to quicken response to fire emergencies, also generated

275 SMH, 30/5/1877.
276 SMH, 7/9/1875, 25/9/1875, 16/11/1875.
277 EN, 25/5/1881.
278 SMH, 27/7/1881.
279 SMH 23/4/1181, 14/11/1866.
280 Sydney Building Act, 1837 8 Will 4, No.6, s.68.
conflict and dysfunctional outcomes that were unintended. Payments made pursuant to the Act appear to have been made until 1884, when the Fire Brigade Board was formed, except between 1879-1881 when payments were suspended.\textsuperscript{281}

Whilst VFCs responded to monetary rewards under the \textit{Sydney Building Act}, the major driver for quick response was a keen sense of competition between brigades. Companies keenly assessed and published statistics on when they arrived at fires and their manpower relative to other brigades.\textsuperscript{282} To maintain their reputations for speed and weight (i.e. number of personnel) of response, they developed company specific strategies: emulating the ICFB, some members slept at their station and at one brigade (Hook & Ladder Co.), where accommodation was not available for a man to sleep, they engaged a “call-boy” to “rouse up” the men at night when the alarm sounded.\textsuperscript{283} No.3 VFC gave elaborate trophies to their best attendees at fires and drills, including one specifically for night-time attendances.\textsuperscript{284}

Competition between brigades was not limited to the fireground. Volunteer firefighters participated in an extensive range of rituals peculiar to the firefighting industry. Firefighting competitions ranged from tests of firefighting skills within brigades, to very elaborate and public Intercolonial ‘Demonstrations’. Most involved two tests: which team could perform a firefighting task at the required standard and in the quickest time.\textsuperscript{285} Local demonstrations were aimed at developing proficiency and presumably unity with individual companies. However, they had a wider purpose of engaging with their locality. When Mudgee VFC held a public “wet practice” after the ‘christening’ of its new manual engine in 1877, it was accompanied by a public collection on the streets.\textsuperscript{286} Local demonstrations often involved visiting brigades: a full complement of men and appliances of the ICFB and No.2 VFC attended Parramatta brigade’s twentieth anniversary demonstration (1879). Along with senior representatives of other seven other companies, they participated in a range of “athletic sports” such as running and walking races. Engaging with the local

\textsuperscript{281} DT, 14/1/1881; SMH, 31/1/1881.
\textsuperscript{282} e.g. see report from No.1 VFC in SMH, 14/11/1866.
\textsuperscript{283} EN, 19/1/1883.
\textsuperscript{284} Echo, 14/7/1881.
\textsuperscript{285} EN, 16/5/1881; SMH 10/11/1881.
\textsuperscript{286} Mudgee Independent, 1/12/1877.
community, the events included non-members, such as races for under-14 year old boys. Presided over by Andrew Torning, the competitive events were preceded by an elaborate luncheon, attended by the Mayor and local politicians, where extensive speeches and toasts were made.287

At the other end of the spectrum were the Intercolonial Demonstrations. Growing out of the very popular annual Victorian Fire Brigades Demonstration, which started in 1873, the first Intercolonial Fire Brigade Demonstration in 1881 was held in Sydney, organised by the United Volunteer Fire Brigades.288 Held over a number of days, over 350 volunteers from a wide range of NSW and Victorian brigades attended.289 The demonstration, like others, was subject to rigid rules, judging and disputes procedures. Eight events were held over two days and included events that tested hose handling, the unpacking and stowage of equipment, working both manual and steam engines to get water over a specified height and distance and the carrying and use of ladders. Mirroring firefighting, all events were time critical, with the quickest team to complete the event properly judged the winner. The Premier, Henry Parkes and an extensive entourage of parliamentarians attended, with the Premier effusive in his praise for the volunteer movement and the Demonstration. He presented successful teams with their prizes: trophies, gold medals and firefighting equipment of significant value.290 The demonstration attracted much attention from the public: up to six thousand attended the events and an “immense crowd” watched the accompanying Torchlight Procession, led by Andrew Torning, where some four hundred firefighters, holding torches, paraded through the streets of the city.291

Torchlight processions were a reasonably common practice amongst volunteers and represented just one of the very public rituals that volunteers engaged in.292 Another important ritual was the “christening” of new fire engines. Like demonstrations, they

287 SMH, 23/10/1879.
288 Murray and White, State of fire, pp.43-47.
289 SMH, 9/11/1881, 10/11/1881; DT, 9/11/1881, 10/11/1881; 11/11/1881, 12/11/1881; EN, 12/11/1881
290 Echo, 18/11/1881.
291 DT, 9/10/1881, 10/10/1881; Demonstrations have become an entrenched part of ‘volunteer’ (indeed firefighting) culture in NSW. Whilst inactive for the first decades of the BFC’s operations (and during wartime), they have been regular and large-scale events (http://www.nswfb.nsw.gov.au/page.php?id=510). RFS bushfire brigades have also emulated the practice post WW2.
292 EN, 27/5/1878; Echo, 19/5/1882 DT, 9/11/1883
were large-scale and elaborate public events, with crowds of up to five thousand people. Along with grand picnics and festivals, christenings were a time for volunteer brigades to display their unity, or to use Greenberg (1998) and Tebeau’s (2003) expression, their “brotherhood”. Such unity was displayed at the “ceremony of christening” for No.4’s new appliance in 1881. The Daily Telegraph reported that the “members of the different brigades represented at the gathering went to work con amore”. Like the Intercolonial Demonstration, Parkes and other politicians attended and were unequivocal in their support for the voluntary ethos of firefighting. Parkes christened the new appliance Prince Edward and affirmed, unhesitatingly, that every man who exercised the functions of a fireman would be a better son, a better father, and a better citizen. (...) So far as he personally could he should help that movement, and he assured them that the fire brigades might rely on his sympathy and assistance whenever necessary.

Generally the ‘infant’ fire engines received less personal, more evocative names. Victory was a popular name but others chose Enterprise, La Mascotte, and Fire Queen. No.1 VFC named their new appliance The Pioneer, in honour of its founder Andrew Torning, whilst the Government Printing Office VFB used the apt name of Gazette. Following US practice, appliances were sometimes adorned with mottos (e.g. “always willing” and “We strive to save”) and occasionally, elaborately painted firefighting scenes or portraits. Mudgee’s Victory depicted a firefighter on a ladder “axe in hand and surrounded with flames, doing his best to save life”, whilst The Pioneer sported a portrait of Torning.

Despite the elaborate and seemingly all encompassing world of the volunteer firefighter, they did engage with their local communities beyond firefighting. They held events such as regular quadrille dances and Newtown VFC even held a spelling bee for “young ladies” and schoolboys. As noted previously they engaged with, and

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294 DT, 25/7/1881 (their italics).
295 Echo, 25/7/1881.
296 Empire, 25/7/1871; SMH, 28/11/1881, 6/11/1882, 11/6/1883; Mudgee Independent, 1/12/1877; DT, 1/5/1882; EN, 17/10/1881; Adrian, Fighting fire, pp.4-5, 19; Tebeau, Eating smoke, pp.43-44.
provided political opportunities for, politicians in both colonial and local government. This engagement was of course reciprocated, with subscriptions, fundraising concerts and, as noted later, political support. Many brigade members, particularly outside of Sydney, were prominent citizens in their own right. Windsor’s brigade, for example, had a lawyer for its Captain, who was active in the local Benevolent Society, a Deputy Grand Master within the local Freemasons and the local Protestant Church. Its secretary was prominent in the local Oddfellows, whilst its treasurer became the first elected Mayor of Windsor in 1871 and was also active in the Benevolent Society. Its engine-keeper was also Mayor briefly in 1881 and a prominent Protestant, whilst another member was the local Minister and an active Mason. Whilst many Sydney brigades had illustrious supporters, their leaders were more likely to be publicans than lawyers or ministers. William Camb (No.2), W.S. Kelly (No.3) and J.H Rainford (No.3) were all prominent volunteers and hotel owners and companies regularly held meetings in, and occasionally operated out of, hotels across the city and suburbs.

The linkages between the volunteer fire companies were not merely local in nature. Through demonstrations and other rituals, they built a strong affinity with other companies in Sydney and the rest of the colony, though this unity would be tested, on and off the fireground at times. There was an international element as well: the organisation and practices of the colony’s VFCs were very much aligned with the volunteer movement in the United States. Torning was an ardent advocate of the US voluntary approach and firefighting methods and his interest in their systems may have led to the creation of the colony’s first company. Indeed, as discussed later, he left the colony in 1858, to return eight years later, having worked as a volunteer firefighter in San Francisco. Politicians, like Premier Parkes and John Sutherland, joined Torning in advocating a for a US-style voluntary system of firefighting.

Volunteer fire companies in NSW did replicate many of the attributes of their earlier formed US counterparts. For the most part, their systems of organisation, governance and funding were similar to those of US volunteer firefighting companies. For

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298 SMH, 14/6/1881.
299 J. Steele, Early days of Windsor, Tyrrell’s Ltd, Sydney, 1916, chaps. 8, 15, 19, 33, 34; SMH, 28/8/1869.
300 EN, 13/10/1880, 3/5/1883, 31/7/1883; DT 1/6/1881, 10/6/1882, 31/10/1883; SMH 3/12/1881.
301 SMH 17/12/1867; 25/4/1877, 22/6/1883; 22/7/1876, 25/10/1882, 2/11/1882; DT 22/10/1883.
example, US brigades were largely self-governing democratic organisations that tended to form specialist companies with dedicated roles, such as hook and ladder and hose reel operations. Even the rituals, nomenclature and symbols of the US companies were appropriated by the local brigades. Formal demonstrations were started in Australia, after a US born Victorian volunteer visited Chicago in the early 1870s. Volunteers in Sydney sometimes elected Lieutenants, reflecting US ranks and copied US certificates of membership from US brigades. They shared the same fetishism around their engines, anthropomorphising them with names and rituals. More importantly, as discussed later, Sydney’s VFCs also replicated the intense competitiveness that US volunteers displayed both on and off the fireground, as discussed by Tebeau (2003) and Greenberg (1998).

The US-centric and competitive approach of NSW volunteer companies contrasted with the English origins and more disciplined approach of the Insurance Companies Fire Brigade (ICFB). This contrast became more pronounced the longer the two systems coexisted. As the rest of the chapter outlines, the independent and competitive nature of the volunteer companies isolated them from the communities that they professed to protect.

3.9. Early tensions between the ICFB and the volunteer fire companies - “Paid Servants” vs. “Independent Tradesmen”

The contrast of approach between the ICFB and the VFCs became manifest, through conflict in the latter half of the 1860s. As early as 1866, T. Bown and J.W. Evans (Secretary No.1 VFC) were arguing in newspapers over who was the more efficient in attending fires. Evans, after alerting Empire readers that they were the first engine on scene stated: “As we derive no remuneration or benefit by attending these fires, we are desirous that the honor should be given to whom it is due.” In the same week, William Camb, Superintendent of the No.2 Brigade also bought in to the remuneration debate in response to T. Bown:

302 Greenberg, Cause for alarm, pp.11-15.
303 Murray and White, State of fire, p.43; EN 13/8/1881; Adrian, Fighting fire, p.25; Greenberg, Cause for alarm, pp.11-15, ch.3; Tebeau, Eating smoke, pp.32-35.
304 SMH, 10/7/1866.
305 Empire, 6/7/1866.
For the information of those who don’t know (that, I am sorry to say, is nine-tenths of the general public), Mr. Bown is not Superintendent of all Fire Companies in Sydney – merely a paid servant of the United Insurance Company’s. [sic]

This was an often repeated line by some VFC representatives - their status as an unpaid volunteer was promoted as a civic virtue, to be relied upon in any dispute between paid and unpaid labour in the industry. They counterpoised themselves against the ‘mere’ ‘paid servant’ of the Insurance Companies. They protected life and the community whereas the ICFB were purported to act in the interests of property alone.

The volunteers rejected such servitude. T. Bown, acting on behalf of the Insurance Companies, offered the No.1 & No.2 VFCs a £100 subsidy, provided that they placed themselves under his control on the fireground. The VFCs organised a joint meeting in February 1867: the VFCs refused to “fettered in their operations by placing the control and command of their staff and engines in the hands of any of the paid servants of the insurance companies”. They saw the proposal as prejudicial to their voluntary foundation and threatened to publicly undermine T. Bown and withdraw their services, if he were ever put in charge of their brigades or operations. At the meeting, W. Hinchey announced to loud cheers, that: “Sooner than go under the guidance of Mr. Bown he would take his uniform and put it behind the fire.” He also “indignantly repudiated any idea of an independent tradesmen being brought under the control of that gentleman.”

As volunteer firefighters, Hinchey and others considered themselves independent tradesmen in their professions and civic-minded selfless firefighters. T. Bown and his firefighters were mere “paid servants”, lacking the independence and selflessness of the volunteer. The meeting insisted on the passing of laws to ensure the future of volunteer brigades.

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306 SMH, 10/7/1866.
307 SMH, 16/2/1867. It is interesting to note that Hinchey objected to on these lines, given that he was a publican and Bown was a plumber and gasfitter, with his own manufacturing business.
308 Ibid.
The ICFB and the insurance companies continued to seek control through the command of equipment and finances: No.1 VFC had to return a fire engine that it had loaned from the ICFB and forego a subsidy, rather than accept T. Bown’s superintendence. No.2 VFC came to their assistance, loaning them their second engine until No.1 could procure its own. The volunteer brigades continued to be driven not merely by the necessities of fire protection – their “principles as volunteer firemen” and independence was almost as important. As such, T. Bown continued to be roundly criticised by the VFCs for undermining the volunteer brigades.

The joint February meeting exposed another more operational tension between the paid ICFB and the VFCs. The latter were critical of the ICFB’s Salvage Company for interfering in their operations on the fireground. The tensions between the volunteer ethos of ‘playing water’ on fires, versus the ICFB’s ideal of minimising water damage, continued for another two decades. For the volunteer fire company, success was measured in battling the fire, for the ICFB (particularly the salvage brigade), it was about minimising property damage. Tensions also started to emerge out of competition between the two volunteer companies, generated by the Sydney Building Act’s reward system and the competitive nature of the companies. The competition was also starting to generate unwanted externalities: in 1868, No.1 VFC ran over a man on the street “in the hurry and excitement of attempting to reach the spot”.

Amid the tensions between the two city-based volunteer companies and the ICFB, the papers heralded the impending return to the colony of Andrew Torning, the self-proclaimed founder of volunteer firefighting in Sydney. On December 16, 1867, he arrived and was met by No.1 & No.2 Brigades and paraded to Bondi, where the fire engines of the two companies competed against one another. Torning at the celebratory lunch played to the crowd:

He [Torning] gave some information respecting the management and workings of the fire companies of California. He was satisfied, from the experience that he had gained, both here and in California, that volunteer

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309 Empire, 5/12/1867.
310 Empire, 22/4/1867; SMH, 29/11/1867.
311 Empire, 12/3/1868.
312 SMH, 21/7/1868.
313 SMH, 17/12/1867.
fire companies were of greater utility than what were termed paid men, and were less expensive to the insurance companies. He expressed his regret at the course which the insurance companies in this city had taken with regards to the volunteer fire companies, and trusted that a better state of things would yet be brought about.  

Torning’s comments are interesting for what they leave out. Torning had left Sydney for the United States in 1858. During his time overseas, Torning had joined up as a volunteer firefighter in San Francisco and would have witnessed great upheavals in the status of its volunteer firemen. In the December preceding his departure, San Francisco, was embroiled in an acrimonious switch from autonomous volunteer fire brigades (with significant local political clout) to a paid fire department. It left a significantly diminished role for a small rump of volunteers, who were once described as an “institution so highly valued.” He returned to Sydney to become the Superintendent of No.1 Co., having witnessed the virtual demise of the San Francisco volunteers.

Press support in the late 1860s was largely supportive of the volunteer brigades. In 1868 the Evening News chastised the newly appointed Superintendent of the ICFB, C. Bown, for failing to recognise the efforts the volunteer brigades in his Annual Report:

\begin{quote}
We hope and believe that in danger the men of the Brigade and the Volunteer companies will always be found working in hearty cooperation, and that next year’s report of the Brigade will not grudge some mention of a body Sydney is proud of – her Volunteer Firemen.
\end{quote}

Sydney Punch went further and lauded volunteer effort, whilst deriding the ICFB firemen as mercenary in comparison:

\begin{quote}
OUR VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADE.
HURRAH! hurrah! for our Fire Brigade
Of gallant Volunteers,
By peril or danger ne’er dismay’d,-
Whose bold hearts spurn all fears!
When the boding knell of the hoarse fire bell
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
314 Ibid.
315 Municipal Record, City and County of San Francisco, October 1925 as found at http://www.sfmuseum.net/hi/st1/evolve.html; Greenberg, Cause for alarm, chapter 5 (particularly p.147).
316 Evening News 26/3/1868.
\end{flushright}
Full loudly calls for their aid,
Then never will lag or was known to flag
Our Volunteer Fire Brigade!

[...]

Full swiftly they hie at duty’s call
(A duty self impos’d)
And cheerily labor, one and all,
Nor reck their lives exposed.
And they toil and strain, but ‘tis not for gain
By hope of which they’re sway’d:-
They earn but renown, and honor’s bright crown,
Our Volunteer Brigade!

Oh! shame, foul shame on th’ Insurance Brigade
Who basely toil would shirk,
And wherever their labors are not paid
Refuse to aid or work;
Who to save don’t care any building where
No policy is made;
But ‘tis rescued then by readier men,
Our Volunteer Brigade!317

Labour, that would normally be considered useful and valuable (i.e. saving life and property through risk to life and limb) was, when compared to the readier volunteer firemen shameful, indeed mercenary.

Press reporting as to which Brigade arrived first at a fire continued to generate inter-brigade tensions. Torning (No.1 Co.) and Camb (No.2 Co.) became engaged in a battle in the press in July 1868 over credit for attending fires.318 Nonetheless relations between the volunteer brigades at this stage were, on the whole, amiable. The daily newspapers also acted as a conduit for public tributes to the volunteer brigades (and the ICFB) - the public often placed advertisements thanking various Brigades for their assistance in saving life and property.319

By March 1869, C. Bown in his Annual Report reported that better relations existed between the Insurance Brigades and the volunteers than in previous years and that he

317 Sydney Punch, 17/7/1869.
318 SMH, 18/7/1868, 21/7/1868.
319 e.g. SMH, 4/3/1868.
hoped “that the friendly feeling now existing may be continued and extended”. Certainly by October 1869, at least some of the volunteer brigades, such as Windsor, had aligned themselves with C. Bown and the ICFB. As early as 1867, the Insurance Company Brigade was organising joint picnics with the Windsor brigade. By February 1869, this relationship had developed to the point where the ICFB provided it with a larger fire engine.

Notwithstanding C. Bown’s comments, the collaboration of some brigades with the ICFB led to broad schisms forming between various volunteer brigades. At its fifteenth anniversary, No.1 VFC (together with No.2 and Parramatta VFCs) celebrated by parading to Botany, to play cricket and luncheon. After various toasts, Camb made much of the cooperation between these companies. At the same time he expressed his “strong disapproval” of Windsor brigade’s association with the ICFB. He recommended that other volunteers disown them, as they “had acted in a manner highly calculated to bring the officers of the other Volunteer Brigades into contempt.” Notwithstanding the disapprobation, Windsor continued its relationship with C. Bown and the ICFB.

The improved relations between brigades soon dissipated in 1870. At a fire in Bridge Street in January, a physical confrontation occurred between ICFB and volunteer firefighters. One account described how C. Bown threatened to throw a bucket at Camb’s head, how Camb had burning embers thrown at Bown and that ICFB firemen rushed at Camb to wrest control of the hose. C. Bown accused Camb of zealotry – which caused excessive water damage and placed ICFB men at risk, with all requests to desist, ignored. Indeed it was rumoured that Camb drenched the Insurance Brigade whilst on the roof “just for a lark”.

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320 SMH, 1/3/1869.
321 SMH, 8/3/1867, 2/4/1867, 16/2/1869; Empire 8/4/1869.
322 Empire, 26/10/1869.
323 SMH, 4/2/1870.
324 SMH, 3/1/1870, 4/1/1870.
325 Afternoon Telegram, 7/1/1870.
Following an altercation later in the year outside of the firefighting arena, Camb was reported to be “no longer connected” with No.2 VFC.\textsuperscript{326} The departure of Camb coincided with a period of peace between the various volunteer companies and the Insurance Brigade. At No.2 Company’s picnic held on the January 1871 after lamenting Camb’s absence, its Foreman (George Lane) toasted their harmonious relationship with No1. VFC and the ICFB.\textsuperscript{327} Indeed by February 1871, No.1 VFC was contemplating accepting \textit{conditional} subsidies from the Insurance Fire Brigades Board, so as to finance its new fire engine.\textsuperscript{328} The ICFB’s status and resources were hard to ignore. By this stage it was contemplating additional stations and dominated fireground response times: in 1870 it arrived first at the fireground thirty-four times, compared to fourteen times for No.2 Company and three times for No.1 Company.\textsuperscript{329} No.2 Company however maintained its resistance, as it had a better first attendance rate and technology.\textsuperscript{330}

Unity between brigades continued: in March 1871, a number of office bearers of No.1 Company attended a presentation in honour of Mrs. Bown.\textsuperscript{331} One insurance company representative toasted No.1 Company likening “their previous quarrel to those of lovers, only to be renewed with warmer friendship.”\textsuperscript{332} During this period of rapprochement, the only party to raise the issue of poor relations between the brigades was the City Corporation. It had an interest in blaming disunity between Brigades for delays in putting out fires, rather than admitting that poor water supply, particularly at night, led to a diminished ability to fight fires.\textsuperscript{333}

Notwithstanding the peace, there was unease at No.2 VFC. At their quarterly practice in April, Camb, having returned from his absence, spoke rather critically of its treatment by the insurance companies, who withdrew their “paltry pittance of £100 per year” when it refused to place itself, “a volunteer company, composed of most

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Empire13/12/1870} Empire, 13/12/1870.
\bibitem{Empire12/1/1871} Empire, 12/1/1871.
\bibitem{SMH10/2/1871} SMH, 10/2/1871.
\bibitem{SMH27/2/1871} SMH, 27/2/1871.
\bibitem{SydneyMercantileAdvertiser8/3/1871} The Sydney Mercantile Advertiser, 8/3/1871.
\bibitem{SMH15/3/1871} SMH, 15/3/1871.
\bibitem{SydneyPunch26/8/1871} Sydney Punch, 26/8/1871.
\bibitem{Note} In the 1870s, Sydney’s water supply was turned off after 6.00pm to conserve water and regulate use in the absence of metering. See SMH, 1/4/1871.
\end{thebibliography}
respectable citizens, under the surveillance of a paid man (Mr. Bown)."  

At the christening of No.1 VFC’s new engine, The Pioneer, the ICFB and the Parramatta VFC celebrated their unity and regret was expressed, during the speeches, of the non-attendance and general truculence of No.2 Company. C. Bown observed: “If more harmony existed it would be a glorious matter. He considered that petty feelings should not exist, and approved of more sociality.” He also noted that the insurance companies had offered a £100 subsidy to No.2 “but they declined to submit to an imaginary degradation”. The cordial relations between the ICFB and No.1 VFC eventually became too much for No. 2; in August, it informed the public “that they are the only volunteer fire company in Sydney” and viewed No.1 VFC as an auxiliary of the ICFB. No.2 VFC was not averse to receiving help from the insurance industry, provided it required no subservience to C. Bown or his brigade.

By this time, Camb had regained a leadership role within No.2 VFC and acted as a strong advocate of volunteerism. Unease turned into hostility: in January 1872 Camb was involved in an altercation with John Murray of the ICFB, over which engine was first at a fire. Pursuant to the Sydney Building Act, the Police Inspector ‘gave’ No.2 first place, even though the ICFB was first to attend. An altercation ensued “whereupon Mr. Murray made use of language which laid him open to prosecution”. The Herald lamented the situation: “It has frequently observed with regret that the praiseworthy rivalry or zeal which the members of the Fire Brigades throw into the performance of their voluntary duties is sometimes allowed to degenerate into a lower type of feeling.”

Within days of the Camb / Murray incident, it was eclipsed by the Prince of Wales Theatre fire on 6 January 1871. Described as “one of the largest and most substantial buildings in Sydney”, the loss of the Theatre and surrounding buildings, was compounded by the eventual deaths of three people involved in firefighting operations: James Coates (private engine - Fanning, Griffiths & Co) and two other

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334 The Sydney Mercantile Advertiser, 19/4/1871.
335 Empire, 25/7/1871.
336 SMH, 8/8/1871; EN, 8/11/1871.
337 SMH, 8/11/1871.
338 Ibid.
339 SMH, 10/1/1872, Empire, 10/1/1872; Sydney Punch, 201/1/1872.
men assisting on the fireground, which No.2 later claimed as members. The funeral procession of Coates became a factionalised affair: headed by C. Bown and Edward Oram (a VFC official), the ICFB and No.1 Co. marched down George Street. No.2 VFC did not participate.\(^{340}\)

According to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, valuable time was wasted at the Prince of Wales fire, through a “struggle” between No.1 & No.2 VFCs, for “possession” of one particular fireplug. It labeled the event “simply disgraceful” and “hoped that such unbecoming exhibitions of angry disputings will never have again to be chronicled”.\(^{341}\) Another contemporary observer described the behaviour at the fire and observed similarities with dysfunction US volunteer behaviour:

> “The late fire at the Prince of Wales has been the scene of a series of rows and threats, commingled with the foulest language, playing their stream of water at their rivals rather than at the fire, which was gaining in all sides. […] Truly we are degenerating into the old Yankee volunteer style, when it was usual to knock off at the fire and have a good fight, cutting hose, smashing engines and various other sports”.\(^{342}\)

Whilst relations between the ICFB, No.1 and Parramatta VFCs remained amiable, the public were increasingly concerned about the future direction of their fire protection. Their concerns were about both the effectiveness of firefighting and the behaviour of firefighters. Large conflagrations like the Prince of Wales fire unsettled both property owner and resident alike. Furthermore, the “disgraceful” conduct, and sometimes violent nature of the contestation, was completely at odds with the middle class moral and social reforms of the times that sought “self-disciplined, hard workers, moral and proper.” A call for legislative reform ensued.\(^{343}\)

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\(^{340}\) *SMH*, 9/1/1872, 25/7/1872; *Empire*, 6/1/1872; Adrian, *Fighting fire*, p.24.

\(^{341}\) *SMH*, 8/1/1872.


\(^{343}\) *Empire*, 1/10/1872; Smith, ‘Subjectivity, hegemony, and the subaltern’, p.170.
3.10. Calls for regulation by the state - jostling for command and control

The behaviour of firefighters led to acrimonious public debates and encouraged discussion on the reorganisation of fire protection in Sydney. Ald. Raphael (MLA) proposed at a public meeting that an “eminent gentleman” or engineer be engaged by the City Corporation to manage both the ICFB and the volunteers. From the early 1870s onwards, concerns over conflict between brigades and ineffective management of fire services in Sydney, led to a number of attempts by the state to intervene in the industry. The key concept underlying all calls for legislative change was for unified command and control on the fireground, so as to avoid damaging conflict between brigades and to maximise fire suppression efforts.

Prior to the attempts at legislative reform in the 1870s, the colonial government had made only one previous attempt at reform. In 1854, faced with the demise of the Corporations Brigade in the previous year and a calls for improved fire protection, it introduced a Bill into the Legislative Council that would enable the formation of a fire brigade for Sydney, operating as part of the metropolitan Police Force. The Police hierarchy backed the plan, at the Select Committee formed to consider the Bill, referring to the need for “centralization” and the “want of unity of action between the engine of the Corporation and the engine of the Insurance Companies.” The concern over a “want of unity” was not in the context of any specified incident and may have represented an attempt by the Police to monopolise another public sector function and emulate the English police fire brigade model. The insurance industry was split on police as firefighters. Whilst some supported the Bill, others took a different stance, arguing that firemen “should be available at a moment’s notice [...] and... attend the extinction of fires exclusively.” As discussed in Chapter 2, the temporal imperative of a fast turnout has continually shaped debates about fire service resourcing, with obvious implications for the types of firefighters ‘employed’.

344 SMH, 3/6/1872; Adrian, Fighting fire, p.24.
345 SMH, 25/7/1872.
346 Larcombe, Origin of local government, p.177; Adrian, Fighting fire, p.18.
348 Ibid., pp.7-8, quote p.8.
The idea of police acting as firemen was endorsed by the Select Committee. An amended Bill was tabled in the Legislative Council the following year, proposing the establishment of four fire stations, each staffed with one officer (station engineer) and four firemen (constables), with a senior officer (inspecting engineer) overseeing the Brigades. It proposed that insurance companies would contribute approximately twenty-five percent of total costs. Notwithstanding the qualified support for the Bill, it was rejected by the Parliament on the basis of cost and an argument that safer, newer building methods decreased the need for fire suppression resources.\footnote{Ibid. first page (unnumbered); Larcombe, \textit{Origin of local government}, pp.177-178.}

### 3.10.1. Conflict and calls for reform in the early 1870s

Like the reform agenda of the mid 1850s, the call for regulation in the early 1870s stemmed from the failure of existing brigades to cooperate so as to maximise fire suppression efforts. The Parkes Government introduced a new Fire Brigades Bill into the NSW Parliament in November 1872. It proposed the appointment of an insurance industry approved Superintendent to oversee fire services in Sydney and suburbs, with powers to control the firefighting operations. When the Government’s Representative in the Legislative Council (Saul Samuel) introduced the Bill, he commended the previous good service of both the ICFB and the volunteer movement. He then went on to cite the Prince of Wales fire, with reference being made to this “serious conflict in which axes were taken up”. Samuel quoted at length from a book published by the late Superintendent of the London Fire Brigade, James Braidwood, who stressed the need for the unified control of the fireground by one person.\footnote{SMH, 28/11/1872; The work of Braidwood’s being quoted was more than likely J. Braidwood, \textit{Fire prevention and extinction}, Bell and Daldy, London, 1866.}

Unsurprisingly, the VFCs rejected the approach as a threat to their independence and dignity. Camb from No.2 VFC did not mince words – they simply would not work under the proposed Bill if introduced.\footnote{SMH, 23/1/1873.} Torning labelled it as part of the campaign to form a “Government Brigade”.\footnote{SMH, 11/1/1873; \textit{Empire}, 19/1/1873.} He lobbied for a ‘return’ to the glory days of urban volunteerism and self-determination that were the hallmarks of his experience in San Francisco:
I think that it is imperative that the citizens should have a fire department, under the care and control of paid officers nominated by the citizens themselves, and elected by votes, the municipal authorities being the head, having the full control. (...)

The Municipal Council could not then do better than imitate the American Fire Department (the old style) i.e., paid chief engineer, two assistants, engine-house keeper, and bell ringer, and volunteer fire companies.

C. Bown naturally embraced the concept; in March 1873 he sought a network of branch stations, telegraphic communication systems, the “employment of a permanent staff, one chief in full command”, military assistance and an improved water supply system. Whilst these requests were to the insurance companies, they were also likely aimed at influencing debate in Parliament.

The Bill met considerable opposition in some municipalities. There was concern about the charging regime and the powers of the proposed Superintendent and his Assistant Superintendent to “take any measure which appear to him expedient for the protection of life and property.” In particular, his ability to demolish a building to avoid the spread of fire and related compensation arrangements, caused much controversy. The Empire approved of this aspect of the Bill and summed up the tensions between economic and civic freedoms on the one hand, and the need for effective fire suppression, on the other:

> private interests and convenience are to be made subservient, in the hour of danger, to what must then be the absorbing concern, — the extinction or limitation of the fire. Hence the large powers confided to the superintendent, who, for the time, is to be the dictator of all the fire brigades, and, in all matters connected with his work, ruler of the city also.

Opposition to the Bill led to its slow passage through the parliamentary process, to the extent that it failed to be passed prior to parliament going into recess at the end of 1873.

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353 SMH, 6/2/1873.
354 Empire, 17/3/1873.
355 Empire, 22/3/1873.
356 Ibid.
357 Adrian, Fighting fire, p.26.
3.10.2. Further Legislative Proposals amid unity and division amongst the volunteers [1875-1880]

In late 1875, calls were again made for legislation to regulate the brigades, as a result of the increased number of uncoordinated volunteer companies and the increased disputation over access to fire plugs. “Unity of action” was called for: the 1872 Prince of Wales Theatre fire and the use of axes “as weapons of attack” still lingered in public debates and were reinforced by a fire at Castlemaine Brewery, where a smaller volunteer brigade manual engine would not yield to the ICFB’s larger steam fire engine, thereby significantly hindering firefighting operations. By the time a new Bill was introduced in late 1875, elements in the press were increasingly critical of volunteer zealotry. The Echo pronounced that:

The efforts of the unpaid men, which until this stage, have been effective and praiseworthy, simply become obstructive if they refuse to give place to men and engines which carry out the common object of extinguishing the fire much more rapidly. (...) Many a victory has been lost by an allied army through the jealousies of its leaders; and so we have reason to fear that the common enemy – fire – will overmaster the firemen if they are not united under a leader.

The Bill proposed the appointment of a Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent to be in charge of all fire suppression activities within Sydney’s city and suburbs. Again these officers were to be selected by the contributing insurance companies, who were to be the primary source of funding for the new system. Again, the Bill gave the Superintendent (or his delegate) extensive powers at fires including the ability to pull down buildings. It also proposed a charging regime for attendance at fires, to be paid by the insurer or the property owner if uninsured: the Superintendent was to receive 10s. for the first hour at a fire and 5s for every hour thereafter, firemen 3s, ‘extra men’ half crown and boys 1s. Whether this latter proposal was merely a charging regime or was in fact legislation to regulate the minimum earnings of firemen (part-time and ad-hoc volunteers) is uncertain.

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358 Ibid., p.28; SMH, 26/11/1875 (est. date), see SRNSW: Fire Brigades Board; CGS 4265, Newspaper cutting books, 1862-1906, 19 Jun 1871-4 Dec 1879 [11/16227], p.156; Echo, 3/11/1875.
359 Echo, 25/9/1875.
360 EN, 25/10/1875.
On November 23, 1875, Torning, Camb and other VFC superintendents met with Premier Robertson, representing seven volunteer brigades and a combined membership of three hundred men. By now, No.1 VFC had returned to the fold, with Camb and Torning being united by critical press coverage of their voluntary movement.\textsuperscript{361} They objected to an insurance companies’ appointed superintendent, the powers of the superintendent and the charging regime proposed by the Bill. At the meeting, one of the Superintendent’s stated that “he would rather burn all the plant belonging to his company than work under” the proposed arrangements. Their solution was for the Government or the Sydney Corporation to appoint the superintendent.\textsuperscript{362} The volunteers also petitioned local government with the result that at least one inner city council (Waterloo) sought involvement in the selection of the Superintendent and proposed a municipal (i.e. local) approach to fire insurance and fire suppression.\textsuperscript{363}

The Parliamentary debates centred on the same issues. It was argued that the Government should choose the Superintendent rather than the insurance companies. To do otherwise was deemed by some to make the Superintendent the “officer of private individuals.”\textsuperscript{364} During a Select Committee hearing deliberating on the Bill, C. Bown made much of the “confusion and indiscretion” that continued to occur on the fireground, which impaired firefighting operations. Notwithstanding the high level of public scrutiny, disputation continued in this period and the press made much of it.\textsuperscript{365}

After hearing evidence from Torning, Camb, C. Bown and others, the Select Committee tabled its report in April 1876. It recommended that the Bill be amended to require the Government to match the payments of the insurance companies so as to set up and maintain “a paid body of firemen” to protect Sydney. Within days, the Bill was stopped in its tracks in the Legislative Council and withdrawn. In a repeat of

\textsuperscript{362} SMH, 24/11/1875.
\textsuperscript{363} SMH, 14/12/1875; Evening News, 17/12/1875.
\textsuperscript{364} SMH, 26/11/1875 (est. date) (see fn.363).
\textsuperscript{365} New South Wales Parliament, 'Select Committee (1876)'; SMH, 27/3/1876; EN, 3/4/1876 & 8/4/1876. For example see SMH, 29/4/1876, where William Camb offered a reward of £10 “on conviction of the Person who wilfully CUT THE HOSE of the Sydney Volunteer Fire Company, No.2, whilst the engine was working at Redfern.”
earlier years, the Parliament was implored by the Press and the Governor to revive the Bill. The editor of The Echo felt that “the possibility of a quarrel over the plug whilst the flames are spreading is simply disgraceful. Unity of control is the great requisite”.366

Under pressure, the Parkes Government re-introduced a similar Bill in May 1876. While many in the press were supportive, the volunteer companies were less enamored with its reintroduction. In the following month, a meeting was held at William Camb’s Commercial Hotel, where he and other VFC superintendents expressed strident opposition to the Bill. Again, an insurance company nominated superintendent was the main issue. Yet this view was not universal amongst the VFCs. No.3, Balmain, Newtown/Camperdown, Glebe and Woollahra VFCs all backed the provisions of the Bill. No.3 VFC even proposed that C. Bown should be the appointee. There may have even been division within individual VFCs over their opposition: according to one opinion, whilst the leaderships of No.1 & No.2 VFCs were against the Bill, at least seventy percent of volunteers supported it.367

The Echo was dismissive of the volunteer companies’ sensitivities and discussed the relative merits of paid and unpaid labour in fire suppression activities:

The regular army would be no more enthusiastic in driving an enemy from England than the volunteer force; but there can be little doubt that its training and experience would make it more efficient for the purpose; and so probably the regular brigade of firemen in proportion to their numbers would be more effective than the volunteers. And as the command of armed force, so we imagine a fire brigade should be under the command of the most capable fireman, who would probably be found among those whose regular business it was to attend fires.368

Although the parliamentary debates and press coverage concentrated on the need for unity on the fireground, others commented favourably on other aspects of the legislation. The Newcastle Daily Pilot saw particular advantage in the centralised control, afforded by the Superintendent’s position: fixed rules, methods and

367 SMH, 19/5/1876; EN, 25/5/1876; Echo, 10/6/1876; SMH, 12/6/1876 & 13/6/1876; EN, 13/6/1876; SMH, 29/6/1876 & 4/8/1876.
368 Echo, 13/6/1876.
remuneration systems would spread across the colony and in doing so, solve their recent dispute over pay differentials between the firefighters of Newcastle and West Maitland.\textsuperscript{369}

The Bill, however, did not enjoy universal support within Parliament. During debates in the Legislative Assembly, John Sutherland, a long time supporter of the volunteer movement, expressed reservations on the impact on volunteers. In particular, he suggested that, without competition from volunteer firemen, the response times of paid firemen would slow, citing US experience. Others backed the volunteers, including John Davies who thought that the Bill would cost Sydney six or seven volunteer brigades and 250 volunteer firemen. Notwithstanding such claims, volunteer leaders denied that they would “throw in the sponge”.\textsuperscript{370}

Yet, the concerns expressed by the volunteer brigades and their supporters did not convince the mainstream press. According to the \textit{Herald}, the legislation was much needed:

\begin{quote}
“The want of unity among the brigades when on duty has neutralized much of their zeal, embittered their relations to each other, and occasioned loss of property, if not also loss of life. [Volunteer companies] outside their own special company (...) have no organization and no discipline whatever.”\textsuperscript{371}
\end{quote}

Thus, the proponents of the Bill saw the decrease of unbridled competition to be a good thing and, at the same time, supporters of the volunteer movement lamented the loss of this same dynamic. The Bill came close to being passed, but due to opposition, was bogged down until the Parliamentary session ended and was finally abandoned in August 1876.\textsuperscript{372} The Bill did not re-emerge in 1877 and the community had to wait until 1881 for the next Bill to be considered by Parliament.

\textsuperscript{369} \textit{Daily Pilot}, 14/6/1876.
\textsuperscript{370} \textit{SMH}, 22/7/1876; 5/8/1876.
\textsuperscript{371} \textit{SMH}, 4/8/1876.
\textsuperscript{372} \textit{Echo}, 14/8/1876.
3.10.3. Parliamentary inertia and factionalism among the volunteers [1877-1880]

Despite the hiatus in the legislature, public debate continued with the view that reform would occur. Torning and Camb continued their campaign against any future Bill with an insurance companies’ appointed superintendent, as did a pro-volunteer breakaway faction of the insurance industry.\(^{373}\) Supporters of Torning and Camb in the press attempted to place the volunteer firemen on the same pedestal as “citizen soldiers” and referred to the ICFB as the regulars. *The Sportsman and Licenced Victuallers Gazette* stated that “credit must be awarded to the equally gallant men who are ever ready to do battle with that terrible enemy, the fierce and relentless FIRE KING” and sought public funding of volunteer fire companies: “the Volunteer [Military] Force partakes freely of legislative bounty, then why should not the Volunteer Fire Companies”.\(^{374}\) The regulars / volunteer soldier metaphor and its associated battle / enemy associations were, and remain, an enduring one.

In 1879, lobbying commenced again for the implementation of a Fire Brigades Bill.\(^{375}\) At the ICFB’s Annual Picnic, C. Bown and an insurance representative highlighted the need for centralised control of all Brigades, full support by all insurance companies and Government financial assistance. The *Echo* encouraged C. Bown to press for reform, so as to emulate the efficient system in London, where they organised firefighting “on scientific principles”.\(^{376}\) This interest in the London Fire Brigades was not new. The writings of Captain E.M. Shaw (London Fire Brigades (LFB) Chief Officer) had previously been referred to in the press and were revered by many Brigades.\(^{377}\) Shaw regarded the business of extinguishing fires according to scientific principles as a new profession, developed through a combination of theory and practice. He was dismissive of amateur involvement in fire protection and saw the employment of a “trained, skilled, and well disciplined force” as the only means of providing adequate fire cover.\(^{378}\) The *Sydney Mail*, after criticising the “jealousies”

\(^{373}\) *SMH*, 18/1/1877 & 2/3/1877.
\(^{374}\) *Sportsman and Licenced Victuallers Gazette*, 21/10/1876.
\(^{375}\) *SMH*, 20/1/1879 & 23/1/1879.
\(^{376}\) *Echo*, 15/1/1879.
\(^{377}\) *Echo*, 17/3/1877; *Courier*, 11/7/1879.
\(^{378}\) *Echo*, 17/3/1877.
that encouraged the colony’s parliament to thwart previous bills, joined the chorus for reform:

Personal animus ought not to be allowed to stand in the way of a public necessity. Organization and discipline lead to effectiveness, to the maximum of result at the minimum of cost, both of labour and money; and this is a matter of the utmost moment.”

As with the last Bill, a number of volunteer fire companies supported legislative reform. Glebe VFC saw it as means to regulate and raise professionalism of firefighting through a system of examinations. No.3 VFC, in its 1877 Annual Report, curiously both supported the Bill, because it provided unified command, and celebrated the company’s volunteer nature:

As young citizens of this glorious City of the South, we have thought that those who enjoy the privileges of citizenship should also undertake some of the burdens; and as our part of them, we have banded together, and give our time and labour freely to protect from the dangers of fire the things most valuable to men – property and life.

Yet, at the meeting where the report was tabled, the concept of giving “time and labour freely” had been worn thin by the workload of, and expectations on, the members. The new Bill held the promise of remuneration for its members:

Your committee thinks that any bill dealing with Fire Brigades should specially provide for remuneration to firemen, for when we look at the pay received by [Military] Volunteers, we consider that we have a just claim on the revenue of lands of this country for services rendered to the country at great risk and sacrifice. (...) Once or twice a week, and sometimes oftener, firemen are to be found leaving their beds and their homes to save property and life, without pay, and very often without thanks. We think this should not be so, and trust that our claims to reward will no longer be overlooked.

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379 Sydney Mail, 25/1/1879.
380 EN, 5/6/1879.
381 ‘City Volunteer Fire Company No.3 - Second Annual Report’, 9/1/1877, SRNSW: CGS 4265, [11/16227], p.204. The title of ‘City Volunteer Fire Company No.3’ is perplexing: the City Volunteer Fire Company did not form until 1879 and was a breakaway from No.3 Co. (see Adrian, Fighting fire, p.248) and later text in this chapter. It may indicate that the 1879 breakaway group took with them a name that was also used occasionally by No.3 brigade.
382 Echo, 10/1/1878.
The obvious tensions between their voluntary outlook and the desire for remuneration eventually boiled over in 1879 and split the Brigade in two, with those favouring remuneration (and other changes) forming the new City Fire Brigade. Whilst not the main driver for the split, there was an air of sectarianism surrounding it: during the intra-company tensions in No.3, the soon to breakaway element referred to their Superintendent as “Billy Tykes Kelly”. 383

Notwithstanding No.3 VFC’s troubles, inter-brigade conflict appeared to be more contained. The seeming inevitability of legislated unified control of the fireground led to attempts at more unity across the Brigades in late 1879 and early 1880. Their rituals became more inclusive, such as Parramatta VFC’s Centenary Demonstration in October, and the level of fireground conflict was reduced. 384 In late November 1879, an attempt was made to develop a unified position across all brigades: a meeting of superintendents and delegates from most volunteer fire brigades and the ICFB considered a motion that the brigades lobby the colonial government to appoint a recognised head to control all brigades at fires. Various brigades rejected the very concept and threatened to disband if it occurred. A representative from No.2 VFC suggested that they appoint their own Superintendent to control the fireground. Chairman J.P. Garvan MLA opened the meeting by blaming the competitive operation of the Sydney Building Act as the cause of unpleasantness and squabbling that led to the need for such an appointment. The meeting was adjourned to allow delegates time to consider their respective brigade positions on the matter. 385

Subsequent meetings focused on an alternative approach: a “scheme of self government” for the Brigades. Like volunteer firefighting management associations in the US, it represented an attempt at self-regulation and control on their terms. However efforts by some brigades to exclude the ICFB from subsequent meetings and debate, and their attempts to secure the command positions themselves, led to a schism between the various Brigades, which eventually led to the formation of two

385 DT, 28/11/1879.
rival organisations representing the State’s firemen.\textsuperscript{386} By August 1880, the United Volunteer Fire Brigades of the City of Sydney and Suburbs (UVFB) had formed and appointed their own Superintendent-General, E. Oram. Instigated by No.3 Co., it comprised of No.1, No.2, No.3, Woollahra, Glebe, Redfern and Mount Lachlan VFCs. Its first public event was a benefit night, to enable the purchase of a reel and hose for the use of all UVFB companies.\textsuperscript{387} At around the same time, a rival association formed, named the Metropolitan Associated Fire Brigades (MAFB). Its members were the ICFB, City, Nth Sydney, St Leonards, Paddington, Newtown, Waterloo & Alexandria, Surry Hills, Hook and Ladder and Fire Escape Brigades. The MAFB organised Sydney into districts, with various senior volunteer firemen appointed as District Superintendents and C. Bown as Head Superintendent.\textsuperscript{388} By October 1880, the organised factionalism was strong enough to ensure that, when Sydney’s firemen paid their respects at Camb’s funeral, they did as two separate and distinct groups, the UVFB and the MAFB.\textsuperscript{389}

The following month (November) the schism widened after a “violent altercation” between members of each group. In an effort to be first at a fire at Randwick, No. 1. VFC attempted to block the City VFC’s passage en route to the fire, whilst jostling for first position. When City passed, a member of No.1 VFC held down the brake of City’s engine, leading to a brawl between the companies. This incident (and a similar one involving a dispute over suction hoses and dams with No.3 VFC) led to near universal criticism of “faction fights” and “overheated competition” between brigades in the press.\textsuperscript{390} Even the Daily Telegraph, often more sympathetic to volunteer brigades than others, lost patience:

\begin{thebibliography}{9}


\bibitem{387} SMH, 31/8/1880; DT, 3/9/1880; SMH/Echo, 31/1/1881; EN, 4/2/1881. The original No.3 Band was now the City Brigade Band, see DT, 2/9/1880.

\bibitem{388} ‘First annual report - MAFB’, SRNSW: CGS 4265, [3/12945].

\bibitem{389} EN, 13/10/1880; SMH, 15/10/1880.

\bibitem{390} SMH, 1/11/1880; Echo, 1/11/1880.

\end{thebibliography}
Rivalry is all very well while it is devoted to expedition, but when it takes the form of faction fights and willful delay while peoples homes burn, it becomes a public question, and calls for something more than protest.391

Both factional groups used these incidents to humble the other. W. Lane the Secretary of the City Brigade, after extolling the virtues of C. Bown, the ICFB and his fellow MAFB Brigades wrote:

I am of the opinion that friendly rivalry should be encouraged by all means. But when it takes the above form I think that an Inspector General of Police is wanted to looks after the United Volunteer Fire Brigades instead of a Superintendent-General.392

W.S. Kelly responded in the press regarding the suction hose incident denying it and testifying to the unity of the UVFB brigades.393

The contest between the UVFB and MAFB manifested itself in other ways, including the simultaneous formation of rival brigades within the one locality. In November 1880, the Surry Hills Fire Co. was formed, under the auspices of the MAFB, and was enrolling members. On the evening of 7 December, a further meeting of the Brigade was held, where it received broad support and new members. However on the very same night, the UVFB organised a meeting for the purpose of forming a volunteer fire brigade, to operate also in Surry Hills. In the end, No.3 VFB organised a branch station in the suburb. The UVFB and the MAFB had started to deliberately organise competing brigades in the same areas: the contest over spaces of control and therefore the demarcation of work intensified. The battle for control extended from the powers and need for a person to be in overall command of Sydney’s brigades down to in which group would ‘control’ individual suburbs.

The interaction at Surry Hills was not just about control on the fireground or part of the broader competition between the UVFB and the MAFB. It was also about financial dominance. Both Brigades quickly had their collectors out gaining funds and localist allegiances from the Surry Hills community.394 Tensions between the

391 DT, 1/11/1880.
392 DT, 4/11/1880.
393 DT, 12/11/1880.
394 SMH, 27/11/1880, 8/12/1880; DT, 7/4/1881; EN, 27/5/1881.
factionalised brigades continued; in December, the press were critical of some brigades for not ringing the fire bell until they were well on the way to the fire, thereby slowing the response of rival brigades. Presumably used as a method of maximising status on the fireground (as well as payments under the *Sydney Building Act*) it was described by the *Sydney Morning Herald* as a “very objectionable practice.”

3.10.4. The road to the Fire Brigades Act (1881-1884)

With the introduction of yet another Fire Brigades Bill into Parliament in January 1881, the split between Sydney’s brigades would grow even wider. A delegation from the Insurance industry had provided Premier Parkes with a draft bill and had called for the establishment of an efficient and disciplined brigade. Interstate rivalries were played upon: according to one representative “all other capitals of the Australian colonies had disciplined brigades, except Sydney. In Melbourne there was a very efficient corps, and volunteers were not allowed to come into the city.”

The new Bill involved the formation of a board to manage fire services in Sydney, with funding coming from both the insurance industry and Treasury. A superintendent and assistant superintendent were to be appointed, who would have extensive powers on the fireground and control over Brigades whilst in attendance at fires.

A *Daily Telegraph* editorial agreed with the need for discipline, as fire protection in Sydney was judged to be akin “to a battlefield, on which each regiment fought as it pleased without any central or guiding authority. All the value which combination gives was lost.” The MAFB took a similar position and acknowledged that rivalry whilst “to a certain extent, healthy” had “assumed a most injurious phase, and in the contest for places and positions at fires, unseemly and reckless behaviour is of frequent occurrence.”

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395 SMH, 7/12/1880.
396 *EN*, 7/1/1881. The Insurance representatives also sought legislation to compel non-insurers to contribute to fire suppression costs.
397 SMH, 21/1/1881; *EN*, 22/1/1881.
398 *DT*, 10/1/1881.
399 ‘First annual report - MAFB’, SRNSW: CGS 4265, [3/12945].
The UVFB lobbied for representation on the new Board for volunteers: a delegation of its officials petitioned Parkes to appoint two volunteers to the new body.\footnote{Letter from Native in DT, 22/1/1881; DT, 26/1/1881; see also SMH & EN, 26/1/1881.}

During this time, the UVFB sought to portray itself as the representative of volunteers throughout the State. At its first half yearly meeting, it lamented that the only reason that all volunteer fire brigades were not members, was because they had been induced by C. Bown through grants, to “withdraw from the union” and join the MAFB. They reveled in their numerical supremacy over the MAFB (claiming a membership of 2033 persons!) and held out hopes that they would be a “grand institution in the Colony”. They also, for the first time, placed an economic value on their labour – 1s 6d for each hour each member spent at a fire.\footnote{EN, 4/2/1881; DT, 5/2/1881; DT, 23/2/1881. The UVFB claimed their membership was 2033 persons, yet less than a month later it represented only 543 volunteer firemen.} The UVFB was optimistic about its future, with some justification. In the following months, the UVFB was instrumental in the formation and ‘capture’ of new volunteer brigades including Pyrmont, South Sydney (No.4), Petersham and Balmain.\footnote{Echo, 5/3/1881; DT, 24/3/1881, 1/6/1881; EN, 11/6/1881 & 29/9/1881; DT, 11/7/1881.}

Like previous attempts at reform, consideration of the Bill was again stalled, due to the different agendas of the insurance companies, the volunteer companies and a rather dysfunctional legislature.\footnote{DT, 9/4/1881.} The delays were too much for C. Bown, who used the Press to raise both the spectre of large-scale conflagration and the dysfunctional operations of some volunteer firemen:

> Sydney will never have a Fire Brigades Bill until the citizens will have the sad satisfaction of knowing what it is to experience conflagrations similar to those which devastated Chicago and Boston. (...) No sane person can deny the necessity of such a measure as a Fire Brigades Bill. It [sic] he will but closely watch the actions of some who call themselves firemen, and observe the indiscretion, want of discipline and tact, waste of energy and the total disregard as to the easiest and most effectual way of stopping the progress of a fire, which is displayed at any of our large fires, he will be thoroughly satisfied about the necessity of a Fire Brigades’ Bill.\footnote{DT, 26/3/1881.}

The Press indicated their disquiet with the legislative holdup. After noting Parkes’ effusive support for volunteer fire brigades at the ‘christening’ of No.4’s new engine,
the Echo opined that legislation was needed “to impart to the firemen the discipline of the army”.405 Yet Parkes was not alone in his support of the volunteer brigades cause. At the same ‘christening’ W Fraser Martin MLA (a pre Eureka Ballarat fireman) hoped that any Bill would generate 3000 firemen, rather than 300 and that it “would be on the volunteer principle, than which there was nothing more noble.”406 Such adulation by Parkes and other parliamentarians, in light of the delays with the passage of the Bill, did little, other than to strike up a public debate on the value of volunteer firemen. M W S Clarke the Resident Secretary of the Liverpool and London and Globe Insurance Company responded:

We do not deny that good service has been rendered by volunteer companies, but we say that it is impossible to know beforehand what dependence can be placed on them in time of need, and cases have occurred where the inexperience and want of control have proved as dangerous as the fire itself.407

Intra and inter-brigade conflict and rivalry continued into the latter half of 1881. Tensions within the UVFB, generated by a change in leadership, led to disorderly meetings and assaults on the fireground between members of No.2 & No.3 VFCs (both UVFB brigades).408 Meanwhile, annual picnics, engine ‘christenings’ and alike became increasingly factionalised events.409 When the UVFB organised the Intercolonial Fire Brigades Demonstration, the MAFB Brigades expressly boycotted it.410

Yet again, a new bill was introduced in December 1881. It replicated previous bills, in that centralised control of the fireground was the key feature. Competition between brigades nonetheless continued and ranged from disputes in the press, to bad language and violence hindering the response to fires. The Goon Ping fire (May 1882) emphasised the need for change. Fireground operations were marred by a “general melee” that involved assaults and bad language. It received significant press coverage

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405 Echo, 25/7/1881; EN, 19/7/1881.
406 DT, 25/7/1881.
407 SMH, 27/7/1881.
408 SMH, 30/8/1881; DT, 16/9/1881; EN, 19/9/1881.
409 EN, 17/10/1881; SMH, 22/10/1881; DT, 28/11/1881.
410 EN, 31/10/1881; SMH, 4/11/1881; SMH, 9/11/1881; DT, 9/11/1881; EN, 1/11/1881; 5/11/1881; DT, 10/11/1881.
and, yet again, led to a general call for centralised control of all brigades on the fireground. It also put into stark contrast the varying techniques of the ICFB and the volunteer companies: whilst the former used water judiciously so as to minimise water damage to property, the excitement of ‘quenching’ the fire by the volunteers often led to spectacular losses. In this case, the original fire damage was £10, but the water damage ran into hundreds of pounds. Within weeks, the utility of the volunteer was again in question: over 250 Sydney volunteers participated in the Intercolonial Fire Brigades Demonstration in Melbourne thereby raising questions as to their motives (protection or pageantry) and their very necessity. The SMH identified volunteerism as the heart of the problem:

The distinction between paid and unpaid labour is obvious to all: The fact that 250 firemen can leave Sydney at one time of their own accord to attend a demonstration in a neighbouring colony, is in itself sufficient evidence of the ineffectiveness of our fire brigade system. It noted that the Insurance Brigades did not have such liberty.

The volunteers countered by claiming a right to “more sympathy and consideration” than “mere public servants”.

Subsequent fires in 1882, did little to quell the situation. A fire at Borthwicks (Oil and Colour Merchants) at Redfern in August led to further assaults and the deliberate cutting of an ICFB hose on the fireground. The Secretary of No.4 VFC was convicted for the latter offence (which was overturned on appeal). The normal volunteer friendly Daily Telegraph in calling for a unified control of Sydney’s firefighters, was highly critical:

“First water” rules the roast, (sic?) and the rival firemen will fight like Kilkenny cats, and hinder each other, so that their companies may gain the kudos of having thrown the first jet from their reels. This, as we have often pointed out, is disgraceful, and, what is more, unmanly. Are the firemen of Sydney, who have the noble reputation of heroic predecessors and congeners in other lands to sustain, degenerated into larrikins and hoodlums of the worst type?

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412 SMH, 24/5/1882.
413 EN, 20/6/1882.
The Sydney Morning Herald went further and called for the abolition of the volunteer system: “Rather than have this clashing between the two classes perpetuated, it would be better to have the Volunteer Brigades abolished and a body of paid men appointed and made amenable to discipline.”

Within weeks another round of claims and counterclaims of violence (one involving a crowbar) between paid and unpaid labour emerged at the Cook Bros (Ultimo) fire, with access to the water supply again being the cause of the fracas. This was soon followed by the total destruction by fire of the spectacular Garden Palace in September, which only heightened concerns over the administration of firefighting operations in Sydney. A subsequent fire, which led to the death of Mrs. Wright in George Street, escalated the tensions, with the UVFB and MAFB brigades fighting over placement of ladders at the fire, and as a consequence, who was liable for her death. This latter event boiled over into further very public and acrimonious division between the UVFB and MAFB brigades.

In this context of division both on and off the fireground, yet another Fire Brigades Bill was introduced into the Parliament in late October 1882. If differed from earlier Bills in that it only funded the ongoing operations of brigades that met certain (Schedule B) efficiency standards. To be deemed efficient, a brigade had to have a certain structure of officers and technical staff, and twenty four adult firemen, of whom five had to be “constantly on night duty” and four on “day duty”. Thus, volunteers were to be required by statute, rather than community service, to be ready for fires. Minimum levels of equipment were also stipulated. Some parliamentarians saw the changes as necessary, others saw at a threat to the whole existence of volunteer brigades. Whilst all brigades in attendance at fires would receive payments, only those with Schedule B status would get recurrent funding for their ongoing operation. The parliamentary and public debate was also divided over the appointment of the overall Superintendent of the Brigades: whilst C. Bown had considerable backing, UVFB volunteers and their supporters remained vitriolic in

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414 Kingston, History of New South Wales, p.81.
415 SMH, 14/8/1882, DT, 14/8/1882; SMH, 17/8/1882, DT, 1/9/1882; SMH, 7/9/1882; Echo, 22/9/1882, SMH, 29/9/1882. It is perhaps ironic that the arsonist at the Wright fire was motivated by the rewards for raising the alarm as offered by various brigades.
their attacks on his capabilities. Yet again, the debate failed to produce a legislative outcome.\footnote{SMH, 26/10/1882; DT, 27/10/1882; SMH, 2/11/1882, 9/11/1882, 10/11/1882, 13/11/1882.}

The fall of the Parkes Government led to a new, rather different Bill being put to the Parliament by the Stuart Government in early 1883. It proposed a different management structure - a Board managed by representatives of the Government, the insurance companies \textit{and} local government. In another twist, it went beyond mere regulation and contained provisions for the formation of a permanent paid fire brigade, employed directly by the new board. Volunteer fire companies were still recognised, but they were to be controlled by the new Board’s regulations, under threat of the loss of their subsidies. The Bill was viewed as a snub to the volunteer fireman and a loss of “voice in the management of his Company.”\footnote{DT, 26/2/1883.} To counter this, the UVFB and its supporters lobbied hard for representation on the Board itself. Some volunteers criticised the state establishing a paid permanent brigade, arguing that such firefighters would see the position as mere paid employment, rather than as a vocation worthy of zeal:

[Volunteers] would be found moving along much sharper than paid men having most likely no particular love for the work other than for the pay attached to it, and, hence, a want of enthusiasm so much admired in volunteers generally which leads them to overcome difficulties that paid men would never attempt.\footnote{Echo, 12/3/1883.}

Yet such calls were out of step with the community’s mood. The press was ready for a radical overhaul. Even the normally pro-volunteer \textit{Daily Telegraph} thought the situation so chaotic, that they proposed the importation of a complete company of firefighters from the United States. Yet radical change would have to wait yet again - Stuart’s Bill predictably failed to be passed prior to the end of the parliamentary term and was withdrawn in late April 1883.\footnote{SMH, 8/2/1883; Evening News 8/2/1883; DT 12/2/1883; SMH, 16/2/1883, 24/2/1883; DT 26/2/1883; Letter to editor, Echo 12/3/1883 DT, 27/2/1883; SMH, 28/4/1883; Echo, 5/5/1883.}

Within months, a fire at Coles Stationery Shop re-invigorated the debate over the utility of volunteer labour in firefighting. Volunteer firemen on scene were accused of
being overzealous, causing extensive and unnecessary water damage, despite requests by the proprietor not to do so. As a response to such criticism, some volunteer brigades threaten to disband – the Echo thought this a good thing: “it will be a matter of infinite regret if they do not carry their intention into effect. They have made a monstrous farce of a noble institution long enough.”

The situation was made more dramatic by the publication of a letter to the Herald’s editor by “Shopkeeper” on 9 June, which accused uncontrolled volunteers of damaging stock through excess water use, and more gravely, of pillaging at a fire. For a brief time, Shopkeeper’s accusations caused unity between the UVFB and MAFB - a joint meeting between them was organised, as both saw the accusations as damaging to all volunteers. The unity did not last - shortly thereafter, the UVFB snubbed a MAFB delegation and division was ‘restored’.

After the Shopkeeper fracas, the UVFB again threatened disbandment of the volunteer brigades, as a reaction to the ongoing criticism directed towards volunteer firemen. Elements in the press egged them on: “perhaps their credit would be better saved by disbanding now than by waiting to be driven out by the enforcement of necessary discipline.” Whilst the MAFB openly rejected such a course, the insurance companies’ had already put the government on notice that they would dismantle the ICFB by the end of the year, because of the lack of a Fire Brigades Bill and the ongoing existence of an uncontrolled volunteer sector. Both unpaid labour and the employers of paid labour threatened to withdraw from firefighting operations, in the absence of a more ordered system. The cry for a Fire Brigades Act was near universal.

Initially, minor changes were made to the legislative regime: the Sydney Corporation changed the way payments were made under the Sydney Building Act to reward the

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420 Echo, 8/6/1883.
422 Echo, 22/6/1883.
423 Ibid.
424 Echo, 11/6/1883 & 8/6/1883; SMH 8/6/1883; SMH 9/6/1883; EN, 13/6/1883 & 18/6/1883; SMH, 19/6/1883, 20/6/1883, 22/6/1883; EN, 22/6/1883; Bulletin, 22/6/1883; DT, 30/6/1883; Echo, 22/6/1883.
first on scene, rather than the first to put water on the fire, thereby reducing tensions on the fireground. More radical change occurred in October 1883 when Premier Stuart introduced yet another Fire Brigades Bill.\textsuperscript{425} It replicated the previous Bill, except that it also provided for volunteer fire brigade representation on the Fire Brigades Board. In what appears to be proto-social capital theory in the making, Premier Stuart argued that volunteers “were giving their time, which was their capital, in the extinguishing of fires, and that on this account they had just as much right to be represented at the board as capital in other forms.”\textsuperscript{426} This proposition was contentious: detractors argued that volunteer brigades made no monetary contribution and would be in the position of voting themselves subsidies. On the other hand, other parliamentarians proposed that the permanent paid firefighters also be represented on the Board, arguably representing the first attempt at public sector employee industrial democracy on record. The debate over the Bill also raised many other issues: funding of volunteer brigades, remuneration for volunteers under the Bill and the possible demise of volunteer firefighters.\textsuperscript{427} Of note, the Bill also provided for the possible regulation of country brigades, allowing towns to set up fire brigade boards, similar to the proposed new board in Sydney.

Unlike its predecessors, Stuart’s new Fire Brigades Bill actually made it through all legislative processes. The Bill was passed by the Parliament, to finally create a Fire Brigades Act, which was gazetted on January 24, 1884.\textsuperscript{428} Debates raged as to who would be appointed Superintendent under the new Act. There were petitions and other representations supporting C. Bown, led by the MAFB, whilst the UVFB and its supporters, pushed for the appointment of its officials, namely W.S. Kelly as Superintendent and E. Oram as the Chairman of the Board. Amidst the controversy, Stuart appointed an outsider as Superintendent, William Bear, previously the 3\textsuperscript{rd} Officer in the London Fire Brigade on the recommendation of its head, Captain Shaw. The selection of the volunteers’ representative on the Board was equally contentious. The meeting convened to develop an election process was, according to the MAFB,

\textsuperscript{425} DT, 6/7/1883; SMH, 12/10/1883
\textsuperscript{426} SMH, 19/10/1883.
\textsuperscript{427} SMH, 23/10/1883, 1/11/1883; DT, 22/10/1883, 23/10/1883, 30/10/1883, 1/11/1883; EN 19/10/1883, 20/10/1883.
\textsuperscript{428} Adrian, Fighting fire, p.36.
illegal due to the irregular and riotous behaviour of the UVFB delegates. Notwithstanding representations by the MAFB, a vote proceeded at a subsequent meeting with the UVFB's representative, Torning being elected in a close vote.429

3.11. Conclusion

After thirty years of operation (and debate), the US styled volunteer fire companies were to be regulated, not by their peers, but by a Board with a nucleus of permanent paid firefighters. A paid superintendent, from the English school of centralised control and paramilitary discipline, was to be in charge of their operations on the fireground.

Whilst the creation of the ICFB was motivated by insurance company profit, the VFCs were more aligned with localist concerns over the risk of fires in particular communities. Indeed, there was a strong interdependence between the companies and their communities. The VFCs provided fire protection. The local community provided funds through subscriptions and fund-raising, and local capital, such as Morts and the breweries, would often provide fire engines. The companies and their communities interacted at benefit nights, dances and at the major rituals of the firemen, such as local demonstrations and fire engine christenings. In the early years, politicians and the press heaped praise on the volunteers, who distinguished themselves from the “paid servants” of the ICFB, by emphasising their volunteer status and self-managing voluntary organisation. Civic virtue, rather than money was their motivation.

Yet, their voluntarist autonomy and enthusiasm, which was lauded as a virtue, eventually led to calls for their regulation. They began to transcend their localist foundations, instead gravitating towards the “brotherhood” of volunteer firemen. Competition between companies (and with the ICFB) began to outweigh the needs of their local communities. Shows of volunteer unity, at an array of demonstrations and christenings held beyond the areas that they were supposed to protect, led to both communities leaders and the press to question their utility in effective fire suppression. When the inter-brigade competition extended to the fireground and led to quite dysfunctional outcomes at fires, the call for regulation and unified control

became widespread, with some equating volunteers to Sydney’s ‘larrikins’. The press sought solace in order and unity of command – not only were the behaviours of the volunteers bought into question – the very utility of volunteer labour was in question.

The press, business and legislators wanted more than unbridled enthusiasm. They called for a unified and managed fire service, free of conflict and zealotry that was a product of the volunteers’ self-management. Government was slow to act to these calls, due to a dysfunctional parliament. Nonetheless, thirty years after the first legislative attempts, the Fire Brigades Act was passed in 1884, effectively ending the independence of VFCs on the fireground. Unified command and control of the fireground in urban firefighting had arrived. In Sydney, it came in the form of Superintendent Bear from the London Fire Brigade, who was an advocate of the more British, paramilitary approach to firefighting.

As Chapter Four outlines, fears that regulation of VFCs would effectively lead to the demise of the volunteer movement were not unfounded. Within twelve years volunteers had disappeared within the City of Sydney and fourteen years after that, volunteer fire companies were abolished across the State. The VFCs did put up some resistance to their emasculation. However, changes in technology, the built environment, community expectations and management systems made their demise almost inevitable.
Chapter 4. Disaggregated control – volunteer decline and the growth of paid and partially paid labour - 1884 to 1909

4.1. Introduction

The period between 1884 and 1909 was essentially a period of transition, between the unregulated and conflict ridden environment of the preceding decades and the highly centralised and disciplined reign of the Board of Fire Commissioners that followed. The *Fire Brigades Act* attempted to unify two disparate systems – the independent VFCs and the more regimented and controlled permanent brigade. Whilst the Act appeared to quell hostilities on the fireground, by giving absolute control to the new Fire Brigade Board’s Superintendent, its ability to construct a unified and effective system of firefighting was less assured. VFCs maintained significant independence off the fireground and their dependability in both providing fire protection to their local communities and forming a cohesive system of firefighting was continually subject to question. Using the legislative and financial tools at its disposal the Sydney’s Fire Brigade Board (FBB) attempted to modify VFC behaviour and performance, but, in the end, it chose to eradicate the declining VFCs from Sydney. External forces, such as rapid urban growth, technological change and labour markets tightening the ability to volunteer, helped them in this process.

During this period localism was used by both the FBB and the VFCs for their own ends. The FBB continually tried to reframe the VFCs’ collective rituals as diverting them from their responsibilities in protecting their local communities. Ironically, the FBB almost became an ‘enforcer’ of localism, forever trying to spatially limit VFC activities to within their local communities. VFCs also harnessed localist agendas in an effort to stop their domination by the ever growing FBB permanent corps, the Metropolitan Fire Brigade. In country brigades localism played an important role in the formation and maintenance of brigades. However, where quasi-volunteers felt that they were being exploited, localist tendencies were soon replaced by division and, in some cases, industrial action.
The eventual success of the FBB in protecting Sydney from both fire and fireground conflict, and the perceived failure of volunteer labour to provide effective protection in urban firefighting, set the scene for the new statewide arrangements created by the new Fire Brigades Act in 1909. Under this new regime unpaid volunteers disappeared altogether in urban areas across the State - urban firefighting was now in the realm of paid labour. Unlike the US brigades referred to in the literature review, the volunteer fire companies had left the scene with more of a whimper than a bang.

4.2. Context

The period from the mid 1880s to the early 1900s, was one of significant political, economic, and industrial change in NSW. In 1891, the complexion of NSW politics changed. The Labour Electoral League won the balance of power between the traditional free-traders and the protectionists. There is debate over the effectiveness of labour’s early foray into politics, but there is no doubt that it assisted in the development of major industrial, social and political reforms, such as the Industrial Arbitration Act, the franchise for women and ‘closer settlement’ legislation. Further it set the stage for successive Labor Governments after 1910. More broadly, the creation of the Federation of Australia in 1901 had profound impacts on colonial politics, governance, taxation and the provision of services, such as defence and postal services, which were once the preserve of colonial governments.

The NSW economy began to falter in the mid to late 1880s, foretelling the end of the “long boom” that was created by gold (and other) mining, pastoral exports, government expenditures and residential development. NSW, like the rest of the nation, remained in a severe depression that lasted until the mid 1900s. A tightening of capital from England and the collapse of local banks and building societies caught up in land speculation, exacerbated the crisis. In NSW (and elsewhere), many

industries and their workforces declined, causing hardship, unemployment and underemployment.\textsuperscript{432}

Local government, with some exceptions, was caught out by the depressed economy: its government endowments were decreasing at the same time as its revenue streams were reduced, due to falling property values. Sydney suburban councils were hit hard: for example, between 1893 to 1897, Ryde, Hurstville and Kogarah all experienced a depreciation of their revenues of more than twenty five percent, whilst many councils were unable to collect rates from landholders. Large repayments on loans that were taken out during the boom (to finance needed urban infrastructure) exacerbated the problem. In the latter half of the 1900s, drought conditions lifted and agricultural exports and local manufacturing grew considerably, helping to lift the economy out of depression. Improved local government finances and a growing labour market employment were evidence of change: in the seven years between 1903 and 1910, manufacturing employment increased by fifty percent.\textsuperscript{433}

The 1880s also heralded the growth of organised labour. Unionism was spreading beyond the skilled urban tradesmen to cover a diverse range of skilled, semi skilled and unskilled workers. Unions such as the Australian Workers Union (AWU) and the Amalgamated Miners’ Association organised in regional NSW, whilst unions for transport, maritime and retail workers and public servants formed. The importance of common cause for organised labour was manifest, in both the increasing participation of unions in the NSW Trades and Labour Council and the large number of unionists that participated in the 1890 Maritime Strike (one of many strikes during the period).\textsuperscript{434} Economic conditions slowed down union formation and growth between 1892 and 1899. According to Smith (1922) “probably not more than sixty unions, with an indefinite number of members, had survived the trying period of the nineties.” Union formation and membership picked up in the 1900s assisted by the introduction of


\textsuperscript{434} Patmore, \textit{Australian labour history}, pp.56-63.
statutory conciliation and arbitration systems. By 1904 NSW boasted 154 “active” unions with close to 80,000 members, and five years later, 127,000 members belonged to 166 unions.\textsuperscript{435}

Notwithstanding the dramatic events of the period between 1884 and 1909, the firefighting ‘industry’ was relatively unaffected by them. Its legislative regime, the \textit{Fire Brigades Act}, was already in place and, apart from the complexities of telephone rental from the now Federal Postmaster General, Federation left it largely unaffected. Even economic depression did little to hamper its growth, particularly in Sydney under the Fire Brigades’ Board (FBB). The FBB’s expenditures increased every year from 1888 to 1906 and station growth was relatively spectacular during the depression: in 1884 it had one station of its own and coordinated fifteen VFCs. By 1909, it operated thirty-two stations in all, spread across the city and suburban Sydney. As discussed below, even though residential and other development slowed down during the 1890s (relative to the 1880s), the FBB had to catch up with the significant growth that occurred in the decades before its formation. The FBB and other country boards were also largely untroubled by organised labour. Indeed, firemen were not organised into a union until after the formation of the Board of Fire Commissioners in 1910. That is not to say that the various firefighting boards had an easy time of it with their ‘workforces’. As described later in the chapter, it was unorganised volunteers and quasi-volunteers that were the source of their ‘industrial’ angst.

\textbf{4.2.1. Urban Growth}

As discussed in the Literature Review, the product market for firefighting services is predominantly determined by the size and complexity of the built environment. Between 1884 and 1909 population growth and a maturing commercial and industrial sector in Sydney and towns across the State, led to an increasingly complex built environment. As Appendix 2.1 shows, NSW’s population more than doubled in that period, from less than 750,000 in 1881 to over 1.6 million people by 1911. In the same period, Sydney’s population increased from less than 225,000 to over 630,000

residents. The City of Sydney grew by just under 12,000: it was the fourfold increase in suburban Sydney’s population that led to the large increase in the metropolitan population. By 1911, one in three people in the State lived in the suburbs of Sydney. Some suburbs, like Marrickville experienced very large increases: in 1881, its population was 3501 residents but by 1911, it exceeded 30,000. Municipal populations also expanded rapidly in the west, both close to the city (Leichhardt, Petersham, Ashfield and Newtown) as well as further afield (Granville and Rookwood). Newtown, Hurstville, Canterbury and particularly Rockdale developed quickly in this period, with the latter municipality’s population exceeding 14,000 by 1911. In the east, Waverley and Randwick enjoyed an eight-fold increase in population, whilst North Sydney, Manly and the outlying shires of Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby grew rapidly in the North.436

When the Fire Brigade Act was first gazetted, only one urban area outside of Sydney sustained a population of more than 10,000 people, namely Newcastle and its suburbs. By 1911, four centres boasted such a population: Newcastle & Suburbs (53,741) and West Maitland (12,377), Goulburn (10,023) and most notably, Broken Hill (30,972). Broken Hill had grown out of the desert, due to the discovery and subsequent mining of extensive silver, lead and zinc deposits. Coal mining also drove urban development around Newcastle, and later, in West Maitland. Other centres such as Lithgow were growing on the back of coal mining and associated industries (e.g. iron & steel production). Other centres had more moderate growth and, in the case of centres such as Deniliquin, Grenfell and Kiama, their populations actually decreased.437

With the increase in population in both Sydney and the rest of the State, came a large increase in the building stock. As Appendix 2.2 indicates, between 1881 and 1911 the number of dwellings in Sydney more than trebled. In fact they doubled in just one decade, the 1880s. By 1911, there were close to 130,000 occupied dwellings in

436 Appendices 1.1 & 1.2.
Sydney. By this time, housing was being displaced in the City of Sydney by industrial and commercial development – the growth was all in the suburbs. Some expanding outer suburbs had hundreds of residences but no fire brigade, with Hornsby standing out with close to 1900 dwellings left unprotected.\textsuperscript{438} Outside of Sydney, the growth in residential building stock was less dramatic, though still significant, doubling between 1881 and 1911. At the end of this period, mining centres like Greater Newcastle (11,526) and Bulli Shire (2081) were growing and had significant residential areas (number of dwellings indicated in brackets).\textsuperscript{439}

Accompanying the rise in population and housing stock was the "vigorous policy of public works" and infrastructure development in NSW, particularly in the 1880s.\textsuperscript{440} The suburban and statewide rail network developed extensively from the 1880s and in 1887, the Nepean water scheme finally came on line to provide the rapidly expanding metropolitan area with adequate water supplies, supplied at adequate pressures, which was important for firefighting.\textsuperscript{441} Manufacturing grew rapidly in Sydney in the latter half of the nineteenth century, to the extent that it became the largest sector of its labour force.\textsuperscript{442} Furthermore Sydney's position as the conduit for all pastoral and agricultural trade between NSW and Britain led to significant growth in docks, stores, and engineering undertakings.\textsuperscript{443} With the 'long boom' in Sydney also came its development as a large scale commercial centre, supporting a multitude of financial, merchandising and trading companies, building on its already predominant position the centre of the colony's administration.\textsuperscript{444}

The explosion in the number of buildings obviously had a profound impact on the demand for, and the type of, fire services required in colonial NSW. Yet, the dramatic

\textsuperscript{439} Ibid., pp.421-422; Appendix 2.2.
\textsuperscript{440} Coghlan, \textit{Labour and industry}, pp.1405-1424.
\textsuperscript{442} P. Ashton, D.B. Waterson, and M. Kelly, \textit{Sydney takes shape: a history in maps}, HEMA, Brisbane, 2000, p.44.
\textsuperscript{444} Ibid., pp.31.
increase in the amount of building stock is only part of the story. The spatial
distribution of the ever-growing building stock was equally important, particularly
with respect to the provision of fire services and the ever-changing frontier between
city and town, and town and ‘the bush’. The most significant aspect of the spatial
development of cities and towns across NSW in the last three decades of the
nineteenth century, was undoubtedly, the suburbanisation of Sydney. By 1891,
Sydney had developed as far as Waverley in the East, Strathfield to the West, St
Leonards and Hunters Hill to the North and Canterbury and Hurstville in the South.
Urban consolidation also took place in established suburbs: the population of Balmain
for example, grew by 150% between 1871 and 1881. Industry and high-density
housing tended to be located towards the centre of Sydney, given its proximity to the
ports, large-scale industrial undertakings and rail yards. The development of a
widespread network of steam trams and later suburban rail lines made the
suburbanisation process possible.445 Suburbanisation was not merely driven by the
population explosion and the developments in steam driven mass transit: the land
boom and the subdivision of parcels of land into housing estates through targeted
marketing by developers and real estate agents, were also at play.446

4.2.2. Technological Change

The period from 1880 to the early 1900s was also a period of rapidly developing new
and enhanced technologies, that would have a profound impact on both the demand
for fire protection and the delivery of fire services. The implementation of electricity,
telephone and modern water distribution systems all started in this period.447 Together
with modern transport systems, such as cable and electric propelled trams, a rapidly
expanding suburban and state wide rail network, and the emerging use of internal
combustion engines, these changes would alter both the shape of, and activities in,

446 Kelly, 'Eight acres'.
447 S. Jobson, 'Power for the people: a history of electricity in Sydney - speech delivered at the Union
Macquarie book of events, Macquarie Library, Sydney, 1983 p.126; Clark, ‘Worse than physic’
Sydney and other large urban centres in NSW, as well as provide those involved in fire suppression services with new opportunities and challenges.448

For example, new communications technologies helped the FBB control the operations of Sydney’s VFCs. The introduction of a series of street-side fire alarms throughout the city area of Sydney in May 1885, eventually lead to the demise of the ‘general call of fire’, which utilised public manual bells or the chaotic summoning of brigades by excited men on horseback. All of the alarms were now electrically connected to the Headquarters Fire Station (No.1) and, upon an alarm being activated, the full time Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) would turn out with a steam fire engine, a manual engine and the ladder truck. "In the meantime", VFCs would also be informed of the fire.449 The new technology ensured that the paid MFB firefighters had effective control over the of the alarm system and would, by design, ensure that they were notified first in the event of a fire. Furthermore, the introduction of new electric communication systems in 1886, enabled the Board to stop using a large manual bell to signal to the various brigades that there was a fire: instead the “duty man” at Headquarters could, through the use of telephone connections and electric house bells, notify firefighters across Sydney of a fire call. Bear observed that that the bell “caused a great deal of unnecessary excitement”.450 By removing the generalised ‘alarm of fire’, he also gained the ability to choose who responded to particular fires and incidents, rather than Brigades and other groups of people, in effect, responding themselves. By 1887, thirty-one stations and other facilities were connected up the FBB’s telephone system, thereby improving turnout speeds.451

By the mid 1890s, the ability of VFCs to effectively utilise the new communications technologies was under serious question. At the time, Superintendent Bear promoted the use of telephone alarm systems only where they could be connected to stations with permanent staffing, based on the unavailability of volunteer firemen during the


449 SMH, 8/5/1885.

450 Ari1886, p.13.

daytime and their requirement for regular testing and servicing.\textsuperscript{452} The ready availability of permanent men and the control that could be imposed on them coalesced with the new technologies to exclude the VFCs from relevancy in rapidly expanding Sydney. By 1899, the Board had achieved a high level of centralised control over the operations and movements of all brigades within its jurisdiction through the development of a turnout system, whereby all stations, or combinations of them, could be responded to fires, with the press of single button at Headquarters Station.\textsuperscript{453}

Technology was also a means of enforcing control over the permanent men. In 1889, when the FBB was pressured to man the watchtower at Headquarters, Bear had a watchman's electric clock installed in his office, which the man in the tower had to activate from the watchtower every quarter of an hour. The 'electrical ties' between paid firemen and the Board were extended in 1892, when the Board installed house bells in the homes of paid auxiliary firemen attached to new Newtown Station (see section 4.4.4). Whilst done in the name of stopping the "neighbourhood being disturbed by the clanging of the objectionable fire bell", it also enabled tighter control of the new partially paid men.\textsuperscript{454}

Advances in steam technology and other forms of mechanisation also strengthened the hand of the permanent men. As Neilly (1960) noted, steam powered fire engines were more complex to operate and maintain, and together with new communications technologies, made firefighting a full time business.\textsuperscript{455} The Board, for example, only supplied its own MFB stations with steam powered fire engines, leaving all of the volunteer fire companies to rely on manual hand driven pumps. Furthermore MFB stations were also supplied with “American snap harnesses”, so that the horses could be quickly attached to the engine for a rapid turnout.\textsuperscript{456} Indeed, the MFB stations even

\textsuperscript{452} AR1896, p.7.
\textsuperscript{453} AR1899, p.2.
\textsuperscript{454} AR1889, p.8.
\textsuperscript{455} Neilly, 'The violent volunteers', p.104.
\textsuperscript{456} AR1886, p.13.
maintained a monopoly on horse transport until 1889 when horses were finally provided to five volunteer stations.\footnote{AR1889, p.8.}

The trend of the permanent men monopolising new and important technologies continued. After one large-scale fire, Bear called for mechanised fire escapes, capable of reaching fifty feet in height, to support the rescue of persons trapped in the city’s taller structures. Bear planned to attach these appliances to Nos. 1, 2 & 3 stations, all either staffed (or planned to be staffed) by MFB permanent firemen.\footnote{AR1888, p.10-11.} Thus Bear continued the trend of concentrating in the hands of the permanent men, the newer and more advanced equipment on offer. This trend continues to the present day – only stations manned by permanent firefighters are allocated aerial appliances (e.g. ladder and aerial platform trucks).\footnote{see Crown Employees (NSW Fire Brigades Retained Firefighting Staff) Award 2005 (352 NSWIG 424), subclause 6.2.2.}

Over the years, more steam powered fire appliances came online including lightweight versions, which gave brigades greater mobility, but again were only distributed to stations with permanent men. For example in 1899, the Board attached 260 gallon steam fire engines to Darlinghurst and Marrickville, installed a set of forty-five foot ladders at Redfern and introduced a 700 gallon double vertical steam fire engine into Headquarters. Meanwhile the imperatives of Empire were impacting on the transport needs of the Brigades and were influencing their technological development. Horse shortages generated by the Boer War and colonial needs in India led to the investigation of using either steam, electric or liquid fuel “auto-motor engines” for the Board’s future haulage needs.\footnote{AR1894, p.3; AR1897, p.7; AR1899, p.3; AR1900, p.3; AR1901, p.4.} In the immediate post-Federation period petrol driven fire engines emerged as a viable motive power for the transportation of men and the driving of their pumps. The FBB’s first petrol driven appliance (a chemical fire engine) was commissioned in late 1904 and, by late 1908, two additional petrol driven “motor pumping engines” were in service.\footnote{AR1907, p.3, 8; AR1909, p.4.} In the 1907 Annual Report it declared: “the days of the useful steam fire engines are numbered, and it is proposed to gradually supersede them by motor fire engines as they become

\footnote{457 AR1889, p.8.}  
\footnote{458 AR1888, p.10-11.}  
\footnote{459 see Crown Employees (NSW Fire Brigades Retained Firefighting Staff) Award 2005 (352 NSWIG 424), subclause 6.2.2.}  
\footnote{460 AR1894, p.3; AR1897, p.7; AR1899, p.3; AR1900, p.3; AR1901, p.4.}  
\footnote{461 AR1907, p.3, 8; AR1909, p.4.}
worn out. New, more mobile, motorised transport gave the permanent men a greater range of operations and thus control in areas that their heavier appliances denied them.

Whilst technological change during between 1884 and 1909 was far reaching, the most profound change for volunteer firefighters and the firefighting industry generally was the centralised command and control regimes set up by the Fire Brigades Act, 1884. The Act, and its associated Regulations and Board Orders undermined the self-autonomous nature of the voluntary fire companies – if Sydney VFCs wanted a place on the fireground, they had to be subservient to a “paid servant”, a Superintendent of the Board.

4.3. The Fire Brigades Board in Sydney

The Fire Brigades Board’s first meeting was held on April 16, 1884. For the first time, one body managed fire brigade operations across Sydney, whether performed by paid or volunteer labour. The Board was set up as a statutory authority, rather than as an ordinary government department subject to ministerial control. As shown in Figure 1, there were six members of the Board, representing local government (City and suburban), the insurance industry (local and other), the VFCs and the Government.

Figure 1 – Representation on the Fire Brigades Board (Sydney)


\(^{462}\) AR1907, p.3.
\(^{463}\) AR1884, pp.1, 8.
After the gazettal of the Act in January 1884, the Board took over three months to form. Regulations had to be developed that governed the election of local government, insurance industry and VFC representatives. The first Board had some old faces: as discussed previously, Andrew Torning was the volunteers’ representative. The latter group’s resistance to C. Bown’s possible appointment as Superintendent may have had unexpected consequences: the Government appointed C. Bown as Chairman of the new Board. The Board quickly developed a series of Regulations, the most contentious regulating the conduct and operation of VFCs who sought to be subsidised (discussed below). In essence, the Fire Brigades Board (FBB) had two roles, with the objective of unified control of fire suppression. Its first was to establish and maintain a permanent brigade of directly employed paid firefighters, namely, the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB). As discussed in this and subsequent chapters, these ‘permanent firemen’ were subject to rigorous discipline and management. The FBB’s second role was to regulate the volunteer fire companies of Sydney, through a process of registration and the provision of subsidies, the latter requiring VFCs to meet minimum staffing and equipment standards and ongoing compliance with FBB Regulations and the Superintendent’s orders. Other the subsidies, compliant VFCs were also provided other privileges, such as access to communications networks (e.g. telephones), as described above. As such, the FBB had two means at their disposal for controlling VFCs: the use of the Superintendent’s powers and authority on the fireground and through a subsidy system designed to regulate, at least to some extent, the VFCs beyond the fireground. VFCs were still voluntary associations, but they were now subject to direction at fires and, if dependent on FBB subsidies, limited in their actions and internal structure by regulation.\footnote{AR1884, pp.1-3, 5-6, 14-16.}

On 1 July 1884, the MFB commenced operations, under the command of Superintendent Bear. It comprised chiefly of ex ICFB firemen, although seven members of VFCs joined its ranks throughout the year, along with a couple of ex members of the Royal Navy. By years end, sixteen VFCs were subsidised under the
Act and were subject to the Regulations. At the same time, five VFCs remained outside the system, whilst another five had disbanded. 465

Almost from its inception, the FBB sought amendments to the Act that reinforced its authority over the VFCs. It also sought to vary the spatial limits of its authority and operations. Indeed, throughout its thirty-five year existence, it vacillated between maintaining an inner metropolitan focus and seeking statewide jurisdiction. It also lobbied for improvements in fire prevention - from the mid 1880s the FBB sought legislative changes to regulate the design and construction of buildings. 466 The Board adopted the maxim "Prevention is better than cure" and sought such legislation across all of metropolitan Sydney, to cover the suburbs which were "quite urban in character, and are no longer merely villages surrounding the City."

Webb, after a visit in 1903 to at least forty-five of “the most important fire brigade centres in Great Britain, Europe and America”, returned with new technical innovations and methods of fire brigade management. The trip also reinforced the view of the Board towards regulating the built environment. After referring to the skyscrapers in US cities, C. Bown cited adverse expert opinion on such structures being built in Sydney. C. Bown’s views went beyond just fire protection: “Besides the fire hazard, they are attended by another serious evil in the shutting out of sun and air from city streets, especially where these are narrow; and thus prejudicially affecting health.” 468 Like the FBB’s other calls for change, fire prevention measures, such as a modern Building Act were, unheeded. 469

4.3.1. The growth of the Fire Brigades Board’s operations in Sydney

Notwithstanding the rapid process of urban growth occurring in Sydney, particularly in the suburbs, brigade development was initially slow. After eighteen months of operation, there was one MFB station (Headquarters) based in the city, staffed by thirty permanent firemen. Seven registered VFCs with 120 firemen also operated in
the city, along with the unregistered GPO VFB. Sydney’s suburbs were protected by eleven VFCs, with 249 members. Whilst most VFC’s had only one station, No.2, Balmain and St. Leonards VFCs each had additional branch stations.470

Throughout the rest of the 1880s, MFB permanent staffing numbers did not increase significantly. What did change was their spatial distribution. In May 1886, No.3 Stn Marrickville was opened and was operated by four MFB permanents. No. 2 Stn George Street West opened in August, staffed by a foreman and seven firemen.471 In 1888, the MFB’s headquarters was relocated from the old ICFB station to a new station in Castlereagh Street472 The new station was seen by Bear as a unifying space: “bringing our several volunteer comrades socially together for the purposes of drill, &c., and engendering a good feeling all round with the brigade.”473

The opening of Marrickville and George Street North stations was the start of the FBB’s plan to construct a series of district stations, staffed by permanent men, which would oversee fire suppression on their areas.474 A northern city station was deemed “absolutely required” by the Board given the scale of commercial development in the Circular Quay region. In the interim the Board allowed the City North volunteers to form a brigade in the area. The Newtown area was also identified as needing similar treatment, given the commercial and industrial development in the area. In the latter case, the need was made more acute by the fact that the local volunteer company was on the point of disbanding at the time.475

Whilst Bear and the Board were the drivers for brigade development, there were other forces at work. Community opinion and expectation also shaped the role and growth of the MFB. Late on a Saturday night in November, 1888, a large fire occurred in Market Street, Sydney, which destroyed a number of buildings, including the offices of the Evening News.476 The fire, and the losses that were incurred, led to a public call for the watchtower at Headquarters to be manned on a twenty-four hour basis. Bear

470 Appendices 3.1, 3.2 & 3.4; AR1885, p.18.
471 AR1886, pp.1, 13-14. Marrickville was later renumbered to No.4 Stn.
472 Adrian, Fighting fire, p.76; AR1888, p.10.
473 AR1887, p.13.
474 AR1885, p.2.
475 AR1888, pp.2, 9.
476 Ibid. p.28.
resisted the calls, based on the cost of the extra permanent men required and its lack of effectiveness.\footnote{477}

Whilst the MFB expanded, the VFCs during the second half of the 1880s had mixed fortunes. On the one hand, the suburban VFCs expanded both in the number of companies and members: by 1890 there were eighteen VFCs in the suburbs, with the vast majority subsidised by the FBB. Companies formed in fast growing suburbs such as Leichhardt and Ashfield. Indeed Paddington, which was experiencing significant growth, gained an additional brigade in the form of Paddington Brewery VFC (also known as Paddington No.2). Parramatta VFC and the newly formed Parramatta No.2 VFC registered with the FBB during this time, thus extending the reach of the FBB to the (then) outer western suburbs of Sydney. It was a different story for the city based VFCs. Their numbers dwindled, down from eight brigades spread across the business districts and adjacent city suburbs (such as Pyrmont and Surry Hills), to just three: North City and Standard Brewery, which were subsidised by the FBB, and the independent GPOVFB. There were only thirty-four city based volunteers left in 1890, down from the hundreds of earlier decades.\footnote{478}

By the beginning of 1893, there were fifty MFB firemen operating out of five stations: Headquarters, George Street West, George Street North, Marrickville and Newtown.\footnote{479} Additional stations were also in the pipeline in the inner suburbs west of the city, in the eastern suburbs and north of the harbour.\footnote{480} The rapid growth and suburbanisation of Sydney continued the calls for additional permanent men and stations within the Board's jurisdiction. In the 1896 Annual Report, Bear pushed for the stationing of permanent firemen (and auxiliaries) in inner suburbs of Darlinghurst, Surry Hills, Redfern and Paddington:

> Volunteer firemen cannot be expected to afford proper protection to these thickly-populated and rapidly-growing districts. It is absolutely necessary that permanent men, who are well disciplined and thoroughly trained to use

\footnote{477} Ibid. p.10.  
\footnote{478} Appendices 3.1, 3.2 & 3.4.  
\footnote{479} AR1893, pp.7-8.  
\footnote{480} AR1891, p.10; AR1892, p.2, 3, 8.
the ladders and all modern equipment, be stationed in each of these very important suburbs.481

The nexus between the use of specialised equipment and permanent staffing worked to advance the use of permanent men. Yet understaffing in the permanent corps continued to trouble the Board’s operational effectiveness. The wide range of responsibilities of the permanent men, and the (still) largely unregulated built environment, led Bear to be quite alarmist in the FBB’s 1897 Annual Report: these factors provided “everything necessary to burn the city down with a high wind blowing at the time. It is only by accident and good luck that we have escaped so long”.482 The Superintendent considered that one hundred permanent and fifty auxiliary firemen were needed to protect the city and contiguous suburbs.483 Bear’s alarm may have had some effect: by 1899 there were eleven MFB stations with a greater spatial coverage, and ninety permanent firemen organised into a more elaborate rank structure.484

At the same time, VFCs continued to disband and be replaced by permanents – for example Woollahra VFC disbanded in February 1898, to be replaced by an officer, three permanent firemen and four auxiliaries.485 At the request of the local council, MFB permanent men and a steam fire engine were installed at Balmain.486 Stations continued to be developed to both increase spatial coverage and avoid overcrowding at existing premises.487 Notwithstanding the FBB’s concerns over inadequate coverage of suburban Sydney, the Board experienced difficulty managing its existing operations. As early as 1892, Bear was questioning the Board’s ability to support volunteer fire companies forming in more distant parts of Sydney, such as Drummoyne, North Botany and Rookwood.488 The enormous growth in metropolitan Sydney and as a consequence, the development of new MFB and volunteer stations in the suburbs, led to the new Superintendent, Alfred Webb to break the Board’s spatial

481 *AR1896*, p.8.
482 *AR1897*, p.9.
483 Ibid.
484 *AR1899*, pp.3, 7, 11.
485 *AR1898*, p.2-3.
486 *AR1900*, p.3.
488 Ibid. p.6; *AR1891*, p.10.
jurisdiction into 5 districts, each supervised by a new officer rank, the District Officer. On 1 January 1899 these officers (being the third highest rank officer, under the Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent) were appointed to Headquarters, George Street West, George Street North), Marrickville and Paddington. In reviewing the new system, Webb commented that it allowed for “a more complete supervision of the whole area under the jurisdiction of the board”. By this point there were in excess of twenty suburban VFCs and brigade vehicles were travelling in excess of 15,000 miles each year. Notwithstanding the significant increase in the FBB’s operational capacities, by the time of Federation, urban growth in Sydney was putting real pressures on the FBB’s operational effectiveness. In the 1901 Annual Report, C. Bown referred to eighty percent increase in insured risk under the Board’s jurisdiction since December 1883. Superintendent Webb also highlighted the obvious need for more firefighting resources and expenditure. The Superintendent identified areas of Sydney that were without adequate fire protection and highlighted the time criticality of fire suppression:

The rapidity with which some of the suburbs are growing renders the introduction of fire-extinguishing appliances an absolute necessity. Where long distances intervene between a fire and a fire station, and fire has every opportunity to get a good hold before the firemen can possibly arrive.

Urban growth within the FBB’s jurisdiction led to an urgent call, in 1904, for the creation of two additional districts in the West and South as to ensure “closer and more constant” supervision and for additional stations and men. Webb boasted of the effectiveness of centralised control despite the large area covered by the Board:

the efficiency which the Department has attained may fairly be attributed to the system adopted, of having the whole of the instruction, testing of, and repairs to, machinery and plant generally, carried out at headquarters under competent officers. Unity of purpose and simplicity of management are thus assured although detachments of men are scattered over some 241 square miles.

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489 AR1899, pp. 3, 6 & 7.
490 Ibid. p.6.
491 Ibid.
492 AR1901, p.1.
493 Ibid. p.7, 8.
As discussed more in section 4.4.3, Webb’s “unity of purpose and simplicity of management” had been made easier with the demise of all VFCs across Sydney at the end of 1901. From 1902 onwards, Sydney was solely protected by FBB stations, staffed by either paid permanent men (the MFB) or ‘volunteer’ firemen, who were actually quasi-volunteers, in that they were paid a retainer as well as for attendance at fires and regular training activities (drills).\textsuperscript{494} Rather than being organised into self-managed volunteer fire companies, they were now subject to the direction and control of the Superintendent as \textit{employees} and were attached to (the equally problematically titled) “volunteer fire brigades”. They maintained at least one practice of the VFCs: they were ‘on call’ for fires, rather than in a constant state of readiness at the station. Despite the FBB’s brigades improved unity and effectiveness, Webb was ever aware of the dangers of urban growth outstripping that of their brigades.\textsuperscript{495} By 1905, Webb had started to codify ‘standards of fire cover, using temporal benchmarking to determine effectiveness:

in the congested districts, fire stations and alarms should be so arranged as to protect, in a methodical way, the areas, so that no part is more than five minutes from the nearest fire station; that is, from the time the fire is observed, until the arrival of a fire engine at a fire. (...) In the suburbs the time might be extended. In order to cover the area systematically a standard of time is necessary; and although it may at the present moment not be practicable, owing to money considerations, to establish fire brigades throughout the whole of the Board’s area, it would be well to distribute the various sections so that ultimately they may be at regular intervals. The matter is urged owing to the rapid developments which have taken place in the suburban areas.\textsuperscript{496}

New stations were clearly required but their construction was obstructed by a lack of financial and legislative support from the government. Parliamentary votes for the construction of new stations continually lapsed in the early 1900s thereby delaying the construction of new or enlarged stations across Sydney and suburbs - Headquarters Station, in particular, was operating well beyond its capacities and in 1904 had to be temporarily extended by leasing adjoining properties.\textsuperscript{497} In the Board’s

\textsuperscript{494} Where the term ‘volunteer’ is enclosed in single quotation marks, it signifies quasi-volunteer status.

\textsuperscript{495} AR1903, p.6; AR1904, p.7. Some of these changes were given effect in 1906: AR1906, p.3, 7.

\textsuperscript{496} AR1905, p.6.

\textsuperscript{497} AR1903, p.2, 6; AR1904, p.3, 7.
1904 Annual Report frustration was evident: “it were better that sums should not be voted, rather than, after voting, they should not be used for the intended purposes.”

1905 finally saw the release of these funds, totaling £25,000, which were used for the erection of Botany, Glebe, Pyrmont & Woollahra fire stations and additions elsewhere. By this stage, the MFB had swelled to 148 men, and the building program assisted in housing this growing corps. Another £10,000 was made available at the same time to pay for existing contracts at Kogarah, Alexandria, Crows Nest, St Peters and Waterloo. A number of new ‘volunteer’ staffed stations were also opened at this time: Bexley, Botany, Penrith, Willoughby & Randwick, expanding ‘volunteer’ numbers to 210 men. In the following year, the trend in the demise of inner city VFCs continued: Leichhardt Volunteer Fire Brigade was replaced by MFB permanent men armed with a steam fire engine and large ladders. Whilst partially paid / ‘volunteer’ numbers declined as a consequence of the replacement of ‘volunteers’ with permanents, such as occurred at Leichhardt, new ‘volunteer’ stations continued to emerge in outer suburbs and towns such as Campbelltown.

By 1907, the metropolitan district (i.e. the Board's spatial jurisdiction) had increased dramatically, after the local government boundaries changed under the new gazetted Local Government Act (rising from approximately 241 square miles to just over 350 square miles). Four new ‘volunteer’ fire brigades formed, primarily in South West Sydney and an extensive program of station building and improvement was under way. The following year, further significant growth occurred in 'outer' metropolitan 'volunteer' brigades, with the opening of six new station buildings and the appointment of twenty-eight new partially paid men, bringing their 'strength' to 248 men in total. In contrast, permanent 'strength' increased by one man, which in light of the ongoing development of the Sydney metropolitan area, led Webb to warn of the consequent drop in fire protection. At the same time he also warned of the isolation of the northern side of the harbour, in that resources in the city could not reach the north

498 AR1904, p.4.
499 AR1905, pp. 2,3, 6; AR1906, pp.3, 7.
500 AR1907, p. 1.
501 Ibid. p.3, 4, 8.
502 AR1908, p.2, 7.
between midnight and 6:00am, because of their reliance on harbour transport. The lack of permanent staff in the West also caused concern, given the emerging “important manufacturing district” in the Granville and Auburn municipalities.

The inability of the Board to keep up with suburbanisation continued to plague the FBB. In 1908, the Superintendent commented on rapid suburban development and its impact on fire protection: “[e]states in the suburbs are being cut up and built upon very rapidly, thus altering entirely the characteristics of the various localities.”

Notwithstanding a significant expansion of Brigades in this period, the FBB could not keep up with urban growth in Sydney. Urban growth also impacted upon the Board’s ability to provide accommodation for its staff as their stations (and attached living quarters) were already at capacity and the availability of housing adjacent to stations was limited.

In the face of rapid suburbanisation, by 1909 (its final year of operation), the FBB was operating twenty-one MFB stations staffed by 202 permanents and twenty auxiliary firemen. In addition, thirty-one ‘volunteer’ fire brigades, staffed by 276 ‘volunteers’ were protecting Sydney, as far away as Hurstville, Campbelltown, Penrith, Richmond and Manly. The FBB had certainly come a long way since 1884, when it had to share its space with the VFCs. Yet, as discussed in the next section, the path to unified control in Sydney, was not without problems.

4.3.2. The Regulation of Volunteer Companies in Sydney

While the FBB had established itself as the sole provider of fire services within Sydney by 1909, in its early years, it needed to establish controls over the independent VFCs, to ensure orderly firefighting in Sydney. Soon after its formation, the FBB developed Regulations that managed subsidies paid to Volunteer Fire

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503 AR1907, p.8.
504 Ibid. Marrickville was the most westerly permanent station. Webb judged the distance between Marrickville and Granville / Auburn (being some eight miles) as problematic to effective fire protection.
505 AR1908, p.7.
506 AR1901, p.3, 7; AR1902, p.3.
507 AR1909, p.16.
508 AR1902, p.14; AR1909, p.16.
Brigades and regulated the behavior of their members.\textsuperscript{509} The \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} described them as “stringent” but likely to “check the larrikinism which has occasionally marked the operations of rival firemen here.”\textsuperscript{510} The regulations prescribed who could be a volunteer in a registered, subsidised company: unless special circumstances existed, they had to be between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-two years old upon entry (unless previously an active fireman, where the age was extended to forty) and had to retire at age fifty-five. A volunteer could not be an “unnaturalized foreigner” and had to be both “physically strong men, free from defect in sight and limb, without organic disease” and satisfy minimum height and chest measurements. Occupational limits were also applied: “None but persons whose occupations fit them for dangerous service as a fireman - such as builders, masons, carpenters, painters, plasterers, plumbers, sailors, shinglers, slaters, and such like - will be enrolled or recognised as effective members.” This exclusion did not apply to existing members when introduced. Volunteers were also required to be financial members of benefit societies, effectively enabling the FBB to contract out of the financial responsibility for firefighter deaths. The most contentious occupational exclusion was the one proscribing licensed victuallers (i.e. publicans) from being volunteer firemen, alongside anyone with a criminal record.\textsuperscript{511}

Registration under the Regulations involved a series of subsidies to, and sanctions imposed on, the VFCs. As Table 4.1 shows, the VFCs were subsidised according to their manning and equipment levels. As well as being able to withhold subsidies, the Board could also impose fines of up to £5 for breaches of the Regulations.\textsuperscript{512} The Regulations, in effect, attempted to control all aspects of the Volunteer Fire Companies' operations. All members of registered companies had to be registered with the FBB. Of critical importance, for the first time spatial demarcation was to be imposed on the VFCs: the Regulations stated that "[n]o registered Company shall extend its Stations or branches to any other place, borough, or ward, without the sanction of the Fire Brigades Board." Another regulation reinforced these

\textsuperscript{509} AR1884, p.1
\textsuperscript{510} SMH, 8/7/1884.
\textsuperscript{511} Fire Brigades Board, 'Regulations under the Fire Brigades Act, 1884', \textit{Journal of the Legislative Council of New South Wales - Session 1883-4}, vol. 36, no. 3, 1884 Regs.1-6, 8-9; SMH, 8/7/1884 & 16/7/1884.
\textsuperscript{512} Ibid. Regs.19-21, 43.
geographical delimiters by explicitly assigning each VFC a district (or area), within which, it could attend calls. VFCs could only attend fire calls beyond these boundaries with the express permission of MFB Officers.513

Control on the fireground and the delineation of authority were clearly spelt out in Regulations, which was hardly surprising, given the preceding history of conflict on the fireground. A hierarchy of command and control was established, with the Superintendent at the top, followed by officers of the MFB, in order of seniority. In their absence, an MFB firemen was considered the most senior person in command on the fireground. Seniority on the fireground then cascaded to an officer of a 1st Class VFC, then an officer of a 2nd Class VFC, and so on, down to an Officer of a 4th Class VFC. Those with the least control on the fireground were rank and file members of the VFCs. Effectively, this hierarchy of command and control on the fireground meant that the most junior MFB member outranked and had authority over the most senior VFC officer.514

The Regulations also imposed minimum standards with respect to both the staffing of the VFC stations and training requirements. Regulation 25 required that each VFC member had to "take his turn of duty at his Station" and required that at least one member had to be on duty at night to communicate alarms. Drills were to be conducted at least once a month and in accordance with a standardised system.515 The volunteer tradition of demonstrations was subject to particularly strict limits. No VFC could attend a demonstration more than 5 miles from Sydney’s General Post Office, without leaving a minimum number of members in their District (see Table 4.1). The collection of subscriptions from the public, the internal rules of VFCs, their distinguishing "marks" and the naming of Company positions were also all subject to explicit control by the Board.516 Registered companies also had to comply with FBB disciplinary requirements, which proscribed insubordination, non-compliance with orders, intoxication and use of public houses for meetings and other forms of

513 Ibid. Regs.10, 12, 41-42.
514 Ibid. Reg.32.
515 Ibid., Regs. 36-37.
516 see also SMH, 8/7/1884.
"unseemly conduct". In summary, subsidised companies were subject to tight control: legitimacy and funding were provided at the expense of VFC autonomy.

Table 4.1 – Registration & associated subsidies available to Volunteer Fire Brigades under the 1884 Regulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class VFC</th>
<th>Max. Subsidy</th>
<th>Men (Est.)</th>
<th>Men (Demo)</th>
<th>Equipment Required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>£175</td>
<td>*20-40</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Steam Fire Engine, min 300ft hose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>£125</td>
<td>20-40</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2 x Manual Engines, min 600ft hose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>£100</td>
<td>15-40</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Manual Engine, min 300ft hose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>£100</td>
<td>15-40</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Complete hook &amp; ladder apparatus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>£50</td>
<td>15-40</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Hose reel(s)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Derived from Fire Brigades Board, "Regulations under the Fire Brigades Act, 1884" Journal of the Legislative Council of New South Wales, Session 1883-4, vol. 36, no. 3 (1884); SMH, 8/7/1884.

Note: * for all classes, men had to be effective registered members of the Brigade. In the case of 1st Class Brigades, at least 3 members had to be competent in the operation of steam engines.

Thus the new Superintendent William Bear had significant economic sanctions, status (being ex-London FB) and codified rules with which to control and discipline the VFCs. Bear’s background and stated intolerance to disorder on the fireground, together with press sentiment, made his likely use of these powers unquestioned: some volunteers were already being quoted in the press as saying that the new Superintendent was "like a bear with a sore head." 518

The reaction by the VFCs to the proposed regulations was predictable. After a half-hearted and abortive ‘strike’ be UVFB brigades in early June, the VFCs convened a series of meetings in an attempt to ameliorate the impact of the Regulations. Without doubt, the UVFB felt cheated by the promulgation of the new Regulations: they were under the impression that they were to review them prior to release. At their meeting on July 15, Regulation 8, which proscribed publicans from being members, raised the ire of over 150 of its members, as did the requirement to join a benefit society. One speaker referred to a number of distinguished publicans, including Superintendent Rainford and continued: “[i]f any volunteer tolerated the objectionable rules in any degree, they ought to be horsewhipped through the town.” Limits on demonstrations and the seniority of all MFB personnel over volunteers also led to heightened concern. The meeting moved a resolution that pledged all attending brigades would

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518 DT, 10/7/1884.
not register their brigades under the Regulations until a UVFB had formulated an alternative "code of rules" and submitted them to the FBB.  

According to the Herald, the UVFB's resistance to the Regulations was likely to result in their dissolution and "the establishment of a paid force, ready, obedient, and efficient". After dismissing the volunteers’ objections over the prohibition of publicans and the requirement to be covered by a benefit society, the Herald opined that the VFC opposition might be “interpreted as a chafing at the bonds of reasonable discipline rather than as justifiable protest against injustice or tyranny”. Other sections of the press were more ambivalent: the Sportsman & Licensed Victuallers Gazette labeled Bear an "impertinent new chum" and pointed out that a publican can be appointed as a Member of Parliament or awarded a royal title, but could not be appointed as a fireman. Harking back to the nineteenth century image of the fireman, the Echo sarcastically asked why not ban drinkers as well, “with the whole fire service (...) relegated to the safe hands of the teetotallers, whose combined fondness for cold water and hatred of everything ardent would seem to go far towards the very beau-ideal of a fireman?”  

At a subsequent UVFB committee meeting chaired by its Superintendent-General W.S. Kelly (a publican), sixteen of the forty-three regulations were rejected. They included many of the physical and occupational restrictions, manning prerequisites, the requirement to register rules, symbols and uniforms, limits on attendance at demonstrations and restrictions relating to publicans and alcohol. The FBB’s capacity to fine VFCs was also rejected. The Committee amended eleven other regulations, the most significant being a proposed easing of the requirements for the higher classes of registration. At a subsequent delegation to the FBB, Board member Torning was subject to some abuse by the delegates, as he was seen as not representing the volunteers in the promulgation of the Regulations. Surprisingly, the UVFB Committee ignored other, quite strategic limitations, placed on the VFCs. The ability of the FBB to spatially limit the operation of Companies and the hierarchy of control, 

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519 SMH, 8/7/1884, 16/7/1884; Adrian, Fighting fire, p.110.  
520 SMH, 17/7/1884.  
521 Sportsman & Licensed Victuallers Gazette, 16/7/1884.  
522 Echo, 17/7/1884.  
523 SMH, 24/7/1884.
that clearly favored paid MFB men, were simply uncontested. The UVFB leadership appeared to be more concerned with issues beyond the fireground such as their ongoing participation (i.e. no upper age limit), their uniforms (and icons) and their ability to display themselves at demonstrations.\textsuperscript{524} The UVFB seemed obsessed with the trappings of firefighting, rather than the more important systems of management and spatial control. Notwithstanding the objections, the Regulations were left intact and assisted Superintendent Bear in his taming, and as discussed later, eventual eradication, of the VFCs.

4.4. Firefighters in Sydney

The composition of firemen, particularly in metropolitan Sydney, changed considerably during the operation of the 1884 Act. Permanent, paid firemen grew from a small group into a large corps of men. On the other hand, volunteer numbers declined, particularly in VFCs in, or close to the city, to be eventually replaced by permanents or a new, third form, of fireman – the partially paid quasi-volunteer (referred to in the text as ‘volunteer’). Country firemen had a more stable existence during this period. They had to wait until the 1910s for similar changes to be implemented under the \textit{Fire Brigades Act, 1909}.

4.4.1. Permanent firefighters – the Metropolitan Fire Brigade

In 1884, the permanent men that constituted the Metropolitan Fire Brigade had one workplace: No.1 Stn Headquarters.\textsuperscript{525} Whilst the new Act gave them considerable authority on the fireground, their span of control was limited. In 1886 the MFB expanded its spatial coverage, when Marrickville (No.3 station) was opened. It was staffed by four married members of the MFB (one Acting Foreman and three Firemen, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Class). No. 2 Stn George Street West opened in August staffed by Foreman and seven Firemen, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Class.\textsuperscript{526} The hours of work, as specified in the Regulations were, to say the least, onerous: "Every member is to devote the whole of his time to the service of the Brigade."\textsuperscript{527} Leave was available upon application for six

\textsuperscript{524} SMH, 31/7/1884.
\textsuperscript{525} Adrian, \textit{Fighting fire}, p.76.
\textsuperscript{526} AR1886, pp.1, 13-14. Marrickville was later renumbered to No.4 Stn.
\textsuperscript{527} AR1885, p.8.
hours every ten days. Single men were encouraged to live on the station, whilst married men either lived in quarters on the station, or in nearby residential accommodation. Given the near continuous working week, it is unsurprising that the rigid Regulations extended into the firemen's homes. Regular roll calls were held between 6:00am and 10:00pm to ensure the men’s availability whilst not on the station premises. A fireman "found absent from his home without the requisite permission" was subject to suspension and possible dismissal. If a married man lived in rented quarters on the station, his home was subject to "periodical inspection" by the Superintendent. "Apartments", dormitory style accommodation occupied by single men, were subject to daily inspection (after 9am). The Superintendent had absolute discretion over where firemen lived. Other strict limitations on the lives of MFB fireman existed by virtue of the near continuous hours, including a requirement to be in full uniform, except when on leave.

The number of MFB stations and men greatly expanded from the second half of the 1880s through to the 1900s. Yet early on, the expansion of the permanent presence in the suburbs did not go unchecked, with localist tensions emerging from at least one suburban volunteer company. Initially the Board attempted to locate No.3 Stn in Crystal Street, Petersham. In May 1885, the Acting Honorary Secretary of the Petersham Fire Co., J George Walker strongly objected to the FBB's application to Petersham Council to build the station in the same street as his brigade. Walker argued that the local volunteer station had "always done their duty" and raised the "unnecessary expense" to his community of such a development. Bear responded to the concerns of Walker and others, justifying the location on its centrality in the district, its 'altitude' (in order for fire appliances to respond downhill and therefore with speed) and proximity to a local reservoir. Moreover, he stressed that the proposed district station was of strategic regional importance, "more especially in the daytime, when the firemen of the present station will be at their work."

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528 Adrian, *Fighting fire*, p.112.
529 AR1885, pp.8-9.
531 *Evening News*, 12/5/1885.
Petersham Council agreed to the Board's request for a lease a few weeks later. However, the FBB rejected Council’s offer of a twenty-one year lease.\textsuperscript{532} Whether or not the Council indirectly played to localist concerns by imposing such a short lease period on the Board, in light of the capital expenditure required for a district station, is unclear from the records. The district station was eventually opened around the corner on the Marrickville Council side of the Marrickville – Petersham council boundary in May 1886. Ironically, the Petersham Volunteer Fire Company was winding up at the time.\textsuperscript{533} The Petersham tensions reflected an ongoing and recurring theme in the provision of fire services in NSW; that of localism jarring with the more distant and centralised requirements of the Board.

The early 1900s saw a slight improvement in the employment conditions ‘enjoyed’ by permanent firemen. They were paid weekly rather than monthly and were able to take leave every eighth day, rather than every tenth day. Their annual leave was increased and consideration was given to equalising their rents, regardless of whether they resided in stations, or adjacent private rental properties. Acting as a spokesman for the permanent men, Superintendent Webb conveyed their approval: “These concessions will be greatly appreciated, and they are certain to still further bind the Board and the Brigade, and accentuate the good feeling already existing.” \textsuperscript{534} In 1902 further benefits were offered to the 117 men at thirteen MFB stations. Firemen (as opposed to assistant officers and above) were awarded badges after five years “good conduct and energetic service” and upon receipt were paid one penny (1d.) a day. After fifteen years, all ranks received a medal for long service, though this honour did not entitle the wearer to any additional payment.\textsuperscript{535}

In the latter half of the 1900s Webb had at his disposal a large corps of over 200 multi-skilled permanents, with a capacity to undertake new, less reactive, fire safety roles.\textsuperscript{536} His men were already proficient in skills beyond the fireground, including “blacksmithing, carpentering, electrical, engineering, painting, plumbing, horse-

\textsuperscript{533} Adrian, Fighting fire, p.81; AR1885, pp.2, 17 & 18; & AR1886, p.1.
\textsuperscript{534} AR1901, p.3, 8. In 1908, the Board provided rental concessions of up to 4s. per week to MFB men.
\textsuperscript{535} AR1902, p.4, 8, 14.
\textsuperscript{536} AR1908, p.2, 7.
shoeing [and] hose repairs.”537 Webb extended their off-fireground role to include the inspection of public buildings (including checking fire extinguishing equipment) and providing ‘instruction’ to the volunteer fire brigades. One advantage of this instruction according to Webb is that it kept the “the two forces in close touch with the other.”538 This use of multi-skilled permanents did not go unchallenged. The Sydney Trade Union of Painters unsuccessfully attempted to prosecute the FBB in the Arbitration Court in 1905, claiming a breach of their award because a permanent man from No.3 Stn George Street North had painted the station doors.539

4.4.2. Volunteer Fire Companies - Sydney

Whilst the number of permanents expanded and their responsibilities increased, the status of the VFCs, over the same period, declined. In its first Annual Report, the FBB surveyed the VFCs, after six months of operations under the new Act: fifteen companies were registered, five remained unregistered and five had chosen to disband (see Table 4.2).

Official sources give scant detail as to whether the unregistered companies had not sought registration or had failed to be certified as competent (and therefore subsidised) by the Superintendent, pursuant to the Regulations. The companies that disbanded did so for a number of reasons: in September the Manly VFB shut down due to a deficiency of funds and in the same month, the City Fire Brigade disbanded rather than seek registration under the Regulations.540 Meanwhile, other VFBs outside of the Board's initial jurisdictional boundaries, sought registration under the Act (e.g. Parramatta VFC).541

537 AR1895, p.10.
538 AR1908, p.2, 7.
539 AR1905, p.2.
540 SMH, 3/9/1884; DT, 4/9/1884.
541 DT, 4/9/1884; SMH, 18/9/1884. The jurisdictional boundaries had to be changed first. Parramatta No.1 (and a new company Parramatta No.2 registered eventually registered in 1886 (see AR1886, pp.3, 14).
Chairman C. Bown was rather candid, as to the pros and cons of the volunteer system, after six months of FBB control:

volunteering in fire service labours under the same defects as military volunteering. There is the same absence of discipline and subordination, and there is the same difficulty in obtaining an efficient body of men ready to proceed in sufficient numbers at all hours whenever an alarm is given. It is possible that should an alarm be given after sunrise most of the members would be proceeding to their daily work, and that a man would not be available.\textsuperscript{542}

Table 4.2 - Volunteer Fire Companies – 1884 (Post FBB formation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VFC</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albion</td>
<td>Unregistered</td>
<td>Disbanded 1885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandria</td>
<td>Registered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balmain</td>
<td>Registered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burwood</td>
<td>Registered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City VFB</td>
<td>Disbanded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glebe</td>
<td>Registered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hook and Ladder</td>
<td>Disbanded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manly</td>
<td>Disbanded</td>
<td>Re-registered 1886 (see Note)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mt Lachlan (Waterloo)</td>
<td>Unregistered</td>
<td>Registered 1885 as Waterloo (see Note)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newtown</td>
<td>Registered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.1 VFC</td>
<td>Unregistered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.2 VFC</td>
<td>Registered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.3 VFC</td>
<td>Disbanded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.4 VFC</td>
<td>Registered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.5 VFC</td>
<td>Registered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North City</td>
<td>Disbanded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paddington</td>
<td>Registered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petersham</td>
<td>Registered</td>
<td>Disbanded 1886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyrmont &amp; Ultimo</td>
<td>Unregistered</td>
<td>Disbanded 1887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redfern</td>
<td>Registered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Leonards</td>
<td>Registered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Brewery</td>
<td>Registered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surry Hills</td>
<td>Registered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre Royal</td>
<td>Registered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waverley/Woollahra</td>
<td>Unregistered</td>
<td>Re-registered: mid-1880s as separate VFCs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: \textit{AR1884} pp.2-3, 15-16; \textit{AR1885} p.18; \textit{SMH} 3/9/1884. Note: Parramatta and other 'outlying' suburban VFCs were not initially under the jurisdiction and hence are absent from the table.

Whilst the new Act had given the FBB’s Superintendent Bear control on the fireground, it did not give the FBB the ability to require attendance at fires, by either VFCs or their members. Yet, as C. Bown was at pains to point out, the time that

\textsuperscript{542} \textit{AR1884}, p.2.
volunteers took to reach fires and the number available to attend such fires, was crucial to effective firefighting. There was no residential qualification for VFC membership, which hindered effective response and the impact of primary employment made daytime availability unreliable. A lack of centrally coordinated access to firefighting plant was another issue: the VFCs were responsible for maintenance of their engines and equipment and had absolute control over the use of ‘their’ plant. Like VFC attendance issues, the absence of effective control and authority over such engines and equipment, made the FBB unable to depend on VFC resources. The unreliability of VFC performance created real issues for the FBB and the ingoing viability of the VFC system. C. Bown, after monitoring VFC attendances at fires, opined that instead of “finding a large number of volunteer associations willing and capable of affording ready aid in the suppression of fires, the Board had to depend entirely on its own brigade, even in places protected, as it was supposed, by local corps.”

C. Bown and the FBB were not alone in their scrutiny of VFC performance and governance. In July 1885 localism worked against the Mt Lachlan Fire Brigade in its dealings with Waterloo Council. Previously, the Council had installed trustees for the property and equipment of the Company, in response to the VFC selling a shed to a member that had been funded by public subscriptions and its proposal to move its fire engine (again funded locally) to another area of Sydney. A stand off developed between the Council and the VFC (backed by the FBB). Bear refused to recognise the trustees as the recipients of the annual subsidies and instead proposed to forward them directly to the Company's treasurer. Quite clearly, the local VFC baulked against local government control over their operations and destiny, whilst it would appear that the FBB rejected a third party intervening in firefighting operations in Sydney. Andrew Torning, who was an Alderman on the Council at the time and on the Fire Brigade Board was in a difficult position: nonetheless he sided with the Company and the FBB.

543 Ibid. p.2-3, quote: p.3.
544 The Suburban Times, 6/7/1885.
Later that year, the volunteer companies' love of pageantry, uniforms and other distinctive symbols were also under fire. In November 1885, the Board acted as Patrons to the Intercolonial Fire Brigades Demonstration, which attracted a range of participants, including non-metropolitan and interstate brigades. According to the Herald, crowd numbers were low and it was highly critical of the poor organisation by the event. The *Evening News*, in a particularly sarcastic tone, was highly critical of the excessive pageantry displayed by the volunteers:

> If a stranger were suddenly dropped into this gathering, say from Erewhon, he would imagine that he was in the company of some of the bravest warriors the world ever saw. There are officials brave in gold lace and silver lace. [...] and the medals! Some of the captains (they appear to be generals, at the very least, but that matters not) are liberally covered in medals, in gold and silver, intricate in shape and beautiful of workmanship. (...) If the [medals had been awarded for saving lives] then must two-thirds of the adult populations of the colony have been saved from fire at some time or other in their lives.

Notwithstanding such criticism, ceremonial events continued to fill the volunteers’ calendars. For example, in the same month as the Demonstration, Parramatta No.2 VFC invited a number of other companies to celebrate the christening of its new "infant" hose reel: a brigade from the Hospital for [the] Insane participated, (presumably) staffed by its employees. The following month, the arrival of the new Governor, Lord Carrington (ex London Fire Brigade) generated a very large-scale spectacle, in the form of a torchlight procession and ‘address of welcome’ from the volunteer firefighters of Sydney.

In 1885 two additional companies registered under the Act (No.1 Volunteer Fire Company and Waterloo (ex Mt Lachlan)), making a total of seventeen. Yet others floundered: Petersham, Pyrmont & Ultimo and No.2 VFCs were all in the process of trying to sell their plant and had been inactive on the fireground. Further, Manly, Waverley and Woollahra Volunteer Fire Companies remained unregistered and therefore received no subsidies from the Board. Scrutiny of volunteer attendance at

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545 *SMH*, 10/11/1885.
546 *EN*, 10/11/1885.
547 *SMH*, 16/11/1885.
548 *SMH*, 3/12/1885; *DT*, 10/12/1885; *EN*, 12/12/1885; *DT*, 14/12/1885.
fires by Bear indicated that, whilst each volunteer fire company had more than enough men enrolled, the attendance of members at fires averaged only four per incident. Indeed, volunteer attendance at serious fires was only adequate during the evening (6pm-midnight). Problematic attendance patterns were not the only issue facing the Board: as a result of breaches of the Regulations, including the disregard of the Superintendent's orders, three companies (No 1, No.2 & Petersham) had their registration withdrawn thereby losing their subsidies.  

Bear readily applied penalties on registered companies that failed to meet his expectations in terms of behaviour and performance. In addition, he recommended that companies that opened fire plugs and hydrants and operated their appliances unnecessarily "without first receiving orders after the arrival of" the Superintendent, be penalised with the maximum fine under the Regulations of £5, to be automatically deducted from their subsidy. In the FBB’s 1885 Annual Report, he foreshadowed a scheme that he hoped to implement in the following year: the division of the metropolitan area into districts and assigning to each VFC a "limited radius" of operation with more prescriptive rules. In doing so, he added: “I hope that several of the Volunteer Companies will pay a greater amount of attention to discipline or give up fire brigade business altogether." Bear hoped to increase the regimentation and control mechanisms over the volunteers, by placing operational and spatial limitations on their behaviours, and using a system of financial rewards and sanctions to achieve control.

Notwithstanding the FBB’s increasing regime of VFC management, it could not control unregistered companies beyond the fireground. For example, Bear could not apply sanctions to the unregistered Petersham Volunteer Fire Company, when Marrickville Council complained about it failing to attend fires. Woollahra became another site of contestation: Bear actively supported the formation of a new Brigade in Woollahra (Woollahra No.2 VFC) due to the inability of the original unregistered VFC to maintain "a man always on the premises" and attend local fires. Bear disconnected telephone connections from the original brigade and transferred the lines

549 AR1885, pp.2, 18.
550 AR1885, p.18.
551 Complaint by Marrickville Council reported in EN, 20/1/1886.
to the new brigade. His actions were roundly criticised by the Secretary of the Woollahra Volunteer Fire Brigade. He accused the Board of withholding registration of his brigade, whilst actively processing that of Woollahra Fire Brigade No.2, being "a newly fledged, untried brigade of some four months standing." The co-existence of registered and unregistered brigades within the same spatial territory was not without its problems: when both Woollahra brigades attended a fire in Paddington in January 1886, Bear reported that "several of the volunteer firemen [were] unamenable to his authority".

Truculence was not limited to the unregistered companies. In February 1886, the Alexandria VFB wrote to the FBB informing them that they would disband unless the latter body increased their subsidy to £100pa. The Daily Telegraph labeled the threat, and its subsequent implementation, as a strike. The FBB ignored the "discourteous" correspondence and immediately placed two paid men in charge of the station, which was, in all likelihood, the first time in NSW that paid workers had been used as 'strikebreakers' against agitated volunteer workers. The troubles at Alexandria encouraged the Superintendent to develop lateral solutions to fire station staffing. He suggested that Alexandria be made an auxiliary brigade "by employing 10 or 12 good men at a retaining fee of 10s. per month, with a percentage on the fires they attend.”

While the proposal was not implemented, it may have been the genesis of the auxiliary corps half a decade later (see below). The Alexandria VFC eventually disbanded and permanent firemen were placed there around the clock, pending the company's "reconstruction".

4.4.3. “Only a question of time” the demise of Sydney’s volunteers

By early 1887, the FBB was increasingly wearisome of the VFC’s demands for subsidies with little regard for firefighting outcomes. C. Bown in the 1886 Annual Report, alluded to the practice by VFCs before the formation of the FBB, of

552 DT, 20/1/1886.
553 Globe, 28/1/1886; SMH, 29/1/1886.
554 DT, 27/2/1886.
555 AR1886, p.3.
collecting subscriptions that were “mainly devoted for purposes of show and amusements”. He was equally critical of the current companies:

The Board has had considerable trouble in endeavouring to impress upon these companies that for the subsidies granted, some return by way of service must be expected. The least, which could be expected, has been asked, viz., that there should always be at night some person sleeping, if not on watch at the station, in order to summon the members of the company and to communicate with the Brigade's central station any alarm of fire. This very reasonable request has at times been resented and absolutely refused in many instances."

In the same report, C. Bown made it clear that radical change was required. In effect, he displayed his strong preference for the abolition of the VFCs and his faith in the dependability of paid labour:

It is a matter for consideration whether it might not be better that all plant be under the control of the Board, and that retaining fees be paid to picked men in certain districts who could be readily summoned from the local stations, and thus to have a body of men who could be absolutely depended upon. At present, in spite of the subsidies paid, it is a matter of doubt whether more than two or three men are available at any time at the various volunteer stations. It seems only a question of time when a more reliable organization must come into existence.

The call for "more reliable organization" was made in the context of VFC ineffectiveness, including the troubles at Alexandria and the refusal of the unregistered Pyrmont and Ultimo Volunteer Company to turn out to fires or notify fires to Headquarters. Notwithstanding the resistance of the companies and the Board's increasingly critical response, there were also reports in the same period where cooperative and coordinated responses were made by the MFB and volunteer brigades. Curiously, in the same Report where C. Bown alluded to the demise of the VFCs, Superintendent Bear stated that “the Volunteer Fire Companies throughout, whether subsidized by your Board or not, have worked in harmony, both with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, and also amongst themselves at all fires”. Indeed,

556 Ibid.
557 Ibid.
558 Ibid.
559 e.g. see details of a fire at Redfern: Sunday Times, 31/1/1886.
Bear’s words rang true for the rest of the 1880s, where a “marked improvement” was noted by the FBB. 561 Toward the end of the decade, the FBB used its powers under the Regulations to allocate VFCs specific and limited areas of operation. Thus, it further entrenched the control the FBB, the Superintendent and other permanent men had over the companies: their activities were now spatially limited unless otherwise authorised. 562 The FBB had achieved a degree of control over volunteers unseen since their formation in the 1850s.

Notwithstanding the peace, issues of control and the reliability of volunteer labour, continued to be raised. By 1894, Superintendent Bear joined C. Bown and had come to a firm conclusion that volunteer fireman had no role in the city. 563 He may have been emboldened by the decision, a few years earlier, by Melbourne’s Metropolitan Fire Brigade to abolish all volunteer brigades within its jurisdiction. 564 In 1896, the FBB backed Bear and announced that it would abolish volunteer brigades in the city area of Sydney within two years. C. Bown’s stated rationale for the change was that the growth of permanent men and equipment had made city-based VFC’s dispensable.

Yet other factors were also at play. When announcing their decision, the Board was also highly critical of the practice of VFCs receiving ad hoc grants from the Government. Whilst the political capital generated by making such donations would have been attractive to local and colonial politicians, in the Board’s view, it was “fraught with danger to the discipline and efficiency of the Brigades”, in that it placed volunteer fire companies in “a position to ignore the Regulations, to render it no longer necessary for such Company to make itself efficient”. 565 The Board’s general unease over the control of plant by VFCs and the much-publicised Deniliquin firemen’s strike (see below) also influenced their decision. 566 Bear was more

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561 Quote: AR1887, p.2. See also AR1888, p.13. Again problems of nomenclature emerge with the use of “auxiliary firemen”. Whilst the term was used prior to, and subsequent to this period to signify partially paid firefighters, in this context Bown probably meant that they provided supplementary support to the MFB permanent men. There is no documentation in this period of a regime of partially paid firemen being implemented by the Board.

562 AR1890, pp.9-11.

563 AR1895, p.3.

564 Murray and White, State of fire, pp.52-55.

565 AR1895 p.3; AR1896, p.4.

566 AR1895, p.3.
forthcoming than C. Bown, spelling out the issues in detail and labouring the need for attendance, discipline, control and professional labour:

I maintain that such thickly-populated districts should not be dependent on volunteers for protection; for, while they are following their ordinary avocations, or are absent at competitions, processions, &c., during the day, there is no protection afforded. (...)

I venture to express the hope that this year may see the last of the Volunteer Companies in the city and in the suburbs immediately adjoining. I have had to do what no other Superintendent in any Fire Brigade in the world has had to do, viz., work a permanent staff in conjunction with volunteers in such a large and very important city as Sydney; and I have done this ever since the formation of the Brigade, and I must say that it has been a source of constant trouble and anxiety to me. (...) [In] the city proper and its immediate suburbs (...) our stations must be manned by permanent men and auxiliaries who will be amenable to discipline and be thoroughly trained to the work.”

The Board's plan for the MFB to monopolise fire protection in the city and environs was soon realised. The last volunteer fire company in the city, the Standard Brewery VFC closed its doors in 1896. The Board still saw a role for volunteer companies elsewhere: “the suburbs and more distant towns must long look to Volunteer Companies as their first line of defence.”

Notwithstanding the role of VFCs in the ‘defence’ of the suburbs, some of the suburban companies had poor performance and availability issues. After the death of a young woman at a fire in Alexandria, the Board imposed tight controls on the (reformed) Alexandria VFC and a coronial inquiry was instigated. On January 29, 1897, the whole of the brigade resigned. The Board subsequently manned the station with four permanents and one auxiliary fireman. Bear felt “very contented” with the change: “I can place reliance on my own men, while previously I had to depend on a class who very readily donned a gaudy uniform but took no interest in the profession or work of firemen.” Availability issues went beyond mere shortages during

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567 Ibid. p.11.  
568 AR1896, p.4.  
569 Ibid. p.8.
particular times during the day: indeed the high turnover of volunteers created problems in terms of brigade strength and effectiveness.\textsuperscript{570}

The FBB adopted some innovative methods to address volunteer availability issues. In 1898, engine keepers’ wives were paid to make themselves available to take telephone calls (including alarms of fire) when the male volunteers were at their primary employment.\textsuperscript{571} This practice was illustrative of the blurring of the public / private divide for such ‘workers’ and their families. Again, it can be reasonably assumed that such a system of remuneration was introduced to instill a degree of control and certainty over a crucial time-critical communication system.

The FBB’s frustration with the behaviour and performance of some volunteer brigades continued. Bear complained “\textit{Some companies give very little trouble, while others give a good deal in many ways}”. He sought to re-enforce the spatial limit of their operations to their own districts and to discourage their attendance at “\textit{processions and demonstrations upon every little pretence}”. His impatience as a “practical fireman”, with the pageantry of the VFCs, was evident: “\textit{I fail to see why so much fuss should be made in these demonstrations by firemen simply because they wear a uniform, any more than there should be by a body of tradesmen who do not wear a uniform}.”\textsuperscript{572}

Towards the end of the century, Bear began to question the very calibre of local men (including volunteers) as firemen. In 1898, Bear recommended that the preference that volunteers enjoyed in recruitment for the permanent ranks cease, with preference given instead to seamen. His rationale was forthright:

\begin{quote}
Men who come from country towns require far more training than we can afford to give them, and they are not so amenable to discipline, and do not adapt themselves so readily to the conditions of our service as seamen. We must have men who are possessed of the spirit of self-reliance, and who are accustomed to act on their own responsibility in cases of emergency.\textsuperscript{573}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{570} Ibid. p.9.  
\textsuperscript{571} \textit{AR1898}, p.3.  
\textsuperscript{572} \textit{AR1897}, p.8.  
\textsuperscript{573} Ibid. p.9.
Bear’s comments do more than display a preference for seamen: they illustrate the difference between, what the volunteers offered Bear, and what he expected of a firefighter. Whilst the concepts of being “amenable to discipline” and the “spirit of self-reliance” may appear contradictory, Bear’s expectation was for firefighters to “be amenable” to both *external* and *internal* discipline. That is to say, firefighters were expected to both respond willingly to his authority and control regimes and at the same time, impose on themselves a self-discipline that was “compliant, self-regulating, punctual, thrifty, sober, and individualized”.

By the turn of the century, suburban VFCs were in decline. Indeed in their last year of operation (1901), there were four less companies in operation, with one third less members, than their peak in 1895 (see Appendix 3.2). Longstanding volunteer companies, such as Paddington, had been replaced by permanent men. Notwithstanding their decline, the Board declared in its 1899 Annual Report that the volunteer fire companies were “never more efficient than now”. Indeed by this time, all of the VFCs under the Board’s jurisdiction (except Liverpool & Richmond), were connected to Headquarters by telephone and could be ‘turned out’ at the touch of a button. By this stage, subsidised VFCs were also equipped with horses for engine haulage and the transportation of firemen.

The ever-growing brigade of permanent men and their monopolisation of newer technologies made these “never more efficient” brigades, never more marginal. Using new turn out technologies, localised management structures (districts) and a larger corps of permanent firemen, Superintendent Webb “found [it] possible to a large extent to avoid calling in the suburban [i.e. volunteer] brigades to the city fires”. Whilst done on the basis of not leaving suburban areas unprotected, it also ensured that permanent firemen monopolised the larger, more complex fires that city areas provided. It strengthened the monopoly that permanent men had on the larger and more complex technologies and cemented a ‘difference’ between the professional permanents and the volunteers. As discussed in the following section, the decline of

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574 Smith, ‘Subjectivity, hegemony, and the subaltern’, p.172.
575 *AR1899*, p.3, 6; *AR1900*, p.6; see also Adrian, *Fighting fire*, p.255.
576 *AR1899*, p.3.
577 Ibid. p.6.
578 Ibid.
the VFCs culminated at the end of 1901, when the FBB ceased any support to the VFCs and created partially paid 'volunteer' positions, directly employed by the FBB.

4.4.4. Auxiliaries and the emergence of quasi-volunteers

In 1889, the Board noted the good relations between (and among) the Volunteer Fire Companies and the MFB. Notwithstanding these good relations, the Board proposed to "experiment" with a third type of firefighter, the partially paid Auxiliary fireman, organised into an Auxiliary Corps. The proposed Auxiliary Corps, whilst closer to the volunteers in terms of their hours of work and availability, would work "in conjunction with the Permanent Brigade" and would be "more under its immediate control and direction." Whilst the Board acknowledged that the Auxiliary Corps would assist the VFCs "as a whole", it was clear that they were not to be a part of, and certainly not beholden to, any one or group of companies.

On June 6, 1892, the first seven members of the Auxiliary Corps were appointed and attached to the newly built station at Newtown. Newtown was chosen as it was judged to be " almost urban in character" and had grown to the extent that it had 'outgrown' the protection afforded by the local VFC. Further, the Board judged that telephone fire alarms could not be installed in the Newtown area, without being monitored at the local fire station. Volunteer stations were considered unsuitable for such a purpose, as their stations were generally unoccupied during the day, on account of their employment commitments. The solution was to staff the station with two permanent men and seven auxiliary firemen. The permanent men attended to telephones and alarms, and kept the equipment in order. The auxiliary men were required to reside within a prescribed distance from the station, to facilitate quick attendance and, to enable their connection to the station by telephone.

Both the Municipality of Newtown and the local VFC supported the use of auxiliaries. The Captain and firemen of the company "cordially approved" of the

579 AR1889, p.8.
580 Ibid. p.2.
582 AR1891, pp.2-3; AR1892, p.8.
583 AR1891, pp.2-3.
proposal and voted unanimously to hand over their equipment to the Board, on the basis of a transition to an MFB / auxiliary station.\textsuperscript{584} Indeed, it was their founding Superintendent C.J. Lane (and former local Mayor and Alderman) who facilitated the new MFB station through pressure on the colonial government.\textsuperscript{585} The support from the volunteers was unsurprising: ex-members of the volunteer company filled the Auxiliary Corps positions created.\textsuperscript{586} Whilst they lost some of their (ever decreasing) autonomy, the ex-volunteers in the Corps gained access to better equipment, including electric bells connected to their homes, to assist turn out.\textsuperscript{587} In 1895 the station was equipped with a steam-powered pump, in line with other stations that had permanent firemen attached.\textsuperscript{588} Of most significance was the remuneration that they would receive for their, previously unpaid, labours: they were paid a “small retaining fee” and an hourly rate for each fire attendance.\textsuperscript{589}

Whilst Newtown was the only station to be staffed with auxiliaries initially, the Board had bigger plans for the Corps from the beginning:

\begin{quote}
as population and fire risk increase, it becomes apparent that they outgrow the protection afforded by Volunteer Companies, good service though they may have rendered in the past. The fact that in the case of fires occurring in the daytime Volunteer Firemen are frequently at work in other localities, out of reach of any alarm of fire, leaves the neighbourhood wherein they operate to a great extent unprotected, and as the districts increase in importance, the necessity for reform in this respect becomes more urgent.\textsuperscript{590}
\end{quote}

Whilst the auxiliary experiment was judged a success, an extension of the system did not occur until 1895. It was decided to staff the new MFB station at North Sydney with three permanent firemen (one officer and two firemen) and a partially-paid auxiliary corps, formed by ex members of the disbanded St. Leonards Volunteer Fire Company.\textsuperscript{591} The FBB had trouble with both the transient nature of auxiliaries and their inability to meet strict physical entry requirements. As a consequence, there

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{584} AR1891, p.3.  \\
\textsuperscript{585} Chubb, \textit{Jubilee souvenir of the municipality of Newtown, 1862-1912}, p. 128, 131-132.  \\
\textsuperscript{586} AR1891, p.2, 8; AR1892, p.2.  \\
\textsuperscript{587} AR1891, p.3, AR1891, p.8.  \\
\textsuperscript{588} AR1895, p.3.  \\
\textsuperscript{589} AR1891, p.8.  \\
\textsuperscript{590} AR1891, pp.2-3.  \\
\textsuperscript{591} AR1892, p.10; AR1895, p.1.
\end{flushright}
were only fourteen auxiliaries "on the roll" by the end of 1895. Nonetheless, by that time, four stations were now operating with auxiliary men: Newtown [5 men], North Sydney [5], Darlinghurst [3] and Marrickville [1]. The auxiliary firemen were subject to the vagaries of the labour markets of their primary employment. Depressed economic conditions necessitated both mobility and compliance with employer requirements. In other words, the depression and its impact on labour demand and workers’ capacities to supply their services may have crowded out both auxiliaries and more broadly, volunteerism in Sydney's VFCs.

In subsequent years, whilst the number of stations with auxiliaries increased to six (out of ten MFB stations), the number of auxiliaries did not. Bear identified that the Board could use fifty auxiliaries alongside an expanded permanent brigade, but the impact of the auxiliary firemen's primary employment on their availability, continued to hinder such plans. The Regulations stated that auxiliary firemen must be able to attend their stations 'constantly' after 6.00pm. Yet their substantive employment often temporarily inhibited this and, in some cases, made it altogether impossible. This led to a high turnover rate and an inability to keep auxiliary staffing to its required levels. For all these reasons, on December 31, 1899, the Corps was abolished and instead replaced with another auxiliary corps consisting of 17-20 year old males who were provided a “moderate rate of wage” (and later accommodation) and out through “a system of apprenticeship to the business of a [MFB] fireman”. The concept of the auxiliary fireman had evolved from volunteers who were remunerated to attend fires into an apprentice style system for would be permanents.

Notwithstanding the problems associated with the former partially paid auxiliary corps in the late 1890s, its utility must have been recognised. Partially paid firemen re-emerged in 1902, when the suburban VFCs were effectively abolished by the FBB, through its withdrawal of all subsidies to the companies. The new partially paid firemen were still referred to as ‘volunteers’, but were in fact quasi-volunteers, paid and directly employed by the FBB, with no affiliation to independent companies. [As

592 AR1896, pp. 3 & 10. The high standards for auxiliary recruitment were a function of the preference of employment that auxiliaries received for a time into the permanent ranks.
593 AR1898, p.11; AR1897, p.8.
594 AR1898, p.3.
595 AR1899, p.3, 6; AR1900, p.3, 6.
noted in the Introduction, quasi-volunteers like these firemen, are referred to throughout this thesis as ‘volunteer’ firemen]. Existing volunteers (or new men) were either appointed as: a partially paid captain or ‘volunteer’ fireman and paid a retainer plus payment for fire calls and compulsory drills; as an Engine Keeper and paid thirty shillings per week to constantly tend the steam fire engines; or (to confuse firefighting nomenclature even more) as an “unpaid volunteer”, who received payment only for attendance at fires and who were first in line for any partially paid ‘volunteer’ positions to become available. The number of paid ‘volunteer’ positions was fixed to contain costs and maintain efficiency – on implementation, in early January 1902, approximately half of the volunteer fire company members were made ‘volunteers’. The voluntary structures, once the hallmark of the VFCs, were replaced by FB unilateralism: for example, captains were no longer elected by their fellow firemen and, were instead, appointed by the FBB.

When the changes were introduced, Superintendent Webb observed that “volunteers are drawn from the working class, and they have not such liberty of action as they had 30 years ago”. More rigid expectations of the labour force were again observed to impinge on the adequate supply of volunteers. The FBB considered that paying the volunteers would “tend toward improved discipline, greater efficiency, and more satisfactory results, both to the Department and the new [quasi-]volunteers”, notwithstanding the increased expenditure. Operational effectiveness was indeed increased: the majority of stations now had a man on duty around the clock. Thus the most critical aspect of a firefighter’s function – to turn out quickly to fires – was assured.

596 AR1901, p.3.
597 Ibid.
598 AR1901, pp.3-4, 8; quote: ‘Correspondence from MFB to Captains - re. partially paid volunteer system’, 7/12/1901, SRNSW: CGS 476, [20/14729]. Similar observations in the context of work intensification are still made today regarding the availability of volunteer firefighters. See, for example, S. Reinholdt and P. Smith, Directions in Volunteer Development in Australian Emergency Services, Country Fire Authority, Mt. Waverley, Vic, 1998.
599 AR1901, p.3.
600 Ibid. p.8.
One volunteer fire company, the Waterloo Volunteer Fire Brigade, chose to “disband as volunteers rather than accept partial-payment”. The transition for others was easier: by 1903, the Board reported that the “payment of gratuities” to the ‘volunteers’ had increased their efficiency and generally increased the staffing of each station (between eight and ten men), on account of the extra staffing available through the partially paid men (numbering 166 at that time). Other than some “[m]isunderstandings of an unimportant character”, the volunteer fire companies disappeared from the streets of metropolitan Sydney without the turmoil of previous eras.

4.5. Country Fire Brigade Boards

The Fire Brigade Act also made provision for fire protection beyond the metropolis. Subject to the colonial government’s approval, fire boards could be established in country centres. Prior to the Act’s operation, there were at least twenty-five organised country fire brigades in operation. In July 1884, the Executive Council extended the provisions of the new Act to Grafton and Goulburn, enabling them to form the first fire brigade boards in country NSW. Other boards were soon created in other country centres, such as Deniliquin, Forbes, Wagga Wagga, Bathurst & Orange. By the end of 1888, some eighteen country fire brigade boards had formed, whilst thirty-three were operative by 1900. There were also a significant number of country volunteer fire companies / brigades operating outside of the provisions of the Fire Brigades Act over this period. Brigades like Grafton, and those in the Newcastle area, operated outside of the Act, being managed by the municipal council or a local

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601 Ibid. p.3. My italics.
602 Ibid. pp.3-4; AR1902, pp.4, 7
603 Attempting to survey the full extent and operations of fire brigades in country NSW (as opposed to Sydney) prior to 1910 is problematic due to the lack of accessible data. Whilst the Fire Brigade Board (Sydney) kept very good records, the only coordinated source for fire station development and staffing were the Statistical Registers compiled after 1888 by the Government Statistician. As Larcombe points out, most of the country fire boards did not systematically produce annual reports; see T.A. Coghlan, Wealth and progress of New South Wales 1888-89, Government Printer, Sydney, 1889 pp.640-641; — — —, New South Wales statistical register for 1901 and previous years, Government Printer, Sydney, 1903 pp. 1050-1051; Larcombe, Stabilization of local government, p.113.
604 SMH, 30/7/1884, 16/8/1884.
605 Larcombe, Stabilization of local government, p.113
606 SMH, 29/12/1888; T.A. Coghlan, New South Wales statistical register for 1900 and previous years, Government Printer, Sydney, 1902, p.985.
committee. By the end of 1909, close to 100 fire brigades were operating across country NSW.⁶⁰⁷

These boards and the brigades that operated under them shared many features of the FBB and its brigades. The boards were composed of representatives of local government, local insurance companies and the colonial government. The regulations that governed the operation of country brigades were generally similar to those of the FBB. For example, there were strict 'physical' standards applied to firemen and fines of up to £5 could be imposed on company members for breaching regulations. Some of the boards had strict controls over companies collecting subscriptions from the community and limited their companies to operate within strict spatial and operational boundaries (e.g. Grafton & Wagga Wagga). The boards generally imposed a minimum and maximum number of members of each company, with the probable aim of maintaining operational effectiveness and limiting costs.⁶⁰⁸

The Country fire brigades also differed from their metropolitan counterparts in two ways. First, given the size of the most of the towns and their historical development, there was generally, with the exception of the Newcastle area, only one brigade in each locality. As such, competition between brigades was a non-issue. That is not to say that conflict was absent – as discussed later, tensions emerged at times between the various boards and their respective operational fire brigade members.

The other significant difference between Sydney’s VFCs and the country brigades was that many utilised quasi-volunteers throughout the nineteenth century. Local brigade superintendents (where appointed), captains and engine keepers were generally on salary, whilst firemen were generally paid for "drills, practice or parades" and for attendance at fires. Table 4.3 shows the systems of remuneration in place in selected brigades between 1876 and 1889. Payments for training or parades were generally either 5s. or 10s. The majority of brigades appeared to pay 10s. for the

⁶⁰⁷ Appendix 3.3.
first four hours at a fire, with 2s. paid for every subsequent hour. Deniliquin FBB paid 5s. for the first two hours and past that period gave itself the power to determine the level of remuneration unilaterally.  

**Table 4.3 – Systems of Remuneration – Selected Country Brigades (1876-1889)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Drill etc</th>
<th>1st Payment</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Subsequent</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grafton</td>
<td>5s.</td>
<td>10s.</td>
<td>4 hrs</td>
<td>2s.</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>1886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagga Wagga</td>
<td>5s.</td>
<td>10s.</td>
<td>4 hrs</td>
<td>2s.</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>1886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wollongong</td>
<td>5s.</td>
<td>10s.</td>
<td>4 hrs</td>
<td>2s.</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>1889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hay</td>
<td>5s.</td>
<td>5s.</td>
<td>2 hrs</td>
<td>2s.</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>1895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glen Innes</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
<td>10s.</td>
<td>4 hrs</td>
<td>2s.</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>1887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamworth</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
<td>10s.</td>
<td>4 hrs</td>
<td>2s.</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>1888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deniliquin</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
<td>5s.</td>
<td>2 hrs</td>
<td>Determined</td>
<td></td>
<td>1887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
<td>2s.</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>1s.</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>1876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Maitland</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
<td>2s.</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>1s.</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>1876</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Newcastle, West Maitland rates are referred to in section 3.7 of the thesis. Hay data is found at section 4.6. Other data has been extracted from the relevant Annual Reports of the respective fire boards, as listed in the Bibliography.

Whilst brigades outside of Sydney did not have to compete for ‘space’, either on the fireground or for operational areas, they nonetheless embraced competition in other ways. A number of the brigades were active at demonstrations, both locally and interstate. Some of the country boards emulated their Sydney counterparts, in regulating attendance and use of equipment at demonstrations (Deniliquin, Forbes & Tamworth). On the other hand, other boards such as Moama and Goulburn, celebrated their companies' wins at demonstrations and "competition matches in the district". Unlike the Sydney VFCs, competition did not have its roots in spatial territoriality. The motivation for participation in such events may have related to competition between regional centres, the exchange of ideas and the need to prove their capabilities to their local communities.

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4.6. Volunteer industrial action

Whilst country brigades did not suffer from the excesses of competition that were once the hallmark of the Sydney VFCs, they were not spared tensions nor, in some cases, turmoil. As discussed in the previous chapter, Newcastle’s brigade was the first to use the threat of ‘strike’ action against local management. Under the 1884 Act, the first ‘industrial’ threat was invoked by Sydney’s UVFB affiliated VFCs. In early June 1884, the UVFB instructed its affiliates not to respond anywhere until the newly formed FBB had agreed to appoint a UVFB nominee to superintend fires in the absence of the (Acting) Superintendent or the Assistant Superintendent. They were incensed that they would be subject to control on the fireground by lesser-ranked permanent firemen. The Volunteer Fire Brigades Association (VFBA) (ex MAFB) and its affiliates disassociated themselves from the UVFB’s actions and announced that they would turn out as normal. A number of the UVFB affiliates broke ranks: No.4 (South Sydney) VFB for example defected to the VFBA over the issue. On June 20, after some affiliates broke the strike very publicly at a large fire, the UVFB’s Superintendent Kelly instructed all affiliated suburban stations to again respond in their respective areas, seemingly signaling the end of the strike.

The impact of the strike by UVFB affiliates was negligible. However a number of strikes by firemen in South Western NSW in 1896 were much more effective in getting the public’s attention. In the most forceful display of industrial action by any form of firefighting labour up to that point, members of the Deniliquin Volunteer Fire Brigade voted in late January to “not attend fires, parades, or practices from February 15th, 1896” unless a number of demands were met. These included the payment of two years arrears in pay for attendance at fires, and the proper collection of contributions from the insurance industry, the Deniliquin Council and the Colonial Government. The arrears in attendance fees due to Brigade members had been

611 DT, 2/6/1884; EN, 3/6/1884; SMH 4/6/1884; DT, 4/6/1884, 5/6/1884; EN, 7/6/1884; SMH 14/6/1884; DT, 21/6/1884; SMH 23/6/1884.

ongoing since at least 1891, when it was reported that Brigade members were owed £150 by the local fire board.613

Both of these claims were a consequence of the insurance industry and, to a lesser extent, the Council not paying contributions to the Deniliquin Fire Brigades Board (DFFB), as constituted under the Fire Brigades Act. According to some press reports, the DFFB was an unnecessary bureaucracy, that paid its secretary and board members excessive fees. On this basis, it lost the support of the insurance companies, local government and the brigade members.614 In 1888, the Commercial Union Assurance Co. Ltd successfully argued in the Supreme Court of NSW that its was not required to make contributions to the Board, as it was not properly constituted because of a flaw in the Fire Brigades Act.615

Within weeks of the strike commencing, a single night-time conflagration consumed a number of commercial properties and a hotel within the town. True to their word, the volunteers locked up their fire station and hid firefighting equipment. The station doors were forced open eventually, with non-Brigade volunteers assisting in the eventual extinguishment of the fire.616 Notwithstanding appeals from the police magistrate and town officials "to their manhood", the volunteers had “entered into a stubborn compact that they would not raise a hand to stop the spread of the disaster, as far as they could they would prevent any one else from overcoming the fire”.617 The reaction to their strike was widespread: the Bendigo Independent advocated the ‘tar and feathering’ and expulsion from the town of the brigade members, under the threat of lynching, as a discouragement to such behaviour.618 By the middle of March, a new fire brigade had been formed; none of the brigades members at the time of the strike

615 (1888) 9 NSW 541.
616 Deniliquin Chronicle & Riverine Gazette, 12/3/1896, p.2; AR1895, p.3; Deniliquin Chronicle & Riverine Gazette, 16/4/1896, p.3.
were involved in the 'New Brigade'. In April 1897 a Special Inquiry on the strike was held in the town. Chaired by Superintendent Bear on behalf of the Colonial Secretary, the inquiry played out the tensions that led to the strike in great detail. The Inquiry "opened up a lot of old sores", with the community and local board divided over the actions of the men. Bear was incredulous of their behaviour. He continually highlighted that the men were paid (or sought back payment) and therefore were 'servants of the Board'. In particular he took exception to the behaviour of the local Superintendent (Kynaston) for his actions in the strike and his insubordination towards the local Board. Whilst Superintendent Bear generally described Kynaston's position and actions as "illegal and wrong", Kynaston described the events as a "friendly strike between the Board and the Brigade."

Whilst not reported as widely, at least one other town in South Western NSW experienced similar troubles at the same time. In late 1895, the Hay Fire Brigades Board (HFBB) decided, on the grounds of economy, to reduce the payment to its firemen for both attendance at monthly drills (5s. to 3s.) and at fires (5s. for first 2hrs or part thereof and 2s. for every subsequent hour to 2s. 6d. & 2s. respectively). After having their representations to maintain these payments rejected by the HFBB, the members voted to disband on February 2, 1896, if the decision was not reversed. Like their colleagues in Deniliquin, the Hay brigades’ threat was not hollow: it disbanded on the nominated date. The following day a sizeable fire destroyed a large store and a nearby residence and threatened important town infrastructure. Notwithstanding their disbandment, some of the ex Brigade members

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622 The term “permanent” indicate yet another problem of nomenclature in the industry: they were in fact partially paid firemen, rather than permanents in the sense of the Sydney’s MFB members. In its 1886 Annual Report, the Hay Fire Brigades Board reported that it had appointed "twelve regular paid firemen [...] and a number of volunteers". This description is doubtful in that the expenditure on all "Firemen" for the year ending 31 December 1886 was a mere £9 15s (compared with £6 16s. 6d. for the Superintendent and £28 16s. 8d. for the Secretary of the Board!).
623 Deniliquin Chronicle & Riverine Gazette, 6/2/1896, p.2. The use of the term “permanent” in this context is confusing and differs from the usage used in Sydney at the time and as used throughout this thesis.
responded but were “reported not to have worked in their usual enthusiastic fashion.”

Whilst the origins of the strikes at Deniliquin and Hay were local in origin and may have been influenced by the industrial mood in the pastoral industry in that region, they had an impact across the State. As referred to previously, events in Deniliquin rattled the Fire Brigade Board in Sydney as well as the populace. In particular, it raised the lack of control over volunteers and the dangers of their autonomy. C. Bown in the 1895 Annual Report complained of an “evil” that besets the administration of volunteer brigades: the power to sell or remove firefighting equipment. He referred to the locking up of equipment during the Deniliquin fire, as being fuelled by the belief that “the property was theirs to do what they chose with. That is a faith which is widely held, and has been acted upon.” It may have led Bear to recommend that volunteers be supplied with FBB owned stations in the outer suburbs “to ensue success on their part, as it brings them under better discipline, and also makes them more anxious to give satisfaction. Should they at any time prove incompetent your Board could easily replace them by permanent men.”

The FBB developed a preference for the use of permanent men in highly developed urban areas. Where such employment was impracticable, they sought to limit the sovereignty of volunteer brigades. They saw control of both fire station premises, and the equipment contained therein, as an important means of controlling volunteering brigades and giving them the ability to replace volunteers with ‘replacement’ volunteers or, for that matter, permanents. Volunteers were thus to be denied control of the capital they once possessed. They were reduced to having nothing to ‘give away’ except their own labour.

4.7. “Morituri te salutant” – the demise of separate fire boards

The inadequate provision of fire services in regional NSW, which contributed to large scale fires in towns such as Wyalong and Kiama and concerns about the inequitable

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624 Deniliquin Chronicle & Riverine Gazette, 6/2/1896, p.2.
626 AR1895, p.3.
627 Ibid. p.11.
distribution of fire services (relative to contributions) in metropolitan Sydney, led to calls for wholesale change of the provision of fire services at the close of the 1890s. A new Fire Brigades Bill was introduced in the NSW Legislature in the latter half of 1900. Initially it proposed a Board of three permanent fire commissioners appointed by the Governor, with one representative from the insurance companies and one from local government. Importantly, the Bill proposed the creation of one board, with statewide jurisdiction. After a number of slight variations, the Bill stalled, amidst the legislative flurry surrounding the upcoming Federation of Australia.\footnote{F. A. Larcombe, The advancement of local government in New South Wales, 1906 to the present, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1978, pp.330-331; AR1900, p.2.}

Legislative inertia continued into 1903. In 1906 another Bill was introduced into Parliament, with statewide jurisdiction under “one central governing body” but subsequently withdrawn due to pressure by local government over “increased taxation”. The latter body thought that rural NSW would subsidise Sydney and that the Bill “was opposed to the movement for Local Government” and would “cut across the principle of local self-determination”.\footnote{AR1903, p.2; AR1905, p.2; AR1906, p.2; Ibid., p.331.} Superintendent Webb maintained the need for independent boards and was quick to point out that “very few Councils, if any, have shown a desire to tax themselves for their own protection from fire”.\footnote{AR1906, p.8; quote: AR1907, p.8.}

1908 saw the introduction of yet another similar Bill, which yet again was foiled by the Parliament going into recess, prior to it passing the requisite processes. Once again, opponents again were concerned that the Bill, if passed, would impinge on local government’s right (under the newly gazetted Local Government Act), to self determination. Taxation (through fire levies), without representation, was labelled an “obnoxious system” by the critics. They sought to limit the operation of the Bill to metropolitan Sydney, so as to not crowd out municipal action elsewhere.\footnote{AR1908, p.2.; Larcombe, Advancement of local government, pp.332-334.}

On August 4, 1909, the Colonial Secretary introduced another Bill. After a "somewhat troublesome passage through Parliament", the new Fire Brigades Act, 1909 enabled the formation of the Board of Fire Commissioners, replacing the Fire Brigade Board (Sydney) and all country fire boards. The outgoing Fire Brigade Board
(Sydney) celebrated the "thorough efficiency" created by “one supreme authority” which enabled “uniformity of drill, and co-ordination and interchangeability of men and material”. They considered that it would address the problem with the country volunteer fire brigades outside of their jurisdiction, which they considered had been “lamentably neglected”. In their last Annual Report, the FBB also reflected on their progress since 1884. In particular they celebrated the taming of the volunteer fire companies, expansion of the permanent corps and their ability to cope with the significant expansion and changes in the urban environment since 1884:

It is gratifying that it can look with pardonable pride upon the great progress made under its jurisdiction, from the time, over a quarter of a century ago, when the existing Volunteer Fire Brigades were disorganised and inefficient, Sydney and suburbs very inadequately protected, and hose-cutting, and fighting by jealous rival brigades, occurred at fires. The growth of the metropolis during that time, in the height and capacity of its buildings, in its stocks of merchandise, as well as in population and wealth, has been remarkable. The Board has persistently endeavoured to correspondingly improve the protection of life and property from fire, by obtaining the best fire-extinguishing appliances possible, and by increasing the permanent staff of firemen, which, under the direction of Superintendent Webb, and capable officers trained by him, has done splendid service, and forms a corps that, although in numbers of men and appliances it, may be exceeded elsewhere, has no superior in any other respect.

The outgoing board contemplated the importance of its role. The insured value of the building stock under its protection has increased by 145% between 1884 and 1909. After an extensive review of the rapid changes in communications, fire engines and water supply, the FBB bowed out with the following rather dramatic Valedictory:

Now the Fire Brigades Board makes its exit, with every confidence that the entering authority constituted by the Fire Brigades Act, 1909, with its enlarged powers, will, after a similar period of over twenty-five years be able to point to an even greater record of progress in all things appertaining to the protection of life and property from fire. Morituri te salutant. [Latin: "those who are about to die salute you"].

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633 Ibid. p.2.
634 Ibid.
4.8. Conclusion

The FBB’s final assessment, whilst flowery, was accurate. Before the introduction of the Fire Brigades Act in 1884, firefighting in Sydney and suburbs was uncoordinated and subject largely to the vagaries of independent VFCs and their members. Inter-brigade conflict was problematic both in terms of effective firefighting and the image of firemen across the metropolis. By the end of the 1900s, all firefighting in Sydney and suburbs was under the direct control of the FBB and its operational arm, the MFB. A large force of permanent firemen was augmented by a significant number of paid, employed ‘volunteers’ under the direct control of the Board. Whilst the 1884 Act was the underlying driver for this dramatic transformation, rapid urban growth, technological change and economic conditions made the transition from voluntary action to a unified state provided service, undertaken by employees, all the more likely. Some VFCs struggled against their regulation, however, the increasing capital costs of firefighting equipment and labour market issues for volunteers made them increasingly unviable and less effective than their old paid rivals. Regulation, technology and the economy were not the only forces in transforming many of Sydney’s VFCs into partially paid brigades. Whilst not universal, many opted for remuneration and less self-determination rather than an unsubsidized and tenuous future, stripped of much of the glamour of the nineteenth century. As Greenberg (1998) described a similar process in the US, the “contract of a paid fireman replaced the conquest of fire as the reigning metaphor of firefighting.”

Whilst the 1884 Act changed the organisation of country brigades, bringing many of them under local board control, they benefited less from the legislative reform. Their funding base was low and technical deficiencies in the legislation undermined their legitimacy. Consequently many were under resourced and some like Deniliquin and Hay were subject to resulting turmoil, including strike action by quasi-volunteers.

During the operation of the 1884 Act, localism continued to be an important factor in the battle of wills between the centralised FBB and the more autonomous VFCs. In almost a reversal of the typical understanding of localism as discussed by Patmore

635 Greenberg, Cause for alarm, p.165.
and Eklund, it was the ‘outsider’, the FBB, that attempted to force VFCs to protect their own localities from the shared threat of fire, through the use of an ever increasing system of spatial and management controls. VFCs also used localism in an attempt to counter FBB/MFB domination, such as the Petersham VFC’s successful scuttling of the former’s expansion plans in their territory. On the other hand, Newtown embraced a localist agenda when it actually disbanded in favour of more effective firefighting arrangements for its local community. Yet other VFCs felt less constrained by localism: Mt Lachlan VFC’s rather cavalier approach in treating community funded assets as if they were their own (e.g. attempting to relocate fire engines to other communities), led to poor relations with important local groups, such as the local council. The Mt Lachlan episode was a continuation of the earlier trend discussed in the previous chapter, namely the eclipsing of the tie between locality and VFCs by the broader volunteer fire brigade ‘brotherhood’ and sense of autonomy that the movement encouraged. In country brigades, localism was probably even more important in brigade formation and maintenance, given the more isolated and integrated nature of such localities. However, as the events in Deniliquin and Hay showed, localist agendas around protecting important community assets dissolved in the face of organisational and financial differences.

Whilst the system of firefighting in Sydney was radically transformed by the 1884 Act, it was the country brigades that would be most affected by the new Fire Brigade Act, 1909. With the birth of the Board of Commissioners of NSW, unified control was to radiate across the State, with the new Sydney-based Board as its hub.
Chapter 5. Organisational hegemony - The BFC monopoly and paid firefighter dominance (1909 – 1939)

5.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the golden age of unified firefighting in NSW. Amid a rapidly changing built environment, a turbulent political and economic milieu and technological change, the period between 1910 and 1939 was dominated by the emergence and growth of the Board of Fire Commissioners of NSW (BFC). The new Board was given a statewide jurisdiction and it imposed its own structures and rules on a growing number of permanent stations and ‘volunteer’ fire brigades (VFBs) across the State. Guided by its desire for centralised and disciplined control, it standardised brigade structures and operational methods, often emulating the bureaucratic paramilitary approach of English fire services, as outlined by Ewen and Segars.\[^{636}\] The Board’s centralised approach brought it into conflict with some country brigades and local councils, who were accustomed to managing their firefighting organisations locally. The BFC’s heavy-handed and oblivious approach to localist sentiments was often met with loose coalitions of local resistance set on maintaining longstanding local practices.

The tone of this period was not one of significant conflict between paid and unpaid on the fireground, as was the pattern of the past. Rather, it was distinguished by a struggle, by both permanent and ‘volunteer’ men, against the regime of control and financial stringency imposed by the BFC. Permanents, constrained by an onerous regime of spatial, temporal and personal controls, had to rely exclusively on the newly formed union, the Fire Brigade Employees Union of New South Wales (FBEU) to alleviate some of the excesses of BFC control. The ‘volunteers’, as well as relying on the FBEU, could utilise their much stronger links within their communities to counter the Board’s centralist and often oppressive tendencies.

At the same time as BFC was imposing standardised order in urban brigades, a bushfire brigade ‘movement’ developed in many parts of the State and from the mid-

thirties, was coordinated by its own fledging, albeit weak, bureaucracy. Largely self managed and comprised of unpaid volunteers, they represented a re-emergence of volunteers in firefighting. Bushfire brigades were very local institutions and often emerged with the assistance of entrenched localist organisations, such as local progress associations and agricultural bureaus. Localism, and the ideological underpinning of ‘countrymindedness’ combined to make participation in bushfire brigade activities virtually a required activity of country life, rather than an issue of altruism or the other drivers canvassed in the volunteerism literature.

5.2. Context

5.2.1. Population & Patterns of Settlement

The rate of population growth in NSW was not as quick in the period 1911 to 1947 as it was in the second half of the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, the State’s population increased by around half a million people per decade throughout the 1910s and 1920s. By 1947, close to three million people resided in NSW. As Appendix 2.1 shows, suburban Sydney again enjoyed the most spectacular growth, whilst the City of Sydney actually declined in population. The population of metropolitan Sydney increased by 136% between 1911 and 1947, with the 1910s and 1920s being the most rapid periods of growth. From the 1930s onwards, suburban Sydney’s population exceeded one million people. Suburbs more distant from the city centre grew at quite spectacular rates: municipalities like Randwick and Canterbury grew from under 20,000 residents in 1911 to around 100,000 each by 1947. In fact, more than a dozen municipalities trebled in size during the 1910s and 1920s. Population growth was significant also in Sydney’s then emerging outer metropolitan areas of Blacktown, Hornsby, Sutherland and Warringah shires. Bankstown, in Sydney’s (then) outer southwest, grew spectacularly, its population increasing twenty-fold between 1911 and 1947. The ring of inner city suburbs followed the lead of the neighbouring City of Sydney: the populations of the municipalities of Newtown, Glebe, Alexandria,
Balmain, Darlington and Redfern all declined over this period as industrial undertakings, such as manufacturing, displaced residential property.\textsuperscript{637}

Growth outside of Sydney was more subdued, averaging less than twenty percent in each decade. Indeed, between 1933 and 1947, the population increased by less than ten percent. Some of the larger centres fared better. The Newcastle area enjoyed significant growth, during the development of its steel and mining industries, in the 1910s and 1920s: Newcastle and suburbs grew from 54,603 in 1911 to over 104,485 residents in 1933 (and exceeded 127,000 by 1947). Whilst not as spectacular in terms of absolute size and rate of growth, the Illawarra region (North Illawarra, Wollongong and Shellharbour) running north and south of Wollongong also grew considerably in that period, based on coal mining and industrial development, particularly in the Port Kembla area. Other (non coal) mining centres were, however, in decline. Both Broken Hill and Cobar recorded declining populations during this time. Whilst some of the larger regional centres, such as Albury, Orange, Dubbo and Lismore, more than doubled in size over the three and a half decades from 1911, the vast bulk of municipalities had much more modest population growth. The slower growth in regional NSW, was reflected in the balance between ‘town and country’: in 1947, half of the population of NSW was concentrated in Sydney and suburbs.\textsuperscript{638} The overall growth in population in NSW, particularly in large-scale urban areas had obvious consequences for the State’s built environment.

5.2.2. Changes in the Built Environment

As discussed in the Literature Review, the ‘product market’ for urban firefighting services is determined by the scale and complexity of the built environment. In its first year of operation alone, the Board’s responsibilities grew rapidly: 5470 new structures were erected in Sydney alone and 1300 ‘public’ buildings had to be inspected under the Theatres and Public Halls Act. It is therefore unsurprising that the BFC complained that staffing and appliances did not match this increase in

\textsuperscript{637} Appendices 2.1 & 2.2; P. Spearritt, \textit{Sydney since the twenties}, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1978, pp.116-122.

\textsuperscript{638} Appendices 1.3 & 2.1.
Again, given the large increase in population, particularly in suburban Sydney, the number of dwellings increased rapidly. In 1911 there were just over 330,000 dwellings in the State; by 1947 this had swelled to close to 750,000 dwellings. Residential flat development was significant during this time. By 1947, Sydney had over 70,000 flats within its boundaries. The rate of dwelling construction outpaced population, with a consequent reduction in the average number of occupants in each dwelling over the decades. Commercial and industrial development continued to grow on the back of the growing population, although the Great Depression in the early 1930s did slow such growth. For example, manufacturing expanded greatly between the early 1910s and 1940s. In 1911, there were 5039 manufacturing establishments in NSW. By 1942, this had doubled to 10,166 establishments. However, these establishments had generally become larger in scale, both in terms of the number of employees and the complexity and power of machinery used. Employment in manufacturing had almost trebled from 1911 to 1942 (although it did decline during the depression) and the horsepower of manufacturing equipment increased by a factor of eight in the same period.

The new Board not only had to be concerned with the significant increases in the building stock; the height and scale of the new buildings was also of concern. Notwithstanding its relatively narrow legislative mission (i.e. the suppression and, to a lesser extent, the prevention of fires), the Board expressed wide misgivings over the construction of multistory buildings (up to 165 feet) and sought legislation to regulate the building construction and safety. In the 1912 Annual Report, the Board assessed not only the safety but the political economy of the ‘skyscraper’:

the evil has continued to grow without check until Sydney appears to be destined to develop the skyscraper buildings which have been a cause of much loss of life in New York in cases of fire. Not alone fire protection purposes, with which this board is specially interested, but for other reasons, principally the health of the citizens, and the undesirableness of

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639 Board of Fire Commissioners of New South Wales, 'Report for 1910', Government Printer, Sydney, 1911, p. 11. Note: Annual Reports of the Board of Fire Commissioners of New South Wales are hereafter referred to with a prefix of BFCAR and the year being reported upon e.g. the Board’s Report for 1910 will be subsequently referred to as BFCAR 1910.
640 Appendix 2.2; Spearritt, Sydney since the twenties, p.70.
concentrating the ownership of the chief business portion of the city in a few hands, a building act is imperatively required.\textsuperscript{642}

The \textit{Height of Buildings Act, 1912} ameliorated the situation to some extent. It prohibited buildings in excess of one hundred and fifty (150) feet and regulated those between one hundred (100) and one hundred and fifty (150) feet. The Board sought the extension of the provisions of the Act to buildings below 100 feet.\textsuperscript{643} Other parties joined the Board lobbying for change: the City Council in 1914 organised a conference over the issue, after the rapid collapse of a building during a fire, due to faulty construction methods.\textsuperscript{644} Throughout the 1910s, the BFC continued to lobby for a new comprehensive Building Act that would regulate the scale, design and construction of all buildings across the State. This was unsurprising, given the scale of commercial and industrial development (particularly in Sydney and other large centres like Newcastle) and the adoption of new construction techniques, such as composite steel and steel frame construction.\textsuperscript{645}

Large-scale commercial and industrial buildings continued to be built over the next decade and continued to cause consternation for the Board, due to their scale, construction methods and their proliferation across major urban centres. The height of new buildings was changing the nature of firefighting. Fires at the top of buildings had to be fought inside the building creating new operational, safety and technical imperatives. It also encouraged the Board to promote built-in fire protection systems in buildings, such as alarms and self activated sprinkler systems. The height of the new building stock was not the only concern – scale was also an important factor. In 1925, the Board noted the increasing number of large four to seven storey buildings in Sydney’s CBD and surrounds, particularly in Pyrmont and Ultimo.\textsuperscript{646} At the same time, the rapidly expanding stock of residential flats, created similar issues and were being fitted with similar technologies (e.g. sprinklers etc).\textsuperscript{647} Apart from the years of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[642] BFCAR 1911, p. 2.
\item[643] BFCAR 1913, p. 9.
\item[644] BFCAR 1914, p. 10.
\item[645] BFCAR 1915, p. 10; BFCAR 1916, p. 11; BFCAR 1918, p. 11; BFCAR 1919, p. 11; BFCAR 1917, p. 11.
\item[646] BFCAR 1922, p. 10; BFCAR 1923, p. 11; BFCAR 1924, p. 10; BFCAR 1925, p. 10; BFCAR 1926, p. 12.
\item[647] BFCAR 1927, p. 14; Spearritt, \textit{Sydney since the twenties}, pp.70-73.
\end{footnotes}
the Great Depression, building stocks continued to grow significantly in the following decades, as did the scale of buildings and the complexity of their construction techniques, especially in suburban Sydney.648

Whilst the built environment was expanding in scale and area (through suburbanisation), other infrastructure development was slower to develop, particularly reticulated water supplies. Combined with the vagaries of the Australian weather, this had an obvious impact on the ability of the new Board to provide adequate fire protection, both in terms of the coverage of reticulated water, and the adequacy of water pressures.649 Indeed in 1922, the lack of adequate water supplies was “becoming a very serious problem”. In particular, the usage of small diameter water mains outside of Sydney city was problematic, in that large-scale manufacturing was now being located in suburban areas. These small mains restricted the capabilities of the new motorised appliances. Subsequent changes to water supply and new technologies (e.g. double elbow delivery systems) alleviated much of the problem.650

Table 5.1 – NSW Motor Vehicle Registrations – 1911 to 1941

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Motor Vehicles</th>
<th>Per 100 pop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>6945</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>44443</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>212380</td>
<td>8.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>310882</td>
<td>11.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 5.2 – NSW Railway Development – 1910 to 1940

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Line open (miles)</th>
<th>Train Miles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>3643</td>
<td>15468026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>5015</td>
<td>22834889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>5974</td>
<td>26713951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>6141</td>
<td>36429225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


648 e.g. BFCAR 1930, p. 15; BFCAR 1934, p. 12; BFCAR 1939, p. 15.
649 e.g. BFCAR 1913, pp.3, 8 & 9; BFCAR 1914, p.10.
650 BFCAR 1922, p.10; BFCAR 1923, p.11; BFCAR 1925, p.10; BFCAR 1926, p.12; BFCAR 1929, p.8; BFCAR 1936, p. 4.
Other infrastructures grew more rapidly. As Tables 5.1 & 5.2 show, both road and rail transport grew significantly during between 1910 and 1939. Motor vehicle growth in particular was spectacular: in 1911, there were 6945 motor vehicles registered in NSW (less than half a vehicle for every 100 persons). By 1941 there had been a thirtyfold increase to 238,257, representing over nine vehicles for every 100 persons.

The significant growth of rail and road journeys and infrastructures added to the responsibilities of the Board: building stock had to be protected (e.g. garages, bridges, railway stations etc.); motor vehicles and lorries, railway and tram rolling stock and steam locomotives also needed protection and in the latter case, they were responsible (or blamed) for a large number of bush fires.\textsuperscript{651} The development of the city underground railways provided additional complexity.\textsuperscript{652} Furthermore, the increased use, transport and storage of petroleum products used for transport, created additional risks and responsibilities for the Board. An “extremely grave occurrence” took place at Independent Oil Industries Ltd in Glebe in October 1933, where a ruptured petrol storage tank threatened the neighbouring large-scale industrial undertakings. Within months of this incident, additional BFC By Laws strengthened the regulation of such products. The increased use of electricity for domestic and industrial purposes also created additional operational challenges for the BFC.\textsuperscript{653}

5.2.3. The Political Environment

In the first three decades of the BFC’s existence, the Australian political environment was subject to much change and turmoil, affected by economic and international issues of a global scale.\textsuperscript{654} NSW politics were no exception. After gaining power for the first time in the 1910 election, the ALP’s McGowen and Holman Governments eventually gave way to the National Party Government of Holman in 1916, after

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item BFCAR 1926, p. 5.
\item BFCAR 1913, p. 9; BFCAR 1915, p.1; BFCAR 1916, p.2; BFCAR 1921, p.5; BFCAR 1933, p.2, 5; BFCAR 1939, p.15.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Labor’s split over conscription during WWI. Whilst the ALP Storey and Dooley Governments held power in the early twenties and Labor’s Jack Lang held power from 1925 to 1927 and again between late 1930 and May 1932, the majority of the 1920s and 1930s was under conservative rule. The nationalist governments of Fuller, Bavin and the United Australia Party (UAP) government, led by Stevens, gained power when the economy was faltering and generally re-asserted the rights of employers.

Amid the turbulence of WWI, an increasingly assertive labour movement (e.g. the 1917 Railway Strike), the Great Depression and the swings between laborite and conservative agendas (e.g. state ownership), fire service policy did not rate much consideration. Nonetheless, Labor governments did make changes to the BFC’s structure and, at one stage, threatened its existence. In 1911, Frederick Flowers, the Chief Secretary under the McGowen Government (and later BFC President) threatened to replace the BFC with a Department under Ministerial control. The first Lang Government changed the Board’s structure in 1927 to make the insurance industry carry more of the financial burden of fire protection and to provide Board representation for permanent firemen. In 1938, the Lang Opposition was successful in having a Select Committee created, amid turmoil within the Steven’s Government, to inquire into working conditions of firemen.

State politics also influenced the composition of the Board. After the retirement of C. Bown (ex-FBB) in 1911, the position of BFC President was no longer considered to

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658 For details of Flower’s early ideas regarding abolition of the BFC and Lang’s 1927 amendments, see later in this chapter. See New South Wales Parliament, ‘Report from the Select Committee on the Working Conditions of the Employees of the Board of Fire Commissioners, Sydney, 1939, p.iii for details of voting on the Select Committee formation.
require firefighting knowledge. The position became more of a political appointment, and with one exception, all subsequently appointed BFC Presidents were Labor appointees. In 1912, the Holman Labor Government appointed one of its own, namely Frederick Flowers MLC, to the position. Upon Flowers gaining a Ministry in 1915, Holman replaced him with Ernest Farrar, who shared a very similar Labor background to his predecessor. In 1922, Farrar was replaced by the Nationalist Fuller Government with Edward Harkness, a career senior public servant who had longstanding backing from Holman, who, by this stage had defected to the conservative Nationalists over conscription. Within weeks of the ALP Lang Government winning power, in June 1925, Harkness resigned and was replaced by Thomas Smith (generally referred to as T.J. Smith). Again, like previous ALP appointments, Smith, an ex-organiser with the Australian Workers’ Union, was an MLC with strong links to the ALP state executive. Smith’s appointment was initially lauded by the Fire Brigade Employees’ Union and he was made an honorary member. As Jopson chronicles, within a few years relations soured, and remained embittered, until Smith was forced out of the position in 1956.

5.2.4. Technological change & firefighting

Under the auspices of the Board’s main predecessor, the Fire Brigade Board (Sydney), volunteer fire brigades were limited to manual fire appliances, with the more effective and complex steam powered appliances, limited to use by permanent men. With the creation of the BFC, a number of country brigades were already using steam-powered appliances (Corowa, Grafton, Broken Hill, Newcastle and Stockton). Apart from a brief appearance of a steam pumper at Bega, no other brigades in the country used steam technologies. When the BFC was created, it inherited three motorised fire appliances from the FBB. Permanent stations in Sydney were predominantly equipped with steam powered pumpers whilst Sydney stations with

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only partially paid ‘volunteer’ staff were provided with manual pumps (i.e. whilst the pump may have been hauled by horses, it had to be manually pumped by many firemen).\textsuperscript{661} By the early 1920s, Stockton was the only ‘volunteer’ station to have steam technology, which was, in any case, on the wane due to motorisation. Thus, for the most part, the permanents maintained their monopoly on the control of steam power until the technology was made totally obsolete by the 1930s.\textsuperscript{662}

As Table 5.3 indicates, over the twenty five years between 1910 and 1935, there was a dramatic change in the main technology used by NSW firemen: steam and manually powered / horse hauled appliances were replaced by a fleet of over 210 motorised appliances by 1935. The last three manual engines in service at Bega, Singleton and Camden had disappeared by 1930.\textsuperscript{663} The following year, the horse drawn petrol turbine pumpers no longer appeared on the Board’s \textit{Summary of Working Plant}, thereby signaling the demise of horse drawn appliances.\textsuperscript{664} Steam appliances had petered out in the early 1920s and by 1925, the four remaining steam appliances that were secondary units attached to stations already equipped with motorised appliances.\textsuperscript{665}

\textbf{Table 5.3 - Number of NSWFB Pumping Appliances attached to stations – 1910 - 1935}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Sydney</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Sydney</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Sydney</th>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>(a)</td>
<td>(a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: \textit{BFCARs} for years indicated. Notes: (a) 27 manual engines in Sydney / common in Country (un-tabulated). Data for 1940 & 1945 unavailable in \textit{BFCARs}.

The move away from steam and, particularly, manual engines had obvious consequences for firemen. Fewer men were required to effectively operate motorised

\textsuperscript{661} \textit{BFCAR 1910}, pp.7-12.
\textsuperscript{662} see Summary of Working Plant – Country Fire Districts in \textit{BFCARs} between 1910-1922.
\textsuperscript{663} \textit{BFCAR 1929}, p.21-22.
\textsuperscript{664} \textit{BFCAR 1931}, pp.17-18. Introduced in 1911, these appliances were conversions, where manual pumps were removed and replaced by petrol driven turbine engines. See \textit{BFCAR 1912}, pp.3-4 for a discussion on the merits of these ‘new’ pumpers.
\textsuperscript{665} \textit{BFCAR 1925}, p.12.
pumps, particularly in comparison to manual engines. The obvious physical demands of operating the pump also markedly decreased with motorisation, giving the BFC a profound increase in labour productivity.666

The motorisation of the Board’s pumping appliances also had an obvious impact on its effectiveness in suppressing fires quickly. This stemmed from “quicker attendance and better work at fires.”667 By 1924, all appliances in the Sydney Fire District were completely motorised both for pumping operations and haulage and, as stated previously, the rest of NSW followed suit in 1931. The era of horse drawn appliances was over.668 In 1929, an Ahrens-Fox motorised appliance capable of pumping one thousand gallons per minute and driven by an eighteen litre, six-cylinder motor was attached to Headquarters as “The Flyer”. It eclipsed, and led to the retirement of, the largest capacity pumper at the time, a steam appliance called Big Ben, thus ensuring the primacy of internal combustion.669

The efficiency and speed of motorised appliances gave the BFC the ability to consolidate its network of stations. Motorisation extended the spatial reach of existing stations, and as a consequence, the BFC was able to sell land it had reserved for new stations and closed number of country sub-stations (e.g. South Casino and East Ballina).670 It also freed up considerable room at existing stations, as infrastructures involved with horse and steam appliance maintenance were removed.671

The use of tall mobile ladders (or aerial appliances) started before the BFC’s formation, but, with the benefit of motorisation, it was able to develop an effective fleet of highly mobile and quick responding ‘aerial appliances’. In 1917, it placed an old electrically hauled set of ladders onto a petrol chassis. Six years later, petrol-

666 BFCAR 1912, p.4.
667 BFCAR 1913, p.9.
668 BFCAR 1924, p.4. – Although I have not considered the horses in this thesis, they represent the ultimate form of ‘conscripted volunteer’: J. Hribal, ”Animals are Part of the Working Class”: A challenge to labour history’, Labor History, vol. 44, no. 4, 2003.
669 Adrian, Fighting fire, p.174; BFCAR 1929, p. 6. “The Flyer” was the unofficial term applied to the appliance staffed by the “Flying Squad”, which was based at Headquarters. The Flying Squad was required to be in an extra state of readiness, with its crew required to be fully uniformed, awake and with metres of their appliance for extra quick turn outs (e.g. 12 seconds rather than minutes at other stations). See Jopson, Red brigade pp.28-30.
670 BFCAR 1915, p. 2; BFCAR 1917, p. 2, BFCAR 1927, p. 3.
671 BFCAR 1921, p. 3.
electric 85ft turntable ladders were placed at Headquarters and Newcastle stations.672 Throughout the 1930s, ladders continued to grow in height (reaching 100ft in 1934) and they were allocated to more stations, including Circular Quay, George Street West, Darlinghurst and Crows Nest. The rise of high-density residential buildings in the inner suburbs was the rationale for extending their use beyond the city areas.673

Another significant development as a result of motorisation, was the use of additional trucks (without pumps) for the speedy transportation of crews and equipment. These trucks (generally referred to as ‘tenders’) were located at some district stations and gave the BFC the ability to transport extra men and supplies quickly to an area, without taking away a pumping appliance (and therefore fire protection) from another.674 Two series of events in 1936 proved the value of the spatial and organisational mobility afforded by these appliances. In September, an officer and four firemen from Headquarters used a tender, equipped with specialised breathing apparatus and other equipment, to travel overnight to Twofold Bay (just south of Eden on NSW’s far south coast), to fight a serious fire on the ship RMS Ormonde. At the time, the BFC described the long distance response as “unique in the history of the New South Wales Fire Brigades” and, more than likely, represented the first long distance specialised task force dispatched in NSW.675 Within months, the tenders (fitted with new wireless communication systems) were also used, to great effect, during a dire bushfire season in the Blue Mountains and the outskirts of the Sydney Fire District.676 Motor vehicles also enhanced supervision of junior officers and firemen – inspectors and other senior officers used them to increase the frequency of station visits, inspections and control on the fireground. Indeed in 1929, the Chief Officer was equipped with a high performance single-seater Hudson car for travelling to fires and for other duties.677

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672 BFCAR 1917, p.4; BFCAR 1923, p.4.
673 BFCAR 1927, p.5; BFCAR 1930, p.14; BFCAR 1931, p.13; BFCAR 1934, p.4; BFCAR 1935, p.4-5; BFCAR 1938, p.4.
674 BFCAR 1923, p.4; BFCAR 1935, p.5.
675 BFCAR 1936, pp.3, 15.
676 BFCAR 1936, p.5, 15; Collins, Burn, p.105.
677 BFCAR 1917, p.4. 5; BFCAR 1929, p. 17.
Although the FBB experimented with a number of different smoke masks (involving the use of tubes and bellows), it was the introduction by the BFC of “Proto” smoke helmets in 1922 that gave firemen the ability to undertake rescues in hostile and un-breathable atmospheres. Using a combination of oxygen and recycled air from the wearer, which was ‘scrubbed’ by a caustic soda filtration system, it enabled firemen to breathe, in smoke and gas filled environments, for up to two hours. In 1924, stations in major mining areas were equipped with “Protos” and by the mid 1930s, 158 officers and firemen were “qualified” to use the equipment. Whilst the BFC claimed to have provided instruction in the use of such equipment to all stations, access to Proto equipment was limited to only a few stations. Most firemen at smoky firegrounds were left to “chew smoke” or use Burrell Masks, second hand gas masks from the mining industry that were judged, by at least one firemen at the time, to be “useless”.678

Finally, continued advances in communications systems, from its formation up until late 1930s, improved the effectiveness of the Board’s operations, and gave it greater control over its environment and workforce. The number of street fire alarms in the Sydney Fire District increased from 431 in 1914, to 1296 in 1945, and in country fire districts, they increased from 111 to 595 in the same period. During this time, the number of automatic alarms connected to large commercial, industrial and government premises also grew significantly: by 1945 there were over 1250 such alarms connected in Sydney alone, compared to 1914 when there were 213.679

The connection of street and private alarms had a number of impacts. They increased the effectiveness of firefighting, in that their greater presence, led to quicker responses. They provided a direct connection between the citizen in crisis and BFC firemen, thereby reducing the role for police and casual volunteers in informal firefighting. They also provided the NSWFB with a visual presence throughout suburbs without a fire station. For permanent and ‘volunteer’ firemen, they were a double edged sword: on the one hand they were onerous, in that firemen were required to constantly inspect them in case of vandalism or malfunction, and perform


679 BFCAR 1914, p. 3; BFCAR 1945, p.2.
all night watchroom duties to monitor for fire calls. Conversely, the false alarms that they tended to generate, dramatically increased the number of NSWFB responses and thus kept operational statistics high, increasing the viability of permanent firemen. In 1932, close to one third of all calls in the Sydney Fire District were false alarms, presumably generated mostly by street and private alarms.  

The BFC continued to develop and expand the connection of the residences of ‘volunteers’ to their respective stations, using “bell lines”. As with the FBB’s pioneering work, it enabled partially paid firemen to be summoned to their station for a call of fire, to either board the appliance, or get details of the fire’s location and follow by private means if the appliance had left the station. Apart from being more effective in notifying the men, it also had the added advantage of not sounding the fire bell or siren, which disturbed the surrounding areas and attracted onlookers. Other newer technologies emerged in the interwar years: in 1926, the BFC was investigating the use of “wireless telephony” in its operations. By 1936, it successfully trialed receiving sets in its tender fleet. Radio communications, particularly after WWII, would become a vital tool in firefighting coordination and operations.

5.3. The Board of Fire Commissioners of NSW

5.3.1. Legislative Framework

On January 1, 1910, the Fire Brigades Act, 1909 commenced operation. Under the Act, the Board of Fire Commissioners (hereafter referred to as the "BFC" or "the Board") replaced the FBB and the other boards in regional NSW. However its spatial jurisdiction was not limited by the coverage of the boards that it replaced. Indeed, upon its creation, the Board had control over a number of metropolitan and country local government areas that were not covered by the previous Act. The Act allowed the Government to establish Fire Districts, which spatially delimited areas protected by the BFC, primarily using local government boundaries as the delimiter. Of

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680 BFCAR 1939, p.38.
681 BFCAR 1926, p. 3; BFCAR 1928, p. 13.
682 BFCAR 1926, p. 3; BFCAR 1936, p. 4.
684 Fire Brigades Act, 1909 (No.9.1909), s.6.
importance to the hegemonic position of the BFC and its permanent rank structures, was the absolute prohibition on the formation of fire brigades inside fire districts, without the approval of the BFC. The only exemption was the ability to form industrial brigades to protect particular premises or sections of land, where the owners and/or their employees are the sole members of the Brigade. Thus, C. Bown's desire to cover the whole state was fulfilled – the BFC's organisational hegemony grew to cover the State and ensured a 'monopoly' of control in all sizeable towns.

When it first met on February 18, 1910, the new Board was comprised of five members each representing: the Government; municipalities within Sydney and suburbs; country councils; the insurance companies and the Board’s Volunteer Fire Brigades (Edward Love, Captain at Granville). The Government nominated representative, C. Bown (ex FBB Chairman) was also the President. The means of funding the Board and its operations followed a similar pattern to the previous Act. Local government, insurance companies and the State Government all paid one third each of the estimated expenditures required to operate fire services within each fire district for the following year. During parliamentary debates on the new Bill, country parliamentarians raised concerns over the cross subsidisation of urban fire services by regional and rural communities. As a result of these concerns a number of amendments were made to the original Bill. An upper limit was set on the maximum contribution that the BFC could levy on any one local government area, being a farthing (one quarter of one penny) for every one pound of the unimproved capital value (UCV) of the land within the municipality or shire. The BFC was also required to spend at least ninety percent of the contributions collected from a fire district in that same fire district.

The new Act for the first time defined in legislation the difference between permanent and ‘volunteer’ firemen. Whilst 'the services' of members of the "Permanent Fire

685 Fire Brigades Act, s.41.
688 Section 34, Fire Brigades Act, 1909; Adrian, Fighting fire, p.40; Local Government and Shires Associations of New South Wales, 'Local Government's role in the provision of fire services in NSW: a discussion paper', LGSA, Sydney, 2003, pp.8-9.
Brigade" were "wholly at the disposal of the board", members of a "Volunteer Fire Brigade" were "any association of persons authorised by the board and formed for the purpose of extinguishing fires, if the carrying out of the purpose of such association is not the sole or principal calling or the means of livelihood of such persons or of a majority of them, whether such persons receive or do not receive emoluments for their services as members of the brigade." Thus, the principal legislative and practical difference between the two types of firefighter, were the degree of control that the Board had over them (i.e. services at their disposal) and the degree to which their firefighting role generated a living wage, or was perceived as an occupation (as opposed to community service). The new Act also gave the BFC the ability to make its own by-laws to regulate a range of matters including the remuneration, duties and discipline of the permanent and volunteer fire brigades, rather than rely on the Government creating regulations. In time, the Board developed a regime of By-Laws that were to govern in fine detail the 'working' lives of both permanent and ‘volunteer’ men.

The rapid expansion of urban NSW had additional consequences for the Board in that it was required to inspect public halls and theatres (Theatres and Public Halls Act, 1908) and certain other premises under the Factories and Shops and Height of Buildings Acts. In the early 1920s the BFC sought powers to give it the right to inspect other buildings to ensure their (fire) safety. In seeking such powers, the Chief Officer emoted on the consequences of not having such powers: "Such waste is a national and unrecoverable loss; every year hundreds of men and women are thrown out of employment, and many lose their homes and the savings of a lifetime."

In February 1927, the Lang Government amended the Fire Brigades Act. The composition of the Board and its funding arrangements were significantly altered. The Board was enlarged to include three additional commissioners: the insurance companies were given an extra two board members, whilst the permanent men were also given a representative on the Board for the first time. The addition of the

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689 Fire Brigades Act, 1909, s.5.
690 Ibid. s.21. Under s.42, the Board was still required any by-laws to be approved by the Governor prior to give effect to them.
691 BFCAR 1923, p.11. BFCAR 1924, pp.4, 10.
permanent’s representative on the Board to that of the existing volunteers’ board member, gave employees two out of eight board positions. Notwithstanding some external opposition to the concept, the FBEU had sought equal representation on the Board since 1914. Unlike the employees, the additional representation for the insurance companies came at a price: the Act was amended to require the insurance companies to pay fifty percent (50%) of fire district estimates, rather than the one third that they had paid. Accordingly, the share of fire district estimates payable by local government and the State Government was reduced to twenty five percent (25%) each. The additional burden, placed on the insurance industry by the Lang Government, was unsurprising. In the previous year, Lang had to establish the Government Insurance of NSW, in the face of a virtual boycott of his new workers compensation insurance scheme by the industry. The Act was also amended to allow the Board to increase its borrowings and was given additional by-law making powers relating to fire prevention. The Act was to remain largely unamended until 1944, when it was changed to facilitate the introduction of the 56-hour week at the end of WWII.692

The Fire Brigades Act did not operate in a vacuum. Other fire prevention and suppression legislation operated within the realm of local government. Whilst the Careless Use of Fire Act had regulated the use of fire in rural and agricultural settings since 1886, it was not until the Local Government Act, 1906 was enacted, that the formation of bush fire brigades was legislatively encouraged. Sub-sections 73 (iv) (a) and s.74 of this Act enabled shires and municipalities to make provision “for the prevention or mitigation of bush fires (including the organisation of bush-fire brigades)” 693

In May 1930, the Bush Fires Act varied the Careless Use of Fire Act and the Local Government Act, to strengthen fire prevention provisions and further the organisation of bush-fire brigades. The amendments to the latter Act allowed local councils to “appoint such persons as it thinks proper to be its officer either for the whole of or any

693 See Local Government Act, 1909 (No.56, 1906); see also Local Government and Shires Associations of New South Wales, 'Local Government's role', p.11; Larcombe, Advancement of local government, p.390.
particular part of area to control and manage any bush-fire brigade or section thereof”. Such officers were subject to the direction by Council (by order or ordinance) and were empowered to “take any measures which appear to him to be necessary or expedient and practicable” to prevent, control and extinguish any fire (including the protection of life and property. During an uncontrolled fire, such officers were given the same duties and powers as the Chief Officer under the Fire Brigades Act and like that officer and his delegates (i.e. permanent and ‘volunteer’ firemen), they were exempt from damage for the “bona fide exercise of such powers.” Whilst the legislation was squarely aimed at bolstering the “voluntary co-operation amongst the residents” in developing bush fire brigades, it expected that the officer in charge of a local government area’s bushfire fighting efforts would be appointed from the relevant council’s staff.694 Thus the legislation created the potential for paid officials in firefighting beyond the control of the BFC.

5.3.2. Financial

As discussed previously, under the BFC’s structure, the NSW government shared both control of the BFC with the insurance industry and local government, as well as the responsibility for funding BFC expenditures. In each forthcoming year, the BFC would determine the expenditures required to operate fire services in a particular fire district and levy the three contributors, according to the funding mechanisms described previously. The only statutory cap on what the BFC could require any contributor to pay was the limit on local government’s contribution to one farthing (a quarter of one penny) for every pound of the unimproved capital value (UCV) of the land under its jurisdiction in that fire district.695

These shared funding arrangements and their spatial delineation were an unusual funding mechanism for the provision of a public service and created a framework that was to have a significant impact on the mix of paid, partially paid and unpaid labour in particular areas. Changes in the provision of fire services in any area were both influenced and affected by insurance companies, local council and the State Government. Thus the political imperatives of maximising the delivery of public

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695 Fire Brigades Act 1909, Part IV; BFCAR 1910, p.2; BFCAR 1927, p.3.
services, whilst minimising ‘taxation’ was in play at both the State and local government level. Furthermore the insurance companies, through their policy pricing structures and their classification of areas, could influence whether or not an area was gazetted as a fire district, with obvious cost implications for the industry. The insurance companies were in a unique position: on the one hand they had a direct and real interest in promoting the development of effective fire services in any given area, so as to minimise their losses. However, it was also in their interest, in areas where underinsurance was rife, to resist the development of such services in that it increased the risk of not insuring and reduced the costs to individual companies who had insurers in particular areas. The nexus (albeit not proportional), between positions on the Board and funding, gave local government and the insurance industry representatives considerable influence over the supply of firefighting services and therefore, the level of contributions required.696

The ability and/or willingness of local government to fund fire services, particularly in the country in the first few years of the Board’s operations, was problematic. In its first Annual Report (1910), the Board noted that applications to apply the Act to certain municipalities and shires had to be rejected because the limits imposed on local government contributions were “too low to permit the expenditure necessary to adequately equip and maintain brigades”.697 Thus, local governments with low aggregate unimproved capital values (UCVs) restricted the payment of adequate contributions for effective fire services. The legislation provided a solution to this problem: s.34 of the Act enabled councils, whose contribution limit was a barrier to the establishment or maintenance of BFC brigades, to apply to the Chief Secretary to have the limit raised to cater for local needs. To the disappointment of the BFC, only Gilgandra Shire utilised these provisions. The Board was also critical that some councils, who were covered by existing fire districts, did not utilise these provisions so that the Board could provide adequate services. Not only was the protection of “life and property” at risk by council inaction over s.34; the limited contributions also made it impossible for some ‘volunteer’ brigades to be paid retaining fees and it

696 Adrian, 'Institutional constraints', pp.42, 48-49. As Adrian points out, the industrial democracy afforded to employees of the BFC also gave them the ability to manipulate the supply of firefighting services.
697 BFCAR 1910, p.2.
hindered the provision of adequate amenities for firemen. The BFC regretted that the local government capping stopped it paying retaining fees universally: “[t]he Board is of the opinion that payment for the services rendered in those respects should be made wherever possible, it has been, therefore, with great reluctance that it could not extend the privilege to all brigades.”

In the years following, the Board received a multitude of complaints from country councils that were critical of both, the contributions required from the Board, and poorly resourcing of their local brigades (including “the pay of firemen”). The BFC blamed the Act and the previous non-resourcing of the pre-BFC brigades in the country:

The power of the Board in those respects is, however, strictly limited by the amount of revenue to which it is restricted in the respective Fire Districts. The endeavour to place upon the Board responsibility for the lamentable condition of neglect in which the Volunteer Fire Brigades throughout the State were when the Board took control in February, 1910 (...) is absolutely unreasonable.

It is ironic that the limit on contributions required from local government in the Fire Brigades Act, was inserted out of a fear that the country would subsidise Sydney’s fire services. In effect, it merely hampered their establishment and effective operation in regional NSW.

The councils in the Newcastle area, in particular, complained of the cost pressures of contributions to the Board and demanded that they regain jurisdiction over their fire services. The BFC hit back:

few councils have more persistently neglected the Fire Brigade service [or] have more vigorously resisted being called upon to provide reasonable contributions towards it. (...) The Firemen, except in a few instances, received nothing for their services, and there was a lack of skilled training and supervision, without which brigades could not be thoroughly efficient, even if their appliances were satisfactory. (...) [Raising] the volunteer brigades and their equipments to the high standard of efficiency (...) cannot be done, nor the men paid for their service, to which they are justly entitled

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698 Ibid.
700 Adrian, Fighting fire, p.40.
but did not receive under the old system, without increasing the cost of Fire Brigade maintenance, to which the councils have now to provide one third.\textsuperscript{701}

Notwithstanding the early problems with Councils not applying for their contribution limit to be increased, it did eventually become an established mechanism for country brigades both to form and be maintained. West Wyalong (Bland Shire), for example, was removed from the jurisdiction of the Board in December 1913 (along with Wyalong and Balranald), as the revenues obtainable from the Council were not sufficient to effectively operate a brigade in the town. At the time, Bland Shire would not seek a s.34 increase in contributions. Three years later in November 1913, the Bland Shire, seeking to re-establish fire services in West Wyalong, applied to the Minister for an increase of a quarter penny in the pound to its contributions.\textsuperscript{702} In the following decades, a large number of towns, both large and small sought the Minister’s approval to increase the contribution beyond the statutory limit. The reasons for seeking the increase were varied: Glen Innes, Inverell, Narrabri and Temora councils sought at increase in 1923 so as to upgrade to motorised appliances; Broken Hill applied virtually every year from 1924, when property values dropped, so as to maintain a permanently manned brigade, whilst in 1934, Gulgong, Manilla and Murrumburrah Councils all sought an increase so as to establish and equip new brigades in their respective centres.\textsuperscript{703}

5.3.3. Management and Organisational reform

The management of the BFC started rather shakily. Within a year of forming, the BFC was causing controversy: a Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Administration of the Fire Brigades Acts, headed by Walter Edmunds, was appointed in early 1911. The Commissioner questioned aspects of the probity and conduct of the board members of the old Fire Brigades Board and the new Board of Fire Commissioners. With respect to the latter, ‘travel rorts’, excessive cigar purchases (between two Board meetings, the five man board smoked one hundred and fifty cigars!) and the hire of Board vehicles by one Board member for electioneering

\textsuperscript{701} BFCAR 1911, pp.1-2.
\textsuperscript{702} BFCAR 1913, p.2; BFCAR 1916, p.2.
\textsuperscript{703} BFCAR 1923, p. 2; BFCAR 1924, p. 2; BFCAR 1934, p. 2; BFCAR 1944, p. 2.
purposes were among the issues investigated. The Commission did not touch on operational or staffing members (other than commenting on the benevolent treatment of a long-standing employee, the Messenger of the Board).\footnote{W. Edmunds, 'Report of the Commissioner - Royal Commission of Inquiry into the administration of the Fire Brigades Acts', Government Printer, Sydney, 1911, pp.1-9.}

As would be expected, throughout the period 1910 – 1945, the BFC underwent many organisational changes generated by urban growth, managerial trends, overseas influence, financial constraints, industrial determinations and the agendas of the major stakeholders, the latter of which had representation on the Board itself. In its first year of operation, NSW was divided into eight divisions, with a senior officer appointed to inspect and instruct brigades in their divisions and supervise their “condition and efficiency”. The divisional structure was reduced in scale in that year, due to the costs generated by travel exceeding the small contributions received from, some of the more remote, country fire districts.\footnote{BFCAR 1910, p. 3.}

In 1917, a significant consolidation was flagged in the Sydney Fire District and caused considerable internal controversy within the permanent brigade. As a means to reduce costs, the consolidation scheme had two aspects: the first related to the closure and centralisation of fire stations. It provided “for motorized central stations, and the elimination of those found to be non-essential by reason of the more speedy method of transport of men and appliances.” The second aspect of the change involved reducing the number of District Officers in Sydney from seven to three and re-establishing a Divisional Officer position in the area. The impact of reducing the number of District Officers was presumably offset by the allocation of a motor car to each officer for “inspecional duties” and for use on the fireground. New technology via motorisation was thus impacting on both fireman and officer alike.\footnote{BFCAR 1917, p. 4. 5.}

Subsequent \textit{Annual Reports} indicate that only the second leg of the scheme was implemented.\footnote{BFCAR 1918, p. 4; BFCAR 1920, p.10.} This created a very ‘public’ split between the President of the Board and a large group of senior officers, with claims and counter claims, over the Board’s appointment of a less senior officer to the re-established Divisional Officer position.
In February 1918, the Chief Secretary appointed the Auditor General, F.A. Coghlan (ex- Board President 1911-1913) to conduct a Departmental Inquiry into the administration of the Fire Brigades. Coghlan, whilst explicitly wanting to avoid “unwarrantable interference” with the Board’s powers, indicated his concerns with President Farrar’s usurping of the Chief Officer, in appointing a peripheral senior officer from Broken Hill to the Divisional Officer position and, in the process, marginalising more experienced and senior officers. The Board attacked the report by the Auditor General, who in response, barely veiled his contempt for the President.\(^708\)

In the Board’s 1918 Annual Report, both the President and the Chief Officer reported that the reorganisation of senior officers in Sydney had produced good results and was fully justified. Alluding to one of the aims of the President in the restructure, the Chief Officer stated that “discipline is all that could be desired”\(^709\). Yet within two years, the Chief Officer called for the reintroduction of more districts and officers in Sydney “to obtain more effective supervision and better service.”\(^710\)

From its formation until the end of WWII, the jurisdiction of the BFC was relatively stable. Aside from earlier calls by some disgruntled local councils for local control of fire services, the Board remained the sole authority in the State for the provision of fire services. Indeed, the Board was in an enviable position, vis-à-vis other government departments and authorities, in that it had control over the size and distribution of its spatial territory. This in turn had implications for the financing and administration of individual fire districts. For example in 1919, rather than making the Narrabeen and Fairfield areas part of the Sydney Fire District, it was determined that they should be delineated by their own fire districts by “reason of their geographical position”. Such a determination meant that these growing districts could not avail themselves of cross-subsidisation by other Sydney councils and insurers.\(^711\)

Fire District boundaries whilst generally stable, tended to alter with local government

\(^{708}\) Auditor General (NSW), 'Report of the Auditor General respecting the administration of Board of Fire Commissioners of New South Wales' Sydney, 1918.
\(^{709}\) BFCAR 1918, pp.4, 10.
\(^{710}\) BFCAR 1920, p.10.
\(^{711}\) BFCAR 1919, p.2.
boundary variations and were influenced by changes such as the Greater Newcastle Act, 1937, which created a large Greater Newcastle Fire District.\textsuperscript{712}

The only real challenge to the Board’s monopoly on fire service provision, in its first decades of operation, was the ill-fated proposal by the Lang Government to form the Greater Sydney Council in 1931. At the time, the Board strongly protested against the proposal to hand over its jurisdiction to the new super council. It heavily lobbied the Chief Secretary to reject such an outcome “in view of the fact that the fire service is State-wide in its operation, and the bill would not tend to unify but divide the control of the fire service within New South Wales, and thus create two separate fire brigade services and authorities for the State.” Whilst the Board was successful with its argument, it was nonetheless meaningless, as the Greater Sydney Bill was blocked in the Legislative Council.\textsuperscript{713}

5.4. The New South Wales Fire Brigades – permanents and paid ‘volunteers’

Whilst the Board was concerned with its jurisdiction and finances, it was also very aware of the need to develop and control the building blocks of its service, namely, the permanent brigades and the numerous volunteer brigades spread across the State.

5.4.1. Permanent Brigade

The BFC, like its predecessor, and most other urban fire services adopted a paramilitary style rank structure to govern its personnel and operations. The ex-MFB Superintendent, Alfred Webb was slotted into the top rank, with the new title of Chief Officer. N.G. Sparks his former Deputy Superintendent was made the Deputy Chief Officer. The lower senior ranks were changed to reflect the new statewide divisional structure of the Board’s operations. At the level of Station Officer and below, the rank structure remained largely unchanged with the move to the BFC.\textsuperscript{714} Figure 2 shows the rank structure in 1911, ordered by seniority.

\textsuperscript{712} BFCAR 1938, p.2.
\textsuperscript{713} BFCAR 1931, p. 5; Spearritt, Sydney since the twenties, p.176-177.
\textsuperscript{714} Auditor General (NSW), 'Report of the Auditor General respecting the administration of Board of Fire Commissioners of New South Wales', pp. 4, 13; Adrian, Fighting fire, p.115, 116, 119, 128; BFCAR 1914, p.4.
Between its creation and the commencement of WWII, the rank structure was altered a number of times: in 1914 a new rank of Inspector was created above the rank of Divisional Officer; in 1923 the rank of Sub-station officer was abolished with all incumbents promoted to the lowest grade of Station Officer; two years later, the rank of Senior Fireman was created, which gave 1st Class Firemen with ten years service the opportunity to be promoted after passing an examination.  

715 See Adrian, Fighting fire, pp. 119, 123; BFCAR 1923, p. 3; BFCAR 1925, p. 4.
In terms of staffing, in its first year of operation, the Sydney Fire District (SFD) was served by 214 permanent officers and fireman as well as 234 partially paid firemen. By 1912 the permanent men (256) outnumbered the partially paid firemen (195) in the SFD. In the country districts it was overwhelmingly the other way: there were twenty-six permanents and 978 partially paid men. Table 5.4 shows the particular staffing levels at metropolitan stations and country stations at ten yearly intervals between 1910 and 1955.

### Table 5.4 – Stations & Staffing Numbers – 1910-1955

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Stations</th>
<th>Permanents</th>
<th>Volunteer</th>
<th>Ratio Perm/Vol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>56.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>65.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>73</td>
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<td>252</td>
<td>59.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>611</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>71.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>903</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>77.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1065</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>79.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Stations</th>
<th>Permanents</th>
<th>Volunteer</th>
<th>Ratio Perm/Vol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>978</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>913</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>1047</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>1390</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>1559</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>2043</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Stations</th>
<th>Permanents</th>
<th>Volunteer</th>
<th>Ratio Perm/Vol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>1173</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>1081</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>1299</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>678</td>
<td>1638</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>1006</td>
<td>1827</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>1180</td>
<td>2320</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Appendix 4.1 & BFCAR 1945 p.2.

In 1910, in the Sydney Fire District, there were twenty-two ‘Permanent’ stations and twenty-eight ‘Volunteer’ stations, as classified by the BFC. Again the nomenclature was misleading – in the same way that ‘volunteers’ were in fact paid employees of the BFC, the VFBs were operational units of the BFC, rather than voluntary organisations.

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716 BFCAR 1910, p.11; BFCAR 1912, pp.9-10.
in their own right.\textsuperscript{717} As Appendix 4.1 illustrates, by 1915, another ten stations in the Sydney Fire District were classified as ‘Permanent’ making the total thirty-two permanent stations. Nine were existing ‘volunteer’ stations that were converted in the intervening years into permanent stations (Auburn, Burwood, Glebe, Granville, Hornsby, Kogarah, Manly, Parramatta and Waverley). Two new permanent stations were opened, at Marrickville (the previous Marrickville station was renamed Stanmore to better reflect its spatial reality) and Gordon, a strategically located station on the mid North Shore.

The next decade saw much slower growth in the number of permanent stations: Vaucluse was converted to a permanent station (albeit with only three men) and Annandale was opened in 1916 with one permanent man.\textsuperscript{718} Cumberland Street (renamed York Street North) was closed in this period. The period 1925 – 1935 saw more significant growth. By 1935, an additional nine stations were classified as permanent. Eight were previously classified as ‘volunteer’ stations (Ashfield, Botany, Concord, Mosman, St. Peters, Mascot, Ryde and Maroubra) whilst Bondi opened in 1930 with five permanent men.\textsuperscript{719} Station data is scarce for the early 1940s but it seems likely that there were no significant changes to the number of stations after 1935, until radical changes that accompanied the ‘reorganisation’ of the SFD in 1945. In the reorganisation, twenty-three stations were closed (thirteen permanent and ten ‘volunteer’) – close to one third of all SFD brigades.\textsuperscript{720}

Whilst between 1910 and 1935 the number of permanent stations in the Sydney Fire District (SFD) nearly doubled (22 to 42), the actual number of permanent officers and firemen attached to the District nearly tripled (from 214 to 611 men - see Table 5.4) The significant factor in the increased numbers was the change from the “continuous service system” to the two-platoon roster system in March 1928, which is discussed below.\textsuperscript{721} In the decade 1935-1945, permanent numbers increased by forty-seven percent, culminating with a total of 903 permanent firemen on the SFD establishment,

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\textsuperscript{717} see Appendix 4.1. Note: Mixed stations (with permanent and volunteers) were generally classified according to the predominant group at the particular station.
\textsuperscript{718} Appendix 4.1: \textit{BFCAR 1916}, p.12.
\textsuperscript{719} Appendix 4.1: \textit{BFCAR 1930}, pp.2, 17.
\textsuperscript{720} \textit{BFCAR 1945}, p.2. – Permanent & volunteer classification based on their status in 1935.
\textsuperscript{721} \textit{BFCAR 1928}, p. 5.
notwithstanding the large-scale closure of stations in 1945. Again, this large increase in permanent numbers was a result of changes in officer and firemen’s hours and rostering systems (see below).

Aside from changes in hours and rosters, the impetus for the increase in permanent men in the SFD was the opening of new permanent stations (as detailed above) and the upgrading of VFBs to permanent manned brigades. The first ‘volunteer’ station to switch to permanent control was Drummoyne. When the new station was opened in June 1910, it was staffed by a permanent officer and three firemen, as the ‘volunteers’ failed to apply for their positions at the new station. Later that year, the ‘volunteers’ at Glebe resigned en-masse and permanent men replaced them. There appeared to be less volition for ‘volunteers’ in other changeovers: in 1913, at both Parramatta and Granville, they were “replaced by detachments of the Permanent Staff” with better levels of equipment. In all, between 1910 and 1915, an extra fifty-two permanents were placed at ex-‘volunteer’ stations. Throughout the following decades the conversion of SFD VFBs continued at a lesser pace, and sometimes in other forms: for example with the opening of a new Concord station with permanents in 1929, the nearby Concord West Volunteer Fire Brigade was disbanded by the Board.

The new Chief Officer N.G. Sparks (appointed after Webb’s death in 1913) certainly had a view towards replacing or supplementing ‘volunteers’ with permanent men. Like his predecessors in the FBB, in 1914, he highlighted the problems of ‘volunteer’ availability during daylight hours: generally only one man at volunteer stations was available at these times and they had trouble harnessing horses quickly in case of fire calls. He also referred to a “greater menace”, namely, “the absence of a trained force to cope with fires of any magnitude precludes the possibility of a good save being effected on account of having to rely of the assistance of persons in the vicinity who have not an elementary knowledge of manipulating the equipment.” As a

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722 BFCAR 1910, p. 11; see also EN 5/3/1909: Glebe volunteers were disgraced the previous year, with Council calling for permanents.
723 BFCAR 1913, p. 2.
724 See Appendix 4.1. An additional 4 positions added to take Drummoyne into account - whilst Drummoyne is shown as Permanent in Appendix 4.1, its conversion prior to the end of the year led to it being recorded this way.
725 BFCAR 1929, p.5-6.
consequence he sought an increase in permanent men throughout the SFD to “make the service more efficient”. 726

Fire Districts beyond the SFD (i.e. country fire districts) had much lower numbers of permanents compared to the metropolitan Sydney. In 1910 there were ninety-nine stations in country fire districts. As Table 5.4 shows, by 1945, this had increased to nearly 160 stations. 727 Yet this dramatic increase in stations was not accompanied by a rise in permanent numbers: between 1915 and 1945 a mere seventeen additional permanent positions were created outside of the Sydney and Newcastle Fire Districts. The latter fire district had a strong permanent presence: in 1915 sixteen permanent officers and firemen were attached to a number of Newcastle stations (predominantly Newcastle West, which was staffed by twelve permanents, with no partially paid staff). By 1945, twelve officers and thirty-nine firemen were attached to the fire district. Broken Hill District was the next largest permanent area, although its staffing dropped from thirteen permanents in one station in 1915, to ten by 1945 (three officers and seven men over two stations) by 1945. In 1945, West Maitland was the only other station in the State outside of the SFD and these areas, that had permanent firemen (as opposed to officers) attached, with staffing of an officer and three firemen. In the remaining country fire districts, permanent staffing was restricted to permanent officers in charge of volunteer stations. In 1915, eighteen permanent officers were attached to these districts; by 1945, thirty-eight officers served as station officers (either singly or in pairs) in charge of crews of eight to twelve ‘volunteer’ firemen. 728

Clearly, the switch to permanent crewing in country fire districts, was much less pronounced than in Sydney and Newcastle. In the first four years of the BFC’s operation, a significant number of ‘volunteer’ stations in the country had one permanent officer or fireman attached (e.g. Casino). A number of these permanent placements were a direct consequence of local community pressures for motorised appliances (which required a permanent to staff it), rather than a desire for a

726 BFCAR 1914, p. 10; BFCAR 1913, p1 for Sparks’ appointment.
727 1945 aggregate station data unavailable.
728 See Appendix 4.2; BFCAR 1945, p.2.
permanent presence.\textsuperscript{729} Notwithstanding the rash of early appointments, in 1914 CO Sparks, identified the “obvious” need for more permanents in “important towns” to increase effectiveness and efficiency.\textsuperscript{730} It is clear from Appendix 4.2 that the ‘obviousness’ of this need was lost on the Board and its contributors, particularly local government: four years later one permanent man had been placed at Cessnock, Glen Innes and Wollongong, whilst in 1922 a permanent man was taken from Penrith and West Maitland.\textsuperscript{731} In the case of the latter two stations, permanent men were withdrawn due to insufficient revenues in the fire district.\textsuperscript{732} Again the vagaries of the BFC’s funding arrangements, and local governments’ ability to restrain expenditures, had a real impact on the provision of fire services and the employment of permanent men in any given area. This would account for the fact that in the two decades to 1935, just seven additional country stations received permanent staff (totaling ten men).\textsuperscript{733} Even areas that were long considered permanent strongholds, were under threat by funding arrangements: Broken Hill Fire District was “reorganised” in 1930 to reduce the number of permanent men attached and to introduce (for the first time) ‘volunteer’ firemen into the area, on the basis of “the financial position” of the fire district.\textsuperscript{734}

The pay, conditions, and especially the hours of work of permanent firemen, is worthy of its own extensive research project. To date, only Jopson (1994) and, to a lesser extent, Adrian (1984) have touched on it. The following is only an overview of the main trends in this area, rather than a thorough exposition and analysis of the details. In May 1911, the late Board President George Pitt submitted a report to the Acting Chief Secretary outlining remuneration levels for all BFC operational personnel, which were unilaterally determined by the Board (see Table 5.5).\textsuperscript{735} In January 1913, the recently formed Fire Brigade Employees’ Union of NSW (FBEU) had its first award made pursuant to the Industrial Arbitration Act, 1912. Amongst

\textsuperscript{729} SMH, 25/9/1913, p.9.
\textsuperscript{730} BFCAR 1914, p.11.
\textsuperscript{731} BFCAR 1915, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{732} BFCAR 1922, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{733} See Appendix 4.2.
\textsuperscript{734} BFCAR 1930, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{735} New South Wales Parliament, 'Metropolitan Fire Brigade - report by the late President of the Board of Fire Commissioners of New South Wales on the Fire Service of New South Wales', Government Printer, Sydney, 1911, p.6.
other things, it determined wage rates for permanent firemen employed by the BFC (other than Broken Hill). Table 5.5 shows the rates as determined by the Wages Board for the industry. Rates for all officers, from Sub-Station Officer to Chief Officer, continued to be unilaterally determined by the BFC, under its recently proclaimed *Permanent By-Laws (By-Law 6).*

Table 5.5 – Rates of Pay for BFC permanent staff – 1911 (BFC Determined) & 1913 (First Award)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Board Determined - 1911</th>
<th>First Awd - 1913</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Officer</td>
<td>£850 0s. 0d.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Officer</td>
<td>£460 0s. 0d.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Officer</td>
<td>£265 0s. 0d.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Officer</td>
<td>£235 0s. 0d.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divisional Officer</td>
<td>£230 0s. 0d.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Officer</td>
<td>£200 4s. 0d.</td>
<td>£3 17s. 0d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Station Officer</td>
<td>£182 0s. 0d.</td>
<td>£3 10s. 0d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Station Officer</td>
<td>£172 18s. 0d.</td>
<td>£3 6s. 6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Class Fireman</td>
<td>£145 12s. 0d.</td>
<td>£2 16s. 0d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Class Fireman</td>
<td>£136 10s. 0d.</td>
<td>£2 12s. 6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Class Fireman</td>
<td>£127 8s. 0d.</td>
<td>£2 9s. 0d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Class Fireman</td>
<td>£118 6s. 0d.</td>
<td>£2 5s. 6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliaries (max)</td>
<td>£72 16s. 0d.</td>
<td>£1 8s. 0d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliaries (min)</td>
<td>£54 12s. 0d.</td>
<td>£1 1s. 0d.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: New South Wales Parliament, ‘Report by the Late President’, p.6; ‘Award – Government Employees Group, No.3 Board (Fire Brigades)’ 1913 NSWGG 10, 22/1/1913 in NBAC. New South Wales Fire Brigade Employees Union (FBEU), Z332, Box 68.

Notes: #M = weekly rental allowance paid to married firemen who did not live on Brigade premises. Single men were provided with subsidised rent in mostly dormitory style accommodation at stations (£1 6d pw). * these rates were paid when men were not supplied with (rent free) station based accommodation.

Over the subsequent decades, permanents’ wages were determined by wrangling between the FBEU (and emerging unions for officers) and a parsimonious Board and were subject to the vagaries of the public sector wage fixation, as determined by the NSW Industrial Commission (in its various guises).\(^{737}\) By 1940, 1\(^{st}\) Class Firemen

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\(^{737}\) The convoluted history of wage fixation in the BFC is beyond the scope of this work - See Jopson, *Red brigade ch.9; BFCAR 1916, p.5; BFCAR 1919, p.4. 5; BFCAR 1925, p.4; BFCAR 1938, p.6; BFCAR 1940, p.7; BFCAR 1945, p.4;* for general details on wage fixation in the NSW jurisdiction during this period see Greg Patmore, *Laying the foundations of industrial justice: the presidents of*
were paid either £5 15s. (Grade B) and £6 2s. 6d (Grade A), whilst the newer rank of Senior Fireman received £6 6s per week.\textsuperscript{738}

Whilst permanent staff of the BFC may have had a similar experience to other NSW workers throughout the first half of the twentieth century with respect to wage fixation, what distinguished them enormously, were their hours of work. This certainly impacted on the hourly rate paid that they received: FBEU activists insisted that during the Great Depression, their hourly rate was less than the equivalent paid to unemployment benefit recipients.\textsuperscript{739} Table 5.6 indicates the hours worked by permanent staff between 1910 and 1945 and compares them to the average enjoyed by other workers.

**Table 5.6 - Hours of Work – BFC Permanent Firemen 1910-1945**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Aust Avg</th>
<th>NSW Legtn</th>
<th>Hours/pw</th>
<th>Roster</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>147</td>
<td>Continuous Service - 24hrs off / 8 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*1913</td>
<td>48.93</td>
<td></td>
<td>138</td>
<td>Continuous Service - 30hrs off / 7 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>Continuous Service - 2 x 24hrs / 7 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>45.27</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>2 platoon system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>44.85</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>2 platoon system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*1945</td>
<td>43.61</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>3 platoon system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>39.95</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>#40</td>
<td>3 platoon system</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The battle of the FBEU and the officers unions for equity with other workers with respect to hours, has been well documented by Jopson (1994). Again, the BFC’s constraints on spending caused, at least in part, by the brake of local government contributions, and the Industrial Commissions views on the work of firemen, led to the Board gaining an exemption from the general application of the Eights Hours (Amendment) Act 1922, and subsequently the Forty-four Hours Week Act 1925.\textsuperscript{740}

Aside from Justice Piddington’s landmark decision to break the ‘continuous service’

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\textsuperscript{738} 1940 AR (NSW) 132 at 140.
\textsuperscript{740} 1938 AR (NSW) 42.
system, and therefore “the continuous tie” to the employer, through a reduction in hours from 120 to eighty-four per week, other decisions by the Commission were less ‘generous’ and rather judgmental as to work of firemen. These other decisions generally contained the obligatory exaltation of firemen: “fine body of trained men” (Beeby 1923); “the Commission fully recognises the value of the services which firemen render to the public”; and they “perform tasks in the saving of life and property that not only call for great skill and strength, but may require great courage and power of endurance” (Full Bench 1938). However these same judges also concentrated on distinguishing “standing by” for an immediate response in case of an alarm of fire, from “actual work”. Justice Beeby summed up the prevailing view: “Standing-by time is, in a sense, working time, but it makes such a comparatively small call on the energy of the employee that he cannot expect it to rank as full time worked.” Beeby however went further: in rejecting the Union’s claim for a 48-hour week and the abolition of ‘continuous service’, he extolled the virtues of the such service: “[firemen] are relieved of the necessity of travelling to and from work.” In 1938, the Full Bench emphasised that most firemen could sleep on night shifts under the 2 platoon roster and noted that “the actual manual labour done at the station is of a light character and is only performed on day shifts [and] is over at 1 p.m.” Thus the labour provided by firemen was devalued in the Commission’s view, notwithstanding the impact of long hours for firemen. As Table 5.6 shows, whilst the Union had nearly halved their hours between 1910 and the 1938 (when they achieved the 78-hour week), they were still working thirty hours more than other workers under state awards.

As shown in Chapters Three and Four, fulltime permanent brigades formed in Sydney to protect property and minimise the impact of fire on a functioning city and on the losses of colonial insurance companies. Other non-metropolitan urbanised areas also had paid staff deployed, such as Broken Hill and Newcastle. That these two centres were the only ones with more than three permanents attached is unsurprising: they were the largest urban centres in the State outside of Sydney and both were major centres of mining and commerce. Whilst Broken Hill’s population and development

741 1923 AR (NSW) 85 at 86; 1938 AR (NSW) 42 at 57.
stagnated after 1911, Newcastle grew considerably with the development of the BHP Steelworks, its associated industries and a growing manufacturing capacity: its population nearly doubled between 1901 and 1933, to nearly 105,000 persons. Like Morts in Balmain in the nineteenth century, capital in these (and other) centres had an interest in preserving its infrastructures and providing an environment for a stable workforce: urban conflagration was an enemy of both. The BFC responded to the needs of capital in these two centres. For example, in 1917, they sent an additional 450 gallon steam fire engine to Broken Hill during its “industrial crisis”. The following year the Chief Officer sought to “modify arrangements” (which presumably meant more permanent men) in Newcastle in light of “large industrial undertakings” being established in and around Newcastle.

The motivations for men to join the permanent brigades were not dissimilar to forces at work in the general labour market: it was paid employment. As noted in the last chapter, the MFB had a preference of employment for seamen: according to Jopson seamen also had a preference for employment with the BFC. Charles Milledge, a union activist and eventual Chief Officer, summed it up:

Most Australians found it unattractive to leave home to live on a fire station. The conditions precluded the engagement of married men because of the shortage of married quarters on fire stations. Seaman wanting to live ashore found the conditions superior to those in the forecastle of a ship.

Seaman did not however have a monopoly on entry into the industry: for example in late February, 1910 out of the six new permanent appointees in Sydney, only one entrant was a seaman. The other appointees included a laborer, a schoolteacher and a carpenter. At the same time, eight permanents were appointed in Newcastle (West) and were made up of laborers, tradesmen (i.e. printer, shipwright) and miners. Whilst

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743 BFCAR 1917, p. 4.
744 BFCAR 1918, p. 11.
746 Ibid., pp.17-18.
the employment of seamen did continue in subsequent decades, so to did the employment of other types of workers, particularly laborers and tradesmen.\textsuperscript{747}

In summary, the transition from the MFB to the permanent corps of the BFC for permanent firemen was relatively straightforward. Their wages and conditions, including their anti-social working hours and strict discipline remained relatively unchanged. The BFC’s propensity to maintain these vestiges of the nineteenth century, was also the root of their troubles. As discussed later in this chapter, by the beginning of WWII, the permanent men were heavily unionised and very much aware of their isolation from mainstream employment norms.

5.4.2. ‘Volunteer’ Brigades

Whilst Sydney’s independent volunteer fire companies had already been abolished under the FBB, the transition for country volunteer fire brigades to the BFC’s jurisdiction, was far from straightforward. The most fundamental change was the loss of local autonomy and control. Administrative and broader operational decisions were now centred in the BFC’s Sydney-based management structures. Accordingly, local independent supervisory positions such as Secretary and Superintendent were abolished and country brigades were all restructured along similar lines. The restructured brigades typically comprised of a ‘volunteer’ Captain, Engine Keeper and ten ‘volunteer’ firemen. Captains were now appointed by the BFC, rather than elected by the brigade members. By the BFCs second year of operation, the country volunteer fire brigades were also subject to “a set routine of duties and round of inspections” to ensure uniformity across the State. Local self-determination and/or control was replaced by uniform standards, determined by the Sydney based BFC. As discussed later in this chapter, such centralised control and unilateralism was not universally accepted.\textsuperscript{748}

Whilst the typical ‘volunteer’ station, particularly in the country, comprised of Captain, Engine Keeper and ten ‘volunteer’ firemen, more important country brigades

\textsuperscript{747} ibid; Board of Fire Commissioners of NSW, \textit{Minute Book, (BFC Mins)} 24/2/1910, pp.13, 17 (see Bibliographic Notes at end of thesis for details).

\textsuperscript{748} Appendix 4.2; New South Wales Parliament, ‘Report by the Late President’, pp.3-7; quote: p.5.
had more complex structures. As Appendix 4.2 shows, in 1915, four country ‘volunteers’ stations had more than one permanent attached to them to manage 10-12 partially paid men (West Maitland, Goulburn, Lismore & Wagga Wagga). One permanent man and nine to thirteen partially paid men was the staffing configuration at another seventeen stations. In the first few years, there was another variation on the theme: fully waged Captains, Engine-Keepers and combined Captain / Engine-Keeper positions, that were part of the ‘volunteer’ staffing and not considered part of the Permanent Brigade. For example, Bathurst Fire Brigade was managed, in the first two years under BFC rule, by a fully waged Captain / Engine-Keeper, until the occupant was appointed in 1912 to the permanent ranks as a 2nd Class Fireman, and managed the station as the “officer in charge”. The BFC maintained the MFB’s policy of any permanent man outranking any member of a ‘volunteer’ brigade. Accordingly, permanent men, when attached to a ‘volunteer’ station, managed the station and fireground operations. Where a Captain was the highest-ranking person attached to the station, they were similarly in charge of operational (and lesser administrative) matters pertaining to that station and fire district.

As Table 5.4 indicates, ‘volunteer’ firemen, as a group, did not significantly increase in the Sydney Fire District (SFD) between 1910 and 1935. In 1910, there were 226 ‘volunteers’ (captains, engine-keepers and firemen) stationed in the SFD. 224 were attached to twenty-seven ‘volunteer’ fire brigades, whilst four ‘volunteer’ firemen were attached to a permanent station at Rozelle (a trend that became more prominent in later years). The substitution of both volunteer stations and positions with permanent stations/men, together with the closure of two volunteer brigades, led to a loss 119 ‘volunteer’ positions were lost from existing stations between 1910 and 1915. They were offset, to some degree, however, by the opening of another eleven new ‘volunteer’ stations (and the appointment of another sixty-one ‘volunteers’), in

749 Ibid., p.6.
752 Appendix 4.1.
outer suburbs such as Eastwood, Lidcombe and Willoughby.⁷⁵³ Accordingly, by 1915 a net of fifty-eight ‘volunteer’ positions had been lost in the SFD (a quarter of all positions) leaving just 168 in the District.

The fortunes of the ‘volunteers’ in the SFD as a body were to change over the next decade. By 1925 their numbers had increased by exactly fifty percent from the 1915 level, totaling 252. Only one station had been reclassified as permanent over the period and there were only fifteen losses elsewhere. What led to the turnaround in ‘volunteer’ numbers was the opening of additional fifteen new ‘volunteer’ stations in the District and the appointment of ninety-eight additional men. Again, they were concentrated largely in Sydney’s rapidly growing outer suburbs, such as Dee Why, Wentworthville and Lakemba.⁷⁵⁴ Over the following decade (1925-35) ‘volunteer’ growth stagnated, with permanent conversions (and occasional closures) in established areas of Sydney, being counterbalanced by the opening of new stations in growing outer suburban areas, such as Malabar, Rydalmere and Toongabbie.⁷⁵⁵

The early development of ‘volunteers’ in the Country Fire Districts under the BFC is less documented than that of their Sydney counterparts, with the first full breakdown of staffing available from 1914 onwards. Nonetheless, its 1910 (First Annual) provided a full list of stations under its fledging jurisdiction. Spread across all areas of the State, they numbered ninety-nine in total.⁷⁵⁶ The first aggregate data relating to personnel in country NSW was for 1912: as Table 5.4 indicates there were 1173 ‘volunteers’ in the country districts, compared to twenty-six permanent men. By 1915, the number of ‘volunteer’ men in the country fire districts had been reduced to 1081, operating out of ninety-one stations: twenty-two mixed stations (permanent and ‘volunteers’) and sixty-nine brigades manned only by ‘volunteers’.⁷⁵⁷ The reduction in ‘volunteer’ stations and personnel was caused by the closure of ten VFB stations or their removal from BFC jurisdiction. These removals were a function of some local

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⁷⁵³ Appendix 4.1. One of the eleven stations, Turramurra, whilst listed as a station, did not appear to operate or have any men attached. By 1925 it was not even listed as a station.
⁷⁵⁴ See Appendix 4.1. Whilst in the appendix Harbord and Chatswood appear to be new stations, they are actually Freshwater and Willoughby East renamed and slightly restructured.
⁷⁵⁵ Ibid.
⁷⁵⁶ Appendix 4.2. A number of stations amongst this number may have been purely permanent – e.g. Newcastle West - available information is vague.
⁷⁵⁷ Ibid.
government bodies being unable / unwilling to seek a statutory increase in their contributions to match the expenditure needs in their fire districts. Four brigades ‘disappeared’ in the first year alone. For at least one of these brigades, Hillgrove, it was not just a matter of local finances. Hillgrove Municipal Council withdrew, as it did not support control from outside of the town nor the standardisation of equipment and procedures that came with it. The Brigade in fact continued to operate outside of the jurisdiction of the BFC and was controlled and maintained by the Council. These arrangements continued until the 1920s when the viability of the fading mining town’s urban centre was itself in question.\textsuperscript{758} The other three were predominantly small and remote communities with problematic local government finances (e.g. Wentworth and Wilcannia).\textsuperscript{759} At the same time as these closures, another three new ‘volunteer’ stations emerged at Coffs Harbour, Gilgandra and Lorn.

The following decade saw a large increase in the number of country ‘volunteer’ stations and, as a consequence, the number of country ‘volunteer’ firemen. As Appendix 4.2 shows, fifteen new ‘volunteer’ stations opened between 1915 and 1925, whilst two stations that had previously withdrawn from the BFC’s jurisdiction rejoined (Balranald and West Wyalong). The new stations covered all areas of the state (e.g. Cooma and Quirindi). Two areas, in particular, were subject to considerable volunteer growth: the Far North Coast (Tweed Heads, Coraki and Mullumbimby) and the Illawarra (Bulli, Thirroul, North Illawarra and Port Kembla), reflecting their increasing importance in terms of population, mining activity, commercial and/or industrial growth.\textsuperscript{760} As a consequence, 169 new ‘volunteer’ positions were created in country fire districts. This was dampened to some extent by the twenty positions lost at Jerilderie and Moama, and the net loss of fifteen positions at Newcastle (City) and Broken Hill. Thus by 1925 there were an additional 134 ‘volunteers’ across regional NSW.

The growth in country ‘volunteer’ stations and personnel accelerated even further between 1925 and 1935. Forty-one new stations opened, and again, were

\textsuperscript{758} G.J. Wilson, ‘The growth and decline of Hillgrove: a history of a northern New South Wales mining town from 1880 to 1920’ (University of Sydney, 1990), pp.136-143.
\textsuperscript{759} For example in the early 1910s, both Wentworth and Wilcannia Municipalities had small populations and large per capita liabilities. See Trivett, \textit{Statistical register for 1912}, p.929 Table 1.
\textsuperscript{760} e.g. Eklund, \textit{Steel town}, pp.36-49.
geographically dispersed. Seven were in the expanding Cessnock coalfields and the Lake Macquarie area, whilst four more stations were opened on the coastal strip, north of Wollongong. Additional ‘volunteer’ stations were opened in outer metropolitan areas, such as Cronulla, Blacktown and Cabramatta. These stations, whilst increasingly part of the urban fabric of Sydney, were encased in their own separate fire districts. Being outside of the SFD, classified as country Fire Districts and made them more subject to the vagaries of local government finances than those suburbs in the SFD.761 Two stations that had ceased to be under BFC jurisdiction in 1915, re-emerged (Warren & Wentworth). At the same time, only two stations had closed in the decade (North Illawarra & Broadmeadow) and losses at other stations were minor. Accordingly, there was a net increase of 370 volunteer positions in the decade to 1935, representing more than a thirty percent increase in country volunteer numbers.762

The working arrangements of ‘volunteer’ firemen under the BFC, were similar to those utilised by the FBB. Volunteer Fire Brigades were required to ‘drill’ twice a month and attend fire calls in their fire districts or operational areas. Regulations spelt out their role, vis-à-vis the permanent men. Whilst the latter was required “to devote the whole of [their] time to the service” and were prohibited from engaging in outside work, a ‘volunteer’ was required to “devote a reasonable portion of his time to the service” and was required to “take his turn of duty at the station as required by the Captain.”763

As such, like the unpaid volunteers of the previous era, ‘volunteer’ firemen generally had primary employment elsewhere. Harden was probably typical of most country volunteer fire brigades. When formed in 1934, its ten members were employed in a range of occupations, both blue and white collar: it comprised of three carriers, two

761 Appendix 4.2; Table 5.4. As most of Sydney & suburbs was encased in one fire district (i.e. the Sydney Fire District), local government and insurance company contributions were determined across the whole district. Thus the costs of increasing staff or equipment in one suburb would be spread across all contributors. In country and outer metropolitan standalone fire districts, any increased expenditures were more keenly felt locally.

762 Appendix 4.2; Table 5.4.

763 ‘Permanent By-Laws - 1913’ 1913 NSWGG 185, reg.50; ‘By-Laws for New South Wales Volunteer Fire Brigades, made under the provision of the Fire Brigades Act,’ 1909 NSWGG 185, 19/11/1913 pp. 7035-7038 – reg.43.
mechanics, two shop assistants, a plumber’s assistant, a stock clerk and a butter maker. It was also indicative of the varying degree of service given by some ‘volunteers’: whilst some of the initial brigade members left the brigade within years, a number served the brigade until the mid to late 1950s.\textsuperscript{764}

The wages and conditions attached to ‘volunteer’ service, were given their quasi-volunteer status, unusual in comparison to traditional industrial norms. The actual hours worked by ‘volunteer’ firemen in any given week, was obviously determined by whether a drill was held, or a fire occurred, in that period. There was no statutory, (or other), limit on the number, or pattern, of hours that a ‘volunteer’ could work. The fact that ‘volunteers’ could within ‘reason’, regulate their own hours, distanced them from the long running battle over perennants’ working hours.\textsuperscript{765}

Table 5.7 – Pay structures – ‘Volunteer’ Firemen – May 1911

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Retaining Fees</th>
<th>Drills</th>
<th>Fires (1st hr)</th>
<th>Fires (&gt;1hr)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>per month</td>
<td>per drill or part</td>
<td>per hr or part</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capt/Eng Keeper</td>
<td>£2 5s.</td>
<td>2 s.</td>
<td>4 s.</td>
<td>2 s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>£1 5s.</td>
<td>2 s.</td>
<td>4 s.</td>
<td>2 s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engine Keeper</td>
<td>£1 15s.</td>
<td>1 s.</td>
<td>3 s.</td>
<td>1 s. 6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firemen</td>
<td>10s. - 15s.</td>
<td>1 s.</td>
<td>3 s.</td>
<td>1 s. 6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capt/Eng Keeper</td>
<td>£1 - £1 10s.</td>
<td>2 s.</td>
<td>4 s.</td>
<td>2 s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>Nil - £1 15s.</td>
<td>2 s.</td>
<td>4 s.</td>
<td>2 s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engine Keeper</td>
<td><em>£1 - £1 10s.</em></td>
<td>1 s.</td>
<td>3 s.</td>
<td>1 s. 6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firemen</td>
<td>Nil - 12s. 6d.</td>
<td>1 s.</td>
<td>3 s.</td>
<td>1 s. 6d.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: New South Wales Parliament, ‘Report by the Late President’, pp.6-7. Note: *One Engine Keeper in the Country was receiving £2 10s, higher than the any retainer received by a Captain / Engine Keeper elsewhere.

When the BFC first gained control of the State’s brigades, eighteen country brigades received no retaining fee at all.\textsuperscript{766} All aspects of ‘volunteer’ remuneration were at first entirely at the discretion of the BFC. For the vast bulk of ‘volunteer’ staff, their pay was broken into three components: a retaining fee, payment for attendance at drills.


\textsuperscript{765} ‘Volunteer By-Laws – 1913’, 1909 NSWGG I85,19/11/1913 pp. 7035-7038, reg.43.

\textsuperscript{766} ‘Brief Particulars as to the Basis of the Voluntary System’, 25/5/1922, SRNSW: Board of Fire Commissioners, CGS 4258, Administration Files, 1906-1956, [20/14795]. This contradicts New South Wales Parliament, ‘Report by the Late President’, which reported that “it was not the practice to pay retaining fees” other than in the County of Cumberland.
and payment for attendance at fires. By May 1911, the various pay structures, (if any), of the former independent country volunteers brigades, had been standardised, with the exception of retaining fees. As Table 5.7 shows, the structure of retaining fees varied significantly across the State. With one exception, retaining fees in the metropolitan area were at the top of the scale.

In a report to the Acting Chief Secretary in May 1911, the then Board President (George Pitt) opined that even the top retaining rate in the country, (12 s. 6d. per month), was “paltry”, but limited by the funding arrangements by fire district. He foreshadowed the need and desire to determine a single, across the board, retaining fee structure, as the issue was “a fruitful source of dissatisfaction amongst the firemen” particularly at stations where none were paid.767 Indeed, the FBEU, which had a large ‘volunteer’ membership, sought uniform remuneration for all ‘volunteers’, including retaining fees in its first award (1913). The Wages Board rejected their clause regulating retaining fees, instead leaving it to BFC determination. It did however incorporate drill and fire attendance rates into the Award and increased a number of them (see Table 5.7). Whilst drill and fire attendance rates increased in 1919 and 1925, the rates were remained unchanged at the start of WWII (see Table 5.8)

Table 5.8 – Award increases – ‘Volunteers’ – 1913-1925

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank / Award</th>
<th>1913</th>
<th>1919</th>
<th>1925</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Captain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drill</td>
<td>2s. 6d.</td>
<td>2s. 9d.</td>
<td>3s. 6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire 1st Hr or part</td>
<td>4s. 0d.</td>
<td>4s. 6d.</td>
<td>6s. 0d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire - each Sub hr or part</td>
<td>2s. 0d.</td>
<td>2s. 3d.</td>
<td>3s. 6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fireman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drill</td>
<td>1s. 6d.</td>
<td>1s. 9d.</td>
<td>2s. 6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire 1st Hr or part</td>
<td>3s. 0d.</td>
<td>4s. 0d.</td>
<td>5s. 0d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire - each Sub hr or part</td>
<td>1s. 6d.</td>
<td>1s. 9d.</td>
<td>3s. 0d.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Award (Fire Brigades) – 1913’, NBAC: FBEU, Z332, Box 68; 15 NSWIG 963 at 964; 28 NSWIG 216 at 217.

Details on the non-award based retaining fees are naturally harder to track because until the first (dedicated) ‘volunteers’ award emerged in 1963, they were set unilaterally, and at differential rates, by the BFC. The 1913 Regulations (and repeated

767 Ibid., p.6.
in subsequent amendments) stated that retaining fees were “regulated chiefly by the importance of the fire district and the revenue collected” in that district and capped country fire district retaining fees, by the rate paid in the SFD.\textsuperscript{768} Certainly, in the first years, insufficient revenues in fire districts was a major factor in suppressing retaining fees. Indeed, in the first year of operation, it was unable to pay a any retainer to an unspecified number of ‘volunteer’ stations, notwithstanding its stated desire to do so, because of limited fire district revenues.\textsuperscript{769} The BFC again explained both, its desire to pay retainers, and the fundamental barrier to doing so, two years later:

In the country fire districts, (...) the ability of the Board (...) to provide retaining fees is which the Board are anxious to give in every case, must be governed by the amounts of the contributions payable by the respective councils, which in turn decides the amount contributed by the government and the insurance companies.\textsuperscript{770}

Again local government finances limited their ability to fund country brigades adequately. In 1922, the Board’s President reported on the retaining fees paid at each station to ‘volunteer’ firemen.

**Table 5.9 – Retaining Fees – ‘Volunteer’ Firemen – 1922**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retaining Fee</th>
<th>No. of Stns</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rhodes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5s. 0d.</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Junee, Morpeth, Cobar, Bega, Hay, Moree, Bulli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7s. 6d.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Windsor FD, Taree, Cowra, Coffs Harbour, Yass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10s. 0d.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Maitland FD; Temora, Lithgow, Penrith, Forbes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12s. 6d.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Newcastle &amp; Kurri FDs; Cessnock, Albury, Grafton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£1 0s. 0d.</td>
<td>Not spec.</td>
<td>All stations in SFD (except Rhodes) and Narrabeen FD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ‘Brief Particulars’, SRNSW: CGS 4258, [20/14795].

In country fire districts, captains received double the rate paid to firemen.\textsuperscript{771} Table 5.9 shows the breakdown of retaining fees paid on six scales. It is notable that since 1911, the upper limit of country ‘volunteer’ firemen retaining rates did not change, though in the SFD it did rise by 5s. After referring to the schedule of retaining fees paid, the


\textsuperscript{769} BRCAR 1910, p.2.

\textsuperscript{770} BFCAR 1912, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{771} ‘Retaining Fees – Increases’, 15/12/1921, SRNSW: Board of Fire Commissioners; CGS 475, Registered files, 1909-85, Increased Retaining Fees, 1921-22 [20/14825, Bundle 319].
President outlined three criteria by which retainers are set: 1) “importance” of town; 2) the applicable fire risk and 3) capacity to raise sufficient revenues in the Fire District (quaintly referred to as “the financial scope”).

Thirty years later (1952) the minimum rate paid in country districts appeared to have risen by only 1s. to 6s. Larger stations appeared to have fared better. For example the ‘volunteers’ at Katoomba in 1922 received 10s. per month. By 1952 this had increased to 15s.

The motivation for the formation, maintenance and growth of ‘volunteer’ brigades, in particular localities, varied. Obviously changes in the built environment of any particular town would have been an important driver. Often a fire in the centre of a town, would be the impetus for formation: for example in 1933, the loss of a hairdressing salon in Harden, led to a series of town meetings, which eventually decided to ask the BFC to form a brigade in the town, with all of the consequent costs to local government. The desire to boost a town’s standing in the region and the impact that BFC stations may have had on fire insurance risk classifications (and therefore premiums) were also likely to have influenced communities to seek the formation of a permanent station or ‘volunteer brigade.’ Progress associations, one of the prime agents of localism in any town (Eklund (2000 & 2002) Wright(2001) and Mullins (1995)), were often the conduit between the locality and the BFC in attempting to establish a brigade. For example, the [Lake] Cargelligo Progress Association made the first approaches to the BFC, to form a brigade in their town, in 1917.

The reasons for local citizens joining local ‘volunteer’ brigades are more complex than those seeking permanent positions. Certainly, the need for fire protection in their

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772 ‘Brief Particulars’, SRNSW: CGS 4258, [20/14795], p.3.
776 Eklund, ‘The place’ of politics: Class and localist politics at Port Kembla, 1900-1930’, p.105; — —, Steel town, p.92-99; Wright, ”Brass Hats ... from Sydney”; Mullins, ‘Progress associations and urban development’; BFC Mins 1917, p.486. Lake] Cargelligo Progress Association’s efforts were largely in vain. They had to wait until after WWII for a brigade to be formed (see Appendix 4.2).
communities was a significant factor. Whilst members of VFBs received some remuneration, they were generally not motivated in order to sustain their “livelihood”. Indeed s.5 of the Fire Brigades Act 1909 considered VFBs to be “association[s] of persons” where the “purpose of such association is not the sole or principal calling or the means of livelihood of such persons or a majority of them”. Budai (1999) and self appointed ‘advocates’ for VFB members have stressed ‘community service’ as one of the main motivators for ‘volunteer’ brigade activity. Clearly it is an important factor, as are the other motivators discussed by Thompson & Bono (1993), such as self-actualisation and social status. As discussed later, the BFC was involved in a number of early disputes in the country, centred on the loss of local autonomy. These, rather truculent, VFBs used all means available to them, so maintain their status as self directed workgroups, which controlled their internal structure and operations. As such, using the language of Thompson & Bono, membership of VFBs may have been partly inspired by the “[struggle] against alienated social relations” of modern capitalism and a search for ‘self actualization’ in a work context.

Remuneration was also a significant factor in the motivation of some VFB members. As discussed earlier, up until 1963, (when ‘volunteers’ gained their first dedicated award), retaining fees were set unilaterally by the BFC. In the sixty plus years that they had this power, VFBs, either through their Captain or via the Union sought increases in the retaining fee. For example, members of the Lithgow VFB sought a fifty percent increase (to 15s.) in their monthly retainer from the BFC, through the Chief Officer in February 1911. Like many subsequent applications, the BFC deferred the granting of the increase on the basis of that their local fire district estimates, (governed by the local government contributions), would not allow it. As discussed in section 5.6.2, the linkage between remuneration and motivation became quite

777 Fire Brigades Act, 1909-1927, s.6 - definition of “Volunteer fire brigade”.
778 Budai, ‘Organising part time workers’, p.27; see also 1963 AR (NSW) 41 ‘Re. Volunteer Fire Brigade Employees (No.1)’, pp.56-58.
781 Jopson, Red brigade, p.289.
782 BFC Mins 9/2/1911, p.3.
evident in 1910 and 1911, when a number of country brigades resigned, en masse, primarily over cuts to their pay in the transition to BFC control (Orange), or due to inadequate or inequitable retaining fees (Cessnock & Wyalong).

**5.5. The emergent bush fire brigade movement**

Compared to BFC (and FBB) brigades, the history of bush fire brigades prior to 1939 is poorly documented. This is unsurprising: the BFC had a highly centralised bureaucracy, that reported to its contributors on a regular basis. As discussed later, its reporting systems formed an essential part of its web of control over the lives of firemen and its legitimacy as the sole authority in firefighting. Bush fire Brigades (referred to hereafter as BFBs), on the other hand, were formed and maintained by local interests, with little in the way of reporting requirements. The BFC and a series of Committees formed by the Chief Secretary’s Department provided some guidance, but there was certainly no statewide or even regional control over them.

Despite evidence of the existence and operation of BFBs formed pursuant to the Local Government Act in this period (see below), Griggs (1994) asserts that "the very survival of the bush fire brigades of NSW was in doubt until at least the 1930s."783 The first (reported) bush fire brigade formed in Berrigan, in November 1900. Interestingly, this pioneer brigade was essentially a local pact between ‘town’ and ‘country’. Funded by local subscriptions, it had thirty members who were primarily employed or self employed town dwellers, as opposed to farmers. Yet, according to the Australasian, it was set up primarily for the benefit of the surrounding land holders, reflecting the fact that ""towns are deeply interested in the welfare of the country districts". The use of town, as opposed to country, residents was also deemed an efficient means of quickly mobilising a large enough group of bush firefighters.784 In early 1901, it boasted at least fifty members, with an additional 200 ad-hoc volunteers being noted at one large fire.785 It soon engaged with local town brigades: in October 1901 it was invited by the Hay Fire Brigade to attend a Demonstration in

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784 *Berrigan Advocate*, 14/12/1900, p.2; *Australasian*, 5/1/1901, p.8; *Berrigan Advocate*, 30/11/1900, p.3.
785 *Berrigan Advocate*, 4/1/1901, p.2.
its town.\footnote{Berrigan Advocate, 11/10/1901, p.3.} This represents the first interaction between the bushfire brigade movement and more urbanised fire services. Presumably it was a positive interaction, given that it did not involve any fireground or jurisdictional contact. Whilst newspapers prior to 1900 are replete with episodes of people volunteering (or simply required) to fight large bushfires, this was the first reported organised and ongoing group, set up, to do so.\footnote{For example see SMH, 14/12/1875, where 50-60 men fought “ruinous fires” at Pennant Hills.} Whilst FBB firemen and volunteer companies did fight bushfires, they were generally in urban/bushland interface areas and generally ancillary to urban fire protection.\footnote{e.g. the MFB turned out to bushfires at Cabramatta in 1909: see SMH, 17/12/1909.}

As discussed previously, in 1906 the new Local Government Act came into effect. It gave shire councils across NSW enhanced powers, including the ability to organise bush-fire brigades.\footnote{Local Government Act, 1906, (No.56 of 1906), s.73.} The Premier (Joseph Carruthers) when speaking to the Bill made reference to the operation of BFBs in “some parts” of the State.\footnote{NSWPD, 27/7/1905, p.1107.} Yet in 1909 the Sydney Morning Herald, after a series of serious bushfires, lamented the general lack of bushfire organisation:

Once the danger is present there is no lack of devoted co-operation, and only Australians know what unselfish and herculean labour is untaken at such times. But it is to be feared that such co-operation is not always in evidence before the imminent danger appears.\footnote{NSWPD, 27/7/1905, p.1107.}

The first systematic assessment of the bush fire brigade movement was the 1927 Royal Commission of Inquiry on Bush Fires in the State of New South Wales. The BFC’s Chief Officer, Frank Jackson, sat as one of three Commissioners appointed. In November 1927, they delivered, what must be, one of the shortest Royal Commission reports ever produced, totaling a mere sixteen pages.\footnote{SMH, 17/12/1909, Editorial.} The report was commissioned by the then Lang Labor Government, as a result of extensive bushfires that had occurred during the summer of 1926/1927.\footnote{Cramsie, Jolly, and Jackson, 'Royal Commission - Bush Fires'.} Four organisations were prominent in the Inquiry: the Farmers and Settlers’ Association; the Graziers’ Association; the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{Berrigan Advocate, 11/10/1901, p.3.}
\item \footnote{For example see SMH, 14/12/1875, where 50-60 men fought “ruinous fires” at Pennant Hills.}
\item \footnote{e.g. the MFB turned out to bushfires at Cabramatta in 1909: see SMH, 17/12/1909.}
\item \footnote{Local Government Act, 1906, (No.56 of 1906), s.73.}
\item \footnote{NSWPD, 27/7/1905, p.1107.}
\item \footnote{SMH, 17/12/1909, Editorial.}
\item \footnote{Cramsie, Jolly, and Jackson, 'Royal Commission - Bush Fires'.}
\item \footnote{Ibid. p.5; Foster, Bushfire, pp.39.}
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Agricultural Bureau; & the Primary Producers' Union. The Commission made a number of significant recommendations regarding the formation and management of BFBs. It “recommended that Voluntary Bush Fire Brigades be formed in country towns” and that their formation and training, be assisted by BFC personnel in such localities.  794 They also recommended the establishment of a “Bush Fires Control Board” that would work in conjunction with local shires, to develop and “control” bush fire organisations. This supervisory board was to consist of the representatives of the abovementioned rural organisations and proposed the establishment of reporting systems. 795

According to the Royal Commissioners, the Control Board was needed, as very few shires had used their existing powers under the Local Government Act to establish BFBs “with any degree of success or on regulated and systematic lines.” Whilst the evidence given at the Inquiry referred to only two active shire councils (Carrathool & Waradgery, both in the Hay region), other long standing and active BFBs were discussed, in a wide range of locations across Western and South Western NSW. 796 During the Inquiry, BFBs were reported as being active in inland NSW, including in Dubbo, Wagga Wagga, Trangie, Bogan, Parkes, Gulargambone, and Warren and according to one witness, in “most country centres” in the Murray region. 797

As Foster (1976) points out, the Inquiry was less than “systematic” in its own research. At no stage did it review the existing status of BFBs across the State, instead it relied on “witnesses of varying qualifications” to provide, at times, rather anecdotal evidence. 798 If it had undertaken such research, it would have found other BFBs operating: for example, the village of Book Book (40km SE of Wagga) was reported in the press as having a BFB in 1909. 799 More towns formed them after bad fire seasons in the mid 1920s: for example Barmedman BFB (between Temora and West

795 Ibid., p.15.
796 ‘Minutes of Evidence taken before The Bush Fires Royal Commission’ 24/3/1927, p.236, SRNSW: Board of Fire Commissioners; CGS 584, Papers relating to the establishment of the Bush Fire Committee, Dec 1926-1948 [20/14833].
797 Ibid. p.201. See also transcript for 14-15/3, 21/3, 24/3/1927 for details of existing bushfire brigade activity.
798 Foster, Bushfire, p.39.
Wyalong) was successfully established in 1926 (after a false start in 1924). Following the release of the Inquiry’s recommendations, the BFC wrote to the Chief Secretary’s Department stating that it would provide “instruction and advice”, to help form and maintain BFBs, on the basis that “out-of-pocket” expenses were met from funds other than their own. They also highlighted that fire brigades of any form could only be established in their fire districts with their express permission, thereby reinforcing their spatial monopoly in Fire Districts. Internal BFC documents indicate that this was a real concern to the BFC, when the proposal to form the Control Board was being considered. The BFC’s concerns regarding the formation of a Control Board were misplaced: the Bush Fires Act, 1930 ignored the concept of a centralised bushfires board, instead the Parliament opted to strengthen the role of local government, and making provision for the appointment of unspecified BFB officers. However, when James Ryan (MLC) in his Second Reading speech stated that “There can be no opposition to the [Bill], which does not interfere in any way with the operations of the regularly constituted fire brigades”, he was clearly not privy to submissions that the BFC had made to the Chief Secretary’s Department, that strongly suggested otherwise. The BFC sought legal advice on an early draft of the Bill, and in March 1929, wrote to the Chief Secretary’s Department over a number of concerns. First and foremost was its concern over “divided control” on the fireground that the Bill, appeared to allow. The BFC proposed that the operation of the Bill should not apply to any of its existing or future fire districts and, that where the BFC were in attendance at any fire, that the most senior officer or firemen would be in “sole charge of all operations.” The aim of their suggested amendments was to “avoid possible conflict between the Board’s Officers and Officers appointed by Councils”. The BFC’s position was understandable and unsurprising, given its heritage of disputation on the fireground in

801 ‘Royal Commission on Bushfires – Recommendations by BFC Secretary’ (15/11/1927), ‘Correspondence (28/11/1927) to Chief Secretary’s Dept re. Royal Commission on Bushfires’ [File 27/3216]. SRNSW: CGS 584, [20/14833].
802 NSWPD, 13/3/1930, p.4763.
the nineteenth century, and its consequent obsession with command and control. Nonetheless its advice was unheeded with the making of the Act. The Board’s solicitors (Pigott, Stinson MacGregor & Palmer) gave the BFC the advice, that as a result of the new Act, members of the New South Wales Fire Brigade and the members of a Bush Fire Brigade when present together, were entitled to act independently of each other and neither, was entitled to control the other.

The BFC tried to make the best of the legislation. Again on the advice of their solicitors, the BFC issued an Instruction to their officers and men: referring to the abovementioned “conflict of authority”, it then set the ground rules:

It is therefore ordered that every effort must be made to maintain harmonious relations with the Bush Fire Brigade, and every effort made to work in conjunction without conflict. It is contemplated however that when the representatives of the two Brigades are present together at a fire, the members of the Bush Fire Brigade will as a matter of course place themselves under the control of the Board’s Officers.

Forty-six years after the BFC’s predecessor had eradicated dual control and the inevitable conflict that arises from it, the Parliament reopened this Pandora’s box.

There is no evidence to suggest that the 1930 Bush Fires Act led to a significant increase in BFB development. The Shires Association was critical of the “gulp” of powers conferred on council appointed fire officers – they could exercise “extraordinary powers” (similar to BFC officers), yet such powers were not suited “for the broad acres, the grass lands, the dry stubbles, and the timber country, which are the problem of a person who wants to control or fight bush fires.” Other perceived flaws in the legislation led to further legislative amendments. In 1932, specific powers and roles were given to the positions of Captain and Deputy Captain, to enable them to control their BFBs and exercise powers specific to bushfires outside of BFC fire districts. The legislation, however, still failed to address the issue of dual

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803 ‘Correspondence (19/3/1929) to Chief Secretary’s Dept re. Proposed Bush Fires Bill’, SRNSW: CGS 584, [20/14833].
804 ‘Correspondence (20/11/1929) from Pigott & Stinson (Solicitors) re. Bush Fires Bill’, SRNSW: CGS 584, [20/14833].
805 ‘Correspondence (2/12/1930) from Pigott & Stinson (Solicitors) re. Bush Fires Act 1930’, SRNSW: CGS 584, [20/14833] Italicics are my emphasis.
807 NSWPD, 1/12/1932, p.2511; 29/11/1932, p.2382.
control, where both BFB officers and BFC staff were on the same fireground. The amendments also reinforced the voluntary nature of BFBs: it explicitly stated that an appointment to one of the BFB positions would not make the occupant a “servant of the Council”.\footnote{Local Government (Bush Fires) Amendment Act (41 of 1932).} The issue of compensation for BFB firefighters was raised during the debate in the Legislative Assembly by ‘Charles’ Davidson, the (MLA for Cobar and founding Australian Workers Union member). He invoked the “spirit of the bushman” and sought compensation for damage to clothing and personal effects, that could be damaged, when volunteers fight bushfires.\footnote{NSWPD, 29/11/1932, pp.2380-2382; J.E. Gallagher, ‘(Charles) Mark Anthony Davidson’ in B. Nairn and G. Serle (ed.), \textit{Australian dictionary of biography - volume 8} 1891-1939 Cl-Gib, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1981.}

It would appear that the 1932 amendment did not significantly strengthen the BFB movement, as was hoped. Apart from an article in the \textit{Agricultural Gazette of NSW}, published in December of that year by the Manager of the Temora Experiment Farm (Leonard Judd), which outlined how to organise a BFB, there is little other reported activity in BFB development.\footnote{Agricultural Gazette of NSW, 1/12/1932, p.877.} On the other hand, there was increased activity by BFC firemen in bushfire fighting operations. In 1932, the BFC attended 1067 bush, grass and rubbish fires in the Sydney Fire District alone. By 1939, these attendances had increased to over 3000 (unsurprising given the drought conditions and the terrible fire season at the time).\footnote{BFCAR 1932, p.12; BFCAR 1939, p.15; Collins, \textit{Burn}, pp.44-47; \textit{Bureau of Meteorology website}: \url{http://www.bom.gov.au/lam/climate/levelthree/c20thc/drought3.htm}} The BFC went beyond their fire districts in bushfire operations: in 1936, it deployed “special squads of firefighters”, in radio equipped vehicles, to combat extensive bushfires in the Avalon / Palm Beach peninsula and the lower Blue Mountains.\footnote{BFCAR 1936, pp.5, 15.} In the latter case, the fires destroyed twenty-seven houses in Glenbrook and Warrimoo, plus a number of others further up the Mountains.\footnote{T.J. Daly, ‘Elements of the past: an environmental history of the Blue Mountains, Australia’ (PhD Thesis, Dept. of History, Faculty of Arts, University of Sydney, 2000), p.329.}

The disastrous 1936 fire season had two outcomes: the BFC gained approval to gazette the strip of townships from Lapstone to Wentworth Falls as a new fire district (and subsequently built two ‘volunteer’ stations, Springwood and Lawson). It also led the Chief Secretary (William Chaffey), to establish the Bush Fires Advisory
Committee (BFAC), which was comprised of representatives from a number of government departments as well as the BFC, the Police, the Rural Bank, the Shires Association, the Graziers’ Association and the Rangers’ League. It objective was to promote the prevention and mitigation of “bush fires in sparsely populated areas.” Its formation put “an end to an era lasting about 150 years during which there was no consistent attempt between all interested parties to gather into a collective [bush] fire protection campaign.”

At a local level, BFBs operated in a similar fashion to the old volunteer fire companies, albeit, with probably a lot less zealotry and competitiveness. No doubt there were various approaches to the management of BFBs, but Barmedman BFB was probably fairly typical in its management and operations. Formed at a public meeting organised by the local Progress Association and the Farmers and Settlers Association in December 1926 after a bad fire season, it elected a Captain (a prominent local, W.A. Maitland), two vice-captains and eight deputy-captains, each representing different sections of the adjoining area. At its Annual General Meeting, held in November, it would vote to reform each year, as well as elect office bearers and sets its membership rates. Initially membership was 10s. per annum, although it was later dropped to encourage a larger membership, particularly amongst farmers.

The motivation for the formation of bush fire brigades (BFBs) was generally the experience of a bad fire season in a particular area, as was the case in Barmedman. Yet other factors were also at play: as stated before, the townsfolk of Berrigan decided to form the first BFB to protect its economic base – agricultural production in the surrounding country. Rural organisations, with extensive local branch structures, helped in the encouragement and organisation of BFBs throughout this period, such as local branches of the Farmers and Settlers Association and Agricultural Bureaus. (e.g.

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817 e.g. see Ibid., pp.14-15, 49-50.
818 Ibid., pp.3, 49.
the Coradgery Agricultural Bureau formed Bogan Gate BFB around 1917. Other, more sinister organisations, were also involved in encouraging BFB formation during this period: in early 1932, the ‘Old Guard’, (a relatively secretive and conservative paramilitary organisation), generated a fear in parts of country NSW of the Lang Government and urban radicals, and the latter groups desire to ignite conflagrations in country NSW, to destabilise conservative opposition. They attempted to create the spectre of “hordes of swarthy, barrel-chested bolsheviks prowling the countryside setting fire to crops”.

In late January, graziers in the Burrowa District were reported to have received pieces of charcoal in the mail, just prior to significant bushfires on their properties. According to Moore (1989), the fear of urban bolshevism led to a renewed interest in BFB formation and in at least one area, Canowindra, led to the formation of BFBs by Old Guard operatives.

The motivation for individuals joining and being active in BFBs in this period, appears to have received no appreciable attention. Whilst the interwar period was to play host to various debates on the motivation of employees (e.g. scientific management and welfarism etc), there was no parallel debate on volunteer motivation in bushfire formation. On the one hand, this is surprising: throughout this period, large scale bushfires caused significant economic losses and social disruption.

Between 1926 and the start of WWII at least 4.4 million hectares were burnt out, and 119 people lost their lives in major bushfire conflagrations in Victoria and NSW alone. Authorities had identified BFB formation as important (as discussed above): getting an active and engaged membership would have been equally as important. On the other hand, the lack of rigorous assessment of BFB volunteers’ motivations is unsurprising, given that participation in BFB activities was often seen as a matter not

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821 SMH, 30/1/1932, p.13.


824 Aggregation from Foster, Bushfire, p.237; Note: the vast bulk of deaths (111) occurred in Victoria largely as a result of two major widespread conflagrations known as “Black Sunday” (1926) and “Black Friday” (1939). See Collins, Burn, pt.1 for further details.
subject to individual volition. Indeed, as early as 1907, a number of witnesses at a Victorian select committee on bushfires advocated compulsory attendance by any person at large bushfires as determined by local police.825 A similar position was taken in NSW, at the 1927 Bushfires Royal Commission, where John Clatsworthy a farmer at Goonumbla, in the Central West, asserted “that every man should be compelled within the area to join the Brigade and take his share of the responsibility and the cost of maintaining it.”826 Henry Kater from Gumin (near Gulargambone) shared this view. Other witnesses at the Royal Commission, were less fervent regarding compulsion. Daniel McAlary previously of Warren, when asked about landowners not contributing their labour to BFB activities, stated that few men acted in this way and his solution was to “Let him die out, if you can.”827 Thus, those that did not participate were subject to strong local community pressures to join, or were destined to “die out”. Again the importance of firefighting to local communities, made localism a very strong force indeed.

Using remuneration as a means of motivating participation was also raised at times. During the 1927 Royal Commission, one of Commissioners, Frank Jackson [the BFC’s Chief Officer] questioned Kater on remuneration of townsfolk who volunteered, or who were compelled, to fight bushfires:

[Commissioner Jackson]: It would have to be an entirely and purely voluntary Brigade because once you get in those men who hang round a hotel the first thing they ask is how much they are going to get out of it, and they are no good for you? [H.E. Kater]: Still I think if the Brigade has sufficient funds those men should be paid something for their labour.828 Jackson went further: “My experience has been when you pay those men by the hour or part of the hour they do not put their best energy into it, but say “We will let it go for awhile, so that we can make another couple of hours out of it,” whereas the pure volunteer comes out with the one intention of putting the fire out, and with no idea of what he will make out of it?” In a classic example of “countrymindedness”, as

825 Victorian Parliament, 'Bush Fires Committee - Minutes of Evidence', Melbourne, 1907, pp.77, 79. One witness did, at least, propose remuneration under such compulsion.
827 Ibid., 21/3/1927, p.182.
828 Ibid., p.123.
described by Aitkin (1985), both men eventually agreed that this might not be a problem with the “better class of young fellows in a country town”. Generally, the majority of witnesses backed the voluntary nature of the BFBs and rejected any form of remuneration.

The NSW Legislative Assembly in 1932 also briefly discussed the motivations of BFB members, in the debate over amendments to the Local Government Act. Both Government and opposition speakers agreed on the motivations: the Minister for Local Government Joseph Jackson stated that

men enter the service for various reasons, some from the desire to protect their own homes and the homes of their friends, and some because they are farmers or residents in the district, and are asked to take a hand in fighting the flames as they arise.

“Charles” Davidson (Cobar) also posed a direct and indirect motivation for BFB involvement:

These volunteer fire brigades consist chiefly of men who are interested in the country themselves, but often in the towns there are men who join them purely from patriotic motives, and who, having the spirit of the bushman, are always prepared to lend a hand in case of danger either to life or property.

Both speakers are illustrative of the strong pressures that rural citizens were put under to participate in local BFBs. Joseph Jackson again alluded to the expectation that all in the district were expected to “lend a hand”. Davidson positioned non-participation in bushfire brigade efforts, as unpatriotic and an affront to the archetypal ‘bushman’. Indeed, this was not the first time that patriotism and bushfire suppression had been linked. In 1918, the NSW [War] Recruiting Committee released an evocative image of a solitary, rather ‘caddish’ rural man, watching while a large group of his fellow citizens battle a bushfire. Accompanying the image was the equally emotive text: “Would you stand by while a bushfire raged? GET BUSY, and drive the Germans

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829 Ibid., pp.123-124.
830 Ibid., 14/3/1927, p.41-42, e.g. Andrew Butter of the Trangie BFB saw remuneration as “a bad policy”.
831 NSWPD, 29/11/1932, pp.2379-2380.
832 Ibid. p.2380.
back!” Under such pressure, which was akin to “compulsory altruism” as described by Baldock (1998), it is likely that that non-participants in bushfire suppression activities were few and far between. Where they did exist, they were seen as aberrant and destined to “die out”. It is little wonder then, in the face of such expectation, that (infrequent) requests for payment for assisting in bushfire suppression, were met with disdain: in January 1932, a group of ad-hoc volunteers after a fighting a bushfire in Queanbeyan, held a meeting and demanded 2s. per hour. Local police “sent the men off the work and no further trouble occurred”.

Notwithstanding the motivations of self-preservation and ‘community pressure’ to volunteer, some witnesses at the 1927 Royal Commission did complain of non-involvement and disinterest in BFB formation and maintenance. Mauldon (1931) also noted “rural individualism” as a brake to cooperative endeavours in the country: no doubt this extended to BFB formation in certain localities.

The following section discusses mechanisms used by the BFC to control its permanent and ‘volunteer’ firefighters and the resistance that it encountered from these workers. For bushfire brigades and their members, their largely self-autonomous structures made control, largely, a non issue in the pre-WWII period. By the start of WWII, the Bush Fire Advisory Committee was in existence, but its role was primarily advisory and it had no control over individual bush fire brigades. The BFC’s relationship with individual BFBs was generally good and, at times, it was active in encouraging their formation. Further, as bushfire brigades were largely operating in areas that were spatially separated from BFC fire districts, there was little opportunity for conflict with the BFC, or for that matter, its paid and quasi-volunteer workforce.

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834 SMH, 31/1/1932 p.13.
836 e.g. BFC Mins 16/6/1952, pp.2720-3723.
5.6. Control & Resistance

5.6.1. Permanent firemen

The BFC used an array of temporal, spatial, organisational and social control mechanisms to manage its workforce and the industry. Of all three types of firefighter (permanent, ‘volunteer’ and bushfire volunteer), the permanent men were subject to the most intense control. Their hours of work alone ensured a control regime unparalleled in the rest of industry. As indicated in Table 5.6, whilst most workers enjoyed a 48-hour week (or less) from 1922, permanent firemen worked 120 hours per week until 1928 on the Continuous Service ‘roster’. Consequently, the temporal ‘boundaries’ between work and leisure were completely skewed towards the employer; the private time of permanents was slender indeed.\(^{837}\) The nomenclature of the term “permanent firemen” was indicative of their status (i.e. permanent: “lasting or intended to last indefinitely”).\(^{838}\) The long span of hours, even after they were reduced to seventy-eight hours in 1938, was not the only form of temporal control. Sharing similar attributes to their English counterparts as discussed by Ewan (2006), the “temporal content” of their work was regulated by a rigid set of by-laws and orders.\(^{839}\) For example, the 1926 By Laws and Board Orders were obsessed with regularly timed procedures. Roll call occurred three times per day (7am, 9am & 7pm) and men were to rise no later than 6.45am (except if on watch). Breakfast was to be taken between 8am and 9am, lunch between 1-2pm and “tea” at 5.30pm. The “Occurrence Book” was to be filled out at 9am, 2pm and 6pm indicating the “distribution of men” at each station.\(^{840}\) Single men, residing at the station, were subject to a 9am inspection of their “apartments” every morning.\(^{841}\) To ensure

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\(^{840}\) Board of Fire Commissioners of New South Wales, ’New South Wales Fire Brigades - Orders issued by the Board’ in N.S.W. Government (ed.), *Rules, regulations, by-laws, ordinances etc - issued during the Year 1926*, Government Printer, Sydney, 1927, Orders 3, 5 & 17(k), pp. 427, 430.

precision in control, all stations in the Sydney Fire District had to contact Headquarters at 9am and 10pm each day to “see that the station clock be set right”.

The long span of hours (or days more precisely) and the availability requirements that it imposed on permanent men, led to additional and burdensome spatial constraints. Under the continuous roster system, permanents were either to live on the station, or within 300 yards of it. Whilst on duty, they had to be within earshot of either the bells at the station, or electric bells, attached to their external residence. Thus, prior to the abolition of continuous service in 1928, men and indirectly, their families, were enclosed in a small area surrounding the station (and their nearby residences) for periods of between five to seven days straight. Justice Piddington, in abolishing continuous service, was critical of the combination of temporal and spatial bounds on permanent men. He noted the familial and social isolation that it created and opined that “men are so tied to the station as to remind one of the legionaries in a province, or frontier guards living at an outpost.” The requirement to live in, or adjacent to, the station, created numerous other problems for the men; there was a virtual monopoly for landlords in these areas, who could manipulate rents, regardless of the quality of the dwelling. As noted by Piddington, firemen could not purchase their own dwellings, nor could they move around the larger urban areas (i.e. Sydney and Newcastle) in order to avoid high rents in certain localities.

Whilst permanent men were subject to limited ‘spatial’ freedoms, the BFC was unencumbered. Between the Boards creation and the abolition of the continuous service system, the by-laws required that “[e]very member must serve and reside wherever the chief officer may direct.” After 1928, with the introduction of the two platoon roster, permanents were allowed to escape the confines of their stations and

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843 1927 AR (NSW) 237 at 241-242.
844 1927 AR (NSW) 237 at 242. Piddington’s decision was made on 28 June, 1927 but was to be implemented in the following year. It is interesting to note that Piddington’s groundbreaking decision was made just one day after his controversial ‘Living Wage Declaration’. See L. Taksa, ‘Albert Bathurst Piddington 1926-1932’ in G. Patmore (ed.), Laying the foundations of industrial justice : the presidents of the Industrial Relations Commission of NSW 1902-1998, Federation Press, Annandale, 2003, pp.173-174.
845 1927 AR (NSW) 237 at 242; For similar trends within English permanent brigades, see Segars, 'The Fire Service', pp.101-105.
846 Permanent By-Laws - 1913’ 1913 NSWGG 185, By-law 14.
environs, but were generally only allowed to live anywhere within the fire district to which they were attached, unless otherwise authorised by the BFC (remnants of this policy remained until the 1980s).\textsuperscript{847} However the requirement to “serve wherever the Chief Officer may direct” was kept, and remains in force to the present day.\textsuperscript{848}

Interlaced with this temporal and spatial web, were further control mechanisms. A series of By-Laws and Chief Officer’s Orders governed all aspects of a firemen’s working and non-working life. Even when hours were significantly reduced (with the two platoon roster), the regulations still required that “[e]very member shall devote the whole of his time to the service”: they were prohibited from engaging “in any trade or occupation outside the brigade”.\textsuperscript{849} Permanents were required to travel to and from the station in their uniforms and were not allowed to smoke whilst in BFC attire, nor be seen wearing it in “places of public entertainment”. Thus the control of permanents extended on their journeys to and from work.\textsuperscript{850} They were also required to notify the Board of their addresses and contact details, and keep it appraised of their marital status.\textsuperscript{851} Overarching all these controls, was Order No.1: “Every member of the New South Wales Fire Brigade shall obey all lawful commands by those in authority over them.” Although such an order was almost unnecessary in such a para-militarised service, it served as a very useful management tool in formal disciplinary proceedings. The caveat of “lawful” was almost meaningless in the context of the BFC and Chief Officers broad powers.\textsuperscript{852}

To ensure compliance with the BFC’s objectives of fast response and strong discipline, detailed records were kept on the movement and activities of the men and


\textsuperscript{848} \textit{Fire Brigades (General) Regulation 2003}, Reg. 27(3); although this provision was likely imported from English brigade practices, its impact was more severe in NSW. In England, brigades were organised by local government – transfers would have been across one urban area, as opposed to the entire State, as was the case in NSW.

\textsuperscript{849} Board of Fire Commissionerers of New South Wales, ‘1928 By-Laws’, p.99, By-Law 104.

\textsuperscript{850} Ibid. p.93, By-Law 80; p.105, Order 14.

\textsuperscript{851} Ibid. p.92, By-Law 67; p.99, By-Law 102; p.99, By-Law 107.

\textsuperscript{852} Ibid. p.104, Order 1.
the operation of each Station. Each station was equipped with an Occurrence Book, in
which recorded full details of each ‘call of fire’ that the station received, turnout
times, and details of fires and other incidents. The arrival or departure of permanent
men (and senior officers and visitors) at the station was strictly recorded, as was the
“distribution” of the men. Anything beyond mere station routine was recorded and
‘tampering’ with the Occurrence Book was seen as a serious offence by the BFC.853

The Chief Officer also had the power, under the By Laws, to “inquire into all offences
contrary to the good order and discipline of the brigade” and could recommend a wide
range of penalties to the BFC for its endorsement. Between 1925 and 1938, there
were 223 disciplinary offense cases heard by the Chief Officer, of which thirty-one
led to dismissal from the Service.854 Many of the charges related to drunkenness
causing absence from work, or attendance whilst under the influence. This was
unsurprising, given the long hours that men were under the BFC’s control. Except in
the case of repeat offenders, or where it jeopardised a fire call turnout, such cases
usually led to a short suspension without pay and a severe reprimand. After the
introduction of the two-platoon roster, lateness for work became an issue, whilst
being asleep whilst “on duty” in a watchroom, was another common charge and was
severely dealt with. The Board took quite a moralistic approach to behaviour both on
and off the station. In 1926, a probationer was dismissed for being “under the
influence of drink and committing a filthy offence in his bedroom”.855 Others were
severely warned or even dismissed for “Bring[ing] discredit on Service”, for their lack
of proper management of their own private financial matters.856 The BFC had
unfettered prerogatives over punishment – they ranged from simple cautions &
reprimands, through to suspensions without pay, demotions, loss of seniority and
dismissal (or in lesser cases the opportunity to resign first).857

853 Ibid. – 66, Order 5 & 9; Jopson, Red brigade, p.17.
854 Board of Fire Commissioners of New South Wales, ‘1928 By-Laws’– p.93, By-Laws 71-73;
disciplinary case data collated from New South Wales Parliament, ‘Select Committee on the
Working Conditions’, p.368.
856 Ibid., p.373, Case 38, p.376, Case 63.
The Board’s application of their extensive regime of control was often, though not universally, quite arbitrary in its approach. The treatment of Albert Bruton is illustrative: an ex volunteer fireman from Lithgow brigade since 1898, he was appointed as its first permanent man in 1913. With the sudden demise of his daughter and, soon thereafter his son-in-law in late 1919, Bruton and his wife became responsible for the care of his daughter’s two infant children. In February 1920, his wife died and Bruton became responsible for them, assisted by his sister-in-law. In 1923 the BFC notified him that he was now considered a single man, notwithstanding his carer responsibilities, and that he was to be transferred to the SFD, as Lithgow station was classified by the BFC as a married man’s station. Bruton enlisted considerable local support in opposing this, rather arbitrary, and harsh decision: the Lithgow Municipal Council, three MPs (including recent Premier, James Dooley) and the FBEU all protested the BFC’s actions and asked that the decision be reviewed. The Town Clerk of the Council made an impassioned plea: “it is quite obvious that it will mean the breaking up of his home and the removal of the children from his personal care”. The BFC stood its ground; on February 14, 1923 it decided that the:

BOARD’S PREVIOUS DECISION TO STAND. BRUTON TO BE TRANSFERRED AS A SINGLE MAN, BUT IN VIEW OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES BE ALLOWED TO LIVE OUT OF STATION AS A CONCESSION.859

This “concession”, which implicitly acknowledged the harsh nature of the original decision was not enough for Bruton and the Lithgow brigade. All of the ‘volunteers’ threatened to resign upon Bruton’s transfer and the BFC had to organise for permanents from Sydney to man the station. In the end Bruton resigned on February 23, after an offer of employment from an old (local) employer. The permanent crew remained until some of the resigned firemen returned and new men were found.860

As is evident from the previous sections in this chapter, the main resistance by firefighters to the BFC’s control, was through the Fire Brigade Employees Union of

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859 see M. Wright, 'Firefighter Bruton & the Board', NSW Firefighter, Summer 2001 & BFC Mins 14/2/1923, pp.228-229.
New South Wales (FBEU). Organised in late 1910 and registered in January 1911, the FBEU was comprised of, and represented, both permanent men and ‘volunteers.’ The FBEU emerged in the context of the “new and rapid growth of activity among trade unions” in NSW, particularly amongst public sector workers.\(^{861}\) It is more than likely that the first FBEU members saw registration as a means of accessing the emergent state conciliation and arbitration system, in the face of increasing costs of living and a parsimonious employer, with a strong unitarist bent. As noted by Segars (1989) in his assessment of the UK’s experience in WWII, the fact that there was now only one employer, with standardised operational procedures would have assisted the newly formed FBEU to both organise and unify firefighters across the State.\(^{862}\)

Jopson (1994) outlines both the issues raised, and the tactics used, by the permanent men through the FBEU. As indicated previously, excessive hours of work and inadequate remuneration levels were the most significant permanent issues run by the Union prior to WWII.\(^{863}\) Others issues raised by the FBEU relating to permanents, included those revolving around staffing levels, safety, unfair disciplinary outcomes and industrial democracy.\(^{864}\) Prior to WWII, it was politically and industrially moderate in approach, particularly as it related to permanent men. According to Jopson, in 1927, even the Labor aligned President of the BFC (T.J. Smith) implored a general meeting of FBEU members to get “more kick in it”.\(^{865}\) The union accessed the NSW Industrial Commission, in an attempt to advance issues such as hours and pay, in the face of the BFC’s resistance to its proposed changes. It also had no hesitation in lobbying parliamentarians and the community for such change, and used the media and its members’ status in the community, to pursue its aims. However, the FBEU resisted formal industrial action until the 1940s.\(^{866}\)

Due to the temporal and spatial isolation of the permanent men (particularly before 1928), the Union was, effectively, the only form of resistance that permanent men had. Bruton was unusual, in that he was a former volunteer fireman and had been


\(^{865}\) Ibid., p.201.

\(^{866}\) Ibid., pp. 36-43 & ch.8.
actively involved in the one town for twenty-five years. As such, he could rely on a supportive local community, as well as the Union in his defence. The vast bulk of the permanent men (in Sydney and Newcastle) were subject to unilateral transfers across their regions, which made the formation of strong local support difficult. Furthermore, their isolation from community activity, due to excessive working hours, would have exacerbated their estrangement from the communities they served.

5.6.2. ‘Volunteer’ firemen

‘Volunteer’ firemen were, on the whole, less encumbered by BFC control than their permanent counterparts. This is unsurprising, given that they were less tied to the BFC, with much looser spatial and temporal constraints. Nonetheless, compared to the relatively autonomous position that they enjoyed prior to the emergence of the BFC, many country ‘volunteer’ brigades found BFC control overwhelming. ‘Volunteer’ brigade members from the outset were subject to BFC By-Laws governing their establishment and conduct.867 The By-Laws allowed the Board to control ‘volunteer’ brigades in new ways, including, determining the number of men attached to any brigade; appointing and promoting men to positions such as captain; standardising rank structures, uniforms and insignia; set retaining fees and standardising other non-award conditions (e.g. leave etc); and determining the spatial boundaries of brigade operations.

Between its establishment and the commencement of WWI, the Board was involved in a major ‘re-engineering’ of the State’s ‘volunteer’ fire brigades, through the standardisation of organisation, management, equipment, regulations and operations. Such radical change led to significant resistance by many ‘volunteer’ fire brigades.

In March 1910, the ‘volunteers’ at Casino refused to work under the new regulations, and railed against the reductions imposed by the BFC on their drill attendance payments and staffing numbers. Inequities in remuneration levels, compared to the adjacent Lismore brigade, was also major issue. The Captain subsequently locked the ‘volunteers’ out of the station for refusing to drill. Press reports indicate considerable local support for the ‘volunteers’, including from the Mayor. The latter official’s

867 NSWGG, No.185, 1913 (19/11/1913), pp.7035-7038.
support was unsurprising: he was also a volunteer at the brigade. Nonetheless the BFC tried to use the localist ‘card’ against the men: “[i]f the men had the interests of their town at heart, they would accept conditions which are calculated to meet the requirements of the locality” . Following a visit by CO Webb in early May, the BFC eventually gave in to the local demands regarding drill rates and staffing. Three years later they again resigned en masse, after a permanent man was placed in charge of the station, required under BFC policy, with the arrival of a new motorised appliance requested by the local council.

The BFC’s control over the appointment and disposition of staff at country ‘volunteer’ stations was perhaps the most controversial, particularly in Central Western NSW. Patmore (1999) argues that an “employer may challenge localism by making decisions on the basis of a national rather than local economy and ignoring local custom and practice”. The BFC challenged localism in a very similar way – decisions were made on the basis of the needs of their statewide system of control, which often ignored local needs and trampled on local custom and practice. As Willis (2004) points out, “attempting to arbitrarily impose city-based decisions” on a locality can invigorate localism, which was certainly the Board’s experience. Within weeks of the BFC’s formation, its Divisional Officer for the area arranged for the forced transfer of Bathurst’s established (paid) Captain, George Barnes to St. Peters (Inner Sydney). In turn the (paid) Captain / Engine Keeper from St Peters, Richard Boon, was transferred to Bathurst. Notwithstanding the stated rationale behind the change, to improve the management of the brigade and the capabilities of Barnes, it immediately created distrust between the BFC, the local crew and their community. After unsuccessfully lobbying the ‘volunteer’ firemen’s representative on the Board, Barnes was replaced by Boon in late January. The BFC’s assertive management style led to a “certain amount of suspicion” being felt towards BFC officers by the local men. This was compounded by the local council’s stated reticence to BFC control, instead

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872 The fully paid ‘volunteers’ of the BFC’s early years could be forced transferred unlike the mainstream partially paid volunteer firemen.
favoring municipal control. CO Webb visited the town and dismissed the latter issue in the local press, as the penchant of a local alderman (also named Webb): “Alderman Webb is a municipal man, and that he necessarily holds strong views on municipal institutions … The main point is that the municipal bodies do not like authority to be taken away from them, and they do not like to contribute to any organisation over which they have not control.”  

Further west at Orange, local sentiments boiled over into a mass resignation from the local brigade, and acrimony on the local council. In early April, all members of the local ‘volunteer’ brigade forwarded their resignations to the BFC over inadequate retaining fees, increased drill requirements, decreased staffing and of greatest import, their loss of control over local staffing arrangements. At the heart of the dispute was the newly appointed Sub-District Officer Bartle’s unilateral decisions to appoint an ‘outsider’ to the position of Captain, promote a junior member of the local brigade (Volunteer Firemen Edge) to the position of senior fireman (an informal classification) and sack a long standing member.  

The brigade complained that such decisions should have been put to a meeting of brigade members, as had been the pre BFC practice, and took particular exception to the “domineering and sarcastic manner” of Bartle.  

Again CO Webb had to meet with the brigade, Orange’s mayor and “leading citizens” to broker a settlement. The meeting in late April demanded, among other things, the removal of Bartle and an increase in retaining fees.  

The mayor also wrote to the Chief Secretary seeking an inquiry into the matter. On April 30, Board member Walter Cracknell informed the Mayor that both Bartell and Edge were to be transferred out of Orange, with Bartell swapping positions with the Sub District Officer from Maitland (Phillips). After this led to a return to work, the Council censured the Mayor for his decision to back the men over Bartle, his “dastardly attempt to injure Mr. Bartle” [sic], and for subverting brigade discipline: “Were the men to run the show?”

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875 The appointed captain (Edge) was an ex member of the brigade who according to press reports was promised the position on his return by Bartle; Star, 22/4/1910, 28/4/1910.  
The BFC’s decision to solve the Orange situation by swapping the Sub District Officers, led to further problems in the Maitland coalfields. Charles Phillips, the local Sub District Officer to be usurped by Bartles and transferred to Orange, had been the Superintendent of the Maitland brigades for thirty years and refused the order to transfer himself to the latter town. CO Webb instructed him to obey or resign. He responded that family commitments tied him to the area. Notwithstanding his objections, the BFC stood down Phillips and installed Bartles into the station. After initially refusing to work with Bartles, the West Maitland brigade, together with seven other surrounding brigades, resigned en masse from their brigades in protest over the treatment of Phillips. Labeled in the press as a “strike”, permanent men were sent from Sydney to deal with the crisis. The ‘strikers’ assured the local community that they would respond to fires as ‘civilians’; no doubt this made it easier for the local member (J Gillies), the Mayor (Walter Cracknell who was also on the Board) and large sections of the community, to support the firefighters’ cause. For the ‘volunteers’ in the Coalfields, it was about protecting ‘their own’ against an arbitrary decision made in Sydney. To the BFC, and CO Webb in particular, it was about asserting control over the brigades and the need for discipline. CO Webb put his point clearly in the Newcastle press:

[Phillips] refused to obey the orders of the board, and, in addition to that, he has been inciting the volunteer brigades to assist him, by local influence, in his insubordination. (...) It is just as serious as if insubordination were shown by soldiers on active service, or police. The question is entirely one of control. Is control to be exercised by members of the brigades or by the body appointed by Act of Parliament to represent the people?  

Webb’s question was answered quickly – by the middle of May, after the intervention of the board itself, Philips was reinstated to his former position and Bartles transferred to Auburn, giving “great satisfaction locally.” Emboldened by the win, within two weeks, ‘volunteer’ stations throughout the Coalfields and the Newcastle area started a

879 DT, 9/5/1910; DT, 10/5/1910.  
880 NMH, 10/5/1910.  
881 Ibid.  
campaign for retaining fees equivalent to those as received by West Maitland, repeating the events of the 1870s, as discussed in Chapter 3.\textsuperscript{883}

With the formal emergence of the FBEU in 1911, it quickly became the voice of the ‘volunteers’. This is unsurprising: within a year of formation (January & February 1912) it claimed to have between 852 and 1200 members, which based on BFC employment data and assuming high permanent densities, meant that at the very least it had signed up fifty to eighty percent of all ‘volunteers’.\textsuperscript{884} In May 1911 all of the members of the West Wyalong brigade resigned en masse over their “existing conditions”: namely no retainer was paid and their equipment, uniforms and station were grossly inadequate.\textsuperscript{885} The FBEU’s secretary used the example of Wyalong in a series of press articles, criticising the BFC’s administration and the flaws in the Fire Brigades Act that allowed local government to stymie effective fire protection and remuneration in an area.\textsuperscript{886} The failure to replace the men at Wyalong extended well into 1912 and so other brigades followed suit: for example Bourke brigade disbanded over retaining fees in March 1912.\textsuperscript{887}

A series of debates engulfed the press in January 1912, over the pay and working conditions of firemen, particularly ‘volunteers’ in country areas. Daniel Dakin, the FBEU Secretary described firemen as “seething with discontent”. A reporter from the\textit{Evening News} opined that such discontent “if developed among the wharf laborers or the Lithgow ironworkers to an even lesser extent would surely end in a strike.” Referring to the Newcastle and Maitland regions in particular, Dakin asserted that the Union had ‘put its foot down’ to prevent strikes in country towns. Dakin elaborated: “There is only one thing that has kept the union from agreeing to a strike, that is because of the troublous times the Labor Government has had during the past six months. If it had been different, and the Government not harassed, there would have been a strike long ago.”\textsuperscript{888} Its, albeit begrudging, support for the Government probably

\textsuperscript{884} \textit{EN}, 9/1/1912; \textit{AR}1912, pp.9-10; New South Wales Parliament, ‘Report by the Late President’, pp.5-6; \textit{EN}, 25/7/1912.
\textsuperscript{885} BFC Mins 11/5/1911, p.187; \textit{DT}, 27/5/1911.
\textsuperscript{886} \textit{DT}, 27/5/1911.
\textsuperscript{887} \textit{The Town and Country Journal}, 8/5/1912, & \textit{SMH}, 21/3/1912.
\textsuperscript{888} \textit{EN}, 9/1/1912.
stemmed from its affiliation to the Political Labor League of New South Wales and its stated desire for the beleaguered McGowen Government to deliver on its proposed Industrial Arbitration Bill. The *Sun* accused Dakin of exaggerating the discontent with the aim of “boosting the union”: “The volunteer ranks may be “seething with discontent,” but outside the union nobody seems to have any knowledge of it.” In early February the Union appeared to lose patience with the Government. After being thwarted in an attempt to meet the Premier, Dakin responded in an unusually menacing way:

> This is the spirit in which the Government meets trouble. It tells practically by this letter that they want the matter put to one side. It only requires trouble to start in any place – Maitland or Broken Hill or Newcastle or Sydney – and we do not know where it is going to end.

The Union was eventually received by the Chief Secretary, Frederick Flowers, on February 26, with an introduction by Andrew Kelly MLA (who was a former board member of the MFB, representing the City of Sydney and was subsequently a ‘volunteers’ representative on the BFC and honorary member of the Union). The ability of the Union to put its case so soon may have been encouraged by the commencement of the South Australia firemen’s strike, three days before.

To alleviate the problems that stemmed from the state and local government standoff over financing, throughout 1911 and 1912, the FBEU called for a government department to administer the brigades, with funding to presumably come from consolidated revenues. In 1912, the Local Government Association also had issues with fire service management and funding, although they proposed an alternative solution; led by councils in the Newcastle area, it called for the abolition of the BFC beyond Sydney, and for the municipalisation of fire services. The Chief Secretary, who was quoted in June 1911 as saying that the BFC was the “worst managed service
in this Department”, reacted to the turmoil of fire services, particularly in country areas. He foreshadowed legislation that would abolish the Board, replacing it with a single commissioner, under direct ministerial control.\textsuperscript{896} Using a model from hospital management, district boards were proposed, that would manage and raise revenues in specific areas and provide advice to the commissioner. In the event that an area failed to provide adequate services, the commissioner was to be empowered to enforce satisfactory service provision.\textsuperscript{897} These proposed amendments to the Fire Brigades Act were never realised due to the McGowen Government’s inability to control the legislative agenda.\textsuperscript{898}

With the making of the first award covering firemen in 1913, ‘volunteers’ merely had existing conditions codified. According to Jopson (1994), further en masse resignations from a number of brigades (Wyalong & Katoomba) resulted from the disappointing Wages Board outcome.\textsuperscript{899} Dakin disappointment, tinged with class-based analysis, was certainly evident, when he dismissed the concept that his members were pure volunteers, as was argued before the Wages Board:

I heard it argued before the Wages Board that partially paid firemen should be proud to do the fire-fighting, that they should be content with honour, and that they should not want any pay. I notice that our members are all working men, who, as a rule, don't own their property. Therefore, it would seem that the 'other side' would like us to have all the honour, while they sit down and watch us spoil our clothes in saving their property.

The country municipalities and shores won't contribute sufficient towards upkeep of fire stations or pay our men a pittance. Our men work for nothing, and then they have to buy even their own uniforms…\textsuperscript{900}

In the years following the Wages Board determination, the FBEU was subject to considerable internal division between permanent and retained representatives. In late 1915 and early 1916, permanent representatives successfully challenged having volunteer firemen represent their interests on the Wages Board. ‘Volunteers’ responded by using their numbers to elect ‘volunteer’ firemen into the positions of

\textsuperscript{896} EN, 1/1/1912 as quoted in Adrian, Fighting fire, p.42.
\textsuperscript{897} SMH, 9/5/1912.
\textsuperscript{898} Ibid., Editorial.
\textsuperscript{899} Jopson, Red brigade, p.260.
\textsuperscript{900} Ibid., quote from Sun, 31/1/1913.
President and Vice President of the Union, thereby replacing permanent representatives in those roles. According to Jopson, activity by ‘volunteer’ firemen had waned by the mid-1920s and this apathy continued, for the most part, through the period covered by this chapter.  

Notwithstanding the fundamental changes that occurred in the culture of volunteer fire brigades with the advent of the BFC, some elements would re-emerge over subsequent years. At a local level, new entrants and the position of captain and deputy captain, were, in many brigades, chosen by the brigade members through an informal plebiscite. Thus, while the BFC formally controlled these processes, in effect, these processes were still managed by the volunteer firemen, as a collective. Other, time honoured, volunteer practices returned. In 1932, statewide Volunteer Fire Brigades’ Demonstrations returned and became an important part of being a ‘volunteer’ for many men.  

5.7. Conclusion

The Board of Fire Commissioners’ first decades of operation represented a new era for firefighting in NSW. Voluntary effort and/or localised firefighting operations were replaced by a centralised and statewide professional organisation, dominated and controlled by professional full time, paid firefighters. The BFC adopted a range of strategies to ensure that its firefighters, both permanent and ‘volunteer’ adhered to an overarching regime of centralised control. Following the British paramilitary approach to urban firefighting, it imposed significant spatial, temporal and personal constraints on the liberties of its permanent men, albeit with increasing resistance from the newly formed FBEU, so as to achieve a highly disciplined and regulated core workforce. Its ‘volunteer’ workforce, whilst unencumbered by the extremely long hours and the ‘continuous tie’ to the BFC endured by the permanents were, nonetheless, subject to the BFC’s penchant for standardisation, centralised order and unilateral control.

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901 Ibid., pp.260-262.
In the formative years of the BFC, this approach brought it into, often sharp, conflict with a number of country ‘volunteer’ fire brigades, who were enmeshed in their own local practices and who valued their previous autonomy in management. Whilst volunteers did rely on the FBEU at times, the volunteer brigades, as powerful local organisations in their own right, used localism as their main instrument in their dealings with the Board. Powerful coalitions were built with local government officials, who were already predisposed to resisting Board control and in some cases, were actually members of the brigade (e.g. Casino’s mayor). Essentially, most of the conflict emerged from a clash between the localist-imbued culture of the ‘volunteer’ brigades, protecting their ‘way of life’ and the BFC’s need for standardisation and discipline. To paraphrase CO Webb during the Maitland tensions, the question was entirely one of control, and more important, where it was located – in town, or in Sydney.

The emerging bushfire brigades in inland NSW were also well rooted within their local communities and were, in addition, assisted by the prevailing ideology of “countrymindedness”, as discussed by Aitkin. Self managed and democratically run, bush fire brigades had strong links with other, locally entrenched organisations. Like the Barmedman brigade, they were often formed and supported by the ‘heavyweight’ local bodies, such as progress associations and the Farmers and Settlers Association branches. As Grey and Phillips (2001) noted, the threat of bushfires heightened localism with a locality, transcending the “structural cleavage” between farmers and town dwellers. This was no more evident than in the case of Berrigan, where a localist compact was made between town residents and surrounding farmers, to protect the economic base, on which they all relied.

The bushfire brigade movement of that period also provides a challenge to some of the more contemporary volunteerism literature. Rather than overt altruism, or other extrinsic or intrinsic motivators, driving participation in bushfire brigade activities, strong community pressures, a kind of earnest expectation, was placed on rural residents to be involved. Non-involvement was deemed unpatriotic and an affront to the principles of “countrymindedness”; some farmers even advocated compulsory involvement. As the next chapter illustrates, the imperatives of World War II would catapult the bushfire brigade movement from the inland regions to the rest of the State
and, in the process, create the beginnings of another unified (unpaid) fire service, with all the potential to, yet again, divide control on the fireground.
Chapter 6. War and the re-emergence of the organised volunteerism
(1939 – 1955)

6.1. Introduction

The preparation for, and NSW’s involvement in, the war effort between 1939 and 1945 led to significant changes in the organisation of fire suppression. The expansion of voluntary agencies, and volunteering more generally during the war, together with the dramatically increased civil defence role for the BFC, led to the introduction of new forms of firefighter into the BFC: the quasi-volunteer Reserve Corps and the unpaid Auxiliary Reserve Corps and the Women’s Auxiliary Fire Brigade Corps. Thus, for the first time since the creation of the BFC, unpaid volunteers were again responsible for fire protection in urban NSW.

World War Two (WWII), together with the disastrous January 1939 bushfires, also had a profound effect on the bushfire brigade movement in NSW. Great efforts were made to coordinate their organisation, operations and resourcing out of a fear that bushfires would divert the war effort, or worse, that the Japanese would use them as a weapon. Thus bushfire prevention and suppression was elevated from an essentially local concern to one intricately linked to the statewide war effort. This move towards a coordinated state-wide bushfire brigade movement led to the development of a large scale corps of unpaid volunteer bush firefighters during WWII; by 1941, 30,000 bushfire volunteers operated out of one thousand brigades.

In the decade after the war, the rudimentary elements of the contemporary organisation of firefighting emerged. Notwithstanding the increasingly militant FBEU’s opposition to both volunteerism and quasi-volunteerism in metropolitan areas, it was stronger than ever; by the mid 1950s, over 2000 bush fire brigades were in operation with a combined membership with over 60,000 unpaid bush firefighters. By this stage, bushfire brigades were even operating in the outer metropolitan areas of Sydney, in the absence of service provision by the BFC. To complicate matters, by the mid 1950s, the BFC has developed its own force of unpaid volunteers in the outer suburbs, in the form of over 700 Bush Fire Auxiliary Firemen. This re-emergence of organised volunteerism in urban firefighting was largely a function of the BFC’s (self imposed) financial stringency. A reduction in permanent firefighters’ hours, with its
consequential need to increase staff and the rapid growth of outer metropolitan Sydney caused the BFC to reverse its approach of earlier years. Despite opposition from the FBEU, it advocated the increased use of its own unpaid and quasi-volunteer labour force, in part, to appease localist concerns over the total absence of protection in some areas. More dramatically, the BFC’s stringent, and rather piecemeal approach, left a vacuum in fire service provision in outer metropolitan Sydney and other rapidly expanding urban areas, through the lack of effective provision of its resources. By the mid 1950s, independent volunteer bushfire brigades emerged to fill the vacuum. Supported by their own nascent bureaucracy, and given powers under the Bush Fires Act, 1949, that potentially subordinated the BFC, the scene was set for a system of firefighting organisation that would involve the formation of two separate fire services, and the reawakening of tensions between paid and unpaid labour in the industry.

6.2. Context

6.2.1. Patterns of Settlement and Development

The patterns of settlement and development, outlined in Chapter 5, continued during WWII and the immediate post-war period. As Appendix 2.1 shows, NSW’s population grew from just over 2.6 million people in 1933, to close to 3 million in 1947, and reached over 3.4 million residents by 1954. The trends in the concentration of population in the Sydney metropolitan area also continued: by 1954, fifty-four percent of the population resided in the capital. Between 1933 and 1954, metropolitan Sydney’s population increased by fifty percent, from just over 1.2 million to over 1.8 million residents. As discussed previously, suburbs like Canterbury and Randwick grew rapidly in the pre-war and war years. After the war, more outlying suburbs experienced much of the growth; Parramatta’s population exceeded 75,000 by 1954, and further west, the Holroyd, Fairfield and Blacktown local government areas had a combined total of 125,000 residents. Similar trends occurred in the south, with Rockdale, Hurstville and Liverpool Municipalities, and Sutherland Shire, 903

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903 see Appendices 1.1 & 1.2. Note: There were significant local government boundary variations in the postwar period which should be taken into account when using Appendix 1.1. For example, Parramatta Council swallowed up large areas of Granville Municipality during this period.
experiencing significant growth in the early postwar years. Indeed, Sutherland Shire more than doubled in size to just over 65,000 people in the seven years to 1954. In the north, Warringah Shire exhibited similar growth to Sutherland, whilst the municipalities of Ku-ring-gai, Ryde and Hornsby also experienced sizable increases in population."904 The expansion of suburban development into the urban/ bushland interface in outer metropolitan areas was not without consequence for fire service provision. As Pyne (1991) succinctly put it: in the postwar period, Australia’s “metropolitan centers sprawled and leapfrogged into adjacent lands to create an “urban bush.”"905

Whilst Sydney’s population increased by fifty percent between 1933 and 1954, growth beyond the metropolis was more modest, with a fourteen percent increase over the same period. Most of the growth occurred in the larger regional centres. The Illawarra region, centred on Wollongong, and Port Kembla’s steelworks and associated industries, grew dramatically, particularly in the immediate postwar period with its large-scale immigration intake. By 1954, the combined population of the City of Greater Wollongong and Shellharbour Municipality was close to 100,000. Wollongong had joined Newcastle and Broken Hill as one of the three largest centres outside of Sydney. Other regional centres such as Grafton, Wagga Wagga, West Maitland, Albury and Bathurst also experienced significant growth.906

6.2.2. The Political Environment

At the outbreak of WWII in September 1939, NSW was governed by the Mair (United Australia Party) Government, which had replaced the Stevens Government in 1939. In May 1941, the ALP, led by William McKell, regained government and commenced a twenty-four year period of successive labor governments under James McGirr, Joe Cahill, Robert Heffron and John Renshaw. In October 1941, Labor also

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904 See Appendices 1.1 & 1.2.
905 Pyne, Burning bush, p.323.
regained control of the Federal Government under John Curtin who was succeeded by Ben Chifley, until ousted by Robert Menzies (Liberal) in late 1949.\textsuperscript{907}

McKell and Curtin established an unparalleled high level of state intervention in all facets of civilian life. In 1942, Curtin’s “Total Mobilisation”, implemented after Japan entered the war, “in effect placed the whole productive system of the nation under the control and direction of the Government.”\textsuperscript{908} The McKell Government cooperated with Curtin and invoked similar action at the State level. As discussed below, the State Government formed the State War Effort Coordinating Committee and built up a large Department of National Emergency Services. Government departments and agencies were involved in major public works projects for the war effort (including interstate and overseas) as well as the manufacture of much needed products, such as munitions. During McKell’s administration, large-scale public enterprises were created or re-established after their abolition by previous conservative administrations: the State Dockyard in Newcastle, regional abattoirs, the Government Insurance Office and the State Electricity Commission among them. Reforms, many aimed at regional and rural areas, were made in electricity distribution, farm mechanisation, decentralisation, industrial relations and as discussed below, the encouragement of bushfire brigade development and expansion.\textsuperscript{909} James McGirr replaced McKell as Premier in 1947 and quickly sought to break away from the austerity of wartime. His government further extended the development of state infrastructure in transport, health, water conservation and especially, public housing. His program was subsequently judged to be over-ambitious. Cahill, his successor in 1952, reigned in the program and prioritised McGirr’s public works program.\textsuperscript{910}

In the postwar period, the NSW Labor Governments had to deal with increasing tensions within the industrial wing of the labour movement, that had built up during


\textsuperscript{908}P. Hasluck, \textit{The government and the people 1942-1945}, Australia in the War of 1939-1945 - Series 4 (Civil), Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1970, p.243.


the war years. Whilst McGirr maintained good relations with the union movement, and introduced the forty-hour week for workers covered by state awards, industrial action emerged in a number of industries: gas production, firefighting and, most notably, the 1949 strike by the Miners’ Federation in the black coalmining industry.911 The troubles of the McGirr, and later Cahill, Labor Governments were compounded by internal divisions generated by Jack Lang’s breakaway party, and later, the tussle between communists and their opponents, the Industrial Groups (linked to the Catholic Social Studies Movement).912

6.2.3. Wartime voluntary action and volunteerism

As Oppenheimer (1997) points out, the State was not the sole provider of services during World War II. Indeed, it relied heavily on both the provision of a wide range of services by established and new voluntary organisations, and volunteer labour. A significant number of voluntary organisations active in the war effort, had large memberships: in the case of the Red Cross, it had close to 450,000 members during the war, the vast bulk being women involved in a wide range of volunteer roles including fund raising, first aid, nursing and other material and moral support for Australian troops. Approximately 8000 patriotic funds were formed during the war, such as the Australian Comforts Fund. The male-focused Voluntary National Register (VNR) and its successors, together with the Women’s Voluntary National Register (WVNR), contained large numbers of Australians who volunteered for unpaid work for the war effort. The WVNR contained over 145,000 registrations alone.913 Volunteers were involved in a broad range of roles: fundraising, food production and agriculture, catering, transport, first aid, administrative work, knitting/sewing, nursing, other professional work, providing comforts for the troops and a broad range of roles associated with the National Emergency Services (NES).914

913 Oppenheimer, ‘Volunteers in action’, pp.121; 187-188; 380-381.
It was this latter area of volunteer activity that was to have the most significant impact on fire services in NSW. An entire chapter of the national *War Book* related to Civil Defence detailed mechanisms for protecting Australia from the effects of enemy intrusions, particularly aerial attacks with incendiary devices, bombs and gas. The fire services were given a primary role in protecting the population and vital infrastructure, in the event of such attacks. In February 1939, a Department of National Emergency Services (DNES) was formed, which operated through a series of committees, to plan for the provision for services to protect the population and infrastructure, in case of enemy attack. Based on British experience, it started the process of developing a system of Air Raid Precaution (ARP) wardens and made provision for, among other things, first aid, decontamination (in case of gas attacks), rescue services and emergency communications. The state was split into small ARP areas of 250-500 persons, all managed and staffed by unpaid volunteers.\(^915\) In 1941, the McKell Government reorganised the DNES, and passed the National Emergency Act to give statutory effect to the NES’ operations and to finance the implementation of NES plans. The scope of NES operations was extraordinary; by May 1943, the DNES had issued more than 126,000 proficiency certificates to NES volunteers. One in fifteen civilians in NSW held a certificate and most were “trained in all phases of A.R.P. work.”\(^916\) Representing the largest ever mobilisation of volunteer labour by the state in NSW, it covered an array of services including: ARP wardens, roof spotters, first aid posts, Light Mobile Doctor Units, an NES Ambulance Service and the Civilian War Emergency Aid Service, which ran an extensive system of mobile canteens and rest centres, to provide relief for those made homeless as a result of enemy action.\(^917\) Following the declaration of war with Japan in December 1941, the State War Effort Co-ordination Committee (SWECC) was established as the primary “co-ordinating and directing authority” for the State’s civil defence, including the NES. Harnessing both governmental resources, (including staff, and the NES organisation, it prepared for Japanese bombing raids, or worse, invasion. It formed a range of powerful committees, including a Scorched Earth Sub-committee, a Bush


\(^{917}\) Ibid., p.3, 9-10.
Fires Committee (see below) and a series of others, whose primary role was the possible evacuation of persons and (movable) infrastructure from areas subject to invasion or destruction.918 The SWECC, and the Government more broadly, were given extensive powers under the National Security (General) Regulations to “protect the persons and property of the civil population” in NSW.919

6.3. The impact of World War II – the BFC’s response

The BFC played a key role in the civil defence of NSW. This is unsurprising, given the statewide capabilities of its employees and equipment. Experience in Europe, and the obvious consequences of high explosive and incendiary bombing on urban areas, made effective fire protection paramount. In particular, incendiary bombing had the ability to develop large-scale urban conflagrations that would leave normal fire brigades operations “severely taxed”.920 Aside from fire protection, the BFC also had a significant role in decontamination, rescue, building safety, evacuations, demolition and the possible implementation of the ‘scorched earth’ policy.921

Throughout the war, the BFC was involved in the training of its staff, NES volunteers and public and private organisations in Air Raid Precautions (ARP), using a special corps of training officers. Public demonstrations in civil defence, including dealing with incendiary devices, were held in many locations. The threat from Japan in 1942 led to large-scale activity. BFC personnel visited 1252 buildings and over 72,000 persons were given basic training. 122,000 students and teachers received similar training, whilst close to 600,000 people attended brigade demonstrations on aspects of ARP and civil defence.922 Specific firefighting training was also delivered; in 1943,

918 Ibid., pp.15-16; for further details on the Scorched Earth policy in NSW, the NSWFB’s role and volunteer efforts regarding same, see M. Wright, 'Denying the Enemy' - the NSWFB and the 'Scorched Earth Policy', NSW Firefighter, Summer 2003.
919 McKell, 'The state and the war effort', pp.15.
920 National Emergency Services (NSW), General organisation and notes re protection against air attack: for issue to personnel under chief wardens, NSW NES, Sydney, , pp.2-3, 5-8.
922 Adrian, Fighting fire, p.147; BFCAR 1939, p.6; BFCAR 1940, p.15; BFCAR 1942, p.2; Blue Mountains Advertiser, 17/4/1942, p.1.
the BFC trained over 10,000 NES fire guards and more than 2000 wardens, all volunteers, in “fire extinguishing principles and practice.”

6.3.1. Permanent Firemen

Whilst the war led to increased functions and responsibilities for permanent firemen, other factors led to their significant growth in numbers between 1939 and 1955. As discussed in Chapter 5, in the mid 1930s there were less than 700 permanent men working across the State. By 1945, this had increased to just over 1000 permanent men and, by 1955, there were 1180 permanent officers and men employed by the BFC. The vast majority (1065) were stationed in the Sydney Fire District, with forty-seven in Newcastle and the remaining sixty-eight spread across the State. Over two decades, the permanent workforce had increased by seventy-five percent. Over that same period, however, the number of permanent staffed fire stations actually decreased. In 1935, there were forty-two permanent stations and thirty-four ‘volunteer’ stations in the Sydney Fire District. By 1955, the number of stations was reduced to thirty-six and sixteen respectively. The reduction in stations was not gradual; they all closed in September 1945 as a direct result of the introduction of the fifty-six hour week for permanent men and the need to concentrate more men at fewer stations, with the introduction of a three platoon (shift) roster.

As with the immediate pre-war period, the FBEU agitated strongly, both during and after the war, for improved pay and conditions and for hours, more aligned to those of general industry. Within days of ‘winning’ the seventy-eight hour week in 1938, amidst the threat of a strike, FBEU members engaged in extensive lobbying of the State Government, a common tactic that they had used before and since. As discussed briefly in the last chapter, a Select Committee of the NSW Parliament was established, which recommended a significant reduction in hours (50.4 hours per week), to be worked by three shifts of firemen. However, wartime exigencies delayed the Committee’s report gaining any serious consideration. Amidst near constant pressure from the Union, the McKell Government, in 1944, finally amended the Fire Brigades Act to implement the fifty-six hour week, upon the cessation of hostilities. It

923 BFCAR 1943, p.3.
924 Appendix 4.1; BFCAR 1945, pp.2-3.
took until 1955 for permanent men to catch up with community standards in hours of work, when they gained a forty hour week (with two additional hours of compulsory overtime), almost eight years after the forty hour week was passed on to other workers in the State jurisdiction.\textsuperscript{925}

As Jopson chronicles, from the 1940s, the FBEU “had a touch of the rebel about it”, and continuously elected communist leadership teams from that time, until the 1970s. In July 1944, the FBEU organised its first strike, which stemmed from wartime austerity, namely the lack of overcoats for firemen, and a general frustration with low wages and excessive hours. The strike lasted eight hours and the FBEU won.

‘Volunteers’ backed the strike, staying away from their stations in the main, whilst officers, being in their own separate union at the time, were exempt from the action. Another, seventy-six hour, strike occurred in the following year, whilst in 1955, the FBEU engaged in its longest strike ever, with an eleven-day stoppage over pay.\textsuperscript{926} Officers, police and the armed forces provided fire support during this time. Whilst the Chief Officer advocated that police and the armed forces should specifically operate out of the stations, Menzies rejected the use of troops in this manner.\textsuperscript{927} The State Government also threatened to use volunteers (i.e. replacement labour), who had “been recruited for use in emergency and their names kept at suburban stations”, and forestry firefighters during the strike.\textsuperscript{928} It is possible that the reference to volunteers may have been to BFC ‘volunteer’ firemen, rather than to traditional strikebreakers.Whilst a significant proportion of ‘volunteer’ brigades such as Broken Hill withdrew their labour, others like Merrylands, Avalon and Lithgow continued to work.\textsuperscript{929} In the face of large fines and impending deregistration, the strike was called off, after which time, the Union’s registration was restored and the fines deferred.\textsuperscript{930}

\textsuperscript{926} Jopson, \textit{Red brigade}, pp. 134-137, 140-150, 308.
\textsuperscript{927} ‘Report (undated c. late 1955) re. Fire Brigades Strike’ (File 53/1249), ‘Telegram (14/10/1955) from Prime Minister’ (File 53/1249), \textit{SRNSW: Premiers Department}; \textit{12060, Correspondence - N.S.W. Fire Brigades [13/10697]}.
\textsuperscript{928} Quote from \textit{Mirror}, 23 June 1955, see also \textit{SMH}, 27/6/1955, (File 53/1249), \textit{SRNSW: 12060, [13/10697]}.
\textsuperscript{930} Jopson, \textit{Red brigade}, pp.149-150.
6.3.2. ‘Volunteer’ Firemen

The varied response by volunteers to the 1955 strike was indicative of the relationship between the FBEU, which was by now dominated by permanent, and ‘volunteer’ firemen. Since the late 1930s, the FBEU had both encouraged their participation in the Union and, at the same time, sought their eradication from the metropolitan centres of Sydney and Newcastle. For example in 1939, left leaning committee members from the Union’s Newcastle Sub-Branch, (including Jim Lambert, President: 1941-1946; Secretary: 1946-1968), encouraged ‘volunteer’ recruitment into the Union and boasted of high membership densities in their district.\textsuperscript{931} At the same time, however, the Union pursued a policy that ran counter to encouraging ‘volunteer’ re-engagement. On April 7, 1938, after representations from the FBEU, the Labor Council of NSW recommended “all unionists acting as volunteers in the suburbs [of Sydney and Newcastle] should resign”. The Labor Council’s rationale for the recommendation was to generate more permanent positions and remove an anachronistic system held onto by the BFC (and its funders, which dominated the Board), so as to minimise costs. As described by Page & Bryant (1983) and Wood(1989), it followed earlier, similar actions in Adelaide and Perth, where unpaid volunteer firefighters were accused of denying workers a living.\textsuperscript{932} The Union’s secretary, Jim McNamara, did not mince words: “The volunteer system [in Sydney and Newcastle] is really the leavings of the old volunteer fire-fighting days, and is actually a source of cheap labor.”\textsuperscript{933} Their concerns were not only about ‘volunteers’ arresting the ‘natural’ growth of permanents with urban expansion. Some permanent men were also concerned that ‘volunteers’ could be used as an alternative workforce during industrial action.\textsuperscript{934}

The reopening of Mortdale (closed in 1945), was the first test of the Union’s metropolitan staffing policy. On July 10, 1952, a public meeting was held at the Hurstville Council Chambers with board members and senior officers of the BFC, Hurstville Council members and staff, and over forty members of the public in

\textsuperscript{931} Ibid., p.261.
\textsuperscript{932} Page and Bryant, Muscle and pluck forever!, p.356; Wood, Ready, aye ready, p.62.
\textsuperscript{933} SMH, 8/4/1938.
\textsuperscript{934} Jopson, Red brigade, p.262.
attendance. Five local progress associations, the Mortdale Branch of the ALP and the FBEU were all represented at the meeting, all seeking the reopening of Mortdale Fire Station. Jim Lambert, representing both the South Peakhurst Progress Association and the FBEU, gave details of the inadequate provision of fire services in the area. In particular, he pointed out the failings of the local Hose Box Post system (see following section): “while the local people gave good public service, it was nullified because Reserve Firemen at these posts did not receive any training and many of them were well over 60 years of age, failing in sight and often absent from their district.” In the first explicit reference to the staffing of the station, the BFC’s President, T.J. Smith, argued that the needs of the area were being met and that the “limited service that could be provided at such a high cost”, made reopening the station with permanent men unjustifiable. He then outlined the economic virtues of the ‘volunteer’ system and referred to international practice, including the fact that Santiago (Chile), with a population in excess of one million people, was almost fully staffed by volunteer firefighters. Lambert tried to engage with Smith, but after protests by the BFC President, the Mayor effectively shut him down. A number of community representatives then asked the President about reopening Mortdale as a ‘volunteer’ brigade. The President assured the meeting that the Board would seriously consider that option.935

The BFC’s strategy of contrasting permanent staffing and its higher labour costs, with that of the ‘volunteer’ system, worked. Within weeks, the BFC reopened Mortdale as a ‘volunteer’ brigade.936 Other ‘volunteer’ stations opened up in the postwar period: two in the St. Marys area and one at Ingleburn and Caringbah. All were staffed by ‘volunteer’ firemen, seemingly, without controversy. In the case of St. Marys and Ingleburn, their relative distance from Sydney and their semi-rural status may have excluded them from the Union’s ill-defined definition of “metropolitan” Sydney. The fact that the FBEU did not oppose the ‘volunteer’ staffing at Caringbah until 1959, a year after it was attached to the Sydney Fire District, would indicate that the Union probably used the Sydney Fire District as the spatial delimiter for permanent

935 BFC Mins 21/7/1952, p.4448-4453.
hegemony. As such, they allowed the BFC to define the boundaries of their campaign.937

Nonetheless, whilst the FBEU continued to pursue the replacement of ‘volunteers’ in metropolitan areas with permanent men over the next three decades, it also sought to organise ‘volunteer’ members. In August 1948, the FBEU established a Volunteer Firemen’s Section (VFS/FBEU), to more actively engage and represent ‘volunteers’. At this time, most ‘volunteers’ were not in the Union. Membership density levels did improve, but stagnated, at around twenty percent, throughout the 1950s until at least the mid-1960s.938

Whilst ‘volunteer’ numbers in the Sydney Fire District remained fairly static, in the country fire districts, they increased dramatically during the war, and in the postwar years. In 1935, less than 1400 ‘volunteers’ were attached to country fire districts. By 1955, their numbers had increased by nearly fifty percent to, just over, 2000 men. The growth was attributable to growth in the number of ‘volunteer’ stations: between 1935 and the end of the war, seventeen stations opened outside of the SFD. In the ten years after 1945, another thirty-five new ‘volunteer’ stations were added. As Appendix 4.2 shows, the new ‘volunteer’ stations were geographically spread across the State, although a significant number were clustered in areas such as the North Coast, the Riverina and the Blue Mountains. One notable feature was that a significant proportion were large towns within shire councils, rather than municipalities within their own right. Six of the new stations were set up in rapidly developing outer metropolitan areas of Sydney, such as Sutherland Shire (Caringbah and Sutherland) and Warringah (Avalon). Notwithstanding the formation of these new outer metropolitan stations, these rapidly growing areas, according to Adrian, still suffered from a significant underinvestment in firefighting resources.939

937 Appendices 4.1 & 4.2; Adrian, ‘Evaluating the provision of an impure public good’, pp.295-300.
938 Jopson, Red brigade, pp.262-263, 266. Since the 1970s, the volunteer membership in the FBEU has soared in relative terms. In 2008 it exceeds 80% (Source: email from FBEU Country Organiser (Greg Matthews) 1 October 2008). For an analysis of the these higher density rates during the 1990s, see Budai, ‘Organising part time workers’ & FBEU website: http://www.fbeu.net/5.html
939 Appendices 1.2 & 4.2; Adrian, 'Institutional constraints', p.45.
6.3.3. **Creation of Reserve Corps**

Whist ‘volunteer’ firemen had significantly outnumbered permanents since the formation of the BFC, during the war years, they were eclipsed by the introduction of three additional types of firefighter into the service, due to 'manpower' shortages and increased civil defence requirements. In February 1939, prior to the outbreak of war, and with the concurrence of the FBEU, a Reserve Corp was formed to “assist in emergency”. Reserve Corps members were not expected to attend all fires. Instead, they acted as a “reserve” or relieving corps, to be primarily used when there was “a depletion of the volunteer staff” due to ‘volunteers’ being out of town, or unavailable for any other reason. A relieving roster was set up, whereby the relieving opportunities were shared amongst the Reserve Firemen. They were limited to “outside work” at fires and were barred from firefighting inside buildings and from other, more hazardous, work. They also acted as a reserve of labour to replace ‘volunteers’ when they enlisted or otherwise resigned. Generally, six reserve firemen were attached to each station across the State. They received no retaining fees – instead, they received 2s 6d per hour for attendance at house fires and a lower rate of 2s for fighting bushfires. In April 1941, it was decided to provide Reserve Firemen with uniforms, as opposed to just a badge, and they were permitted to attend ordinary fires and turn out with the fire appliance.940

On June 2, 1943, a meeting was called at Sydney’s Trades Hall of all Reserve and Auxiliary Reserve firemen (see next section). As a result, the Reserve and Auxiliary Reserve Firemen’s Association (RARFA) was established, with Henry Saffron, a Reserve firemen at Annandale, appointed as the Honorary Secretary. Under its constitution, its sole object was the “creation of better understanding, co-operation and good-will of the permanent, volunteer, reserve and auxiliary reserve firemen.”941

The BFC successfully resisted acknowledging its legitimacy, preferring instead, the setting up of an advisory committee. Notwithstanding the rebuff, Saffron wrote to the BFC in December 1943 with a number of proposals: that they be allowed to hold

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meetings at Headquarters Fire Station; that the Reserves and the Auxiliary reserves should be amalgamated into one body; that Reserves and the Auxiliary reserve numbers were over-inflated on the books and that more men were needed on the ground; that better uniforms were needed, as the issued overalls were not serviceable or warm; that they be trained as motor drivers (as had the Women’s Fire Auxiliary) and that issues over insurance cover be dealt with. It is possible that the FBEU may have been involved in encouraging the RARFA, given the latter organisation’s objectives and its choice of meeting venue.942

Table 6.1 - Reserve Corps Members – 1939 -1945

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Corps members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>1453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>1506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>1600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>1588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>1601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>1081</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Various BFCARs 1939-1945.

As Table 6.1 shows, Reserve Corps numbers peaked in 1944 at 1601 members, but fell in the following year to 1081, presumably as a result of the cessation of hostilities. Surprisingly, the Reserve Corps was retained until 1952, for reasons discussed later in this chapter.

6.3.4. The brief return of unpaid volunteers: the Auxiliary Reserve Corps and the Women's Auxiliary Fire Brigade Corps

In October 1940, in consultation with other agencies, the BFC created two new groups of firefighters to deal with wartime contingencies: the Auxiliary Reserve Corps (ARC) and the Women’s Auxiliary Fire Brigade Corps (WAFBC). The original recruitment plans were relatively ambitious: it proposed the ARC would number 2000 members, whilst the WAFBC would be comprised of 3000 members.943 By early 1941, the Board had developed and implemented Brigade Orders governing the

942 ‘Re Reserve and Auxiliary Reserve Firemen’s Association’, Bundle 43c/2841, SRNSW: CGS 476, [20/14778].
943 Report (28/10/1940) by BFC President re Fire Brigades Emergency Service Auxiliaries, SRNSW: CGS 476, [20/14778].
The operation of both Auxiliary forces. The creation of the Auxiliaries, reintroduced, for the first time since 1909, a system of unpaid firefighting volunteers back into urban NSW.

The exclusively male ARC was primarily located in the Sydney and Newcastle Fire Districts, although 170 positions were allocated to country fire districts, such as Lithgow, Wollongong, Liverpool and Broken Hill. In every Annual Report between 1941 and 1944, ARC membership remained at 2000. Yet, these figures may have only represented the quota of positions, rather than the actual number of appointees; an internal report in September 1941, showed less than one thousand appointees, whilst another in June 1945, indicated that enrolment was down to 554 men. Appointed by local officers, from men not of war service age, auxiliary reserve firemen were required to attend training sessions, and other duties, as required by the Chief Officer. Their core role was to “be available to act as part or whole time firemen during an extreme emergency” generated by a large-scale enemy attack on a population centre in the State. In the event of such a scenario, off duty and ‘volunteer’ firemen were to reinforce the affected brigades. If further reinforcements were required, reserve firemen were utilised, followed by auxiliary reserve firemen. There are no records that indicate the use of the ARC in actual firefighting operations, though they did respond to their posts during the Japanese submarine attacks on Sydney and Newcastle, in June 1942.

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944 ‘Board’s Orders regulating and governing the establishment, conduct and services of the Auxiliary Reserve Corps, New South Wales Fire Brigades’ (10/3/1941), SRNSW: CGS 476, [20/14778]; ‘Board’s Orders regulating and governing the establishment, conduct, and services of the Women’s Fire Auxiliary’ (21/4/1941), SRNSW: CGS 476, [20/14779].


947 ‘Board’s Orders regulating and governing the establishment, conduct and services of the Auxiliary Reserve Corps, New South Wales Fire Brigades (10/3/1941)’, p.3, SRNSW: CGS 476, [20/14778]; ‘Notes (undated) by BFC Secretary – Untitled (regarding Auxiliary Reserve Firemen)’ SRNSW: CGS 476, [20/14778].

948 ‘Notes (undated) by BFC Secretary – Untitled (regarding Auxiliary Reserve Firemen)’, SRNSW: CGS 476, [20/14778].

949 Adrian, Fighting fire, p.151.
Another group to mobilise during the attack was the Women’s Auxiliary Fire Brigade Corps (WAFBC), which was formally established in April 1941. The WAFBC was staffed by women, aged between thirty and forty-five years of age and “doing domestic duties and resident in the suburbs”, with preference given to members of the Women’s Australian National Services. Presumably, the target group was chosen so as not to compete with other aspects of the war effort (e.g. staffing of essential industries), whilst the residential requirement, may have stemmed from the need to replenish staff in city areas, if a large-scale enemy attack debilitated inner-city populations. Like the ARC, the WAFBC were required to train and perform duties as required and assist in active firefighting activities only during times of “extreme emergency”. There is more evidence of activity by WAFBC members than the ARC: a large proportion were involved in the staffing of station watchrooms in Sydney and Newcastle, in nightly two hour shifts. Whilst the WAFBC operated primarily in Sydney and Newcastle, it also operated out of some of the larger country centres, such as Wagga Wagga. The Corps numbers varied considerably over the war years: in 1941 and 1942, it appears that there were generally about 250 members. To address the considerable deficit in WAFBC numbers, the BFC launched a recruitment campaign in 1942, which generated considerable press coverage. The campaign, and the increased danger of Japanese attacks, appeared to have some effect; by the end of 1943, there were 527 WAFBC members across the State. In the subsequent two years, however, they dropped to 429 and 385 members respectively.

In March 1942, eighteen women were nominated by the Deputy Chief Officer to form the Women’s Fire Auxiliary Committee (WFAC). In subsequent years, meetings were held by WAFBC members to elect the committee members. The WFAC was unsure of its powers and roles, which the BFC soon clarified: “The Committee is purely

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950 ‘Correspondence to Director, NES re. Auxiliary Reserve Corps’, 9/8/45, SRNSW: CGS 476, [20/14779]; ‘Fire Brigade Emergency Service Auxiliaries’, 28/10/1940; ‘Board’s Orders regulating and governing the establishment, conduct, and services of the Women’s Fire Auxiliary’, 21/4/1941, SRNSW: CGS 476, [20/14778].

951 Adrian, Fighting fire, p.151-152.

952 Ibid., pp.148-153; AWM Collection: Photograph P03103.001.


advisory (...) to assist the Board with suggestions so that the Women’s viewpoint could be considered when creating efficient machinery to function within the Board’s By-laws and Orders.”

On the whole, the WAFBC were more prominent than the ARC, through press exposure and fundraising activities, including a ‘Fire Queen’ competition that raised money for a BFC mobile canteen. The novelty of women participating in structured fire brigade operations enhanced their prominence, with press coverage ranging from merely descriptive, to patronising. Certainly, women had played significant roles in firefighting previously. There are numerous reported examples of ad-hoc volunteering in urban and bush firefighting throughout the twentieth century. Furthermore, women provided much needed support in fireground operations, such as communications and providing sustenance to front line personnel. The earliest structured role for women in firefighting occurred in the early 1900s, when a women’s fire brigade, known as the ‘Armidale Amazons’, was formed. Established by the Armidale fire brigades captain’s daughter, the “Ladies” brigade trained and participated in local demonstrations - whether they played a role on the fireground is uncertain. Other than the Amazons, no other structured women’s firefighting organisation emerged prior to the WAFBC; the “embodiment of immaculate manhood” that was the male fireman, was largely unchallenged.

The Union’s position towards the ARC and WAFBC was ambivalent. Whilst there did not appear to be any opposition to the effective re-introduction of volunteers into the industry, some union representatives questioned their commitment and effectiveness. In a deputation by the Union to the BFC regarding wartime issues, the Union advocated that more permanent men were required, rather than relying on auxiliary corps. The non-attendance of ARC and WAFBC members at stations and

955 ‘Correspondence to Women’s Fire Auxiliary Advisory Committee’, 13/5/1943, SRNSW: CGS 476, [20/14778].
956 SMH, 20/7/1942; Adrian, Fighting fire, p.151-152.
957 e.g. SMH, 26/8/1936.
drills, led the Union to question the viability of, both male and female, volunteers.\textsuperscript{960} One union executive member, J.G. Hatton, whilst careful not to criticise the WAFBC or the contribution by women in the war effort, railed against the use of women in station watchrooms during extreme emergencies: “[w]e feel that they should not be left in charge of the watchroom. Quite possibly, some of them are too old, physically unfitted, and temperamentally unsuitable to the job. (...) We might find ourselves in the position, should one of the ladies make a mistake over the place or the building, that should some of the men lose their lives, or be injured, the position would be most unsatisfactory.”\textsuperscript{961} Hatton stressed physical incapacity: “[w]e realise that the women are playing an important part, and we are not prejudiced in that respect. But where some of the women are physically incapable, we consider that they are a menace to us, and we say that in good spirit.”\textsuperscript{962} The Union also argued that the role of the auxiliary corps should be limited to explicit wartime activities (e.g. roof spotting for fires and enemy incursions), or routine and laborious off-station maintenance tasks, such as the checking of street fire alarms. The response by the BFC President, T.J. Smith, was to warn Hatton to be “very careful” when discussing the requirements of watchroom duty, pointing out that some permanent men were equally ill-suited to the position.\textsuperscript{963} By late August 1945, the BFC disbanded both auxiliary corps and held a “Farewell Ball” for auxiliaries, of which, over 700 attended. By this stage, the war in was is all but complete and the Allied forces had the Japanese in retreat.\textsuperscript{964} The reintroduction of volunteer firefighters, in the form of the ARC and the WFBAC, did not reintroduce the problems of nineteenth century volunteerism. Unlike previous metropolitan (unpaid) volunteer fire companies, the auxiliaries were firmly under the command and control of the BFC and its firefighting staff. Furthermore, they did not have any spatial jurisdiction of their own and, as it turned out, they were not required on the fireground. Both the BFC and the Union viewed them as temporary wartime

\textsuperscript{960} ‘Deputation from the N.S.W. Fire Brigade Association to Board of Fire Commissioners of NSW’ 29/12/1941, \textit{NBAC. FBEU, T22/7 A.53}, pp. 1, 2 & 4.
\textsuperscript{961} ibid. p.2. In later years, the debate over women in watchrooms continued. In 1944, in a debate in the Union’s journal over women in firefighting, the State Secretary Jim Lambert reminded members that women had successfully staffed London’s watchrooms during the Blitz.
\textsuperscript{962} ibid. p.6.
\textsuperscript{963} ibid. pp.2, 3 & 5.
\textsuperscript{964} ‘Women’s Fire Auxiliary and Auxiliary Reserve Corps’ 22/8/1945, ‘Correspondence to ARC members’ 30/7/1945, ‘Disbandment of Aux/Reserves’, SRNSW: CGS 476, [20/14779]
supplemental forces, rather than part of ordinary firefighting arrangements. The BFC’s Secretary conveyed the consensus regarding auxiliaries, particularly the WFBAC: “Fire fighting is a man’s job, but I do say without hesitation that in the scale of things, there is a place for women.”

The scale of the threat of WWII created a place for unpaid auxiliaries that were temporary and supplementary in nature. With the cessation of hostilities, the use of unpaid labour and women firefighters in the BFC ceased. Whilst unpaid labour would again return to Sydney in the early 1950s, women did not serve as uniformed members of the NSWFB until legislative changes in the early 1980s removed this, rather archaic, gender barrier.

6.3.5. Postwar BFC volunteers - Bush Fire Auxiliary Firemen

Towards the end of the war, the BFC created a new type of firefighting unit: in addition to fire stations staffed by either permanent or ‘volunteer’ firefighters, they developed the concept of the hose box post (HBP), staffed by a mixed of retained, reserve and/or auxiliary firefighters. These posts were established in bush areas and consisted of a number of reserve firefighters attached to a Hose Box equipped with rudimentary firefighting equipment. As stated previously, at the conclusion of hostilities, the ARC and the WAFBC were disbanded. However the Reserves Corps was maintained, with a number of ex-ARC members in the Blue Mountains and Sutherland LGAs added to its numbers, so as to strengthen the BFC’s bush fire activities, through an expanded HBP program. By 1951, the BFC had classified reserve firemen into three categories. Category 1 reserve firemen, were attached to NSWFB ‘volunteer’ brigades, to act as a pool for ‘volunteer’ firemen selection. Category 2 reserve firemen were attached to Hose Box Posts, located primarily in urban / bushland interface areas in Sydney, Newcastle, the Blue Mountains and the Illawarra. Those classified as Category 3 were those reserve firemen attached to permanently staffed fire stations, and were largely a residue from wartime.

965 ‘Deputation from the NSWFBA to BFC’, 29/12/1941, NBAC. FBEU, T22/7 A.53, p.5.
966 Adrian, Fighting fire, p.233; Jopson, Red brigade, p.191.
967 Adrian, Fighting fire, p.147, BFCAR 1946, p.3.
968 BFCAR 1946, p.3; SRNSW: CGS 476, [20/14779].
969 BFC Mins 10/12/1951, p.7639; ‘Re. Reserve Corps’, 14/10/1946, SRNSW: CGS 476, [20/14778].
The development of HBPs continued energetically after the war. For example, in September 1946, ten local residents in Springdale Road and Birdwood Avenue, Killara, in Sydney’s lower North Shore, formed a HBP, equipped by the BFC, for bush fire fighting.\(^{970}\) By the end of 1947, fifty-five similar HBPs had been formed across the State. The ‘authorised strength’ of reserve firemen continued to grow after the war, peaking in the early 1950s, at over 1900 personnel (twenty percent higher than during the war). Whilst created under the pressures of ‘total war’, the BFC had created an additional flexible and cost effective reserve of labor, to be used in large-scale emergencies. As such, it gave it the ability to cover such contingencies, without the costs associated with paid labour.

In 1952, the reserve system was abolished. Category 1 reserve firemen, who were prepared to take on the extra responsibility, were eligible to be transferred to the volunteer ranks. Their selection was determined by their “age, distance of residence from the fire station, previous attendances at drill and other factors.”\(^{971}\) Category 2 Reserve firemen attached to HBPs were relabeled as Bush Fire Auxiliary Firemen (BFA Firemen) – they were unilaterally deemed “wholly voluntary”, receiving no retainer or attendance payments. The issuing of uniforms ceased, but the BFC continued to cover BFA Firemen for losses associated with misfortune on the fireground (e.g. loss of earnings and damage to personal property).\(^{972}\) The BFC’s decision to convert the category 2 reserve firemen into unpaid ‘auxiliaries’, produced a mixed reaction. Certainly, the BFC’s Minutes, in early 1952, are peppered with reports from the officer in charge of HBPs (SO V.A. Lowther), indicating acceptance from HBP personnel: a HBP in Beacon Hill indicated that remuneration “was never a prima consideration for their services to the Board, but were particularly interested in the matter of local fire protection”; others, such as Picnic Point HBP, acquiesced so that the BFC would leave the HBP equipment in their neighbourhood.\(^{973}\)

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\(^{972}\) BFCAR 1952, p.5; ‘Hose Box Posts: re Bush Fire Auxiliary Firemen, 8/11/1952; SRNSW: Board of Fire Commissioners; CGS 583, Bush Fire Committee – Minutes and Correspondence, 1936-62, [20/14828].
Yet, the unilateral loss of remuneration by the ex-reserve firemen was an issue in some areas. Within weeks of the BFC receiving reports from SO Lowther that HBPs in the Sutherland Shire had accepted the change, the Sutherland Shire Council protested to the BFC over the policy change.\textsuperscript{974} It argued for the retention of the payment system, arguing that some HBP personnel in the Shire, “suffer loss of pay whilst away from their usual avocation and probably all are put to some expense in carrying out this self imposed duty.”\textsuperscript{975} In November 1952, a conference was held between the BFC and Kuring-gai Council regarding their local HBPs. The BFC’s President, T.J. Smith, outlined the importance of BFA firemen and their conditions. He indicated that the BFC would consider individual applications by HBP personnel where, due to firefighting, the BFA fireman was “involved in pecuniary loss beyond their ability and willingness to bear”. Universal payment systems were ruled out: retaining fees were deemed by the BFC to be “unfair to the man who really did the job as against the less public-spirited man.” A BFA fireman from Mount Wilga HBP (Hornsby) was critical of the BFC’s frugality in rejecting the payment of a small retainer of £5 p.a. to each BFA fireman. The President responded with a plea over capacity to pay (for the insurance industry), and to voluntary instincts:

> Insurance Companies can’t go on paying the bigger and bigger contributions which such payments would involve without ultimately taking it out of the persons who insure their homes etc. Further, there is more honour and glory, as with Life Savers on the beach, and others, in doing a fine job without the few bob an hour.

Another HBP member from Mount Wilga, again raised the issue of payment: “We feel that we have been suddenly dropped by the Board. It is rumoured that the Board has done this to get ahead of the Union who were going for an award for all men who fight fires.” T.J Smith responded, citing the ever-growing army of bush firefighters “who serve without payment.”\textsuperscript{976}

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\textsuperscript{974} BFC Mins 11/2/1952, pp.1110, 1107-1110.
\textsuperscript{975} BFC Mins 17/3/1952, p.1910-1911.
\textsuperscript{976} ‘Board’s conference with Kuring-gai Council, together with hose post representatives from Hornsby and Kuring-gai’, 20/11/1952, SRNSW: CGS 583, [20/14828].
Table 6.2 - Hose Box Posts and Bush Fire Auxiliary Firemen - 1952-1955

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Bushfire Auxiliaries</th>
<th>No. of Hose Box Posts</th>
<th>Sydney FD</th>
<th>Other FDs</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>85</td>
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<td>1953</td>
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</tr>
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<td>1954</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>122</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>125</td>
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</table>


What led to the reintroduction of unpaid labour within the BFC, outside of a dangerous wartime situation? The staffing of HBPs with ‘new’ BFA Firemen, gave the BFC the ability to cost effectively protect the bushland areas of their fire districts, after the disastrous fires of the summer of 1951/1952. Despite rapid outer suburban growth in Sydney and other major centres, HBPs enabled them to provide such protection, without having to significantly bolster permanent and ‘volunteer’ staffing, in light of the financial and ‘institutional’ constraints that it faced during the 1950s. By making the last of the useful reservists purely volunteer, they avoided the potential for them becoming subject to award coverage and union membership. They also countered the pressure from local progress associations (and elements with the Police Department) to form BFBs within BFC fire districts. In essence, they filled a gap in the protection afforded by the BFC, without much additional expense.

As Pyne identified, the urban/bushland interface expanded in the postwar years. A series of large scale and damaging fires occurred between November 1951 and January 1952, across large areas of the State. Bushfires threatened towns up and down the NSW coast and in the hinterlands. In all, eleven people died and four million hectares of land were destroyed. In particular, a large-scale bush conflagration engulfed the increasingly urbanised lower Blue Mountains in early December, destroying over sixty buildings and causing one death. Fires also ringed Sydney during this severe fire season, with large-scale fires on the urban/bushland interface in Penrith, Richmond, Hornsby, Dural, Engadine, Heathcote and other areas.977

977 Collins, Burn, pp.155-165; BFC Mins 4/2/1952, pp.905-907; Wright, "Brass Hats ... from Sydney", p.56.
Outer suburban areas were increasingly intertwining with bushland areas, due to the increased demands for residential and industrial development. Demand for fire protection increased in these areas, due to the additional population and building stock, and their exposure to bushfires. Yet, the BFC was subject to, what Adrian has labeled, “institutional constraints”, which hampered its ability, or willingness, to meet new demand. 978 Decisions by various state governments, aimed at satisfying ‘lobby groups’, together with the funding bodies (particularly the insurance industry) having significant control over BFC decision making through its board structure, led to fire service supply (e.g. new stations and staff) lagging behind demand. In particular, Adrian cites changes to fire service rosters caused by FBEU agitation of successive State Labor governments. The switch from the eighty-four (two shifts per day) to the fifty-six hour week (three shifts) in 1945, and the subsequent reduction to forty-two hours in 1955, led to a sizeable increase in staffing just to cover the existing areas of operation. Meanwhile, the outer metropolitan suburbs, whilst growing in terms of population, demand for fire services and contributions to the BFC, were denied any real influence. Whilst metropolitan local government was represented on the Board, vagaries in the selection process lead to it being dominated by inner metropolitan councils. 979 This combination of factors led to some of the fastest growing areas being protected by the HBPs.

The BFC’s decision to establish BFA Firemen and additional HBPs may have also been influenced by the action of other groups, attempting to organise fire protection within their fire districts. In certain areas, members of the Police Department actively sought to control firefighting operations in their areas. In Penrith and Lower Blue Mountains, for example, a trio of three police sergeants actively undermined the BFC’s authority and standing, to the extent that the Chief Officer recommended that a formal complaint be made to the Commissioner of Police. Sergeant Doyle (Penrith) was accused of running a supposed “get-together” which was judged by the Deputy Chief Officer as a meeting convened by the sergeant:

for the express purpose of subjugating the Board’s Brigades under the N.S.W. Police Force so that future operations would be controlled by Police

978 Adrian, 'Institutional constraints'.
979 ——, Fighting fire, pp.42-45.
Officers resident in the Blue Mountains and with overall supervision by Police in Penrith.⁹⁸⁰

Police officers were active in bushfire brigade control in the Western Division of the State and had their own firefighting arm. In 1945, the BFAC arranged for a BFC District Officer and a bush fire brigade captain to train more than forty police officers from “country centres” in rural bush firefighting and, in subsequent years, even the city based mobile and high profile No.21 Division (Special Squad) were earmarked for deployment at bushfires. However, the aggressive and “overbearing” organisation by police on the outskirts of Sydney, and in BFC ‘territory’, proved a genuine affront to the BFC and its officers.⁹⁸¹

In the midst of, and directly after, the severe 1951/52 fire season, other organisations lobbied for better bushfire protection in parts of BFC fire districts. Some local councils and/or progress associations lobbied directly for the installation of HBPs to provide ‘village’ protection in locations such as Loftus (Sutherland Shire) and Mount Colah (Hornsby Shire).⁹⁸² HBPs were even sought to protect assets beyond a network of residential streets or villages. The Caringbah Chamber of Commerce sought a HBP to protect local business and industry, in the absence of a local fire station. In support of the application, the Sutherland Shire Clerk wrote to the BFC in rather sarcastic terms: “in this far flung Shire, the Hose Posts render a prompt and efficient service in attending fires in the locality of their establishment.”⁹⁸³ Other organisations, such as the West Dundas Progress Association, sought to form bush fire brigades in localities with BFC fire districts. Again the BFC’s ability to offer such groups a HBP, relieved pressures for the establishment of either, a more expensive NSWFB station or, a less controllable bush fire brigade.⁹⁸⁴

⁹⁸³ BFC Mins 18/2/1952, p.1184-1185.
The FBEU viewed the postwar growth of reserve firemen with suspicion. The FBEU questioned the bona fides of the BFC building up the Corps “allegedly for the primary purpose of combating bushfires”. Instead, it saw it as an ineffective means for the BFC to provide fire protection in their fire districts, particularly in areas where stations had closed in 1945.\textsuperscript{985} The Union also saw the BFA firemen as a threat to their ‘volunteer’ members.\textsuperscript{986}

The BFC had to deliver in growing urban and regional areas (particularly Sydney and surrounds), whilst at the same time protecting its board members’ financial interests. The establishment of hose box posts in its existing spatial territory (i.e. fire districts) enabled the BFC to maintain cheaper forms of fire protection at the urban/bushland interface, through the use of unpaid volunteer labour. Yet, the BFC’s Bush Fire Auxiliary firemen were not the only unpaid volunteers protecting outer suburban Sydney and other developing urban areas. Wartime volunteerism had energised the bushfire brigade movement, and urban expansion had blurred the boundaries between suburb and bush. Yet, the BFC’s postwar fiscal constraints and the limited capabilities of its Bush Fire Auxiliaries, made the Board incapable of maintaining dominance of urban firefighting in the rapidly growing fringes of Sydney.\textsuperscript{987} Volunteerism, through the bushfire brigade movement, was again left to fill the void, repeating the patterns of the nineteenth century.

\textbf{6.4. The invigoration of the Bush Fire Brigade Movement during WWII}

Early 1939 was a watershed period for the bush fire brigade movement in NSW. In January, NSW, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) experienced severe heat waves accompanied, at times, by strong winds and low humidity; Sydney reached its highest ever recorded temperature of forty-five degrees Celsius on January 14.\textsuperscript{988} Extensive bush fires broke across all three jurisdictions, with its impact particularly felt in North East Victoria. Over three million hectares of land were burnt

\textsuperscript{985} Fire Brigades Association of NSW and NSW Fire Brigade Officers Association, ‘Matter submitted to Chief Secretary’s Representative Messrs. Buttsworth and Kingsmill to support reconstitution of Board of Fire Commissioners’, in \textit{NBAC Z332 Box 68 1946 C1946}, p.20 (unnumbered).
\textsuperscript{987} Adrian, ‘Institutional constraints’.
\textsuperscript{988} \textit{SMH}, 16/1/1939 p.11; Foster, \textit{Bushfire}, pp.18-21; Collins, \textit{Burn}, pp.11-13.
across South East Australia, with whole towns destroyed in Victoria. The fires also
casted the greatest loss of life experienced through bushfires: seventy-one Victorians
perished, along with six people in NSW. 989 Most of the Victorian deaths and property
damage occurred on one day, January 13, which is now referred to as “Black Friday”.
Further north, extensive fires threatened the outskirts of Sydney and Canberra in mid-
January. In the latter city, activities associated with an Australian & New Zealand
Association for the Advancement of Science conference were severely disrupted, with
many participants, including the Governor General (Lord Gowrie), H.G. Wells, Sir
Douglas Mawson and Professor D.B Copland, all active on the fire front. Other NSW
towns, such as Mittagong and Lithgow, were also seriously threatened by large
outbreaks. 990

The scale and ferocity of the fires led to vigorous debates and a re-examination, in
both States, of bush fire prevention and suppression. 991 Victoria established a Royal
Commission to examine the fires, chaired by Judge Leonard Stretton, which was
highly critical of rural fire practices and organisation. 992 A wide range of politicians,
bureaucrats and organisations participated in the debate. The Commonwealth
proposed a conference of state governments to develop a “Commonwealth-wide
policy for the prevention and extinction of bushfires.” 993 In the press, J.B. Cramsie,
the Chairman of the 1927 NSW Royal Commission, attacked the Stevens
Government’s lack of proper bushfire organisation. He again called for a permanent
Commission to deal with bushfires and was particularly critical of bushfire
organisation being voluntary in nature:

Although the Crown has wide powers to prevent bushfires it has taken no
action. Most of the action taken so far has been voluntary. It should be
compulsory. (...) The Bushfires Advisory Committee has circulated a lot of
posters, but that gets us nowhere. The whole position is farcical. What is
everybody’s job in voluntary organisation is nobody’s job. 994

990 *SMH*, 16/1/1939 p.11, 13/1/1939 p.12, 16/1/1939 p.11.
991 *SMH*, 16/1/1939, 17/1/1939, 18/1/1939, 20/1/1939, 23/1/1939.
993 *SMH*, 20/1/1939 p.12; Ibid., p.312.
994 *SMH*, 18/1/1939 pp.15-16.
The Minister for Education, David Drummond (United Country Party), accused Sydney’s residents, and beachgoers at Dee Why in particular, of apathy: “Thousands of physically fit people were engaged in sport, quite calmly, while homes and property not far away were in danger of being destroyed. (...) It is a pity that civilization and the growth of the city too often cause the spirit of the pioneer to recede into the background.” Adrian Curlewis, the President of the Surf Life Saving Association of Australia, took offence at the possible slur against his members. Curlewis, like others, highlighted the dearth of organisation in bush fire suppression and suggested that it be organised in the same way as Australian surf clubs.

Pyne (1991) portrays the fires of January 1939 as “a Götterdämmerung of European Australia. What the fall of Singapore was to Australian political history, Black Friday was to its environment history.” The fires, and their social and political aftermath, led to a renewed reorganisation of bush fire brigades across the country. By January 1940, the Chief Secretary, Alwyn Tonking, was boasting that there were 472 bush fire brigades across the State, with approximately 20,000 members. Nonetheless, the organisation of bushfire suppression in NSW was still being questioned; Harold Swain, the Forestry Commissioner, was advocating the end of the voluntary system, with its replacement by a permanent organisation with paid labour. After the 1939 bushfires, the BFAC published a pamphlet titled The Organisation of Bush Fire Brigades. Based on Leonard Judd’s article from 1933, it advised on all aspects of bush fire brigade organisation, including personnel and governance. The formation and organisation of brigades was still left largely in the hands of “primary producers”, their associations (e.g. Agricultural Bureaus, the Farmers & Settlers and Graziers Association) and Local Government. In March of that year, the Graziers’ Association Conference voted to actively encourage bush fire brigade formation. Its

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996 *SMH*, 20/1/1939 p.12.
998 Ibid., p. 312.
motivation for doing so was not centred on fire protection; rather, it was about avoiding a legislative requirement to establish rural BFBs with “compulsory levies” on landholders.$^{1001}$ With the BFAC encouraging bushfire brigade formation, and the increasing interest in organising volunteers for civil defence, by April 1941, the Chief Secretary (Tonking) reported that numbers had substantially increased to about one thousand brigades with 30,000 active members.$^{1002}$

After Japan entered the war in late 1941, the organisation of bush fire brigades gained more urgency and Curtin requested that all state governments introduce measures to control bushfires in any wartime emergency. The Australian Military Forces were concerned that the enemy would use bushfires as a weapon on coastal NSW. Bushfires were relabeled by some in the press as the “Red Peril” conveying the same menace as the Japanese threat in the Pacific (“the Yellow Peril”).$^{1003}$ A Movietone cinema short made during the war, titled, *Who helps the enemy*, captured the fear of large-scale bushfires during the war. The narrator put it bluntly:

> Once again the danger period for bush fires in Australia is here. In time of war, carelessness that causes bush fires is nothing short of a criminal act. Remember disaster in Australia means joy in Tokyo.$^{1004}$

In early 1942, the McKell Government created the Bush Fires (Emergency) Committee (BFEC) and, subsequently, gazetted the Bush and Fire Prevention Order, pursuant to Regulation 35(a) of the National Security General Regulations, which governed, among other things, the clearing of fire breaks, the formation of bush fire brigades, cooperation with the military authorities and access for bushfire brigades to materials.$^{1005}$ The BFEC, which was later absorbed into the BFAC, was given a mandate to establish additional bush fire brigades, adequately equip existing brigades and to “take all necessary steps to prevent the spread of bushfires.” The BFAC

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$^{1001}$ *SMH*, 16/3/1939, p.13.
$^{1002}$ *SMH*, 15/4/1941 in *NBAC. FBEU, Z332, [67]*
$^{1003}$ *BFC Mins 17/11/1943*, pp.5541-5542; *National Archives of Australia (NAA): Australian Military Forces: Eastern Command; AWM54, Written records, 1939-45 War; 341/1/1, [Fires - General:] Bush fires as a military weapon and bush fire control, December 1941; Blue Mountains Advertiser, 9/1/1942, p.1; Daly, ‘Elements of the past’, p.340.
$^{1004}$ Australian War Memorial (AWM), *Collection Record: F01386*, http://cas.awm.gov.au/film/F01386
$^{1005}$ McKell, *The state and the war effort*, pp.15-16.
continued this role under the Bush and Fire Prevention Order No.2 (1944) until 1949, when the Bush Fires Act was gazetted.\footnote{1006}{Ibid., pp.15-16; \textit{The Propeller}, 25/3/1942; \textit{BFCAR 1942}, p.3; \textit{BFCAR 1944}, pp.3-4; \textit{BFCAR 1945}, p.3; \textit{BFCAR 1946}, p.3; \textit{SMH}, 1/9/1942 p.7; Bush Fire Council of New South Wales, 'Role of Bush Fire Organisation', p.2.}

In December 1944, the NSW Government extended the provisions of the Workers’ Compensation Act to volunteers involved in bush fire fighting (both bush fire brigade members and ad-hoc volunteers). Whilst it was an extension of the wartime National Security (Civil Defence Volunteers’ Compensation) Regulations, it represented the first recognition in NSW, that volunteer workers faced many of the same physical and economic risks that paid workers faced. During the parliamentary debate on the changes, it was reported that 1035 bushfire brigades across the State were operated by 20,000 volunteers.\footnote{1007}{BFCAR 1944, p.4; Hasluck, \textit{The government and the people 1942-1945}, p.646, fn.5; \textit{NSWPD}, 6/12/1944, pp.1641-1644.}

On first glance, compared to the previous data provided by Tonking three years earlier, it would appear that brigade membership had declined by one third over the years, notwithstanding the efforts of government to boost bushfire brigade development. It is much more likely that Tonking overestimated bush firefighter numbers, given the criticism that the Government had received after the 1939 fires.

Whatever impact wartime organisation had on the number of bushfire brigades and members, there is no doubt that WWII generated a renewed interest and energy in the NSW bushfire brigade movement. As Pyne (1991) stated: “[t]he war ensured that reforms in bushfire protection would participate in a larger social dynamic, that they had an institutional momentum and nationalistic fervour that could propel them across a generation.”\footnote{1008}{Pyne, \textit{Burning bush}, p.322.} After the cessation of hostilities, the NSW Government drafted a new Bush Fires Bill in 1946. When consulted, the BFC expressed real concern over aspects of the draft Bill, which “could place the Board’s Officers subordinate to any person authorised by the Minister to take charge of bush fire-fighting operations.”\footnote{1009}{‘Proposed Bush Fires Bill – Report’, 12/7/1946, \textit{SRNSW: CGS 584}, [20/14833].}

The BFC submitted amendments which remedied this potential loss of command on the fireground and they were accepted, “in principle”, by the BFAC. Notwithstanding

\footnote{1006}{Ibid., pp.15-16; \textit{The Propeller}, 25/3/1942; \textit{BFCAR 1942}, p.3; \textit{BFCAR 1944}, pp.3-4; \textit{BFCAR 1945}, p.3; \textit{BFCAR 1946}, p.3; \textit{SMH}, 1/9/1942 p.7; Bush Fire Council of New South Wales, 'Role of Bush Fire Organisation', p.2.}

\footnote{1007}{BFCAR 1944, p.4; Hasluck, \textit{The government and the people 1942-1945}, p.646, fn.5; \textit{NSWPD}, 6/12/1944, pp.1641-1644.}

\footnote{1008}{Pyne, \textit{Burning bush}, p.322.}

the stated desire of the Government to expedite the legislation, the Bill was not passed by Parliament until September 1949.1010

On December 9, 1949, the Bush Fires Act came into operation. Unlike the 1930s Act, it did not merely amend other legislation. It was a permanent statutory instrument, dedicated to bushfire prevention and suppression throughout the State.1011 Among other things, it regulated the formation of bush fire brigades, their organisation into bush fire districts and the powers of bush fire brigade members. The most significant changes related to the resourcing of bush fire brigades, their control, and, as discussed below, the potential loss of unilateral control by BFC officers in their own fire districts. Part VI of the new Act established the Eastern and Central Divisions Bush Fire Fighting Fund (ECDBFF), funded by the insurance industry, local government and the State Government.1012 As Table 6.3 shows, the funding available for the development of bush fire brigades grew rapidly under the new arrangements, from less than $4000 in the first six months of operation, to almost $250,000 p.a. within four years (1953).

Table 6.3 - Expenditures from Eastern and Central Divisions Bush Fire Fighting Fund – FYE June: 1950 – 1955

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YE June</th>
<th>Equipment Purchases</th>
<th>Total Expenditures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>$2,460</td>
<td>$3,860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>$87,852</td>
<td>$89,652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>$145,402</td>
<td>$147,966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>$243,428</td>
<td>$247,730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>$229,576</td>
<td>$234,676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>$226,924</td>
<td>$231,754</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Local governments’ ability to draw on these funds to equip bush fire brigades, led to significant organisation, and growth of brigades, across most of the State. In April 1950, the new Bush Fire Committee boasted that 1,378 bush fire brigades existed,

1011 Bush Fires Act, 1949 (No.31 of 1949).
1012 Ibid. Estimates of expenditure were limited by a maximum contribution by local government authorities, using a similar mechanism as contained in the Fire Brigades Act.
with a combined membership of more than 26,000 members. In January 1952, close to 1400 bushfire brigades had been formed, with 40,000 members. Five years later in 1957, the Minister for Local Government, Jack Renshaw, announced that more than 60,000 bushfire brigade members were organised into more than 2000 brigades.

The existing BFAC was abolished, with its members transferred to a new Bush Fire Committee, together with two additional appointees, making a committee of twenty persons. It’s composition ranged across a large range of government and representative organisations, including eight government departments, the BFC, the Rural Bank, State Meteorological Bureau, Forestry Commission [R.H. Luke], Shires Association, Rangers League, Farmers and Settlers’ Association and the Graziers’ Association. The BFC expressed concern that the Act did not guarantee it a place on the new Committee.

As well as improving funding arrangements, the new Bush Fires Act also allowed for the creation of Bush Fire Districts. Where the Chief Secretary proclaimed such a district, a Fire Control Officer (FCO) was appointed on the recommendation of the Bush Fire Committee. The role of the FCO was to control all bush fire brigades in their district and the legislation contemplated that they would be employees, rather than volunteers, like brigade captains and other members. An interesting feature of the legislation was that it contemplated jurisdictional difficulties where bush fire districts adjoined BFC fire districts. Sub-section 26 (2) stated:

Where any area or part thereof has been proclaimed a bush fire district and such district adjoins a fire district constituted under the Fire Brigades Act, 1909-1949, the person to be appointed as fire control officer under this section shall where practicable be the officer-in-charge of such fire district.

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1015 NSWPD, 20/10/1949, pp. 4295; BFC Minutes 10/10/1949, p.4475.
1016 Bush Fires Act, 1949, s.23, Part IV, ss 57(2)(j).
1017 Ibid., ss.26(2).
This provision gave the BFC a real opportunity to coordinate and control bush fire brigades that operated adjacent to its spatial territory, thereby providing for more unified command, and reducing the possibility of conflict between paid and unpaid labour at the urban / bushland interface. In effect, if fully implemented, it would have given the BFC real control over the vast bulk of the Eastern Division of the State. In the early 1950s, the Board failed to press the advantage, and in later years, actually rejected attempts by Councils to implement such arrangements.¹⁰¹⁸

Not all of the provisions in the new Act were as respectful of the BFC’s jurisdictional dominance. Section 17 gave the Minister the power to appoint any person to “take charge of bush fire fighting in any area or locality” where the Minister was “of the opinion that any bush fire has assumed such proportions as to be incapable of control or suppression by the fire fighting authority or authorities in whose area or locality it is burning.”¹⁰¹⁹ Such appointees were empowered to issue directions to any person, including any BFC officer, in connection with the “suppression or control” of bushfires within their area. Furthermore, the section overrode all other legislation, including the Fire Brigades Act. When these provisions were being debated in the Legislative Council, Hector Clayton, an independent aligned with the UAP, expressed reservations about the appointed “generalissimo” having the ability to “conscript” potentially “everybody in the world”.¹⁰²⁰ A more realistic problem lay in the fact that, for the first time since the BFC’s formation, anybody could potentially be appointed to command and control BFC officers and firemen (including the Chief Officer) in their own fire districts.¹⁰²¹

Throughout the early 1950s, the bush fire brigade movement continued to develop, after its wartime boost and the subsequent passing of the Bush Fires Act. As discussed in Wright (2001), the bad 1951/52 bushfire season led to quite radical reforms in the Blue Mountains, whereby the BFC was given control of both urban and bush

¹⁰¹⁹ Bush Fires Act, 1949, s.17.
¹⁰²¹ BFC Minutes 10/10/1949, p.4474.
The potential for broader changes, along similar lines, was also canvassed. As a result of the fires, the Bush Fire Committee suggested that the BFC “should assume responsibility for the organisation, training and equipping of the whole of the fire-fighting organisation” in all coastal and mountain shire council areas between Moss Vale and Gosford. The Local Government and Shires Associations (LGSA) rejected the concept before it developed any further, preferring instead for individual councils to be given the option of ceding jurisdiction to the BFC. Only the Blue Mountains Shire adopted the approach. The proposal, if it had been supported by the LGSA and strongly advocated by the State Government and the BFC, would have ensured the BFC’s longstanding monopoly on urban firefighting in Sydney and its outer fringes. Instead, the Bush Fire Committee had to continue its role of ‘loosely’ encouraging and coordinating bush fire brigade development and fire prevention and education activities. Despite some local government apathy toward BFB formation, in March 1953, the Chairman of the Committee boasted that the “volunteer [bushfire] brigades are better organised now than ever before, and in very many places local enthusiasm has reached an all-time high.” By 1954, the Committee claimed that it had doubled the number of BFBs, which were “spread throughout N.S.W. from Tenterfield to Tocumwal and Blacktown to Broken Hill.” The spatial distribution of BFBs was widening to new areas of the State. The *Bush Fire Bulletin* reported the formation of new brigades primarily on the coastal plain of NSW and in the outer metropolitan area of Sydney. For example, in Hastings Shire, fourteen brigades with five hundred members were formed with the assistance of the Forestry Commission in 1954. Shoalhaven Shire’s Fire Control Officer managed some fifty-two BFBs. BFBs were also reported forming in emerging population centres on the Central Coast (e.g. Empire Bay and Wyongah) and south of Wollongong (e.g. Warilla). Furthermore throughout the 1950s, outer metropolitan

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1022 Wright, "Brass Hats ... from Sydney".
1024 Ibid.
areas like Warringah Shire and Sutherland consolidated their wartime development.\textsuperscript{1028}

By the 1950’s, some BFBs were already beginning to resist their increasing control by an emerging cadre of paid fire control officers. For example, in August 1952, the Terrey Hills BFB wrestled with Warringah Council over the provision of a new shed and its new policy of recalling bush fire fighting equipment during winter, rather than leaving it with the individual brigades. The solution for the local BFB was reminiscent of some of Sydney’s nineteenth century volunteer fire companies and quite straightforward: “\textit{They wouldn’t give us a shed. We disbanded.}”\textsuperscript{1029} Council intransigence led to the dispute being widened - the BFB members would only reform if the Council provided the shed and newer equipment, and agreed to free the brigade of the Council Bush Fire Officer’s authority on the fireground. The Council refused, and notwithstanding the local progress associations protests, eventually created a new brigade with mostly new office bearers.\textsuperscript{1030}

In 1955, the Bush Fire Committee appointed a Technical Advisor, Jack Kinnear, a district officer, who was initially on secondment from the BFC. His role was to give advice to councils and BFBs regarding equipment and operations. He was also responsible for the “\textit{Organisation of fire fighting measures in villages and towns not under the protection of the Board of Fire Commissioners}”\textsuperscript{1031} Kinnear was instrumental in forming and organising BFBs across the State. Kinnear was assisted in his task by the Bush Fire Committee’s quarterly magazine, the \textit{Bush Fire Bulletin}. First published in September 1952, it encouraged the formation and development of BFBs, provided technical advice and firefighting tips, showcased ‘best practice’ brigades and even offered a crossword in every issue.\textsuperscript{1032} The content of the \textit{Bulletin} reflected the diverse groups on the Committee, attempting to drive bush fire development, and broader policy. The BFC’s senior officers, George Gilmour, G.W.L McKinnon and V.A. Lowther, at various stages, represented the BFC on the

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{1029} Charteris, \textit{Forty flaming years}, p.19.
\bibitem{1030} Ibid. pp.19-21
\end{thebibliography}
Committee and often wrote technical and operational articles.\textsuperscript{1033} Harry Luke, the Forestry Commission’s Fire Control Officer who reorganised bushfire protection in the Snowy Mountains and developed forestry fire control techniques for Australian conditions, was also a contributor of technical articles, along with the emerging cadre of fire control officers. A diverse range of bodies, including the Police Department, Country Women’s Association and the Public Service Board, provided non-technical articles.\textsuperscript{1034} The \textit{Bulletin} developed a penchant for emotive language: the “Red Terror” was a favourite, whilst the cold-war inspired “Red Invader” also made an appearance.\textsuperscript{1035} The archetypal ‘bushman’ and elements of ‘countrymindedness’ were invoked by the \textit{Bulletin}: “\textit{meetings were being held formally ratifying the existence of brigades born of that spirit of co-operation which the country-man understands}.” Those interested in bushfire protection were considered “\textit{the essential cream of the community who have Australia’s good at heart}.”\textsuperscript{1036}

Clearly, the wartime encouragement of BFBs provided an impetus to brigade formation in Sydney: in areas like Warringah Shire, brigades such as Terrey Hills and Oxford Falls were formed during 1942, whilst Sutherland Shire had formed five BFBs by 1943.\textsuperscript{1037} Yet there was another factor at work: the unwillingness and/or inability of the BFC to resource rapidly expanding outer metropolitan areas. For example, in the case of the Sutherland Shire in the 1950s, the Council, local progress associations and the FBEU were active in lobbying for the BFC to provide high levels of fire protection in the Shire.\textsuperscript{1038} The BFC’s inaction created a void, within which, an alternative and well resourced local bush fire brigade movement developed.\textsuperscript{1039}

The vacuum created by the BFC’s inability, or unwillingness, to expand concomitantly with urban expansion (particularly in Sydney), and to embrace effective control of adjoining bushfire districts, through the appointment of its own

\begin{thebibliography}{10}
\bibitem{1036} Bush Fire Bulletin, 1/9/1956, p.6; Aitkin, “\textit{Countrymindedness}”.
\bibitem{1037} Charteris, \textit{Forty flaming years}, p6.; for Sutherland see: http://www.theboyslightup.com/assets/heathcote/doc/origin/1942.htm
\bibitem{1038} Adrian, "Evaluating the provision of an impure public good", pp.296-203.
\end{thebibliography}
officers as FCOs as contemplated by ss.26(2) of the Bush Fires Act, created a vacuum that was eventually filled by other organisations such as the Outer Sydney Bush Fire Prevention Organisation and a cadre of full-time FCOs. These organisations were actively aided by sections of local government, which found them, less financially taxing than the BFC, and more amenable to localist concerns.1040

6.5. Conclusion

During WWII, and in the immediate postwar period, the monopoly position of paid labour in urban firefighting was challenged. Wartime mobilisation and the expansion of volunteer activity generally, encouraged the BFC to reintroduce volunteer firefighters back into urban areas in the form of the Auxiliary Reserve Corps (ARC) and the Women’s Auxiliary Fire Brigade Corps (WAFBC). In addition, they introduced another type of quasi-volunteer, the Reserve fireman, and installed them across their network of stations and deep into the heartland of the permanent men. Thus, volunteer labour returned to urban firefighting, decades after it had been deliberately eradicated following the conflict of the nineteenth century. What distinguished these volunteers from their predecessors was that they supplemented existing BFC brigades and, as such, were subordinate to paid labour. Furthermore, they were perceived by both the BFC and the FBEU as being a temporary measure during wartime, to be used as a backup auxiliary, in the event of attack.

Whilst urban firefighting volunteerism was perceived as a wartime aberration, postwar experience would prove otherwise. Whilst the BFC abolished the ARC and the WAFBC towards the end of the war, they converted the quasi-volunteer Reserve Corps into an ongoing and totally volunteer workforce. The Bush Fire Auxiliary firemen were ‘attached’ to hose box posts established primarily in rapidly growing outer metropolitan areas. They allowed the BFC to be seen to be providing fire protection, without incurring the labour and capital costs associated with a traditional permanent or ‘volunteer’ station. The BFC’s inability to adequately provide for such areas and its newly discovered appreciation of unpaid volunteers, was a function of the scale of urban growth, increased labour costs due of FBEU agitation over hours,

and the ‘brake’ on expenditures applied, by the funding bodies, through their dominance on the Board.

Through the FBEU, permanent and ‘volunteer’ firefighters resisted, to some extent, the substitution of their traditional responsibilities with BFA volunteers. For example, when the FBEU’s Secretary, Jim Lambert, was attempting to build localist coalitions with a network of progress associations and other community groups, to lobby for the reopening of Mortdale Fire Station, he portrayed the local HBP ‘firemen’ as untrained, old and absent in their responsibilities. However more of the Union’s energies were targeted at their own: from the late 1930s it pursued a policy of abolishing all ‘volunteer’ firemen within the metropolitan which, understandably, tended to make unity between permanent and ‘volunteers’ problematic. Yet, the FBEU seemingly ignored the beginnings of a much larger threat to paid labour, the bushfire brigade movement on the urban/bushland interface.

While some communities, such as Caringbah, begrudgingly accepted the BFC’s hose box posts, others looked to the growing bush fire brigade movement, which had been re-invigorated by the imperatives of WWII and the aftermath of the terrible January 1939 bushfire conflagrations. Whilst there were some early calls for paid labour and centralised control of bushfire suppression, for the most part, it remained very much enmeshed in the voluntary principle. Certainly, the organisation of BFBs had taken on a statewide focus, but they remained essentially localist organisations, coordinated by local councils and still largely governed at the local brigade level.

In the postwar period bush fire brigade membership grew dramatically and a cadre of non-BFC firefighting officials started to emerge, armed with increased powers under the Bush Fires Act, 1949 and supported by a well-resourced Bush Fires Committee. At the same time, the BFC squandered its opportunity to ‘capture’ these powerful positions, by failing to nominate its staff for fire control officer positions. The council appointed fire control officers and their increased powers, did at times, challenge the local roots of the movement as was evident in the Terrey Hills BFB disbandment in 1952. Nonetheless, BFBs continued to develop, in part, as a response to the void in fire protection created by the BFC’s frugal resourcing of outer metropolitan areas on the urban / bushland interface. As discussed in the concluding chapter, developments
both during the war and in the immediate postwar period would set the scene for relations between paid and unpaid labour for the rest of the twentieth century.
Chapter 7. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to chart the development of firefighting in NSW from its establishment as an organised activity in the 1850s to the mid 1950s, when the origins of current firefighting arrangements first emerged. Its focus was on the dynamics of the relations between different ‘forms’ of labour – between paid, quasi-volunteer and volunteer firefighters.

The aims and structure of the thesis were explored in the Introduction. Chapter 2 then reviewed the relevant literature as it relates to volunteering, firefighting, localism and spatial aspects of firefighting operations and organisation. Much of the volunteering literature, (e.g. Cnaan, Handy et al & Smith) whilst useful in understanding what a volunteer is generally and providing the term “quasi-volunteer”, did not help to explain the historical development of firefighting in NSW between 1850 and 1955. Its roots are primarily in contemporary debates about volunteer motivation. The volunteering literature often ignores important issues, such as the freedom to volunteer. In doing so, they ignore the decision that many communities face: do they volunteer to provide services such as firefighting locally in the absence of state or market provision, or do they simply leave their community left wanting, or in the case of firefighting, totally exposed to destruction by fire? Whilst this question has been raised by Zech (1982) and Lyons and Hocking (2000), the “logic of necessity” is less about motivation and more about the lack of provision of necessary services in localities.

The field of industrial relations, regardless of paradigm, has virtually been silent on volunteerism and has added little to the understanding of firefighting in Australia. Labour history as a discipline, on the other hand, has recently embraced the study of volunteerism and voluntarist activities, beyond the narrow limits of trade unions as organisations. The work of Oppenheimer and others has, to a large extent, invigorated the study of volunteerism and widened the field of labour history, creating a path for studies such as this. There is a still a lot of ground to cover; for example, with the exception of Wright and Brawley, little attention has been paid to males volunteering or the relations between paid and unpaid labour, and the nineteenth century has received little attention (c.f. Strachan (2001)).
The same can be said of the bulk of the literature relating to the history of firefighting. Colin Adrian’s thesis and his other publications certainly raise important factors in play within NSW firefighting. The inability &/or unwillingness of both the State and market to provide much needed fire services, at certain times in Sydney, is a theme that he touches on in the nineteenth century and explores more fully in the postwar period. A significant issue with Adrian’s work is that his analysis focuses on the period after WWII and is Sydney-centric. As such, the constant tension between the BFC’s penchant for centralised control and the desire for local control in ‘volunteer’ and bushfire brigades is missed. As discussed later, the statewide jurisdiction of the BFC influenced the very nature of the industry and impacted on paid and unpaid firefighters alike.

Whilst Jopson (1994) provides much detail on the lives and resistance of the permanents, and the interstate histories generally provide snippets of information of relevance to the NSW experience, the North American literature is rich in detailed research of tensions on the fireground. However, the utility of this research in understanding firefighting in NSW is limited for a number of reasons. Its usefulness is hindered by the authors’ deliberate concentration on volunteer fire companies, their internal organisation and the bonds of ‘brotherhood’. As such, with the exception of Tebeau (2003), they limit their analysis to the nineteenth century, which saw the rise and fall of volunteerism in major US cities. Whilst Tebeau’s analysis extends into the twentieth century, it is limited by the spatial constraints of his study. By concentrating on one or two departments in isolation, once a Department becomes a paid department, the relations between different types of firefighter all but disappear.

Differences in the spatial reach of US fire departments also limit their utility in understanding firefighting in NSW. Whereas NSW firefighting from 1910 was largely controlled by one fire service (the BFC), in North America, the provision of firefighting was usually organised into much smaller spatial and operational units, which displayed significant homogeneity once established. Thus the key and competing issues of unified control on the one hand and localist agendas on the other, were much less exaggerated in North America brigades, when compared to the BFC which had to serve ‘town and country’ with a more diverse range of firefighters. Thus the discord between distant centralised authority and local control was particularly
pronounced in NSW. Furthermore, localism, whilst it created strong bonds within localities, became a source of frustration for the Board as it sought to unify and centrally control the State’s urban firefighting resources. As discussed in Chapter 5, this was particularly evident in its early years with its dealings with towns such as Bathurst and Casino. A similar problem also manifests itself with the UK literature. The quite narrow spatial delimitation of UK fire brigades distinguishes them from their NSW counterpart. Except for a brief period during World War II, fire services were contained to one major city or town or a small cluster of villages. (Segars 1989).

Both North American and English fire services had also historically developed in different political contexts.

Notwithstanding the quite different spatial contexts of North American and UK firefighting arrangements, the overseas literature is important in understanding the early dynamics of fire services in NSW. The competition between nineteenth century paid and (unpaid) volunteer firemen in Sydney was more than a contest by eager groups of men for the kudos of “first water”. It was also a contest between two approaches to firefighting. Independent, self managed and locally entrenched volunteer fire companies firmly rooted in US voluntarist principles emerged in the 1850s and were prominent until the turn of the century. On the other hand, the ICFB and later the FBB, were dominated by the English approach to firefighting, where centralised and unified control, combined with discipline, were applied to firefighting organisation. In essence, the formative years of firefighting in NSW were shaped by these two, mostly contradictory, approaches to industrial democracy, fireground management and the ‘location’ of control. NSW during this time operated as a hybrid of the US and UK systems: for approximately half a century, a UK styled hierarchical system of centralised control and discipline (as emulated by the ICFB and the FBB’s MFB) coexisted with a confident US-styled voluntarist network of volunteer fire companies (VFCs). Whilst US cities, such as St Louis and Philadelphia, did experience periods of transition between voluntary provision and paid departments, they did not rely on co-existence as their model. The UK in the main was also devoid of such tensions: whilst they did have brigades in some large towns that were mixed (i.e. with permanent and retained firefighters), the retained men were part of one brigade, generally dominated by permanent men and, in addition, were subject to the
controls inherent in the wage/work bargain. Furthermore, many of the larger brigades formed within the police service, which was highly regimented and disciplined.

As Chapters 3 & 4 demonstrate, the fundamentally different philosophies and modes of operation between the ICFB / FBB and the VFCs led to tensions over command and control on and off the fireground. One shared characteristic of both groups was an appreciation of harnessing localism to enhance their respective positions. Before the formation of the FBB in particular, the volunteers were well placed to influence localist agendas as they provided much needed fire protection to their local communities. On the other hand, they could portray the ICFB as a profit driven organisation, with its roots in commerce, rather than community. After the FBB had formed, however, their positions were somewhat reversed. The VFCs by this stage were now perceived by sections of the press to be less concerned with protecting their communities and more interested in the trappings, rituals and competition of firefighting. The FBB became the ‘enforcer’ of localism by attempting to place spatial limits on volunteer collective activities such as demonstrations and imploring them to protect their communities.

Notwithstanding the demise of the voluntary organisation in urban firefighting in NSW in 1910, Chapters 5 & 6 are indicative of the ongoing centralised / localised control dichotomy that pervaded earlier years. Indeed as discussed above, the unique statewide jurisdictional boundaries of the BFC as a single firefighting entity created additional complexities. The BFC’s potential jurisdiction was an area of close to 800,000 km². Yet the largest single fire authority in the UK (London Fire Brigade) had spatial coverage of less than 1600 km².1041 In 1910, the most northern brigade under the control of the BFC (Murwillumbah) was approximately 1200 km from the most western (Broken Hill) and southern (Balranald) brigades. Sydney, the administrative and operational hub was over 1100 km by rail from its furthest fire station (Broken Hill).1042 Whilst the BFC adopted the disciplined and centralised control model of contemporary English brigades, the very long distances within its

1041 Holmes, An atlas of population and production for New South Wales, Introduction (n.p.); London Fire Brigade website: http://www.london-fire.gov.uk/about_us/who_we_are.asp. US fire departments also typically cover small areas.
network of stations made its effective implementation more difficult. Their span of control was over-extended and the wide-ranging diversity of localities within the BFC’s jurisdiction (from the metropolis of Sydney down to relatively small rural towns very much isolated from the capital such as Bega) made a standardised approach to firefighting organisation all the more problematic. Thus both distance and the heterogeneity of localities covered, made unified control difficult to attain and brought into sharp relief the BFC’s ‘otherness’ from the distant communities they served. For example, in the 1910s the BFC found it difficult to control localist agendas in country brigades such as Bathurst and Maitland – the distance from Sydney, the clash of central versus local control, and the lack of local legitimacy of its appointed full time officers created a localist response and led to considerable local dissent to its authority. In previous research, (Wright (2001) I found similar patterns in the BFC’s attempts to control bushfire brigades in the Blue Mountains in the 1950s.

The agendas of the ICFB, FBB and BFC were generally to maximise their spatial and operational jurisdiction – the establishment and maintenance of unified control was the goal. The gradual ‘taming’ and abolition of independent brigades initially in Sydney, and then across the State, was achieved by legislative reform. The aim of the Fire Brigades Act, 1884 was to centralise control of firefighting operations within Sydney. After considerable resistance, Sydney’s volunteer fire companies eventually conformed to their regulation, prior to their abolition in 1901. Similarly, the 1909 Act extended this process to virtually all urban firefighting brigades across the State, with similar early resistance by local brigades to the standardisation imposed by the Sydney based BFC. The achievement of statewide jurisdiction for the BFC was a double-edged sword for the organisation: on the one hand, it gave it control over all urban areas and significant towns across NSW. The BFC was, without question, the authority in NSW on firefighting. Its permanent men who dominated the higher-level operational structures of the BFC were in control. On the other hand, the Board’s huge potential territory was its downfall. It was considered to be an body firmly rooted in Sydney; its often paramilitary style of operation, its desire for standardisation and the centralisation of senior officers and administration in Sydney (and to a lesser extent, major regional centres) created a dynamic whereby localist agendas could separate the BFC (and permanent men) from the communities that the BFC was required to protect (e.g. Orange).
Whilst the BFC was the only organisation responsible for urban firefighting in the State, during its tenure, the bushfire brigade movement emerged from its early beginnings in Berrigan. Set up primarily for the protection of agricultural lands, bush fire brigades (BFBs) were entrenched within their communities. Indeed the first BFB at Berrigan, was essentially a localist compact, whereby primarily town dwelling brigade members provided surrounding landholders with fire protection, so as to protect their shared economic base.

With the emphasis on civil defence during WWII, the bushfire brigade movement grew rapidly and brigades, particularly on the fringe of urbanised areas, were increasingly involved in protecting the built environment. While the *Fire Brigades Acts* of 1884 and 1909 reduced the scope for independent voluntary action in urban firefighting, legislation in the form of the 1930 and 1949 *Bush Fires Acts*, recreated such opportunities. The first of these Acts gave volunteer bushfire brigades the ability to act outside the structures and more importantly, the authority of the BFC and its paid and quasi-volunteer firefighters. Strongly resisted by the BFC, it created the possibility of conflict and divided control on firegrounds, outside of fire districts, between BFC officers/firemen and bushfire brigade officials and members. It created possible scenarios that would echo firefighting in nineteenth century Sydney: in effect it meant that BFC crews, when attending fires beyond BFC fire districts, which occurred with some frequency, could not control the bushfire volunteers who were also in attendance. The BFC assumed that bushfire brigades would “as a matter of course” subordinate themselves to the BFC’s authorities when they were on the same fireground.

The assumption that all would subordinate themselves to BFC control on the fireground was quickly dispelled with the 1949 *Bush Fires Act*. As described in Chapter 6, the postwar legislation contemplated particular circumstances whereby even the Chief Officer of the BFC could be under the direction of a non-firefighter on the fireground, even with one of the Board’s own fire districts. Thus under prescribed circumstances and subject to Ministerial fiat, control was not merely divided, it was potentially lost.

As Adrian (1982, 1984) notes, the immediate postwar years were problematic for the BFC in terms of providing adequate urban fire protection, particularly in outer
metropolitan areas of Sydney such as Sutherland. Population levels and the built environment had expanded quickly in such areas but the BFC, by this time, was having real problems in meeting demand. Its lack of control over urban development and bushfire legislation were not their only issues: the permanent men, stably subservient under the ICFB and the MFB, became less controllable under the BFC, due largely to their combination in the form of the FBEU. Under BFC control, unionised permanents baulked at their excessive hours and relatively poor conditions. Due to sustained industrial and political agitation, the permanents were successful in reducing their hours from 147 hours per week in 1910 to forty hours by 1955. In particular, their reduction in hours from seventy-eight hours to fifty-six hours per week at the end of WWII necessitated a significant increase in permanent men to staff stations. Consequently, the BFC was squeezed financially and, as highlighted by Adrian, was unable, or unwilling, to fund the required BFC resources in growing outer metropolitan areas of Sydney.

Consequently, by the early 1950s, significant gaps had formed in increasingly urbanised areas. These gaps were generally filled by voluntary effort: namely local BFBs that had been reinvigorated, significantly resourced and professionalised during the war. As Sydney extended its suburban boundaries, the interface between BFC operations and BFB activity increased. The hegemonic position of the BFC had declined. There were now ‘holes’ in both its spatial territory and control regimes, which had been filled by alternative fire service arrangements: communities, assisted by locally entrenched organisations like progress associations and spurred on by localist concerns over fire protection, formed and sustained bushfire brigades, staffed by volunteers and loosely coordinated by local government. In essence, the origins of the modern firefighting organisational system were established in the decade after WWII: a widespread and centralised BFC jurisdiction interspersed with active local bushfire brigades. In the context of an expanding urban/bushland interface and the bush firefighting legislative framework, the BFC’s hegemony was undermined and frontiers of conflict, spatially delimited by fire districts and bush fire districts, were formed.

In the following decades, conflict on the edges of Sydney returned: by 1997, it was described in the *Sunday Telegraph* as “one of the great stories of turf warfare in
Notwithstanding a complex mosaic of formal boundaries between fire districts and bush fire districts and associated Mutual Aid Agreements, NSWFB (ex BFC) permanent and (quasi-volunteer) retained crews competed territorially, once again, with unpaid labour on the urban fireground. Whilst not as intense as nineteenth century Sydney, “[a]ntagonism, physical assault and competition” resulted, at times, where BFC and BFB crews came into close contact at the urban/bushland interface.

Towards the end of the twentieth century, a new centralised alternative fire service to the NSWFB had fully evolved into the Rural Fire Service. Unified control on the fireground was so compromised by the 1990s that it required a Memorandum of Understanding between the NSWFB and the Rural Fire Service, and an Act of Parliament, yet again, to regulate relations between paid and unpaid labour. Under this legislation, the Fire Services Joint Standing Committee was formed to develop “comprehensive, balanced and co-ordinated urban and rural fire services at the interface of fire district boundaries and rural fire district boundaries”, to review fire service jurisdictional boundaries and develop strategies to “minimise duplication and maximise compatibility between the services”. Two fire services, one dominated by unionised professional paid and quasi-volunteer staff and the other, the RFS, staffed largely by non-unionised (unpaid) volunteer labour, competed within Sydney and other urban areas across NSW, replicating the tensions of the nineteenth century. Whilst not a source of great friction, another interesting development was the re-emergence of unpaid volunteers under the auspices of the NSWFB. Community Fire Units (CFUs) are now spread across a significant number of NSWFB fire districts. Staffed by over 7000 CFU volunteers, they provide very localised areas with protection until the arrival of permanent and retained (partially paid ‘volunteer’) crews on scene. Again their genesis is in WWII – they emerged from the remnants of

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1044 NSW Fire Brigade Employees’ Union, ‘Submission to New South Wales State Coroner’; Adrian, Problems of the metropolitan fringe: fire services in Sydney, quote: p.55.
1045 Fire Services Joint Standing Committee Act, (18 of 1998), s.5.
the Hose Box Posts and Bushfire Auxiliary Firemen of the 1940s and 1950s. Today they outnumber permanent and retained firefighters by a factor of two to one.\textsuperscript{1046}

The primary theme that has emerged from this thesis, other than the cyclical nature of fire service provision with respect to the use of volunteers, is the importance of spatial relations and localism in understanding the period in question. As discussed in the literature review, the delimitation and ‘annihilation’ of space are not natural or given boundaries and processes. Firefighting, unlike most urban services, takes place in a time-critical context; a rapid ‘turnout’ to a structural fire with enough firefighters and equipment is essential to its containment, so as to minimise property damage and ensure public safety. As such, effective response requires the readiness of firefighters to respond. As discussed in most chapters, this imperative drove the MFB and BFC to constantly impose its control over firefighters and to install permanents in more urbanised areas. Another means of ensuring effective response to alarms of fire was to reduce travelling times to the fireground. Steam driven and later motorised firefighting appliances gave firefighting authorities the ability to both, cover more territory with any one brigade, and reduce the number of firefighters required on the fireground, when compared to the manual pumpers of the nineteenth century. When combined with the advancements in communications that were occurring at the same time, these technologies allowed for “time-space compression” to enable the further centralisation of BFC management and operations.

Yet, a countervailing spatially rooted dynamic was also at play. Unlike other employers, firefighting authorities were and continue to be “place-bound”\textsuperscript{1047}. That is, the temporal imperatives of firefighting require their ongoing operation in towns and suburbs. Centralisation inevitably is limited by the requirement to have firefighters and resources in distant urban areas and towns to provide fire protection. The remoteness of such brigades and their vital importance to their localities, ensures that both localism and “countrymindedness” come into play in debates about fire service provision. As in the latter half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century,

\textsuperscript{1046} New South Wales Fire Brigades, \textit{Annual Report 2006/07}, p.9.
\textsuperscript{1047} Ellem, ‘Contested communities’, pp.436-437.
once independent local fire brigades are established, their usurping by a remote authority, such as the BFC, is problematic for all parties.

The ‘product market’ for urban firefighting services is spatially defined and should be determined by both the level of both population, and the size and complexity of the built environment. Spatial delimiters, such as fire districts, are important as they demarcate the level of fire service delivered to particular communities and directly influence the type of firefighters delivering such services. The real operational boundaries between the NSWFB and the RFS (i.e. who is in charge on the fireground), are now determined by a process akin to bureaucratic trench warfare. Supervised by the Fire Services Joint Standing Committee, urban areas are argued over, street by street. Within the same process the demarcation between paid and unpaid labour is played out. The boundaries of volunteer work in the industry are now more about ‘space’ than skill.

It is the hope of the author that this thesis goes beyond being a readable academic narrative of the tensions amongst firefighters and their organisations over the course of one century. From my experience, the organisation of contemporary fire services in NSW is quite dysfunctional. Whilst unity of control on the fireground and near eradication of conflict was achieved with the establishment of the BFC, these qualities are diminished by current arrangements. With respect to those involved in firefighting policy, the sooner they look back at the past debates, the sooner they will avoid repeating the excessive competition of the nineteenth century. In doing so, policy makers have to find the right balance between unified control and localist agendas.
Appendices

Appendix 1. Local Government Areas - Fire Brigade Formation and Population Growth between 1861-1954

Appendix 1.1 Sydney and Selected Suburbs

Appendix 1.2 Sydney Hinterlands

Appendix 1.3 Country NSW
APPENDIX 1.1: Local Government Areas - Fire Brigade Formation and Population Growth between 1861-1854
Sydney and Selected Suburbs
Municipality
Brigade
Name
Incorp.
Formed 1861 1871
Alexandria
1868
1882
596 2123
Ashfield
1871
1888
718 1256
Auburn
1892
1908
Balmain
1860
1875 3499 6272
Bankstown
1895
1916
Burwood
1874
1882
584
881
Camperdown
1862
1874
829 1950
Canterbury
1879
1902
319
535
Concord
1883
1901
289
325
Darlington
1864
1887
660 1398
Drummoyne
1890
1892
206
257
Five Dock
1871
1909
350
550
Glebe
1859
1877 3712 5721
Granville
1885
1891
Hunters Hill
1861
1910
816 1425
Hurstville
1887
1897
250
427
Kogarah
1885
1895
330
547
Ku-ring-gai
(S) 1906
1914
Lane Cove
1895
1916
Leichhardt
1871
1887
448
614
Liverpool
1872
1898 1053 1338
Manly
1877
1877
388
611
Marrickville
1861
1886 1370 1464
Newtown
1862
1874 3727 4328
North Sydney
1890
1877 1836 3366
Paddington
1860
1878 2987 4250
Parramatta
1861
1859 5577 6103
Penrith
1871
1905
710
836
Petersham
1871
1881
946 1156
Randwick
1859
1890
810 1789
Redfern
1859
1870 3984 6616
Rockdale [Wst Botany]
1871
1892
520
764
Rookwood/Lidcombe
1891
1892
Ryde
1870
1914 1287 1461
St Peters
1871
1907
509 1242
Strathfield
1885
1906
60
225
Waterloo
1860 < 1884 1222 2988
Waverley
1859 < 1884
891 1377
Willoughby
1865
1900
596
959
Woollahra
1860
1875 2106 4061

1881
3449
4087
15063
2472
3522
1175
1420
2026
666
888
10500
372
2282
670
760
1866
1768
1327
3501
8327
7149
9608
8432
2310
3413
2079
10868
858
247
1673
2272
1150
5762
2365
1411
6168

1891
7505
11697
2026
23475
108
6227
6658
2426
2107
3465
2701
1250
17075
4248
3633
3175
2328
1115
17067
4463
3236
13507
17870
17106
18392
11677
3797
10369
6236
21322
4908
2084
3225
4860
1820
8701
8842
3411
10023

Population
1901 1911 1921
9341 10123
9793
14329 20431 33636
2948
5559 13563
30076 32038 32104
1246
2039 10670
7521
9380 15709
7931
[Syd]
4226 11335 37639
2818
4076 11013
3784
3816
3651
4244
8678 18761
19220 21943 22754
5094
7231 13328
4232
5013
7300
4019
6533 13394
3892
6953 18226
9458 19209
1918
3306
7592
17454 24254 29356
3901
3938
6302
5035 10465 18507
18775 30653 42240
22598 26498 28168
22040 34646 48438
21984 24317 26364
12560 12465 14594
3539
3682
3604
15307 21712 26236
9753 19463 50841
24219 24427 23978
7857 14095 25189
4496
5418 10522
3222
5281 14854
5906
8410 12700
2991
4046
9216
9609 10072 11199
12342 19831 36797
6004 13036 28067
12351 16989 25439

1933
9018
39356
20114
28272
25384
19373
79050
23213
3053
29215
19874
19718
8989
22663
30646
27931
15138
30209
6315
23259
45385
25290
49752
24674
18076
3911
26941
78957
18834
39123
17379
27861
12554
15336
11659
55902
42511
34727

1947
8060
44761
21902
28398
42646
21734
99396
29401
3032
32985
20510
26942
11497
33939
39298
39874
19817
29462
12642
33455
46866
24933
60379
24681
20816
4961
29451
100931
18637
47290
20281
36418
12404
19252
11241
74800
51945
45122

1954
39777
47039
102384
31341
109871
28326
30855
>
>
12571
50336
43618
52615
21806
64919
26610
32473
78261
>
56768
>
76117
7924
>
99080
>
75995
>
54101
>
25829
>
67474
52090
49073

APPENDIX 1.2: Local Government Areas - Fire Brigade Formation and Population Growth between 1861-1954
Sydney Hinterlands
Shire
Name
Baulkham Hills
Blacktown
Hornsby
Sutherland
Holroyd
Fairfield
Warringah

Brigade
Formed 1861 1871
1924
1927
1914
1930

1920

1881

1891

Population
1901 1911
3483
3847
8901
2896
2823

Notes: > indicates that Municipality absorbed by another local government area

1921
5113
7281
15287
7705
9643

1933
8075
13724
22596
13525
16054

1947
10675
20753
31816
29184
33176

1954
15620
36328
43730
65757
40385
49027
60239


## APPENDIX 1.3: Local Government Areas - Fire Brigade Formation and Population Growth between 1861-1954

### Country NSW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality Name</th>
<th>Incorp.</th>
<th>Brigade Formed</th>
<th>1861</th>
<th>1871</th>
<th>1881</th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>Population</th>
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<td>1863</td>
<td>1587</td>
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<td>1887</td>
<td>910</td>
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<td>1880</td>
<td>4042</td>
<td>5030</td>
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<td>625</td>
<td>872</td>
<td>1634</td>
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<td>1998</td>
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<td>397</td>
<td>1378</td>
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<td>2609</td>
<td>1593</td>
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<td>&lt;1891</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>1882</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>938</td>
<td>592</td>
<td>688</td>
<td>2381</td>
<td>2152</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1880</td>
<td>&lt;1910</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>718</td>
<td>1486</td>
<td>1926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1884</td>
<td>&lt;1910</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1859</td>
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<td>3371</td>
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<td>244</td>
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<td>193</td>
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<td>1875</td>
<td>1657</td>
<td>1575</td>
<td>1832</td>
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<td>1145</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gulgong</td>
<td>1876</td>
<td>1875</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3228</td>
<td>1642</td>
<td>1283</td>
<td>1579</td>
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<td>&lt;1889</td>
<td>172</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>716</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>1871</td>
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<td>1804</td>
<td>1770</td>
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</table>

Notes: > indicates that Municipality absorbed by another local government area
Appendix 2. Population and Dwellings - Sydney & Rest of NSW - 1861-1954

Appendix 2.1 Population Change - Sydney & Rest of NSW - 1861-1954

Appendix 2.2 Occupied Dwellings - Sydney & Rest of NSW - 1861-1954
**APPENDIX 2.1: Population Change - Sydney & Rest of NSW - 1861-1954**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>City of Sydney</th>
<th>Rest of Sydney</th>
<th>Total Sydney</th>
<th>Rest of State</th>
<th>City of Sydney</th>
<th>Rest of Sydney</th>
<th>Total Sydney</th>
<th>Rest of State</th>
<th>Percentage of State Total</th>
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<td>1861</td>
<td>350,860</td>
<td>56,840</td>
<td>38,949</td>
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<td>11%</td>
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<td>73%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>502,998</td>
<td>74,566</td>
<td>63,020</td>
<td>137,586</td>
<td>365,412</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>73%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>749,825</td>
<td>100,152</td>
<td>124,787</td>
<td>224,939</td>
<td>524,886</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<td>70%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>1,127,137</td>
<td>107,652</td>
<td>275,681</td>
<td>383,333</td>
<td>743,804</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>66%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>1,355,355</td>
<td>112,137</td>
<td>369,693</td>
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<td>873,525</td>
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<td>27%</td>
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<td>64%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>1,646,734</td>
<td>112,921</td>
<td>516,582</td>
<td>629,503</td>
<td>1,017,231</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>31%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>2,100,371</td>
<td>104,153</td>
<td>794,079</td>
<td>899,059</td>
<td>1,201,312</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>57%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>2,600,847</td>
<td>88,308</td>
<td>1,146,959</td>
<td>1,235,267</td>
<td>1,365,580</td>
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<td>44%</td>
<td>47%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>2,984,838</td>
<td>95,925</td>
<td>1,388,079</td>
<td>1,484,004</td>
<td>1,500,834</td>
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<td>47%</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>3,423,529</td>
<td>193,103</td>
<td>1,670,058</td>
<td>1,863,161</td>
<td>1,560,368</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>54%</td>
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**APPENDIX 2.2: Occupied Dwellings - Sydney & Rest of NSW - 1851-1954**

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<th>Year</th>
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<th>Rest of Sydney</th>
<th>Total Sydney</th>
<th>Rest of State</th>
<th>City of Sydney</th>
<th>Rest of Sydney</th>
<th>Total Sydney</th>
<th>Rest of State</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
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<td>1851</td>
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<td>19,891</td>
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<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>64,370</td>
<td>17,291</td>
<td>47,079</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>73%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>93,690</td>
<td>38,636</td>
<td>55,054</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>73%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>135,326</td>
<td>38,636</td>
<td>96,690</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>71%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>216,202</td>
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<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>252,502</td>
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<td>177,639</td>
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<td>37%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1911</td>
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<td>39%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1921</td>
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<tr>
<td>1933</td>
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<tr>
<td>1947</td>
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<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>912,906</td>
<td>464,245</td>
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<td>51%</td>
<td>57%</td>
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Appendix 3.1  City of Sydney

Appendix 3.2  Suburban Sydney

Appendix 3.3  Country Station Formation and Staffing
### APPENDIX 3.1: Volunteer Fire Companies Staffing - City of Sydney - upto 1901

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteer Fire Company</th>
<th>Formed</th>
<th>Status 1884</th>
<th>1884</th>
<th>1885</th>
<th>1886</th>
<th>1887</th>
<th>1888</th>
<th>1889</th>
<th>1890</th>
<th>1891</th>
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<th>1894</th>
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<th>1896</th>
<th>1897</th>
<th>1898</th>
<th>1899</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1901</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
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<td>Gov’t Printing Office</td>
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<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** Where staffing data not available - U = subsidised; S = subsidised; * = in existence
## APPENDIX 3.2: Volunteer Fire Companies Staffing - Suburban Sydney - upto 1901

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteer Fire Company</th>
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<th>Status 1884</th>
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Notes: Where staffing data not available - M = municipal control; * = in existence
Appendix 4. BFC Brigade Status and Staffing Levels - 1910-1955

Appendix 4.1 Sydney Fire District

Appendix 4.2 Other Fire Districts
## APPENDIX 4.1: BFC Brigade Status and Staffing Levels: Sydney 1910-1955

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**Legend:**
- **Permanent:** Permanent members.
- **Volunteer:** Volunteer members.
### APPENDIX 4.1: BFC Brigade Status and Staffing Levels: Sydney 1910-1955

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| Total men:   | 214          | 234             | 317           | 168           | 368           | 252           | 611          | 248           | 1065          | 267          |

| Permanent Stations: | 22            | 21             | 33             | 42             | 36             | 16             | 16           | 16            | 16            |
| Volunteer Stations: | 25            | 27             | 40             | 34             | 14             | 10             | 10           | 10            | 10            |

| Total Stations: | 50            | 59             | 73             | 76             | 52             | 52             | 52           | 52            | 52            |

Note: In Station column Red indicates outside of SFD until after 1955; Grey shows stations that were closed in 1945.
### Appendix 4.2: BFC Brigade Status and Staffing Levels: Other Fire Districts - 1910-1955

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| Total Men:       | 51           | 913        | 964      | 56    | 1047          | 1103      | 67   | 1390 | 1457          | 115       | 2053       | 2169   |
| Total Stations:  | 99           | 107        | 122      | 117   | 135          | 148       | 161 |      |               |           |            |        |
Appendices - Sources

Appendix 1.1

Appendix 1.2

Appendix 1.3

Appendix 2.1

Appendix 2.2

Appendices 3.1 & 3.2

Appendix 3.3

Appendices 4.1 & 4.2
Various BFC Annual Reports 1910-1955.
Bibliography (and Bibliographic Notes)

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*NBAC: New South Wales Fire Brigade Employes Union (FBEU), T22/7 A.53*

*NBAC: New South Wales Fire Brigade Employes Union (FBEU), Z332, Box 68.*

City of Sydney Archives

*City of Sydney Archives CRS 21/1 p.576 (Report No.81 p.3).*

Marrickville Council Archives


Fire Brigades Board (Sydney) - Annual Reports

Referred to throughout this work as *AR*.


Note: in earlier years the Metropolitan Fire Brigades Board is shown as the organisation issuing the report.

Personal collection (also available in Parliamentary Papers).

BFC Annual Reports (BFCAR)

Referred to throughout this work as *BFCAR*.


Personal collection (also available in Parliamentary Papers).
Country fire board Annual Reports (1884-1909)

Annual Reports (various years) for the Fire Brigades Boards in the following towns were consulted:

- Armidale
- Deniliquin
- Forbes
- Glen Innes
- Goulburn
- Forbes
- Moss Vale
- Tamworth
- Goulburn
- Wagga Wagga
- Grafton
- Wollongong

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Board of Fire Commissioners of NSW – Board Minutes

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SRNSW: Board of Fire Commissioners; CGS 473, Board minute books, 18 Feb 1910-19/12/1955 [3/13010, 6/13086-241]

For the purposes of brevity, the full listing of minutes consulted has not been provided. There are in excess of 150 volumes of minutes between 1910 and 1955. A full shelf listing, indicating the date range, page number range and shelf location for each minute book is available at the State Records reading rooms located at The Rocks and Kingswood.

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Unless a newspaper reference has a page number associated with it, the source of the reference can generally be found in the Newspaper cutting books of both the Fire Brigades Board and the Board of Fire Commissioners, held at State Records, Kingswood.

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- 16 Dec 1862-31 Mar 1871 (Kingswood 14/1743.1)
- 19 Jun 1871-4 Dec 1879 (Kingswood 11/16227)
- 23 Aug 1880-7 Nov 1882 (Kingswood 3/12945)
- 7 Nov 1882-3 Mar 1888 (Kingswood 7/15759)
- 13 Feb 1888-18 May 1895 (Kingswood 3/12656)
31 May 1895-3 Aug 1901  (Kingswood 7/15760)
12 Jul 1907-29 Jan 1905  (Kingswood 7/15761)
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Sydney Morning Herald
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Shire and Municipal Record
The Fireman (FBEU)
Agricultural Gazette of NSW
New South Wales Government Gazette
New South Wales Industrial Gazette
New South Wales Parliamentary Debates
Arbitration Reports (NSW)
New South Wales Reports
Legislation (NSW)

Bush Fires Act, 1930

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Careless Use of Fires Act, 1886

Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998

Fire Brigades Act, 1884

Fire Brigades Act, 1909

Fire Brigades Amendment Act, 1927

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