



# **GERALDTON VF&RS BRIGADE**

## **Bren Prunster Memorial Running Track**

**Pass Street**

**Geraldton**

The Geraldton Volunteer Fire & Rescue Service Brigade is a non profit organisation that provides an important community service to the people of Geraldton, under the umbrella of the Department of Fire & Emergency Services of Western Australia, a body charged with the responsibility of responding to emergencies both on land and at sea throughout the state. DFES emergencies range from cyclones, maritime rescues, land searches, road rescue to fires, both bush and urban. The VF&RS Brigade is only one part of the overall organisation. As such it operates on a budget that has to cover equipment, maintenance, PPE and administration costs. It is necessary for the Brigade to conduct fund raising in the community if a situation arises where DFES cannot assist or our existing funding will not cover it. The running track is one such feature where DFES funding does not apply or is severely limited. However it is an important part in the training of fire fighters.

The current running track is located at the north end of Pass Street on the eastern side just before the Pass Street Eighth Street roundabout. It is situated between the Skate Board facility and the Swimming Pool, adjacent to Theatre 8, The Italian Club, Badminton Club, Netball Association and Little Athletics. The oval of Little Athletics is used for marching practice by the Geraldton Volunteer Fire & Rescue Brigade.

The running track is in need of urgent repairs. It is 180 metres long running into the fencing around the Netball courts at one end. Vandalism has taken some toll with fittings and buildings. The surface of the track itself is in reasonable condition with remarking of lines requiring repainting. The pump shed/storage shed is built in brick with an iron roof. Attempts have been made to illegally gain entry by undesirables, luckily to no avail. Locks have been super glued up in the past when access has been successfully denied.

The hydrant plugs in the track are in urgent need of refurbishment by way of replacing the water supply under the track. The pipe work is located 600mm below the surface. It is brittle and in fact has burst in one area. This has made use of the plugs limited, nearly inoperable, hindering proper and meaningful practice.

It is envisaged that the replacement of the equipment be in sections for easy installation and if required, replacement at a future date. All existing risers, ball valve housings, hydrant clutch fittings and the wind down mains valve in the line need to be thoroughly inspected for replacement or refurbishment.

A new above ground reservoir should also be considered. At present there is an overhead steel tank, showing signs of rust and old age. The overhead stand is also in a state of disrepair due to rust. It has been suggested that an approach to the City of Geraldton Greenough be made for one of the surplus concrete water tanks at the Airport. It is also believed that there are surplus concrete water tanks at the hamlet of Greenough. There is sufficient room adjacent to the pump house for an above ground tank to be installed.

The above sounds like a death sentence to the Running Track, however nothing could be further from the truth. With an organised effort and teamwork the Running Track can be successfully restored to near its past glory. If one knows who to ask for assistance it is surprising what information and help comes to the fore, especially if the help is for a good cause.

Also to be considered in the refurbishment of the track is the installation of collection tanks at the end of the track to collect water used in the training sessions. It would also assist in the run of rain water as the track serves as a "sealed catchment". This water could be recycled onto grounds that surround the track.

The trees on the northern side of the track provide a much sought after shade in the heat of summer. Sweeping of the track to remove leaves and twigs from overhead branches is regularly required.

### **Considerations:**

Use of facility

Future outlook

Community benefit

Scope of problems

Remedial action

Finance

In kind contribution

Grants

Donations

Corporate support

Time frame

### **Use of facility:**

The current facility has been and is still used for training by the Geraldton Volunteer Fire & Rescue Service Brigade. The members who regularly use it belong to the competition running team. This team varies from 5 to 10 or more persons, depending on the strength and interest of the Brigade. It provides off street training with water in a controlled situation. The training engenders team work, team spirit and the honing of fire fighting skills. Most competitive events revolve around call out procedures with each member of the team having a particular task to fulfil as would be the case in a real life call out. The facility is also used for inter Brigade competition where there can be as many as 10 Brigades in attendance.

At present the land is leased to the Geraldton Volunteer Fire & Rescue Service Brigade on a month by month basis from the City of Greater Geraldton. It is believed that the Council would like to see the facility moved elsewhere to enable the land to be used as a parking area for the Aquarena. The current running track has been in existence since the Brigade lost its original track, where the QEII Centre now stands. That track came into existence in the early 1900s'. The brigade itself was first formed in 1889 and is the oldest registered Volunteer Brigade in the state. It was first registered in 1902 and proudly wears the Brigade number **1**. The track was moved to Pass Street when the area was considered to be out of the way and of little value. The swimming pool was built facing Pass Street at a later date. The swimming pool was later expanded to its current size, cutting into the area that had been allocated to the Brigade, as a fait accompli.

### **Future Outlook:**

To move the track from its current location has been mentioned by Council previously with some suggested locations being unreasonable. A suitable location would need to have one side 250 metres in length and at least 50 metres wide, a total area of approximately 2 hectare. The normal length of a running track for safe operation is 200 metres. The area needs to be relatively flat land. The cost of a new track from scratch will be in the vicinity of \$450,000.00. This does not necessarily include the land cost.

We have recreated a Junior Fire Brigade, which will educate young children in the age range of 11 to 16 years in aspects of fire and fire suppression. Research shows there is a catchment group in excess of 5000 children in the age group. Part of the operations with the junior personnel involves hose work and water. With the track in

its present state we would not be able to safely undertake this important part of their training in handling hoses and the application of water.

### **Community Benefit:**

The community benefits from a running track as it provides a training facility for the Volunteer Fire Brigade, the training translating into the ability to arrive at a fire ground and confidently go about the task of extinguishing a fire. The Brigade learns the skills in shipping a standpipe into a hydrant plug efficiently, with a minimum of time lost in accessing water. Members of the fire crew (team) learn how to run out hose and connect it to the standpipe, connect a branch (nozzle) and direct the water onto the fire base. This is done as quickly as possible with the minimum of error.

This all could be done from a fire hydrant in the street, however this would require the carriageway being blocked to vehicular traffic as the exercise was conducted, causing some angst to persons wishing to traverse the carriageway. By conducting these drills at the track there is no disruption to traffic, no damage to fire equipment and the opportunity to conduct a drill with safety. There is a need to conduct stipulated drills in streets/roads within the community from time to time. These are usually conducted under the watchful eye of the District Officer from DFES.

Importantly it is a visual display of the tax payer dollar being used. Remember that the Volunteer Fire & Rescue Service Brigade carries no labour costs. These tasks are carried out in the members own time. The tax payer dollar is only used for the actual fire equipment on the appliance, PPE and public liability insurance.

Any equipment used by the Brigade's competition running team is the teams/Brigades responsibility. DFES does not supply any equipment that is normally used. All fittings, hoses, standpipes and the running cart has to be purchased by the Brigade. Maintenance of the running track also is the responsibility of the Brigade.

Also as mentioned previously, the creation of the Junior Brigade is considered a community benefit as it caters for the youth of the town and a possible source of fire fighters in the future. Another aspect is that some parents of the children who join the Junior Brigade may move to become involved in the Senior Brigade as a Volunteer Fire Fighter, making it a family involvement in community service.

### **Scope of problems:**

The problems at the current running track are many, but not insurmountable. The problems result from ongoing lack of maintenance and by the track not being regularly used in the past decade. Some problems will be an easy fix, others will

require a more considered approach to remedy, especially where safety is concerned. The problems simply could be defined as:-

1. Water supply to track
2. Track hydrant plugs
3. Water supply under track
4. Overhead lighting
5. Pump/Equipment shed maintenance
6. Timing system fittings

The water supply to the track is by way of a 32nb water pipe (underneath the northern extension of the Aquarena) to an overhead steel tank of approximately 8,000 litre capacity. Water is controlled by a ball float in the top of the tank. From the tank the water transfers through a 150 ID pipe to a control valve then onto the pump driven by a 3 phase 3HP motor. The pump must be capable of supplying a flow of water through the 60mm, 31 metre long hose in 4 seconds. After the pump it travels through a 150 ID pipe to a screw down valve which is fully wound open when in use. From this valve the same line travels under the track to return to the surface to an air pressure compensator vessel at the other side of the track. Underground the pipe has 4 off take points to surface hydrant plugs. This infrastructure is showing signs of heavy rust. At one point between hydrant plugs 3 and 4 the pipe underground has developed a major leak. This leak is pushing sand up through the crack where the concrete and bitumen surfaces meet, to such an extent that within 30 seconds plugs 3 and 4 are filled up with sand. At present water is sourced from the pipe supplying water to the overhead tank (which has been disconnected) and by means of a 30 metre line of hose to one of the hydrant plugs.

Vandals have set to work on some of the facilities outside the shed with the destruction of the outside power outlets, smashing electrical conduit exposing the cables of both the power and the timing equipment. The timber decking on the outside area of the shed has been smashed and ripped off by vandals. The area is hidden by the swimming pool building and subsequently is out of view from security unless they enter the car parks of the premises adjacent that front Eighth Street. On several occasions these undesirables have been found hiding behind the shed waiting for an opportunity to present itself, or engaged in activities such a drug taking. On several occasions needles have been found discarded in the area.



## **Remedial Action:**

Water Supply. The suggested solution to the deteriorating tank and stand is to remove it and replace it with at least one 27,000 litre concrete tank. There is sufficient area for such a tank to be installed. Several surplus to requirements tanks have been identified in the local area. If the tanks are structurally sound it may be an economic way of replacement. Cost of transport will be a major factor whichever way we move in replacing the existing tank.

Hydrant Plugs. The whole line under the track will need to be dug up to remedy the problem. Replacement by means of steel or poly pipe is the moot point. Poly pipe can be obtained in high pressure construction and could be easier to handle. Cost will determine which way to go. It is also suggested that the excavation for the pipe be lined in concrete, the pipe work laid and a mesh screen be placed over the top for easy access for maintenance. This in itself poses problems of vandalism, rubbish collecting in pit and drainage of water that would also collect. It should still be considered an option, if acceptable by our governing body, the Volunteer Association.

Shed. The shed itself is of brick construction with the western end having an opening door the full width of the wall. Access to the shed is through a personnel door in the wall facing the running track. The roof is clad in Trimdeck sheeting. Three phase power is supplied to the shed underground. The building needs an internal and external make over. The internal needs proper shelving to store hoses and fittings and ancillary equipment for both seniors and juniors. Externally the front of the shed needs to have a new roof on it. It needs any split timber in the frame to be replaced.

Overhead lighting. There is a need for overhead lighting. At present temporary flood lights are used to illuminate the track for night practice, presenting a possible danger from power cables on the ground getting wet from an accidental spray of water. Unfortunately this lighting is limited in area lit up due to lack of height. It has been suggested that we attempt to gain 3 - 5 street light structures and erect them as permanent lighting.

Timing system. There is quite a lot of timing equipment in the shed. However vandals have damaged some of the outside fittings. A complete makeover of the timing equipment outdoors needs to be carried out, with a decision to make installation each time temporary or, except for the discs, a permanent fixture. This is not a priority at this time, but should be considered in the long term.

## **Finance:**

The cost of a total make over will be significant. The cost of some items will have to be met out of funds or conduct a fund raiser for that specific purpose. An estimated break down of costing is:-

Water supply

Tank - concrete	\$	4,500.00	
Fittings	\$	2,000.00	
Pipe work - Steel	\$	3,800.00	
Poly	\$	3,600.00	
Labour	\$	2,000.00	
Fittings – refurb.	\$	2,500.00	
Concrete	\$	2,000.00	
Steel work	\$	2,000.00	
Excavation	\$	1,000.00	\$ 23,400.00

Lighting

Light poles	\$	4,000.00	
Lights	\$	1,600.00	
Electrical	\$	4,500.00	\$ 10,500.00

Shed

Timber	\$	1,000.00	
Shelving	\$	500.00	
Roofing	\$	2,000.00	\$ 3,500.00

Timing

Poles	\$	4,000.00	
Wiring	\$	2,500.00	

Recycling Water

Tanks x 2	\$	950.00	
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## **Donations:**

This is an unknown factor. How do we attract donations from business and others? The direct approach in person is often the best way to go. An up-front honest approach lets the person you are speaking to know from the start where they stand in the conversation. The person making the approach needs to understand the size of the donation being sought, what it is for and what grounds are there for the person or company to contribute. The person also needs to know any shortcomings in the proposed use of any donation and be prepared to expand on the benefits that the donor can gain. In any business environment there is a limited amount of finance to go around. Some businesses are generous to a fault. Others struggle to make ends meet and are therefore unable to assist, even though they may consider the recipient of the donation a good cause. They may offer a donation in kind, such donations are not to be rejected. One can only ask that a business or individual consider a request for a donation based on the information supplied as to how much is being sought and what it is to be used for. The end decision rests with that business or individual as to what they can afford if they wish to donate.

## **Corporate Support:**

An approach should be made to large corporate bodies in the local environment for assistance. With development of a significant scale being programmed for the region this area is one to follow up. Most corporate sponsors require that we advertise the fact that they are sponsors. This sponsorship can be way of signage, Corporate logo on running gear, mention of the sponsorship in all advertising and on our correspondence. A number of corporate bodies are in the area and should be approached, some that come to mind being:-

Oakagee Port & Rail

Patience Transport

Bunnings

Coles

Woolworths

Vehicle franchise groups

A marketing strategy would need to be developed before making an approach for sponsorship. The same grounds as seeking donations would apply.

**Time Frame:**

It is impossible to put a time frame for completion of the work. The work will have to be carried out in segments with a time frame for each segment. The urgency or simplicity of the segment will determine how much time is needed. Any time frame needs to be realistic.

It is suggested that the water supply under the track be the priority task. We cannot use the track properly until the pipe is repaired or replaced. The suggested priority listing is as follows;

Repairs to water supply under the track

New tank for the water supply

Shed refurbishment

Lighting

Timing gear

Funding will determine what is done after the water situation is resolved.

**Summary:**

As can be seen there is a lot of work ahead to bring the track up to a competition standard. At present we will be getting a new fire station built in Webberton Road. It is included in the 2012/13 budget and should be finished ready for use by the end of 2014. We will still need to maintain and use the current running track for years to come, City of Greater Geraldton permitting. The ideal situation would to have a new running track built alongside the Volunteer Fire Brigade station, however the location of the new station prevents this. The feasibility of a new track elsewhere should not be discounted, and a keen eye be kept for a suitable location and a regular upgrade of costing for such a venture.

In kind contribution has the ability to cut the overall costing significantly. As such our ability to gain any available grant could be greatly enhanced.

One of the major factors behind the scenes hindering the proposed improvements and repairs to the track is the present uncertainty of tenure. A month by month lease does nothing to instil confidence in operating at the track and seriously inhibits support from outside contributors.

Efforts have been taken within the Brigade to reach the status of full membership of 40, with prospective members waiting in the wings. There is room for further

improvement at the moment, current membership at 35 members, with the remaining positions being filled by continuing recruitment. Having a full brigade also can assist in going about raising funds for improvements and ongoing maintenance at the running track.

At present the surface of the running track is still in a satisfactory condition. If the track is not used this surface will deteriorate to such an extent that it will have to be resurfaced. An estimate of resealing 860 square metres of track is approximately \$56,000.00. A full track resurface would cost in vicinity of \$200,000.00.

### **Conclusion:**

The above appears to be a paper on doom and gloom. However nothing could be further from the truth. The Geraldton Volunteer Fire & Rescue Service Brigade is rebuilding under a new administration, intent on removing the torpor that pervaded over the past 5 years. We undertook a major recruiting drive to increase our numbers to enable the Brigade to carry out its core function, that is providing assistance to the Career station in protection of life, property and putting out fires in our local community. While we are a support brigade we still have to be able to carry out the same duties as a career fire fighter in case that we have to respond as the primary brigade. Training is conducted on a weekly basis and a running track provides off street facilities to hone our skills on basic fire fighting.

We acknowledge that times are changing everywhere and that we need to adapt and take advantage, where possible, of such changes. However in fire fighting the major changes are in equipment provided. The skills still remain the same and it is these skills which need to be maintained otherwise we become complacent and lax in how we carry out our duties.

The need of a running track to maintain these skills is a significant part of this training. The competition that takes place each year between Brigades is an opportunity to put these learned skills out in the public eye. A chance for the ratepayer to see where some of their Emergency Services Levy goes, and the knowledge that it is being used to provide adequate protection to themselves, their property and the general community. Some of these demonstrations utilise the old fashioned (original) fire carts, with hoses wound on. However the principles that apply with these old appliances are still used on current fire appliances.

As can be deduced, the Geraldton Volunteer Fire & Rescue Service Brigade, need to have a running/training track that is both operational and functional. We would prefer to stay where the current training track is in Pass Street, however we will seriously consider moving to an acceptable location if that is to be the end result. Any move from the current location will have to be financed by the Council as the Brigade, while having some funds put aside for the training track, is not in a position

of funding a new track. As has been explained elsewhere we are not recognised as a sporting group by some bodies. We are a non profit group who have to raise our own funds by whatever means we can. With Racing Gaming and Liquor we have to expend any monies raised through raffles in the same financial year in which the funds are raised. This seriously inhibits the accumulation of funds for a major project that we wish to undertake. At the same time we cannot afford a large impost of outlay for the use of facilities provided.

The fact that we provide a crucial service to the community should be seriously considered by Council in their deliberations. One never knows when one may urgently need our services.