

Fire Protection Accreditation Scheme—the road ahead

Accreditation classes and categories, business recognition information, training and important terminology for FPAS were outlined in *Fire Australia* Autumn 2013. This final article lays out the steps ahead.

By Joseph Keller,
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On 1 July 2013, Fire Protection Association Australia (FPA Australia) began accepting applications into its landmark voluntary Fire Protection Accreditation Scheme (FPAS).

Almost two years in development, FPAS now provides formal, nationally harmonised recognition of the skills and competencies of appropriately trained technicians who inspect and test fire protection systems and equipment and the businesses that support them. More accreditation types beyond 'Inspect & Test' will come onstream from 2014.

In Voluntary National Accreditation Part 1 (*Fire Australia Spring 2012*, p. 14), we addressed the foundations and goals of the scheme, while Part 2 (*Fire Australia Autumn 2013*, p. 14) outlined significant detail about the scheme's structure and requirements. This final instalment, Part 3, considers the achievements of the scheme so far, highlights some of the work being undertaken at FPA Australia in support of FPAS and looks to the future of the scheme.

Recent scheme milestones

Since applications opened in July, FPA Australia has been overwhelmed by the response from the fire protection community. Many technicians were particularly keen to gain accreditation, as these individuals had undertaken significant training but had very few opportunities to have their skills recognised—until now.

One of those individuals was Mr Andrew Hobson of Fire Rating Solutions in Melbourne—the first technician in Australia to submit an application for individual Qualified Accreditation.

In August, Mr Hobson was presented with his official accreditation card and pack by FPA Australia CEO Scott Williams at the Association's National Office in Melbourne.

Mr Hobson said he expected his accreditation to benefit both his employer and his clients.

"It's great for me that there is now a simple way for clients and other industry professionals to recognise the training I've undertaken and the skills I have," he said.

"FPAS clearly highlights properly trained people doing fire protection work, helping clients make an informed choice."

Mr Williams said Andrew should be very proud of his achievement. "On behalf of the whole Association I sincerely congratulate Andrew on his commitment to the scheme and to his own continuing professional development," Mr Williams said.

"Andrew is thoroughly deserving of both his Qualified Accreditation status and also the title of first FPAS accredited technician in the country.

"His leadership sets a great example for other technicians to follow and I thank Andrew for his strong support of the scheme."

Mr Hobson's application was the first of hundreds of individual submissions that have now been received. Based on the level of interest so far, FPA Australia expects to have 1,000 technicians accredited across the country within the first year of the scheme's operation.

The first business to apply for recognised status was Chubb Fire & Security Pty Ltd (Chubb). As part of its application, Chubb has committed to ensuring its technicians are accredited nationwide by the end of the 2013.

As an industry leader, Chubb's commitment to the scheme sends a strong message to other fire protection businesses on the importance of voluntary professional recognition. You can read more about the Chubb-FPAS partnership on page 16 of this issue.

As well as Chubb, many other business recognition applications have been received. Based on current application levels, the Association expects to have 100 businesses recognised within the first year of the scheme.

Committed to professionalism—investing in FPAS

The implementation of FPAS represents a significant milestone for the fire protection industry in Australia.

As previously discussed, until now there has been a very limited framework to validate the competency of individuals working on lifesaving fire protection systems and equipment across the country, posing a significant risk to community safety.

The Board of Directors of FPA Australia understands this, and views FPAS as vital for the future of the Australian fire protection industry. As such, the Board has allocated significant investment, both financially and through existing Association resources, to ensure the success of FPAS.

This investment includes the creation of a dedicated department within the Association's National Office, called 'Accreditation & Licensing', which is now handling all FPAS-related activity. New staff members have been hired specifically to work in this area.

Additionally, substantial funding has been allocated to upgrade existing information technology and database management systems in order to professionally manage and administer the scheme.

This work will allow integrated billing and renewal tracking of all members with Business Recognition and their accredited fire protection technicians, as well as all individual fire protection technicians accredited under FPAS.

Recognised businesses will be listed on FPA Australia's website and promoted over non-recognised businesses. In addition, all individuals with FPAS accreditation will be listed on the website for consumers and industry stakeholders to easily validate an individual's accreditation status.

Significant communications, marketing and promotional activity, including media releases and advertising in many industry publications, is already increasing awareness of FPAS among fire protection industry stakeholders and the public.

These marketing materials encourage all users who require inspection and testing of fire protection measures to ensure they only engage FPAS-accredited technicians wherever possible.

All of the important work outlined above is being directly funded by fees associated with FPAS applications. The Association is reinvesting all funds generated by the scheme back into supporting it, ensuring FPAS is backed up by robust systems and infrastructure.

Thanks to this hard work and investment in support of the scheme, it is expected that, with time, FPAS will become as widely recognised as any successful accreditation or licensing scheme in the Australian building and construction sector today.

Looking ahead—the future of FPAS

Because FPAS encourages customers to only use trained, competent technicians in maintaining essential fire protection systems and equipment in Australia, it has received strong support from government and industry.

To date, FPA Australia has conducted valuable discussions with representatives from each state and territory government, and many related industry bodies.

As a result of these discussions, FPA Australia has already received positive indications from some state and territory regulators that they intend to support FPAS through future regulatory inclusion. This may lead to the mandatory adoption of FPAS for technicians in some jurisdictions.

Until then, Mr Williams said the message for end users of fire protection products and services was clear.

“Be sure to only choose an FPAS Recognised Business employing properly accredited technicians wherever possible,” he said.

“If an FPAS Recognised Business or Accredited Technician is not yet available in your local area, make sure the business you select is, at a minimum, an FPA Australia Code-of-Practice compliant member company.”

Thanks to the strength and rigour of FPAS, customers can now confidently select individuals who are properly trained, skilled and competent over those who are not.

Ensuring that only these competent technicians are engaged to maintain essential fire protection systems and equipment in Australia will go a long way to professionalising the industry as it matures further and will guarantee the highest possible standards of fire safety for the community, now and into the future. ■

More information about the Fire Protection Accreditation Scheme (FPAS), including application forms and fact sheets, can be found at www.fpa.com.au/fpas.



Scott Williams, FPA Australia CEO (L) and Andrew Hobson, the first technician in Australia to submit an application for individual Qualified Accreditation.



- CHUBB—leading the industry as the first company to take up FPAS Recognised Business status
- ALL of Chubb’s technicians to be FPAS accredited by the end of 2013
- 1,000 technicians expected to be FPAS-accredited within the first 12 months
- 100 businesses expected to achieve FPAS Recognised Business status within the first 12 months
- ALL FUNDS derived from application fees are reinvested into the scheme
- STRONG SUPPORT from government regulators and industry bodies around Australia, including indications of future regulatory adoption



Chubb and FPAS—a partnership in professionalism

Chubb is the first company to receive business recognition under FPAS, demonstrating Chubb's commitment to the scheme.

By Joseph Keller,
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Chubb Fire & Security Pty Ltd (Chubb) has committed to the new Fire Protection Accreditation Scheme (FPAS).

The company, which is a Corporate Platinum member of FPA Australia, has achieved business recognition under the scheme, and has committed to transitioning its many technicians to accredited status by the end of 2013.

As of October 2013, Chubb had already submitted applications for a significant percentage of its technicians, with the rest to follow.

Scott Williams, CEO of FPA Australia, said the announcement from Chubb represented a significant vote of confidence in the scheme and its goal of setting minimum competency benchmarks in the industry.

“By committing to FPAS, Chubb has signalled it is an industry leader that is dedicated to ensuring the professionalism and ongoing education of its workforce,” he said.

“I want to formally acknowledge Chubb for the strong leadership it is demonstrating by supporting the scheme in such a wholehearted way.

“In doing so, Chubb has created a competitive advantage for the business, has set the best possible example to the industry, and most importantly, is helping to deliver better fire safety outcomes for the community.”

Dave Marven, Managing Director of Chubb, said the commitment to FPAS was consistent with Chubb's values of responsibility, employee development and customer care.

“FPAS helps to further set us apart as leaders in the industry while ensuring the highest professional standards of technicians within our business,” Mr Marven said.

“While this is a voluntary accreditation scheme, Chubb supports raising standards in the fire

protection industry in servicing essential fire life safety equipment. We are very proud to provide leadership in the industry and to provide industry recognised and certified training to our technicians.

“We also anticipate that large customers, particularly within the government sector, will want to see their fire service providers and technicians accredited under the scheme.

“This is already being shown by early feedback, which is indicating that large customers are very encouraged that Chubb is an early adopter of FPAS.

“Based on this feedback, Chubb expects that large customers will soon begin to include FPAS accreditation as a requirement in their tender requests, and we see this as a positive step for industry professionalism and community safety.

“As an organisation we are very proud to be the first large fire protection company to announce its commitment to the scheme and the first company overall to apply for business recognition status under the scheme,” Mr Marven said.

As part of the commitment by Chubb to FPAS, FPA Australia recently undertook a professional photo shoot at Chubb's training facility in Dingley, Melbourne, featuring some of the company's newly accredited technicians.

Many of these images are included in this issue of *Fire Australia* and will also be featured in upcoming FPAS promotional and marketing materials.

The Association would like to thank each of the Chubb technicians—Mr Stuart Logan, Mr Michael Strachan, Mr Adam Flannagan and Mr Michael Anderson—for volunteering their time in support of FPAS. FPA Australia also congratulates these technicians on successfully achieving FPAS-accredited status.

Mr Williams said every Chubb employee should be proud of the company's commitment to professionalism.

“In taking this step, Chubb has indicated to staff and customers that it is at the forefront of driving positive change, both for the fire protection industry in Australia and for the safety of our community,” Mr Williams said.

“On behalf of the Association I sincerely thank and congratulate Chubb for their strong leadership.” ■

(Left–right) Mr Michael Strachan, Mr Michael Anderson, Mr Adam Flannagan and Mr Stuart Logan are among the first Chubb technicians in Australia to achieve FPAS accreditation.

