

T-Model Ford bounces back to life

The gleaming red, newly restored T Model Ford firefighting appliance now resident at FESA's Education and Heritage Centre in Perth has quite a history.

Centre Manager Su Ferreira said the Western Australian Fire Brigades Board imported the chassis from Canada in the 1920's.

"On its arrival in Perth the front mounted pumps and equipment were added before it was sent to Wiluna Volunteer Fire Station as Motor 31," Su said.

"This particular appliance is a 1924 T Model Ford Light Pumper and it remained at Wiluna until around 1948.

"It is now without its front mounted pump because in the early years of firefighting in WA, newer appliances were sent to country fire stations and fitted with pumps taken from the older appliances.

"In its next life this particular appliance went into service at nearby Cue Volunteer Fire Station where it was used as a crew and equipment carrier until being decommissioned in the mid 1950's."

Su explained that for the next 30 years the old appliance was used as a fencing vehicle by a local farmer until it eventually fell into disrepair.

"Since the late 1980's the vehicle has been circulated around vintage car club enthusiasts until it was finally donated as a pile of parts to the Fire and Emergency Services Heritage branch," she said.

"Members of the FESA Vintage Fleet Restoration Team enjoy a challenge and they have spent seven years painstakingly restoring the appliance.

"Their attention to detail is such that imported Hickory wood from America was sourced so it could be hand turned into spokes for the wheels, as this was the original material and method used."



▲ The T Model Ford back in its heyday as a firefighting truck.

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▲ The vintage T Model Ford fire appliance is a credit to the FESA Vintage Fleet Restoration Team who gave it a new lease of life, including retired firefighters Charlie Easter, Daryl Hefron and Bob Wigley.

Former volunteer and career firefighter Daryl Hefron is a member of the restoration team and says that restoring old appliances like the Model T is a big part of his life.

"We are all very proud of what we are able to achieve with these vintage appliances," he said.

"Although time consuming, it really is a labour of love and very satisfying when you start out with a rusted old chassis and successfully rebuild the whole thing.

"There are only about a dozen of us with a bunch of various skills, but we stick at it and get the job done eventually.

"It's also a great way to keep in touch with my retired firefighter mates."

Thanks to the dedication of this skilled and determined band of retired firefighters, the reborn T Model Ford fire appliance is now a joy to behold, right down to its working gears and engine.