
CFS Promotions Unit

A Volunteer organisation of the South Australian Country Fire Service and the South Australian Country Fire Service Volunteers Association

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CFS Promotions Unit Report 2014

The CFS Promotions Unit has celebrated its 20th year of operation, and continues with its original charter of:

- Promote the volunteer nature, role and size of the CFS
- Support the members of the CFS
- Educate the public on
 - The operational activities of CFS members (Road Crash Rescue / Rural Fires / Structure Fires / Hazardous Materials Spills/ Natural Disasters)
 - The support roles of CFS HQ and volunteers (eg: Bushfire Prevention & Public Safety Education)
- Encourage new recruits to join the service
- Demonstrate the commitment of CFS volunteers to serving their community
- Gain public support for the CFS volunteers and organisation

Website

The CFS Promotions Unit website, as in previous years, has continued to grow. The site now takes up more space (almost 1000 Meg) and has again received more visitors to the site than in previous years.

Over the last 12 months, we have had over 230,000 visits, and over 7 million hits – not bad for a site that is predominately about what CFS volunteers do, rather than a media site with instant information about current activities!

The site continues to hold the most up to date information about CFS appliances and brigades around the state, with continued feedback received from staff and volunteers, that the site is used as a reference point for information about appliances, stations, brigade contacts and details.

While the information is relatively up to date, we are always seeking input from brigades and groups to ensure it is correct as it can be. Thanks goes to those brigades and individuals who have provided photos and updates – no matter how small that update might be. It all goes towards keeping the site current.

As in previous years, several CFS and MFS staff have been very helpful in providing photos and information to update the site - thanks to all those who have assisted.

Our photo collection continues to grow. It has been a very busy year, particularly for fires, although personally we didn't make it to many of the major fires. However, large numbers of CFS members were out with their cameras, and took some spectacular shots – many of which were sent to us for display.

With the high numbers of fires in January, and the interest generated, made January a very busy month for our site – with over 1 million hits just for January.

Due to time constraints, we have been limited in the number of incident and activities we have been able to get to ourselves to take photos, but our collection continues to grow – we estimate that the collection is somewhere in the vicinity of 650,000 images – and growing!

We continue to receive requests for the images from our site. Photos have been used in CFS Training manuals brigade websites, local council brochures, University Research projects, AFAC presentation, SAPol publications, CFS annual report, State Government Agencies. The images are provided free of charge.

Our Facebook page has grown, from around 800 at this time last year, to over 1800 “likes” currently. We are pleased with how the Facebook page has grown, as an adjunct to the website. The number of Twitter followers has remained steady since last year.

Cameras

We purchased a new camera this year – a Nikon D800, as well as two light weight cameras. All are working well.

Promotions Unit vehicle

CFS HQ continues to support the unit through the Promotions Car 1 – a 1995 Toyota 80 series Landcruiser, which was formerly a Group vehicle. CFS HQ has allocated this vehicle for the use of the Promotions Unit, and covers the maintenance costs of the vehicle, while the Promotions Unit budget pays for the fuel.

This vehicle has enabled us to travel extensively over the last 12 months, including onto many firegrounds, getting to areas that we wouldn't be going in our own vehicle.

Thanks to CFS HQ for the use of this vehicle, and we hope that the support will continue.

Kangaroo Island Trip

As mentioned in our report last year, we had planned a trip to Kangaroo Island, to update our photographs of Kangaroo Island. As a result of our stated intention to go to Kangaroo Island, we were put in touch with Stack & Helen Stevens from Penneshaw. They sponsored our trip to Kangaroo Island, including the cost of the Ferry, and our accommodation at their B & B, Dudley Villa.

The trip allowed us to update the bulk of our Kangaroo Island images.

Thanks Stack & Helen – your sponsorship, and hospitality was excellent, and very much appreciated.

And thanks to the brigades that we caught up with, and took the time to open up stations for us, and provide us with information on current CFS, as well as the historical side.

History Project

Our history project continues, although there is perhaps not a lot of new information added to our site.

We are still working on our appliance history, and adding information and photos on appliances, as we gain the information, and have the time to upload it! We are still on the first phase of this project, which aims to record every vehicle (including trailers) that CFS & EFS has ever had. The information we are endeavouring to show includes make of vehicle, chassis year, builder, pump / pump motor, registration number(s), date when it arrived, and left a brigade, and where it went from the brigade. We are trying to include one photograph of each vehicle. We have around 56300 CFS / EFS entries so far, and are still working through our photographic collection, and various data sources we currently hold. We are also seeking information and photographs from CFS members (past & present) as well as members of the public, who may be able to assist.

We haven't been able to work on the second phase of the appliance history project, which aims to include multiple, and larger images of those appliances. This requires new programming to be done – something we haven't had the time to do!

We have also been working on collating information on brigade & Group histories – including when they were formed / closed, members of the brigade, stations the brigade has had / utilised, and activities of the brigade. A small amount of this information is on the web, while we continue to collate this data.

We have been fortunate to have some invaluable work done by Strathalbyn members Graeme & Lorraine McVitty. They have been researching and collating information on a number of brigades. After some extensive research, the first of the brigade histories has been produced, with several more in progress. Thanks Graeme & Lorraine.

We have started to scan and add old editions of the Volunteer Magazine to the site (with several still to go). We are endeavouring to scan copies of the EFS Manual, and eventually upload them as well.

We welcome information and images from CFS members, and members of the public to assist with this project.

We created a Promotions Unit History Facebook Page in October 2013. We have around 440 likes on this page, with good interaction from those watching the page. The History page, as the name suggests posts photos and information that is not current CFS activities / stations / appliances, which is opposite to our other Facebook page, which deals with the current.

Budget

The Promotions Unit continues to receive a budget from CFS, through the CFSVA. While this budget has not increased for some time, the budget does adequately cover all of our expenses, and we are pleased that the funding has continued.

The issuing of credit cards to each of us for Promotions Unit expenses has made things easier for us, by not having to pay for Promotions Unit items, and then claim reimbursements.

We expect our expenses over the coming year to include the following:

Recurrent expenditure:

- Internet access
- Fax line
- Website hosting
- Domain registration
- Fuel
- Insurance
- Travel Reimbursement (travel undertaken by others, on our behalf)
- Trailer Registration
- Stationery & consumables (eg camera memory cards, batteries, postage)

There may be additional, and unplanned costs, in relation to incidents and activities that we don't yet know about – that is travel to an incident (such as with a strike team somewhere in the state), and accommodation if required, or planned (but as yet unknown) events such as station openings, brigade or group activities, where overnight accommodation is required, due to the distance.

Conclusion

The website continues to be an ever growing, and ever changing beast. There is rarely a day that goes by without at least something being updated on the website – some days only small updates, other days significant or large scale changes.

Time to work on the site, attend incidents & activities to take photos, as well as our own paid work, looking after our two Junior members, and our own brigade responsibilities makes for a very busy time!. At times, it means that there is a delay in being able to sort, and upload photos we have taken, to the site, especially in a busy year, however, they eventually get there.

Thanks to all those who have contributed to the CFS Promotions Unit website – from those who regularly supply photos and information, to those who update their brigade information once a year, and to those who look at the site – without all of you, the site would not exist.

Pip McGowan & Ashley Hosking
Website Administrators
CFS Promotions Unit
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