



The Country Fire Service Volunteers Association

"Representing the interests of CFS Members"

Annual General Meeting

EXECUTIVE REPORT

October 2013

As I write this report it is exactly 12 months to the day that I started my employment at CFSVA.

Within weeks the CFSVA was invited to respond to a Parliamentary Select Committee reviewing Community Safety Directorate and the Emergency Services, and with the assistance of the Executive Committee: Roger Flavell, Andy Wood and Jeff Clark we were able to submit to Parliament a comprehensive written response which identifies many of the key areas affecting CFS volunteers. In May 2013 the CFSVA was invited to go before the Parliamentary Select Committee to provide additional verbal evidence, and has since been invited to return as the Select Committee continues to take evidence.

My first and only meeting with the former Minister of Emergency Services, Jennifer Rankine, was less than inspiring and thankfully the current Minister, Michael O'Brien is far more receptive and open to the CFSVA and acknowledges the vital role of CFS volunteers. The CFSVA meets with Minister O'Brien bi-monthly and has good access to the Minister's advisors in between.

The CFSVA responded to the Review of the Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005 and met with Paul Holloway to address issues raised in the CFSVA's submission. The review was completed in September 2013, however as yet the outcomes have not been made public.

After 7 years the 25kph past Emergency Vehicles Bill passed through both houses of Parliament, and now is buried in bureaucracy. The matter is in the hands of DPTI to effect the legislation, however no commitment has been made as to how long this will take. In the meantime the CFSVA reminds CFS volunteers that WHS legislation requires a safe workplace and therefore the necessary action to create a safe workplace must be taken. It is appropriate to acknowledge my predecessor Wendy Shirley who worked tirelessly on this matter and was hoping to see the legislation come to fruition before moving on.

Over the last 12 months we have seen the Community Safety Directorate and whilst a mere shell of the former ambitious project remains it is only a question of time before all trace of

the Directorate completely disappear. The Parliamentary Select Committee on Community Safety and Emergency Services was particularly focussed on the method by which the Directorate was formed and the rationale and intended scope of the Directorate, which still to this day has not been made clear.

The key issue which has absorbed a good deal of the CFSVA's time and continues to do so this year is the Presumptive Legislation. The level of discrimination the current Government continues to display towards CFS volunteers in relation to this matter is unacceptable. The CFSVA has been strong and resolute in the message delivered to Government and continues its campaign for the inclusion of all CFS volunteers under the Presumptive Legislation. The Premier's announcement in November 2012 promising only MFS firefighters the ability to claim under the presumptive legislation devalues the immense contribution CFS volunteers make to South Australian communities. Further, displays total disregard for the impact firefighting may have on CFS volunteers when they respond to emergencies placing their lives at jeopardy to protect South Australia. The CFSVA has remained firm in its response to Government making it clear that the only acceptable outcome is equality of all firefighters regardless of whether they are volunteer or career firefighters. The CFSVA is currently circulating a petition which seeks equality for all firefighters and will be presented to Parliament in due course. We urge you all to sign this petition and ask your family, friends and communities to do the same.

The CFSVA enjoys a good working relationship with the CFS Chief Officer and staff and whilst at times we have differing opinions, this relationship is important as both the CFSVA and the CFS strive towards the same goal: the safety and protection of CFS volunteers.

The CFSVA has also conducted a series of round the state road shows which has enabled CFS volunteers participation and has identified key areas of interest or concern amongst volunteers. This information has enabled the CFSVA to produce a series of policies to take forward prior to the 2014 state election and seek political support and commitment. These presentations have been well received and have provided volunteers with an insight and better understanding into the role and work of the CFSVA. This project is now approaching its final stages with the completed document to be released soon.

The E-Connect project has provided all CFS volunteers access to the Volunteers Portal and access to a wide range of information which can be accessed through computers installed at each CFS Brigade. Volunteers are encouraged to make full use of the portal and benefit from the wealth of information it contains.

In conclusion I ask myself - What do I take from this year?:

- immense respect for CFS volunteers
- a better understanding of the extraordinary commitment CFS volunteers make to South Australian communities
- the stubbornness of Government to accept and acknowledge the obvious

Thank you to all the CFS members who have worked on numerous CFSVA committees throughout the year, and who have given their time and support to ensure that the CFSVA continues to represent CFS volunteers at all levels.

Thank you to Roger Flavell, Andy Wood, Jeff Clark and Kirsti Oliver, the CFSVA Management Committee and delegates for your acceptance help and support this year .

Finally I would like to acknowledge all CFS volunteers who generously donate their time to ensure the provision of a strong emergency service across South Australia. Last year CFS volunteers provided 690,000 hours of emergency response time which clearly identifies the true level of dedication, generosity and commitment of CFS volunteers. Thank you all.