



# The Country Fire Service Volunteers Association

*"Representing the interests of CFS Members"*



## **Presidents Report AGM October 2013**

This time last year we took the opportunity to farewell Wendy and welcome Sonia to the Executive officer role, and I don't believe Sonia's feet have had time to touch the ground since.

It has been another busy year for all the executive, with a whole range of issues having to be dealt with, in what seemed a continuous stream.

The first shot across the bow came in November while Andy and I were attending the official 150 year celebrations of the MFS in early November and the Premier announced that the Government would provide presumptive legislation for a range of twelve types of cancers to professional fire fighters in South Australia (meaning the paid career fire fighters). We were left more than a little bemused that the offer hadn't included volunteers, however it was pleasing to receive significant support from the MFS personal who were in attendance and who seemed just as confused why the CFS volunteers weren't included.

We were aware at the time that Federal fire fighters had been granted the presumption for these cancers with the help of Honourable Adam Bant of the Greens party and Wendy had been working here with the Honourable Tammy Franks of the Greens here in SA to get legislation in place for all SA fire fighters, so it was extremely disappointing that the Government here chose to deliberately exclude volunteers.

It has been a punch in the nose for CFS personal particularly when the Government over the last few years has demanded that the two fire services work closer to eliminate waste and duplication, which we have tried to facilitate and then when they have an opportunity to help us draw closer, drive a wedge between the two services.

This type of action does nothing to dispel the fears that CFS personal have that if there was ever to be one fire service, volunteers would become like some other states where volunteers are treated very poorly and still have to raise most of the funds to purchase PPE, trucks and other equipment.

We were offered a position where volunteers who attended 35 incidents of certain types would be covered, which the government had calculated would cover about 800 volunteers while the MFS would enjoy a position where they would be covered under a years of service model.

We rejected this offer because there is no evidence that a number of incidents attended makes any difference and many of the MFS personal wouldn't meet the same requirement.

It is discriminatory what the government is currently offering with their legislation introduced in the lower house, however at this stage we have the upper house which the government doesn't control willing to amend the legislation before it is passed.

There is a petition that has been distributed and we need volunteers to walk down every street and collect signatures so we can present it to government and show that South Australians want their fire fighters to be treated equally.

Policy development and validation for the coming State election has been coming along nicely with Jim Sandford, Jeff Clark and Sonia doing the majority of the road shows across the state confirming we have the issues that concern volunteers covered. This has been exceptionally well received where volunteers have taken the time to come along and be involved.

Thanks to Jim, Jeff and Sonia for providing their time and knowledge to get the best outcomes in this process.

We hope to have this finalised shortly ready for distribution to all political parties and members for their support and consideration in the lead up to the election in March.

Vision: - To be recognized as a united voice of CFS volunteers.

Mission: - To influence stakeholders to progress the interests of CFS volunteers for mutual benefit.

We have held two extremely successful forums this year with the first being at Karoonda, where some 70 or 80 people attended to ask the panel a range of questions about CFS and in some cases aired their frustrations.

Another was held recently at Wallaroo with a few less attending but a good number of questions were considered and answered by the panel. A very comprehensive record of the proceedings was taken by a Dalkeith member which I believe was being distributed for others to read who weren't able to attend.

25 Km/h passed emergency service workers or incidents in roads, has crept a little closer, with the legislation passing through both houses of parliament, and now the implementation process is being put into place. This involves a number of things including changing all the information for licensing, scrubbing 40km/h of the MFS trucks and replacing with 25 km/h etc.

It has been suggested it will take a few more months however hopefully we can soon see the results for the years and years work that has gone into this common sense issue.

The review of the Fire and Emergency Services Act, has been done by the Honourable Paul Holloway and was delivered to Government on the 30<sup>th</sup> September.

We wrote a submission and attended a meeting with Paul and Roy Thompson to discuss our submission. We haven't as yet seen any of the recommendations as it has to go through Cabinet first before it is released publicly.

A parliamentary select committee chaired by the Honourable Robert Brokenshire has been reviewing how the Emergency Services are funded and if those funds are adequate.

We provided a submission to the committee on how we thought things could be better, and then were called before the committee to clarify and answer questions.

Recently when we asked the Minister about The Directorate of Community Safety, we received a wry smile and almost a "*what Directorate?*" So it seems at this point that we have seen the last of this idea, however I suspect more will be revealed within the review of the act when we get to see that.

Sonia and I recently met with Andrew Lawson, Anne Depiaz and representatives from the Crown solicitors office and the Government Insurer, to discuss the progress of the Wangary Class action against the CFS. We want to ensure that any volunteers involved will receive full support if they have to give evidence which we are assured would be the case.

These issues along with the day to day problems, meeting attendances has ensured that Sonia hasn't had time to get out of her running shoes, and while last week she did try to take a week's leave she was still good enough to accommodate a meeting with the Minister and Opposition on the Tuesday, along with a phone call or two I am sure.

While our Government continues to speak as if they value the 690,000 hours put in by volunteers during the past financial year, it would be helpful if they backed it up with actions.

I wonder what 690,000 hours at career fire fighter pay rates would look like, not to mention the thousands of hours in training and administration that is put in on top of the incident work by volunteers to provide an emergency response for the community.

A big thankyou to Sonia, Kirsti, Andy, Jeff, Ray, Brian, Russell, Ken and Wayne along with you all, for your assistance in helping make the CFSVA the organisation that can represent our hardworking volunteers.

Roger Flavell

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