
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 2015

The CFS Promotions Unit continues into its 21st 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 is larger than it has ever been, and we juggle what we keep on the site, to keep the size down to a manageable level!!!

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 and SES 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. As with the previous year 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, particularly Sampson Flat, and the interest generated, made January a very busy month for our site – with the traffic to the site 3 ½ times the normal level!!

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 670,000 images – and growing!

We continue to receive requests for the images from our site. Photos have been used in CFS Training manuals brigade websites & Facebook pages, 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 1800 at this time last year, to over 6580 “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.

In July / August this year, our site, along with many others hosted by the same Internet service provider (ISP), were the target of hackers. While there was no damage done to our site, it was not accessible for a few weeks. We received several phone calls, emails & messages from users of our site, who couldn't access the site – so we know people are looking at it!

Along with our ISP, we have put into place additional measures to protect our site from this type of activity.

This has also meant that we don't currently have access to the statistics about the actual usage of the site, and exactly what people are looking at – so we can't give specific figures in this report.

Over the last few months, we have been looking at the programming required to make our site mobile user friendly (which it currently is not). We are hoping that over the next 12 months, we will have a mobile user friendly site.

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.

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

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 almost 5900 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 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 know that around the year 2000, a history project was undertaken, which compiled a lot of information on brigades, and collected historical images. We have tried to locate this information, but have been unable to do so. If anyone knows where this information might be, we would love to know!

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. Thanks Graeme & Lorraine.

We created a Promotions Unit History Facebook Page in October 2013. Since then, the number of likes has doubled, 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.

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

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
Oct 2015