

CFSVA AGM 2019

CAFVA report

Andy Wood and David Lindner attended the CAVFA (Council of Australian Volunteer Fire Associations) meeting and AGM in Melbourne on 25th and 26th August 2019 prior AFAC conference.

A number of things were highlighted by our interstate Associations which are likely to impact on us now or in the future. We also gained an increased understanding of what systems and practices we have in SA that we take for granted but strenuously need to protect.

Stuart Ellis gave a talk about things AFAC have been doing and looking at, and when we analyse what he spoke about, AFAC as the leading research organisation in our Australasian fire services is doing most of its work in the volunteer space. A few of the issues AFAC is looking at.

- Volunteer fire services provide 85% of the work and callouts to the community.
- Paid services have cultural issues which AFAC is investigating
- Victorian Equal Opportunity Commissioner is favourable to volunteers
- Spontaneous volunteers – at what level do they do things. Risks are, they are untrained, ill-equipped with no WHS. But we do it now with things like farm fire units so we adapt and manage. Social media is a challenge – engage when happens and incident management is best place not on fireground. In the main incident remember the basis is volunteers so need to manage.
- Issues of disappearing volunteers – age and distance from home, but gender balance and ethnic diversity improving.
- Bureaucrats created structures for Government not community.
- Indications show all services are going top down not bottom up.
- Questions about training PUA's and other training aspects and includes the eventual agreed acceptance by paid services to accept volunteer training.

Discussion points – CAVFA – The welfare survey has influenced Federal Labor to approach the national body to initiate discussions into the future of volunteers and issues in this sector. Funding of CAVFA from outside sources being investigated to take pressure off state resources.

QLD – Had decentralisation process forced with no consultation and volunteers are not able to control activities especially IMT. Paid does that.

TAS – UFU questioned volunteers training volunteers. Paid refused to work with volunteers so no training at all. The big fires last year showed a lot of deficiencies especially IMT. Now developing risk and capability framework. Adding PTSD to Presumption legislation.

VIC – After receiving a battering from the reform process and losing a protracted court case and a hammering from government the organisation is at its lowest ebb but time will truly tell the impact. Predicted impact is the agency is in trouble and likely to lose 5,000 volunteers. Public couldn't understand issues and therefore couldn't support volunteers. Volunteers sick of national competencies and want to go back to competency based training. They now have a volunteer based emergency organisation with no staff. Staff are part of paid service and are under the UFU.

WA – Criminal History checks, many under 25 can't get a 100pt check, under 18 can be almost impossible, immigrants may not have visa's (New Zealanders). Looking at vehicle design. Annoyed PUA's don't transfer interstate.

Implications of presumptive legislation that are coming out is more responsibility of Incident Controllers in size up and the dilemma to protect ourselves from smoke impacts or save someone. Need to consider our personal long term effects.

P3 masks are being used or on trial in WA, QLD and TAS. Issues are around harder to breathe requiring higher fitness, no facial hair, cartridges last 3 months used or not used, should consider fitting gas meters and high likelihood of more people going down on the fire ground.

It was agreed that the Associations would continue to maintain the spreadsheet on important issues and how each state is placed such as presumptive legislation. It was also agreed that a simple paper be formed to outline how each Association is structured and how each Emergency Service or Agency is structured and how it operates aiming at what responsibilities and management levels volunteers are allowed to do in each state.

It is noticeable that SA is highly respected in this forum and a number of states are envious of what systems have been developed here and how the volunteers are respected and recognised in their training and ability to do what is required. Through this Andy was elected chair for the ensuing year.

Point to note. Under the CAVFA constitution the president of the Association is the delegate to CAFVA hence why there is no nomination process for this committee.

