

CFSVA AGM 2021 Presidents report

Firstly, I would like to thank Sonia, Kirsti, David, Jeff and members of the Management committee and delegates who have provided support and encouragement during the last year. Without all the work and support our association could not function. The management of our association is and needs to be a team effort.

South Australia needs a vibrant emergency services sector so as to provide best service to our communities. The vast majority of the sector is volunteer based and as such everything that can be done, must be done to support and encourage this part of the sector. For volunteers to perform at our best we need to be enthusiastic about what we do and why we do it. If we accept the concept that enthusiastic volunteers are a necessity to this state, there are some things that require attention, including but not limited to, proper up to date facilities, fit for purpose equipment, proper consultation on matters that may affect us, provision of training when and how best suited to volunteers, sufficient staffing levels to provide support services, recognizing and using the skills that volunteers bring to the organization. On the other side of the ledger, treating volunteers as an unpaid workforce or allowing sector or political self-interest to drive policy is a path to diminishing the enthusiasm of volunteers. [2021 CFS yearbook]

Looking back, I find it interesting that many of the association's positions over the years have been accepted across the sector, sometimes it has taken a long time, but we have gained credibility as an association and as a result we are being listened to across the sector. A recent example is SAFCOM, for years we have pushed for an independent chair of SAFCOM and for SAFCOM to perform its proper role in providing services to the agencies. I believe we are now on that path. This should lead to a stable period in the sector and assist with planning for a sustainable future for us.

Two years ago, I told the management committee that I would not contest the president's position when it came due next, that is today. I have been involved for 12 odd years in a couple of roles and over that time I feel that we have been in near constant conflict, mainly with political agendas. At 64 its time to move on, maybe not for ever but certainly for a while.

A college asked me recently for some advice, that advice was, and I offer it to anyone contemplating taking on a leadership role, "grow very thick skin, because your job is not to be popular or to be liked or to please everyone, but to make informed decisions in the best interest of those you serve"

It has been a great journey, not always a pleasure, but always an honour to have tried to represent the interests of volunteers with honesty and integrity. I am confident the association will go forward with the new leadership. Again, I thank everyone for their support.

Andy Wood ASFM