

## PRESIDENTS REPORT

### General Meeting

12<sup>th</sup> April 2022

I am now settling into this new role as President. Even though I had been working closely with Andy and Sonia within the previous leadership roles, there are some distinct requirements which the President does need to manage and do. One of those roles is representing the VA at various meetings and being the advocate for our volunteers and a contact point. Covid has hindered us over the past couple years to have those one on one conversations with volunteers, and doing this face to face is so much more humanising than a conversation over the phone or even Zoom. From those conversations and those networking opportunities at other meetings, I have had volunteers confirm our thoughts that we have a number of problems in the organisation of CFS if we want to be that best volunteer fire service in the world or if we are going to remain that reliable community emergency service.

Over the past few years the VA Executive have been looking at the way the VA has functioned and then looked at areas where we can improve in the way we operate, recognising criticisms received by our membership. Discussion has also occurred at Management Committee about some of these aspects. Today is a step to improve our governance processes and a new way in which we can engage with more volunteers so that we can look at more of those issues I referred to before, through the discussion of the draft constitution, and presenting it to the delegates for their approval. The next steps of the envisaged processes will improve our ability to know what the volunteers really want and the direction CFS should take so that the service is sustainable and viable into the future. These next steps will give our membership more ownership of the organisations of the VA and CFS direction.

I was disappointed that the position of Vice-president did not receive a nomination. The VA requires leadership and advocates for the CFS membership. Without that, who is going to represent them in many types of forums. The VA leadership has for many years created relationships with many people and organisations including The Minister of Emergency Services, CFS executive team and other service providers and has gained much personal respect. As I see it, the strength of the CFS VA is not only to have a competent Executive Officer to advocate for the membership, but to have CFS operational volunteers who have that integral knowledge of how it works on the ground to support the Executive Officer when required. That knowledge is gold during many discussions and often clinches the desired outcome.

In the near future, the Management Committee will be discussing how we will move forward and implement these concepts.

Also today, we will have a presentation from a volunteer about mental health. I ask that you all take note of what is being put before you as we recognise that mental health is a larger issue than we think as it is mostly masked or hidden. Covid has created some additional pressures and issues for people and we need to recognise and look after those with a problem.

I thank Sonia and Kirsti for the time and effort they put into their work as they go way beyond their employment contracts.