

President Report

CFSVA AGM

23RD October 22, 2023

Each year seems to be more intense and busier for the executive team. I look back over the time I have been involved with the State Management of the Association starting as a Branch delegate in 2012, being elected to the Executive Management Committee two years later and holding each of the Office Bearer positions. There has been a gradual change of the way the Association business has progressed and the avenues we use to represent our volunteers over this time. We take notice of the concerns and the background knowledge our volunteers convey to us. With this knowledge and our understanding of how the systems work, we take these concerns to the appropriate source where we believe we will get the best outcome and it is not always directly with CFS. I also note that I have seen that we are operating at the more strategic levels more often, which not only deals with the single issue at hand but also looks at how the system can be changed. Often our volunteers may feel we are not working on their behalf, and sometimes we can't do miracles when fighting a system, but to be instrumental in making good outcomes for all it often takes time, especially in a governmental framework. I have also seen how the respect has grown towards the VA by many politicians, CFS leadership, Sector partners, other organisations and individuals. This was evidenced when I was invited to represent the VA and Volunteers as a special guest to the Rededication Service of the Herbert Hedger grave at West Terrace Cemetery in May on St Florian's Day. Herbert passed away in January 1914 being declared the first, line of duty, fireman death in South Australia. The grave has been restored in commemoration of this significance.

We are in close contact with the Ministers office and are very open with him and his advisors. There are also other politicians who do contact us for comment or clarification on matters. We always work with our Chief Officer first on matters he can control and the other CFS Executive team members. Sonia gains information about the whole sector and influences direction on the SAFECOM Board. We take and work with aspects on the Sector Advisory Committee. Topics include, sector policy on Bullying and Harassment, Elected Members Visitation Policy and ways to make Workcover work better for volunteers to name a few. These are about whole of sector directions and managed by SAFECOM working within government frameworks. Working with SAFECOM on Cadet policy and individual Workcover claims. We work directly with CFS on CFS strategic direction documents and numerous other policies as released. There are VA members on numerous CFS committees who influence outcomes and highlight impacts some decisions will have on volunteers. Sonia has been involved with numerous staff selection and interview panels. We have a working relationship with the SESVA and the UFU. I have met with our CAVFA partners which not only is about matters as outlined in that report, but we create that personal contact and learn what is happening in their state and maybe able to jump on a band wagon or fend off early a trend sweeping across Australia. AS part of this committee, Sonia is a representative on a national AFAC committee looking at volunteering. Importantly we try to maintain contact with our members through our Branches, Presidents and Delegates and support where we can.

This year we have been deeply challenged to fight and influence change to a number of decisions made by CFS. This has taken a lot of time and in some ways a few other things have been put on hold. All of the above has shown that the Association needs to move forward and consider what

needs to change so we can advance, as what is happening at the moment is not sustainable within our staffing or workloads on the Office Holders.

Looking ahead, I can see the business part of the Association changing and with our new 3 year financial agreement with the Minister this change is likely to start to occur, which in many ways will make the Association quite different to what it ever has been and I believe the start to a new era. This change has been at least 3 years in discussion and planning.

The recent motions in Parliament about our Brigade facilities, just highlights how influential our documents can be, but also highlights how we need to be careful how things are worded as this topic has been picked up from the pre election document. I mention this because we are about to go into writing a document to mainly influence political policies for the next State election in March 2025. The parties are now having conversations about framing their policies. We also must be prepared to know what we really want, not now but in the future and know what we require to be changed in any regulation review and not just wait for something to be placed before us some days out from it entering parliament.

For me it has often been difficult to fulfill a number of members expectations of this role due to my business pressures and dealing with droughts and combine that with CFS operational activities (really important to keep my feet on the ground). As I mentioned earlier, the expectations are growing but if we are to attract people into these leadership positions, we will need to change the way we do things. When I look at the Associations around Australia, I believe SA has the highest turn over of Presidents and I feel it is because we expect them to do too much. Currently our Presidents are part of the workforce, not the managers and leaders. Jeff is President elect at this point of time and I wish him the best to continue to take the Association forward.

Thank you to all the Presidents and Delegates for your efforts in gathering and sending out information as requested or for bringing issues to our attention. This is the core business of the Association and it is something we have discussed how we can improve our processes of doing this side of the business.

Lastly but in no way least, I thank Sonia and Kirsti for their efforts and support. I know they do more than their job description outlines, but only a very limited few get to see how everything works. Sonia and I have spent many hours on the phone discussing issues and what is happening in the VA, CFS and the Sector as a whole. I will miss those regular long conversations where we think we have fixed the world, then something else pops up later that day and we start it all over again.

David Lindner