



**The Country Fire Service
Volunteers Association**
"Representing the interests of CFS Members"

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

October 2024

It has become obvious over time that the funding model for CFS (Emergency Service Levy) is not sufficient to sustain the service, which is impacting on our volunteers as we continue to be called upon to provide more out of scope support particularly to SA Ambulance, SA Police and the SA SES.

The CFSVA has raised our concerns with the Minister and through emergency service sector committees and our sector partners, the MFS and SES, is seeking support for a review of sector funding, with particular focus on the effectiveness of the ESL to financially support our emergency services into the future.

Undoubtedly over the last 5 years government bureaucracy and enforced change has created greater impost for CFS volunteers, and whilst our volunteers are not the catalyst for many of these changes, we have become the casualties.

This year, the CFSVA Executive Director and State President were invited to present evidence to a South Australian Parliamentary Standing Committee on matters impacting CFS volunteers and was able to raise CFS' funding with members of Parliament and will continue this conversation as South Australia moves to a state election in 2026.

Over time, the CFSVA has become more than just the advocates for CFS volunteers, but also the intermediaries between CFS and volunteers to ensure that outcomes satisfy government legislation and direction, whilst maintaining workable and achievable parameters for volunteers.

Working with children legislation created a volunteer uprising, as CFS attempted to implement change by stealth, and whilst volunteers did not generally oppose the changes, volunteers took umbrage at the method by which the changes were presented, with a clear message sent to CFS that you consult with volunteers you do not just demand.

In this instance the CFSVA proposed a solution which ensured, that under their own terms, our volunteers could comply with working with children legislation.

The CFSVA recently signed off on the new 'Volunteer Conduct Management Process' (disciplinary process), which had been a long outstanding issue. The concerns raised by volunteers relating to the length of time taken by CFS to resolve matters; the lack of support for complainants; the unnecessary escalation of matters which could have been resolved at a lower level; and lack of fairness within the process, were all addressed as part of the review process.

The CFSVA, following extensive consultation with volunteers, is satisfied that a modern policy has been developed which provides natural justice and support to all parties; provides volunteer leaders with training to manage these demanding situations; and establishes clear and acceptable time limit for resolution.

This year, CFS introduced a process for assessing volunteers for interstate or international deployment which outlines parameters and rules for volunteers who wish to participate in these important deployments. The CFSVA fully endorses this approach which sets out clear guidelines for interstate or international deployment and establishes the ground rules for all to understand and accept.

In the recent state budget, it was announced that several additional female cancers will be added under the presumptive cancer legislation, however stopped short of adding any additional male cancers which have been identified as intricately linked to firefighters. This continues to be an ongoing matter for the CFSVA.

The CFSVA has successfully secured funding for an audit to be conducted of all CFS stations and facilities across the state. This audit is imperative to identify the condition of CFS facilities and the level of financial investment required in the future.

The CFSVA executive group continues to meet monthly with the CFS executive team and participates or has representation on all relevant CFS committee or working group which provides great benefit to our volunteers, and whilst this places an additional burden on a small CFSVA team, it ensures that the association is across all matters that may impact our volunteers and is able to commence volunteer inclusion and consultation very early in any process.

Late last year the CFSVA hosted a governance and training workshop for our volunteers' representatives, to assist them in understanding their responsibilities and duties as volunteer representatives. The workshop provided valuable insights and skill training for participants, with the CFSVA intending to organise similar workshop on a regular basis.

Chief Officer Brett Loughlin continues to lead CFS, and we welcome his vision for the future of CFS and his desire to work proactively with the CFSVA to move CFS forward and create a safe working environment for our volunteers and bring everyone home safely home at the end of each day.

The adaptability and flexibility of our CFS volunteers continues to be the strength of CFS and the CFSVA as it embodies the generosity of spirit that is shown repeatedly as our resources are stretched and our skills assessed.

I would like to congratulate all those who have collaborated with me, with passion and determination to achieve good outcomes for our volunteers; the executive members for their efforts over the last year; and for the diversity they bring to these roles.

I would also like to thank Kirsti Oliver who is an invaluable member of the CFSVA Executive Team.

I am also most grateful to those members who have been tapped on the shoulder by the association and have committed their time and expertise to represent the CFSVA on CFS working groups.

I would like to acknowledge Jim Sanford and Malcolm Thomson who have each served as Branch Presidents and thank them for their support of the CFSVA, and to Ray Bryant who has served previously as a Branch President and more recently a delegate. Our branches are our lifeline and our

direct contact to our membership, and an especially important part of the CFSVA's work. Thank you to all.

Our world continues to change, whether in our personal lives; in the way we do business or the way we respond as CFS volunteers; and it is up to us all to seek and create opportunities as we move forward, and I look forward to being part of this journey.

The constant of CFS is our volunteers as is their commitment and goodwill which makes CFS the capable and resilient service it.

Thank you to all CFS volunteers and their families for their continued support; your dedication and commitment is unparalleled.

Sonia St Alban
Executive Director