

Transcript

Station: **5AA** Date: **25/06/2009**
 Program: **AFTERNOONS** Time: **01:52 PM**
 Compere: **LAINIE ANDERSON** Summary ID: **A00035172396**
 Item: **DISCUSSION ABOUT THE CFS.**

INTERVIEWEES: WENDY SHIRLEY, CFS VOLUNTEERS ASSOCIATION

Demographics:	Male 16+	Female 16+	All people	ABs	GBs
	6000	5000	11000	3000	6000

LAINIE ANDERSON: Wendy Shirley joins me now. She is with the CFS Volunteers Association. Hi Wendy.

WENDY SHIRLEY: Good afternoon Lainie.

LAINIE ANDERSON: Thanks a lot for coming on today.

WENDY SHIRLEY: That's fine.

LAINIE ANDERSON: Yes, I saw quite a lot in the news, I think it was just before I started here at 5AA. And I wanted to get you on to find out whether there had been any response to your calls for better funding for CFS branches - not branches...

WENDY SHIRLEY: Brigades...

LAINIE ANDERSON: Brigades.

WENDY SHIRLEY: ...and volunteers.



LAINIE ANDERSON: Yes, across SA?

WENDY SHIRLEY: Well, it's early days yet. We see this as a long-term campaign leading to the report from the Bushfire Task Force which is looking at the results of the royal commission into the Black Saturday fires in Victoria.

LAINIE ANDERSON: Yeah.

WENDY SHIRLEY: So we want to ensure that when that task force hands down its report that a number of these funding shortfalls, as we see them within CFS, are addressed.

LAINIE ANDERSON: Because I think in the stories, you're actually only getting a fraction of levies that are actually supposed to be recouping money for fire services, is that right?

WENDY SHIRLEY: Well, the Emergency Services Levy, which was introduced in 1999, is to fund the Country Fire Service, the Metropolitan Fire Service, that's the red trucks for your listeners - we're the white trucks - and the State Emergency Service. It also funds a number of areas such as the Rescue One helicopter. And I think the South Australian Police are the third largest recipients for about \$20 million, which I believe is something to do with their star force...

LAINIE ANDERSON: Okay, and so this - it's leading to volunteers being stretched to the limit, I would have thought, because



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they're having to raise funds, as well as all the different training that has to be done...

WENDY SHIRLEY: Sure.

LAINIE ANDERSON: ...as well, and then having to actually go out to emergencies.

WENDY SHIRLEY: Yes. So - well, CFS volunteers provide a range of services, or emergency services for the community. So it's bushfire fighting, it's road accident rescue, cutting people out of cars when there's been a bad crash, it's structure fires such as house fires and shed fires, hazard material spills, all those sorts of things that are provided by the CFS volunteers. And we are funded for a bare minimum - a service level, but we still see that, you know, things are stretched to the limit but this service has been operating for too long now on the goodwill...

LAINIE ANDERSON: Yes.

WENDY SHIRLEY: ...of the volunteers and a very small dedicated staff to keep this service going. And yes, the Government have put in more money over the last few years but, as we see it, it's for many compliance issues around occ health and safety and so on, and also for aerial fire fighting. But the base level, the things with what we're calling are staffing levels, are far too low. There's...

LAINIE ANDERSON: [Interrupts] So the actual paid staff...

WENDY SHIRLEY: The paid...

LAINIE ANDERSON: ...per - like, yeah, which should be a ratio to volunteers, I presume, is it?

WENDY SHIRLEY: Yes, and we've got the lowest ratio of staff to volunteers of any emergency service in Australia and those staff are supposed to be there to support the volunteers who actually deliver the emergency services. Our staff are there to help provide the training that we need, to ensure we've got the correct buildings and trucks and, you know, all the logistical stuff, but they're being stretched to the limit too because there's just not enough of them.

LAINIE ANDERSON: And as we saw over on Eyre Peninsular and on Kangaroo Island, in the last few years, it's a massive responsibility for these volunteers, isn't it?

WENDY SHIRLEY: It certainly is. I - you know, sometimes it just blows me away, the dedication of these volunteers and the hours that they put into it. So, you know, going to the station once a week to train, doing courses on weekends, going to the bigger fires around the State which, you know, is up to five days of their time, and even heading over interstate when we've got major emergencies such as the Black Saturday fire.

LAINIE ANDERSON: Is all of this conspiring to, like, make CFS volunteering less appealing?



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WENDY SHIRLEY: I think that's what's happening out there. Many people are saying well, you know, we're being treated a little bit like unpaid public servants. There is more and more - you know, as society gets more complicated and there are more and more government imposts put on to CFS volunteers because the CFS is a public service agency.

LAINIE ANDERSON: Yeah.

WENDY SHIRLEY: And therefore we get all the same as any other public service department in terms of compliance. I think there's a lack of understanding by some parts of government. The volunteers are doing this in their own time. They have their regular jobs. They are not paid one cent for anything they do and a lot of people don't get this.

LAINIE ANDERSON: No.

WENDY SHIRLEY: We're not paid for training. We're not paid for attending incidents. We're not paid for any of the meetings and other things that - you know, it's part of being in the CFS. It's all done as a service to the community. We see it as a partnership. CFS volunteers put in their time, their skills, their expertise, into keeping this community safe. Governments and the community put in the resources, the funding that we need, to do the job.

LAINIE ANDERSON: Yeah, that's right.



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WENDY SHIRLEY: Now, you know, we do things like - and we don't mind doing things like, you know, keeping our stations maintained because there's absolutely no money in the budgets for station maintenance. Not a cent.

LAINIE ANDERSON: No, I can imagine how frustrating it must be when you will - hopefully after, you know, in the aftermath of the royal commission, things might change.

WENDY SHIRLEY: Well, we'd hope that there'd be some areas that will get extra funding, particularly from that in the area of community education and prevention because we simply don't have enough to do the mammoth job that there is in keeping, or getting the community educated about how to keep themselves safe.

LAINIE ANDERSON: Well, thank you so much for keeping us up to speed on it, Wendy.

WENDY SHIRLEY: Thank you, Lainie.

LAINIE ANDERSON: And good luck with it all.

WENDY SHIRLEY: Thank you. Bye-bye.

LAINIE ANDERSON: Thanks a lot. That was Wendy Shirley. She's with the CFS Volunteers Association.



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ABs = Managers, administrators, professions. GBs = Grocery buyers.
