



## The Country Fire Service Volunteers Association

*"Representing the interests of CFS Members"*

### CFSVA STATE EXECUTIVE REPORT October 2018

I'm often asked the question "What does the CFSVA do?" The answer is that the VA provides 24/7 support to CFS volunteers, and although much of the VA's work may not be apparent, behind the scenes there is always much happening: whether it be due to a major event, or lobbying Government on specific issues for volunteers; or working one on one with a volunteer on a personal CFS related issue, each day is full.

Sometimes it's necessary for the CFSVA's work be kept confidential due to either the sensitive nature of its work, or to ensure that the VA is in the strongest strategic position to achieve its outcomes, which is always in the best interest of volunteers.

It is equally important for the CFSVA to have strong Branches supported by a network of volunteers, with a strong and dedicated leadership team, who remain focussed and motivated to achieve the best outcomes for CFS volunteers.

Nationally, the CFSVA's achievements measure up extremely well in relation to our interstate counterparts, and whilst we are not the largest organisation, nor the best funded we carry considerable influence when it matters. The CFSVA has managed to overcome much of the adversity our interstate counterparts are currently working under, and is highly respected for its work. Andy Wood is a member of the CAVFA Executive team and represents the CFSVA well.

South Australia was the first state to secure presumptive legislation for all CFS volunteers, with the CFSVA remaining firm that there must be parity for both volunteer and paid firefighters, and although there has been a small number of claims made under this legislation, which saddens us, the CFSVA is proud to have been instrumental in securing presumptive legislation for volunteers, and may alleviate some of the financial pressures from volunteers who may find themselves in this difficult situation.

The CFSVA work with the current Government for the South Australian Return to Work legislation to be amended to remove the 2 year cut-off point continues, and is disappointed that to date this matter has not been brought to conclusion. As the legislation currently stands WorkCover will only support an injured worker for 2 years following a work related injury, which we believe is unacceptable. A bi-partisan commitment has been made and the CFSVA looks forward to the amendments coming into legislation in the foreseeable future.

In the main CFS volunteers have now accepted that for the time being at least, that sector reform is over. Premier Steven Marshall in his pre-election commitment to the CFSVA stated that “A Marshall Government will work to rebuild trust so that emergency service volunteers know that they are valued for the great work they do” and the CFSVA will ensure that this commitment is met.

When we look across borders and see what is happening in other states such as with the CFA in Victoria, it makes us realise just how much we have to lose, however one thing is sure, in that the CFSVA will not concede what CFS volunteers had worked so hard to achieve.

During a recent meeting of the SAFECOM Sector Advisory Group indications were given by most parties including all Chief Officers and representatives from associations and unions that this sector group should be the voice of the sector and the vehicle for communication and discussion of sector and agency specific issues. This clearly identifies that the sector has the will to work together to achieve the best outcome for South Australia without being forced down a path of reform.

The CFSVA continues to work closely with the Minister’s office to enshrine the CFS Volunteer Charter into legislation, and anticipate that the amendment Bill will be presented to Parliament later this year. This will ensure that the voice of the CFS Volunteer is recognised, heard and considered in the decision making process.

Aside from political distractions the CFSVA remains focussed on the health and wellbeing of volunteers with particular focus on support services available to volunteers injured in the line of duty, and will progress this important matter in time to come.

In closing I would like to say that over the last period of time the CFSVA has welcomed the opportunity to refocus on its core business and plan for the future: a future that recognises and appreciates volunteers; a future that accepts that the risks to volunteers are no different to the risks to paid firefighters; a future that provides support to volunteers and acknowledges the enormous contribution CFS volunteers make to South Australian communities.

I have now been in my role for close to 6 years and when I look at what the VA has managed to secure for volunteers over this period, I am very proud to be part of the team that has delivered these outcomes. Thank you all for your invaluable contribution.

Sonia St Alban  
Executive Director