

Presidents Report

David Lindner

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It is unbelievable how another 12 months has again passed. But it has been 12 months of consolidating the position of the Association, especially in the political sphere. It took some work to put together the position statements before the election and we thank those involved in that process. The outcome of that living document has given our volunteers an additional \$5m to improve their operational facilities and for some, to get them to a basic standard of safety and toilets which is a minimal human standard in our society today. We must make our facilities acceptable if we are to encourage our female members of the community to join our service so we can maintain our community resilience.

Over the past couple years the management committee has been slowly documenting our direction and putting more emphasis on managing our internal affairs so we become less reactive and that we have an agreed direction, one that is not just thrust forward from the executive team in an adhoc manner. It was in our planning day in August that we grasped the initiative of looking at what we do at an Association management level. Whilst issues that Branches forward are important, they are not the only thing the management committee and executive need to focus on. In our workplan which is the actioning part of the strategic plan, the six themes of political, CFS, volunteers, volunteer association, sector interactions and media are nothing new in the Association's activities, it is just that we recognise and have documented these areas of importance so you as members know how we intend to achieve the required outcomes. One of our main emphasis in recent years has been a political lobby group and that is going to remain. A number of the other activities is a means of gaining influence to advance positive change.

It has become noticeable this year that our hard work over the past few years in developing relationships with those that we need to influence and work closely with has paid off. We have gained a high level of respect at regional, state and national levels and when we ask a question or make a statement to protect the rights of the volunteer, people listen. As the executive members of the Association, we listen to our member's comments and then we need to interpret that information with the knowledge we gain from outside sources to take an appropriate action. Unfortunately at times our members don't understand that some of these aspects can't be enacted or take time to enact and also that we can't always have a mistrust in our politicians and need to trust those doing the negotiation on behalf of the association that they are given the support to take whatever measures they see fit to fulfil the policy direction.

For us to be strong in influencing those around us, we need to have a strong organisation. The time is now right for us to review our legal framework and internal structure. This doesn't mean that there has to be change but our constitution has revealed in the past couple years that it is not the guiding instrument it should be. A deep discussion about our

constitution is our priority this year and we must think broadly so that what we are looking at will be ahead of its time. When we step back and analyse the CFS Volunteers Association of today, we must recognise that we are managing a budget and staff therefore running a business and have to manage all the legal requirements before we get to the core business of representation and support of our members. We must be able to give both aspects of strategic thinking and representation careful consideration which at the moment, we at times struggle to achieve. We also acknowledge that we need to encourage more people to become involved at Branch level and State level as our pool of people to represent the Association in committees etc is very small. Another factor is that we need to be better in succession planning.

With the health scare Andy had in July, it has highlighted how vulnerable the organisation can be if one key person is suddenly out of action. The Association relies heavily on its executive team which is quite normal in the business world. This is something that the management committee needs to discuss and start thinking about things such as risk management and making sure that processes are in place to provide a seamless transition. It is good to see Andy's recovery and hope he is able to take up the position of President again after the AGM.

To Sonia and Kirsti, we thank you for the time and effort you put into the day to day management of the Association. What you do can often be beyond your employment contract, but that is what makes this Association what it is, not only a family friendly organisation but an organisation that can be classed as part of the family.

For the upcoming fire season, please remember to look after yourself first. If there is the unfortunate accident or injury, please be assured that the Association should be your first contact for assisting you in your recovery, but we need to know something has happened.

David Lindner

Acting President