



The Country Fire Service Volunteers Association

"Representing the interests of CFS Members"

20 August 2019

To all CFS volunteers

The CFSVA writes to you to express our concerns with the current direction the South Australian Emergency Services sector is taking and the instability this is creating for CFS volunteers as we enter fire season. The CFSVA has attempted to raise these urgent concerns with the Minister for Emergency Services Corey Wingard and Premier Marshall, but have been disappointed by their lack of response, which is why we believe it is essential that you are aware of these matters.

The CFSVA is concerned by the number of processes that have been undertaken since Minister Wingard assumed the Emergency Services portfolio that has either disregarded advice from key stakeholders or has excluded key stakeholders from the process.

A recent example being the selection process for the next CFS Chief Officer to which the CFSVA was invited to have one representative on the selection panel. Prior to engaging with the selection panel, the CFSVA's representative was provided with clear directions by the CFSVA Board as to key criteria required of the next CFS Chief Officer, which included that the appointee should hold proven experience in leading a volunteer emergency service work force similar to CFS, and also extensive knowledge and understanding of the Australian topography in relation to fire behaviour.

Whilst mindful of not breaching confidentiality of the selection panel, the CFSVA's representative, reported to the CFSVA Board that they were unable to sign off on the "preferred candidate" as it was their firm opinion that the CFSVA Board's directions and key criteria were not met, and furthermore has not been advised of the outcome nor of the Minister approach to any candidates. It was however reported to COAC by Domenic Lane the CEO of SAFECOM that Minister Wingard would announce the next CFS Chief Officer once he returns from leave next week.

In June 2018, Minister Wingard outlined to the CFSVA Board process to be undertaken for the review of SAFECOM where he clearly identified the path that this review would follow which provided the ability for key stakeholder consultation and input into the process. Since January 2019, Minister Wingard has indicated on many occasions that there had been no further action on the SAFECOM review, however in Estimates on the 26th July 2019, Minister Wingard, when questioned about the outcomes of the review of SAFECOM advised Parliament that the outcomes are cabinet-in-confidence, and therefore was unable to elaborate.

This raises concerns in relation to the actual purpose of the review of SAFECOM and why key stakeholders were not consulted and indeed continue to be excluded.

The CFSVA has asked Minister Wingard to confirm Government's vision for CFS into the future, given his response to Parliament in April 2019 in which he announced that he would not be renewing the CFS Chief Officer contract and that he would appoint a new Chief to take CFS in a 'new direction'. This 'new direction' has never been made clear and the CFSVA has sought assurances from the Minister

that Government will consult openly with the CFSVA during all phases of future planning and implementation of strategic direction for the Emergency Services, however this has only lead to exasperation as we are left with more questions than answers.

Minister Wingard has constantly emphasised his commitment to a 'volunteer focus', however after almost 18 months under his leadership the CFSVA has heard a lot of rhetoric, but so far has seen no genuine desire by the Minister for transparency and open dialogue. Further, it is unacceptable for the Minister's senior staff to berate and criticise CFSVA elected representatives for merely doing their job and attempting to raise the concerns of CFS volunteers with the Minister.

The CFSVA strongly believes that the Country Fire Service belongs to people of South Australia, and it is disappointing when the genuine concerns of the CFSVA as the legislated representative of CFS volunteers are ignored.

The CFSVA is extremely disappointed with the lack of response from the Minister and the Premier which is why we bring these concerns to your attention.

Regards

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