



Frontline



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**STATE ROAD CRASH RESCUE CHALLENGE
THE EYRE PENINSULA BUSHFIRES • BLACK TUESDAY
VOLUNTEERS ASSOCIATION ONLINE**



SASES Volunteers' Association Inc.
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CONTENT FOR FRONTLINE

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contents

2	Chairman's Report	19	Another First for Hawker
3	From the CEO's Desk	20	Black Tuesday
4	Executive Officer's Report	24	Volunteers Association Online
5	Peter Nygaard	24	Port Augusta Awards
7	Introducing Minister Zollo	25	Pye's Poems
8	The Eyre Peninsula Bushfires	26	Emergency Management
11	State Road Crash Rescue Challenge		Volunteers Summit 2005
		27	Letters

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Chairman's report



“All the benefits the Association has won in ensuring volunteer representation on matters concerning them could be lost in a backroom compromise.”

To say the last three months have been busy for the Association and Derren would be an understatement. Government attempts to move the Emergency Services Legislation through the parliament has once again been stalled and the bill has gone to a conciliation stage where a small group of politicians from both sides sit around a table and come up with a bill that both sides are happy with. So much for consultation with the affected parties. All the benefits the Association has won in ensuring volunteer representation on matters concerning them could be lost in a backroom compromise. Derren, along with other volunteer representatives, has met on a number of occasions with the new Minister of Emergency Services and the Opposition to put forward our views on changes to the legislation. Both sides understand our concerns but it would seem the legislation is headed towards a stalemate.

By now you should be aware of the managerial changes that have taken place at state headquarters and be aware of the various leadership changes. While the association is yet to decide on following states lead and move to four regions, any feedback or productive comments would be welcomed. Currently, the Association is reviewing its constitution to ensure it continues to reflect the needs of the Association, so if we were to change, now could be the time.

On a more positive note, Derren has had meetings with interstate SES volunteer organisations with a focus on establishing a National SES Volunteer Association in the near future. Initially, the focus will be on sharing experiences with the different legislations and funding structures under which each state operates. Derren has also been asked to join the Volunteering SA Ministerial Advisory board as the representative for all volunteers working in emergency services throughout the state.

A lot of time has also been put into researching what volunteers want from a central call and dispatch system. This has included

visiting a call centre in Melbourne to develop a better understanding of how the system works and the impact it has on volunteers.

The Uniform Committee has met and made a number of recommendations. Samples of both dress and walking-out uniforms have been sourced. The final outcome may not be what everybody wants, but will address the need for a standard dress code for the Service. Along with the recent announcement of the purchase of new 4WD vehicles, comes news of increased funds for wet weather gear and other personnel protection equipment.

International Volunteers Day saw many units take the opportunity to recognise the efforts of volunteers and join in community celebrations. In Port Augusta, members of the Unit attended a volunteer expo which was organised by the local council; the Unit and two of its members received certificates of recognition from the council, as did other volunteers from different organisations. While the SES does have its own week in November, we are still made up of volunteers and it is great that the local community sees us as such. I would therefore encourage Unit managers to contact their local volunteer coordinator to see how and what community awards are available to volunteers. While on the subject of SES week, now would be a good time to start thinking about the Keith Lane Memorial award and nominating people.

I would encourage you all to take the time to read Derren's report to see just how busy things have been. If you have any concerns, ideas or comments, please take the time to contact either your regional representative or a member of the executive. Communication is a two-way street and we like to hear of the positive things as well as the negative, otherwise how do we know we are looking after SES volunteers' interests?

Till next time, stay safe.

Warren Hicks
Chairman, SASESVA

from the CEO's desk



Now that my first anniversary is approaching, it is probably a good time to reflect on how we are going. The "Case for Change" listed some 48 strategies to lift this organisation toward being recognised as a professional rescue emergency service. The actions were required to meet the very significant risks facing it and just to remind you of the key risks:

- Safety of our Volunteers
- Image of the organisation, and therefore attraction for recruiting and retention
- Financial governance
- Support to our frontline volunteers.

The Volunteer Association and the general members made it very clear to me that any, or even worse, all of these risks combined had the potential to significantly affect the future of the SES in SA.

If you review the strategies today the score is:

- 8 completed
- 32 work in progress (with arguably 6 or so that will always be ongoing, eg community liaison)
- 7 to be commenced 05/06
- 1 not commenced (see strategy 26)

Of the strategies completed or well under way they all link strongly to the key risks.

- Introduction of dedicated OHS&W resource and risk assessment completed
- Introduction of dedicated media/marketing expert and marketing plan completed
- Restructure of the service to focus paid resources on volunteer needs completed
- Introduction of a senior business manager and business support officers to assist with financial management and accountability completed
- Increase (from 3 to 5) of dedicated training Officers completed

OK - it is easy to sit back and say we have made significant headway with a plan only

tabled in November 2004, *but*, this plan is only the initial guide to get this organisation into basic shape. What is on the horizon?

We are currently implementing revised documented operational response systems that include intelligence gathering and planning into the "preparedness" stage. We aim to provide (and be seen to provide) leadership in the areas where we have legislative responsibility for flood and severe weather. Our performance at Karoonda in the response and recovery areas was fantastic - I was very impressed with our volunteers - the way they "volunteered" for extra clean up support to the community who are very appreciative of your efforts.

We are planning for the shift of call receipt and dispatch from SACFS to SAMFS in line with the introduction of the new computer dispatch project for all Emergency Services. This provides an opportunity to document and agree on all our dispatch criteria and "lock it in" to computer software that will reduce call out disputes between agencies.

We are planning new operational and corporate uniforms, roll out of more training "TRK"s, more new vehicles and building replacements or upgrades. The next year is going to be one of landmark change for this organisation.

Longer term, with the increase of severe weather events predicted, we are likely to be called on more and more to assist the community of South Australia. This means we need a long term plan and a clear vision of where we are going in say 10-20 years.

This is one of my main discussion points that we will be talking about when I catch up with you at our next Unit or Regional meeting.

David Place

Chief Executive Officer

State Emergency Service South Australia

PS - don't forget the invites for me to visit your Unit!

"I was very impressed with our volunteers - the way they volunteered for extra clean up support to the community..."

Executive Officer's report



“My personal thanks go out to all the volunteers that have been involved on project teams and contributed to this small piece of history that will stand the service on a solid platform well into the future.”

My apologies for the lateness of this edition of Frontline. The SASESVA have been in contract negotiations with Countrywide Media to secure this magazine for the next three years. These negotiations have gone well with the same format and quantity to continue, but with provision for an editor to be reimbursed for their time on the magazine. Countrywide Media will continue to solicit advertising for Frontline and I am sure that we will continue to have a great product at the end of it all. The editorial position for the magazine was advertised in August with a decision hopefully being made during our meeting on September 4.

I have been fortunate to be invited on the various trips around the state that the SHQ have been conducting. Many discussions have taken place in State on the best way to communicate with the volunteers through the State. Any messages when sent by mail, fax or e-mail are received but not always effectively heard by all members all of the time. Again, when visits are made by State not all members are available, but it is another way of directly talking to the troops, that helps spread the information and receive feedback and complaints. It has allowed myself and SHQ management to notice patterns across the State and discuss issues that have arisen. Without going through all of them, the ongoing issues with PPE and uniform top the list with these areas being addressed urgently.

So far, the trips have included a 3500km epic around the North of the State in 4 days and a 3-day journey through the East and South of the State. The hospitality that has been extended to us has been unbelievable. We arrived at Hawker to be greeted by not only a happy and vibrant unit but also a 3-roast meal with all the trappings including orange tablecloths, with orange and blue balloons. The BBQ at Roxby was great and the beast on the spit was amazing at Coober Pedy. We got up as far as Marla and Mintabie before heading south. All up, the visits have been a great success with all parties knowing more about what's going on around the State.

The SASESVA has also been travelling. Our last meeting was held at Pt Lincoln Unit and was a great opportunity for our committee to meet the local units and listen to the issues from the area. We also heard from Glen Cameron (SAFECOM) regarding the transition of the call, receipt and dispatch from CFS to the MFS Comcen in Wakefield St. This transition is moving along slowly but surely ensuring that our needs are met and improvements are forthcoming.

We have been working through the final negotiations with the Minister regarding the Fire and Emergency Services Bill and we are proud to announce its progression and projected proclamation on the 1st of October. This has been a monumental task starting with the Dawkins Report three years ago and finishing in the last couple of weeks. My personal thanks go out to all the volunteers that have been involved on project teams and contributed to this small piece of history that will stand the service on a solid platform well into the future. It has been an example of the success that comes when the workers are given the opportunity to contribute to their future direction. The SES membership has done this proudly.

The SASESVA are continuing to work on behalf of you, the SES volunteer, and are available for you to contact about any issue that is concerning you or indeed anything that is working well that you want to share with others. Please also have a look at our new website www.sasesva.org.au. You will find out the latest info on issues and also the new legislation for your perusal.

Regards

Derren Halleday
Executive Officer
SASESVA

Peter Nygaard



Since the last issue, I have visited the Adelaide Hills, Eastern Suburbs, Western Adelaide, Berri, Renmark, Pt Elliot, Ceduna, Pt Lincoln, Hawker, Roxby Downs, Mintabie, Coober Pedy, Andamooka and Murray Bridge Units. I thank all the Unit Managers and Members for their hospitality.

I have addressed some of the OHS issues that have been highlighted in the Moroney Report and will continue working on the OHS Systems we need for the future.

I agree there is a fair task ahead, but do not believe the desired result is unattainable. One of the most positive aspects of this task is the fact that everyone I meet within the Units and Regions is willing to go forward in a positive way. I will lay the foundation and with your assistance, build and maintain the structure. OHS starts with each and every one of you and in reality most of the OHS has direct links with everyday thought processes involving commonsense, self-preservation and teamwork.

Most workplaces are continually updating/improving their OHSW and the SES is no different. The focus is not only about providing the best rescue service for the community, but also about maintaining high levels of safety for our own members whilst providing this service.

Hazard Alerts

Hazard Alerts are not about publicly hauling someone over the coals. They are a speedy medium for sending information over a large area. They draw attention to an identified problem that may affect one or more Units. Take then on board and spread the message. Since the last issue, three alerts have been sent out.

- Deployment during operations
- Emergency flares
- Confined Spaces

If you are unaware of any of these, please contact your Regional Commander via your Unit Manager.

OHS Structure

Whilst the restructure of the organisation has been taking place, I have liaised with WorkCover Corp. and due to the “work groups” (Regions) changing, the following process will take place in the near future:

The SASES will have six OHS Committees:

- 1 committee per Region
- 1 VMR Committee
- 1 SES State Committee

All SES Units will have the opportunity to elect an OHS Liaison person at Unit level. This Liaison will be the immediate contact for OHS issues and report to the Regional OHS Committee. The State Committee will include Regional OHS Representatives, 1 VMR Rep, selected State HQ staff and Volunteer Association representation.

An information booklet is being developed and will be issued shortly. Bear two points in mind.

1. The SASES does not have a choice other than to restructure the OHS Committees due to changing the Regions from 9 to 4.
2. We, as an organisation, do not wish to lose the knowledge, experience, assistance and time commitment that all the current representatives have put in over the years and still wish to contribute. You are highly valued and an intricate link for the new process to operate effectively.

I look forward to visiting more Units and meeting members face to face in the near future. In the interim, contact me to discuss any OHSW issues you would like addressed.

Stay Safe.

Peter Nygaard

OHSW Officer
State Emergency Service
South Australia

“One of the most positive aspects of this task is the fact that everyone I meet within the Units and Regions is willing to go forward in a positive way.”

INTRODUCING MINISTER ZOLLO

Carmel Zollo MLC is South Australia's new Minister for Emergency Services.

“As the recently-appointed Minister for Emergency Services, Carmel is committed to continuing the Rann Government's strong support of all of South Australia's emergency service volunteers and salaried staff.”

Carmel has served South Australians as a Member of Parliament since 1997, and is the first Italian-born woman to be elected to the Legislative Council, and the first Italian-born Cabinet Minister.

Before becoming a Minister, Carmel's Parliamentary roles included Government Whip in the Legislative Council, and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry and Trade.

Carmel is committed to promoting South Australia and ensuring the successful development and export growth of the State's food and wine sectors.

She is Convenor of the Premier's Food Council, and continues as a member of the South Australian Wine Industry Council. She also Chairs the Food South Australia issues group, and the SA Wine Industry Council issues group.

As the recently-appointed Minister for Emergency Services, Carmel is committed to continuing the Rann Government's strong support of all of South Australia's emergency service volunteers and salaried staff.

“The thousands of SES volunteers around the State play one of the most vital roles in the community,” said Carmel.

“Along with our other emergency service organisations, the members of the SES often put their own lives on the line to make sure our communities are as safe and secure as possible.

“The contribution made by SES volunteers is highly respected by all South Australians, and is warmly acknowledged by the State Government, and myself personally.”

Carmel is also a passionate supporter and member of numerous community groups and organisations, is a Justice of the Peace, and is married with three adult children.

FRANK'S A WINNER

Western Adelaide Unit member Frank Ursino recently represented the Service in the Australia & New Zealand Police & Emergency Services Games 2005.

To say he performed well would be an understatement. Frank competed in three cycling events, taking a silver medal in the criterion, gold in the road race and another gold medal in the hill climb, (up Norton

“Frank is a true “quiet achiever”, always there when needed...”

Summit Road). Frank is a true “quiet achiever”, always there when needed and a valued member of the Unit. Those of us in the know realise the personal circumstances that confronted Frank during the competitions. His strength of character and willingness to represent the service has reinforced his hero status to all in the Western Adelaide Unit.



Frank Ursino with his awards



THE EYRE PENINSULA BUSHFIRES

An SES volunteer's perspective

The role of the State Emergency Service or SES is not well understood outside the service. To people watching the news it may appear to be a "Chainsaws and Tarps Brigade" or occasionally it is seen conducting land searches for people or evidence for the police, but it is much more than this. It is a specialised search and rescue service made up of volunteers with a very small paid cadre staff. Born out of the old Civil Defence Service of the UK, it is the lead combatant authority for flood and storm damage, land search, and most counter-disaster activities that don't involve fire.

On Monday, January 10, I was

driving up to Wirrulla with my family to visit my in-laws for a week. We stopped at Wudinna for a cold drink at 11:00am, it was already 45 degrees and I remember how hot it was then. The wind was gusting from the north and it was very unpleasant. At 8:45pm or 20.45 my duty manager pager went off requesting if we could assist the CFS. On contacting our unit manager it appeared the fires has been contained and we were not required.

The next morning the local radio station reported that the fire had jumped containment lines and was burning out of control. A few more urgent phone calls and the Cummins SES Unit was activated at 10:00am using the pager system. During the

Christmas break, most SES Units suspend training and although equipment and a stand-by roster is maintained, many people go away for the holidays. Consequently, we had to pull people from everywhere. I had a 350 kilometre drive and our unit manager was interstate. Many of our members who were farmers had already been out protecting their own properties.

Our appliance which is a Mitsubishi Canter 3.5 litre Rescue Truck had already been rolled and was tasked to carry meals and water from Wangary to the fire fighters at Edillilie. The welfare/communications officer was sent to collect cartons of bottled water and food from the local

supermarket as we would need to be self-sufficient for at least 24 hours. The radio room was opened up, the backup generator rolled out and run up as there was a strong possibility we were going to lose power (something that did happen later on). We also had the TV and commercial radio station tuned in to try and find out what was happening. Command and control was pretty fluid at this stage and Pt Lincoln and Tumby Bay were all being activated and drawn into the fray. It was soon very obvious one small crew and a truck could not do very much, but in perspective we were a cog in a much larger machine. When I caught up with the truck at Edillilie fire ground, our Unit was dispensing meals

and some members were helping with the large water tankers that were being filled to create an emergency reserve should we lose the Tod trunk water main. The flames were burning just at the back of the silos and Kevin Warren's water bomber was doing a good job; the plane was lower than the silos as it circled dropping water. The fire had cut the road to Wangary and down to Pt Lincoln; I couldn't believe how fast the fire had travelled. Some reports claimed it had spread 70 kilometres in less than 40 minutes. We received an urgent call to return to Cummins and assist police to set up a road block on the Bratten Way, the main road between Cummins and Tumbly Bay. As fire was burning around behind us, we had extra fire extinguishers and a woollen blanket for each crew in a burn over. So we had to be very careful not to get caught out.

It was very hard to get information on the fire's path which proved frustrating. Reports of people being killed were starting to filter in, but at this stage no one knew who they were. As the day went on, the number of casualties increased and the hospitals did an excellent job of treating people. This fire was much bigger in terms of life and property than the Tulka ones 4 years earlier. The fire was burning on a 26 kilometre front and was turning into a fire storm. All we could do was try and keep people out of its way.

The Cummins crew set up a road block which we were to maintain for nearly 3 and a half days. Back burning was well under way along the road to hold the fire and a tanker staging area was set up at Yallunda Flat. The fire had burned into North Shield, and we had unconfirmed reports that the fire was only 8 kilometres away from Tumbly Bay (which later proved to be false although a phase one warning had been issued). This was the second time in 4 years our house had been under threat and we couldn't do anything about it, due to circumstances beyond our control. The fire had cut the Lincoln Highway by now,

and the only way in or out of Cummins was via Lock and Cleve. When we did manage to get home 4 days later, we found burnt leaves and twigs from spot fires on our front and back lawn. So we were very lucky.

Cummins ran out of diesel fuel earlier in the afternoon, but fortunately two emergency tankers made it through and we were able to stock up. They had to remain in town as the fire had cut them off. As

the small hamlet of Wanilla – the town had just gone, vanished! There were piles of burning ashes where houses once stood. One of the worst situations for me personally that night was driving to my principal's house at Wandilla, turning on the truck's alley lights to see a huge pile of burning debris and not knowing if he and his family had got out. Fortunately, they had evacuated early and were OK.

“Burnt shattered trees and grey ash littered the landscape. Hundreds of dead sheep, kangaroos, foxes, rabbits, lay everywhere. Fences lay on the ground, their poles burnt through.”

predicted, the town lost power around 11:00pm and the Unit was now running on its own emergency generator; we had enough fuel for about 36 hours.

Around 23.30 that night, we were sent to do a reconnaissance of Wanilla and Duck Pond Road. Huge sugar gums had burned down and were blocking the road. We started chain sawing them up, but there were just too many, so we used drag chains to just pull them off the road using the truck. One of the most devastating scenes was

Driving down Duck Pond Lane at 1:30am was like a scene from the Somme in WW1. Burnt shattered trees and grey ash littered the landscape. Hundreds of dead sheep, kangaroos, foxes, rabbits, lay everywhere. Fences lay on the ground, their poles burnt through. We pulled huge logs and branches off the road. When the truck couldn't move them we used our chainsaws to reduce the weight of them. At the end of Duck Pond Lane the road was totally blocked by 6 large gum trees that were

traffic this incident generated. It was a bit crackly at the fire ground, due to the ionising radiation being generated by the flames. We also monitored and used UHF CB radio which worked well. A lot of CFS appliances were using UHF with good results, liaising with farmers who were carrying in extra water in their ute-mounted fire fighting units. Tuesday night we learned that some of our friends had lost their house at Moon Light Bay which meant the fire had crossed the Lincoln Highway



further up from North Shields. We were temporarily stood down on Friday 14. My wife and I travelled to their house site which was a pile of hot and twisted tin. There were a few small fires still burning and we disposed of their dead pet sheep. I left a message for them on a survey peg and we flagged off the area with SES tape to show them someone had been. I was extremely glad to see them and that they were ok when we finally tracked them down later that day. Saturday and Sunday were spent travelling around with the Cummins unit manager doing reconnaissance and arranging help for burnt-out people.

The clean-up started almost immediately on Monday. The following week we worked long shifts helping to roll up fences, open up roads and driveways that were littered with fallen trees. Psychologically, it was important for people trying to figure out where to start cleaning up, to have someone show up to help. An SES crew with a fully equipped

truck with its own generator, power and hand tools, water and food was a good boost. In a major disaster, the ability of rescue crews to be self-sufficient is well documented. There were also lots of volunteers turning up to help and this lifted morale as well. Often we were able to get people started to a point where they could take over.

We were busy felling half-burnt trees that were extremely dangerous if left. There was a shortage of chainsaws and we had an extra one sent down from Whyalla, (our truck normally carries three plus a hole saw). There were plenty of trees still burning a week later and it was hazardous as they could come down without warning, plus the ground could open up to have your boot in a pile of burning coals if you walked near a burnt tree. Cummins continued with clean-up work for the next week and a half, doing whatever tasking was required. Wednesday January 19 posed extreme weather conditions again so a combined CFS/SES

task force was assembled and a detailed SES operations plan was issued to all managers. Contingencies were put in place for communications failures and large numbers of assets in the form of people and equipment were strategically placed.

The high winds produced very bad dust storms reducing visibility to a few metres in some cases and bringing down further trees which we promptly removed. A good set of dust goggles was vital to work in these conditions.

The Cummins crew and their appliance stood down Thursday, January 20, although we were still getting callouts for fallen trees and we did some clean up work at Poonindie near North Shields and some more clean up work at Wandilla in the April school holidays. Lower Eyre Peninsula is still plagued by dust storms until we get some rain and I suspect that once winter arrives we still will have a problem with falling trees although a lot of work has been put into removing

dangerous vegetation from the roadside. Burn-offs and an outbreak near where the original fire started at Duck Lake Road have caused a few scares and tense moments for the local community.

In conclusion, I feel that small well equipped and trained SES teams certainly provided a valuable contribution to the bush fire fighting effort and during the post fire recovery stage. We had the advantage of a flexible command structure, local knowledge backed up by a good communication system. The trade-off from being small is that we worked longer shifts initially, as there were not the relief crews available from within our own unit. An official enquiry is still under way as this article is being written, but I hope we can learn from this experience to try and reduce the likelihood of it happening again.

By Julian Cousins
Deputy Manager Cummins SES

