



from the Presidents desk...

SESVA

Gordon Hall
SES Volunteers Association



May 2014

Here we are in May and the year is flying.

The storm season is upon us and SES Units are conducting training and preparing their Communities.

At the time of writing we have not seen any storm season campaign in the media which should link to the SES Units and preparation of their communities. Let's hope this happens soon.

Meanwhile the committee has been working hard in a number of areas including training and resolving a number of issues with DFES.

The Search for the Missing Aircraft - MH370

The dedication and professionalism of the State Emergency Service Volunteers from WA and the rest of Australia, both as Air Search Observers (ASO) and Ground Crew, was phenomenal. They worked tirelessly throughout the above operation.

On 21 April I wrote to Tony Abbott, the Prime Minister of Australia, to make him aware of the SES Volunteers across Australia who were involved and had done a great job in support of this International Operation.

I also advised the Prime Minister of the two AMSA staff and DFES staff who worked with and supported the SES Volunteers and ensured their needs were taken care of.

The total numbers for SES Volunteers in the roles of Air Search Observers, Ground Crew and VLOs was;

WA Metro	WA Country	SA	NT	Qld	Tas	ACT	NSW	Vic
77	12	4	4	4	8	8	9	12

The SES Ground Crews came from CSU and Bayswater whilst the SESVA provided the VLOs.

Further to this, DFES provide a total of 14 staff as ground support and Air Search Observers.

Commissioner Gregson

Our relationship in this area is going well and his assistance on a number of matters is appreciated.

There are now over 57 issues on our register, however we are sure the Commissioner would agree with us that many of these could be quickly resolved if there were quality systems and processes in place in particular areas of the organisation.



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Some areas in DFES work very well.

The SESVA will be work-shopping a number of issues on 8 May with the three Operations Command Chiefs with a view to identifying what is causing the biggest frustration to the SES Volunteers.

It is hoped that some of the systemic issues will be identified and strategies put in place to resolve these matters and make it easier for the SES Volunteers to carry on doing what they do best – as emergency service responders in their community.

SES Social Night

The SES social night was very successful and more than 60 Volunteers attended from a number of units.

It was a great opportunity to network and catch up with old and new acquaintances.

The SESVA presented the first of the **Outstanding Achiever Awards** at this function. It is hoped that this award will be presented from time to time for a Volunteer who has consistently, over a long period of time, gone above and beyond what is normally expected of a Volunteer.

The organising committee, Phillip Petersen and Ash Smith, did a great job and will be reporting and making recommendations for any future social event.

The feedback has been positive and some who did not attend want to be on the mailing list for next time.

Any comments please forward to sescomment@gmail.com.

Training

I attended the special training information night for SES Volunteers on 1 May.

The SES Training Pathways was again explained and some constructive feedback received.

Assistant Commissioner Darren Klemm advised the meeting that this will be signed off within four weeks.

The SES Volunteers Association will then print the pathway tables and send a number of copies to each unit.

Wayde Isard went through the Trainer/Assessor model and program that he wants to use. This appears to be built around a four day course whereas the SESVA has providers who can do it in less days.

Les Hayter will provide further information to DFES and hopefully we will get a shorter training course for those SES Volunteers who have training qualifications and transportable skills.

Those who have no background in training will need to do the four day course.

A number of communication issues between the Training Academy and SES Volunteers were identified by the Volunteers. DFES have made note of this.

DFES tried a video link but there were major issues and all Volunteers had dropped off by an hour later.



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Peer Support Team

The Director of Human Services, Karen Roberts, has advised the Association that due to Government policies on recruitment in this financial year, a halt has had to be put on the appointment of a coordinator for the Peer Support Team. It is disappointing that the Government has forced DFES down this path.

The DFES Volunteers Conference

The planning of the Conference by DFES is going well and there is acceptance of the 3 specialised SES specific sessions of 2 hours each, containing 3 fifteen minute presentations with a 20 minute Q&A session following each presentation.

The sessions would be; Training; Unit Management and Administration; Vehicles and Equipment.

DFES will circularise to all SES Units when registrations are open.

Media Coverage

The SESVA receives phone calls and emails about the lack of media for SES, so this Association requested a number of media matters for the SES Volunteers be organised by DFES.

A story about the SES and rescues on the 10th Anniversary of the death of an SES Volunteer during an operation was requested. And if the media outlets would do nothing then it was requested that an advertisement be placed in the media.

There was no internal acknowledgement at all of the death of James Regan, a highly respected and valued SES Volunteer who drowned during a rescue.

Nothing happened.

The Association requested media about the Volunteers, ASOs and Ground Crew, for the MH370 search be placed as a story. This was denied.

We requested DFES concurrence for the Association to do media work with the Chinese on what the SES Volunteers do in their community – with no reference to the MH370 operation.

DFES-media gave every reason why we should not get involved.

DFES-media promised a strong push for a feature in the Sunday Times on the SES and at the last minute said they would not waste their time as that was election weekend and chances of an article were very slim. Nothing has subsequently been done, even after AMSA approved any media releases.

Volunteers continually send us emails about no coverage for SES and more recently about a paid advert (assumedly by DFES) for another service in the newspaper and other articles about fire.

Volunteers keep asking us about the “all services picture” taken at the RAAF base of the uniformed services involvement in the search for MH370 – no SES. See the photo in the West 30 April. SES Volunteers ASOs or ground crew were not advised or invited.

The Association would like you to feedback your comments on media for SES to sescomment@gmail.com



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Legislation review

The Legislative Review Concept Paper has been released and submissions on this will close at the end of July.

The DFES team has put a lot of time and effort in their consultative process with stakeholders and DFES have placed their preferred options in this concept paper.

The SESVA Executive plus some other committee members (and SES Volunteer Jonothan Boswell who was involved in the ACT Legislation) went through the Concept paper on 1 May and listed quite a number of points for discussion.

A number of the DFES preferred options, if accepted, would certainly be a game change for the SES Units and Volunteers.

The SES Units and Volunteers have less than three months to provide their submissions to the Legislative review Team in DFES.

To assist the SES Volunteers to have an understanding of what is in the Concept Paper the SESVA will be conducting an information briefing on 15 May (6.30 for 7pm, Metro Inn, Canning Highway, Sth Perth).

The Association is investigating the use of technology so country units can listen in.

Notification of this session will be placed on the SESVA website and emailed to all SES Units in the next few days.

SES Volunteer Advisory Committee

The State Government Cabinet has now formally approved all the SESVAC members. There are a number of formalities to go through and then the SESVA will hold an induction day for the SES Volunteer members.

The Cabinet Appointed SES Volunteers are;

Shelley Staff, Trevor Patton, Mal Holt, Matthew Thomas, Phillip Petersen, Dave Beard and Gordon Hall.

The Deputies are;

David Fyfe, Keith Squibb and Bernard McNamara.

Cheers

Gordon Hall
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Copy of the letter to the Prime Minister from the SESVA



21 April 2014

The Hon. Tony Abbott, MP
Prime Minister of Australia
Parliament House
Canberra

CC: AMSA CEO, Graham Peachey

SUBJECT: MH 370 SEARCH - PERFORMANCE OF AMSA AND AIR OBSERVERS

Dear Prime Minister,

On behalf of the SES Volunteers Association (WA) I want to make you aware of the dedication and professional aspect of the State Emergency Service (SES) Volunteers, both as Air Search Observers (ASO) and Ground Crew who worked tirelessly throughout the above operation.

The SES Volunteers came from all over Australia, along with two AMSA staff from Canberra. They were also supported by four DFES (WA) District Officers.

These Volunteers were not only truly altruistic in their involvement but they also had the support of their family members, friends and employers.

In my role as the Volunteer Liaison Officer, I was able to observe the high standard of professionalism and organisation by two of AMSA's staff, David Ingram and Gary Stevens. Both David and Gary worked tirelessly to ensure all SES Volunteers from around Western Australia and the other states were catered for in an appropriate way.

This was done in a transparent and timely manner and they always acted quickly to resolve any issues brought to their attention. Nothing was too much trouble for them.

Without their dedication, this part of the operation would not have run as smoothly as it did.

On behalf of the SES Volunteers Association in Western Australia, I ask that you please convey our thanks to their department for all of their efforts and considerations for a job well done.

Kind Regards

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SES VOLUNTEERS ASSOCIATION