



SESVA

from the Presidents desk...

Gordon Hall
SES Volunteers Association



8 February 2016

Overview

During the Christmas New Year period many SES Volunteers undertook a fire support role for the bushfires in the South of the state. Many of us worked long hours in country and metropolitan areas assisting wherever we possibly could.

To me it is a great honour to be part of an organisation that works hard in their communities to defend the safety of everybody, during the many natural hazards that impact on each one of us.

As President of the SESVA, I would like to say “Well done everyone”. We consistently hear from community members how much they appreciate the sacrifices made by SES Volunteers and their families.

Traditionally, this is the time of year when SES Volunteers have their annual break, and attend to maintenance of equipment to ensure we are prepared for any activations throughout coming year. For many units, it didn't quite work that way this summer, with numerous callouts received to assist local governments and DFES with fire support.

Most SES Units have now returned to structured training and maintenance.

WoW Day 2015

The 2015 WOW Day was very successful. DFES Staff and SES Volunteers put in a great effort to organize and execute a simulated search and cliff rescue at Bicton.

Unfortunately, the DFES Commissioner and Minister Francis had to cancel their attendance at late notice on the morning of the event, due to the Esperance fires. However, they followed the rescue demonstration at Bicton closely (albeit from a distance).

The Association has continuously supported this annual SES event, however, we would hope a different demonstration scenario will be used in 2016.

Fire Support

Throughout this current summer, SES Volunteers have given the bushfire Volunteers and career firefighters a tremendous amount of support: at the recent fires in the Esperance, Waroona and other areas. Like all operations, there are parts that work well and other areas that could do with improvement.

The SESVA will work closely with DFES on identifying issues which occurred during these operations, with a view to improving future involvement in support roles.

Chief Superintendents

Late last year, two of the Chiefs in Operations Command changed positions, with Craig Waters taking over Country South, and Murray Bawden taking over Country North. It is good that CS Gary Kennedy has remained with Metro as we need to retain continuity in this group.



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CS Craig Waters comes with a wealth of recent experience in the Operations area and we have found him to be very support of SES Volunteers when working with him on various issues.

During the past December/January period the SESVA resolved more than 20 issues with about 51 still outstanding.

There are still a number of outstanding issues, and we are working through these with Operations Command. These include some activation matters via Comcen.

Superintendent Bignell has been very helpful in the process of analyzing these with his team. It is hoped that this will lead to fewer issues being identified as we go along.

Training

Training remains a major issue for SES Volunteers, the SESVA and DFES. We are receiving reports from many Volunteers advising that on reviewing their trainer/assessor records they discovered their qualifications have been deleted. The SESVA had sought RPLs and/or a transition phase to be implemented as DFES moves away from national competencies. The SESVA has worked hard with a number of DFES staff, who have been most helpful. However, there are some matters that the SESVA do not agree with.

The SESVA has been working closely with DFES on the trainer/assessor course. This course has now been modified to provide instruction on how to teach. It is our understanding there will be assessments at a level similar to what will happen in the field.

There has been a lot of feedback about the "Protect and Preserve an Incident Scene" as a member of a Land Search Team.

After a number of meetings with DFES about this matter, we are happy to report that it is no longer a separate unit, so no certificate is issued. It is part of the Land Search course.

The SESVA has been advised by DFES that Training Course Work Books will be available on thumb drives. If Volunteers want a hard copy they are welcome request it. We are aware of at least one District Officer who is assisting the SES Volunteers in this area.

The Association welcomes all your feedback on training issues. So keep the information coming. Your feedback to the Association, on these and other issues, should be channeled via the SES Local Manager. The SESVA can then represent these concerns to DFES.

Air Observers

During the MH370 search in 2014, SES air Observers put in hundreds of hours searching the Indian Ocean. During this time it was realised their uniform was no longer suitable.

District Officer Allen gale advised the SESVA that a change to the SES Air Observers uniform has recently been approved by the DFES Operations Executive. The uniform consists of the black SES polo shirt, orange SES trousers and dark shoes. Qualified SES Air Observers are entitled to an additional polo shirt.



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Air Observers should ensure that they have at least two SES polo shirts issued. The FESA teal coloured polo shirts are no longer to be worn by Air Observers and should be disposed of.

Vehicle Weights

The vehicle weight issue relating to GVM upgrades, took an interesting turn this week, with the Fleet Group advising that (my understanding) units wanting an upgrade need to discuss this with their Regional Office. Apparently, approval is being given for the upgrades using their Unit/LG funds (their words).

Another interesting matter reported to and investigated by the SESVA is the maximum weight of PCs. The SESVA has inspected two PCs, and found that the weights sticker says a maximum of 3300Kgs. The compliance plate, however, states a maximum of 3200kgs.

Please check your stickers and compliance plates as these should match.

The SESVA has requested a sticker outlining the weights and number of passengers that each vehicle can carry. This request is to ensure there is no confusion and the driver is aware of his/her responsibility, as per the Road Traffic Act in relation to that vehicle.

The sticker provided for all Personnel Carriers says "... refer to Annex A of Loading Guide for further information". The SESVA will keep working with DFES to get a satisfactory outcome on this matter.

FIRST AID

The SESVA has been advised that the long awaited First Aid tender is expected to go to market by the end of February. We will keep you advised as this progresses.

Level 1 and Level 2 Incident Controllers

There has been confusion on this matter after a Level 1 course was conducted in the country. The SESVA has requested a meeting with DFES to discuss further and to ensure there is no confusion on the incident ground.

Fuel Cards for all SES Units

This initiative was proposed by the Nationals during the 2013 state election, however the current government extended it to all SES Units (and other BGUs).

DFES' Georgina Camarda and her team have worked very hard to ensure a good outcome for the SES Units and Volunteers.

The latest figures showed only three SES Units have not applied for the card. This is a good result.

Some units have already worked out effective ways for distribution and are looking forward to receipt of the card.



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The Use of Buses during the Fire Season

The SESVA-BHPB buses have been used extensively throughout the recent bush fires. The buses have been transporting career and Volunteer firefighters, Incident Management Teams and SES Volunteers as part of the IMTs and others.

The distances covered are quite large and the latest tally for January exceeds 9000 kms.

Some of the issues of last summer were addressed by Chief Superintendent Gary Kennedy who quickly approved detailing and any repairs of the buses immediately after the Waroona operation was wound down. This was done to ensure they were ready to go again if required for any other events.

I must mention here, that feedback received by the SESVA about the drivers and navigators dedication in ensuring the safety of their passengers and delivery in a timely manner, has been very positive.

Well done to all SES Volunteers involved.

Goldfields Challenge

Every year the Kalgoorlie-Boulder SES Unit has conducted a Challenge event which was based around the training of SES Volunteers and expected outcomes.

The Challenge provided a competitive and realistic environment to assist in developing and maintaining the rescue skills required of SES Emergency Responders, as well as encouraging networking and camaraderie between SES Volunteers throughout WA, in a friendly and competitive environment.

The Challenge has been very successful over many years.

Recently DFES have reviewed the transport arrangements and it is our understanding that a DFES circular will be issued shortly on this matter.

Peer Support

In 2014 the SESVA facilitated a meeting between DFES and the Peer Support group with the objective being that DFES would follow the process which has been used by and for SES Volunteers for over twenty years.

Despite a number of Peer Supporters completing training in this area since 2014, there have been numerous delays implementing the program, and SES Volunteers have expressed disappointment in what they perceive as a lack of support for the SES Peer Support Group.

DFES Karen Roberts (Director Human Services) agreed to meet six SES Volunteers on this matter. This gave the Volunteers an opportunity to provide feedback and express their concerns.

The good news is that Karen has mapped some outcomes for her team. Graham Fixter will carry on leading the team and will commence SES Peer Support team meetings.

Graham will also be reporting back to the Association on a monthly basis so we can work closely with DFES to ensure the momentum keeps going and the agreed outcomes achieved.



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Bunnings Fund Raising BBQ Event

The assistance by Bunnings on this matter has been greatly appreciated by all SES Units involved.

The SESVA was involved in the making of two promotional videos and a poster for the marketing of this event.

It is expected that funds raised will be received from Bunnings by the end of the month and then deposited in Unit bank accounts shortly after.

Every cent raised from the sales and donations at these events goes back to the SES Units involved at the particular stores.

The SESVA has made an "Appreciation Certificate" for any SES Units involved to present to their Bunnings store as a thank you for their assistance. The SES Units can request this (by email) from the SESVA Office after next week.

SES Units and Internal Management

Most SES Units are incorporated bodies (under the *Associations Incorporation Act 1987*) which gives the members total control over their fundraising and donation monies.

The spending of these funds must be in compliance with the Unit's constitution and the *Associations Incorporation Act 1987*.

Any discipline of members relating to non-operational matters (ie. as a member of the incorporated body) is also a unit matter.

Under each unit's constitution there will be a grievance process which should follow the *Principles of Natural Justice* in relation to any disciplinary action decided upon by the Management Committee.

This is a privilege and is a part of the Units' self-determination.

There cannot be any outside influence by DFES or LG on these internal matters, as it is the incorporated body that determines discipline and expenditure of fundraising and donations received by the unit.

Cheers

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