SESVA President's Report for 2025-26

Reporting period: 1 July 2025 to 30 June 026

Presented by Greg Cook, ESM, President

It is my pleasure to present the President's Report for the 2025–2026 financial year.

The past year has been an important one for the State Emergency Service Volunteers Association of Western Australia. The Association has continued to represent the interests of SES volunteers, engage with the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, support member units, and advocate for the equipment, training, recognition, and working conditions needed by volunteers across Western Australia.

I acknowledge the DFES Grant that allows the Association to function in our fine state.

I acknowledge that this report has been prepared using publicly available information. The Treasurer's report and the Association's formal financial records should be read alongside this report for the complete AGM record.

1. Recognition of SES volunteers

On behalf of the Association, I extend my sincere appreciation to every SES volunteer who contributed during the year.

SES volunteers continue to provide an essential service to Western Australian communities. They respond to storms, floods, searches, rescues, road crash assistance, damage assessments, welfare support, and many other incidents often at short notice and in challenging conditions.

The contribution of volunteers extends well beyond emergency response. Members maintain vehicles and equipment, undertake training, attend exercises, support community education, conduct administration, and provide leadership within their units and regions.

The Association recognises the commitment of volunteers who contribute during emergencies, as well as those who work quietly behind the scenes to keep units prepared and operational.

2. Representation and advocacy

A central responsibility of SESVA WA is to ensure that the views of volunteers are heard in discussions affecting the future of the SES.

During 2025–2026, the Association continued discussions with DFES on a range of operational and volunteer issues, including:

- the Fit-for-Role program;
- vehicle fleet requirements;
- equipment and uniform needs;
- the role and workload of unit managers;
- volunteer consultation and representation; and
- the long-term capability of SES units across the State.

The Association provided feedback on the proposed Fit-for-Role arrangements and

sought responses to matters raised by volunteers. The publicly reported discussions included consideration of a proposed trial involving five units. SESVA also highlighted the importance of ensuring that implementation is practical, properly supported, and does not place unreasonable additional responsibilities on volunteers or unit managers.

The Association also supported consultation through the SES Volunteers Advisory Committee, including work relating to fleet assessment. Discussions with DFES included the condition, suitability, replacement, and availability of vehicles, equipment, and uniforms.

These matters are important because volunteers must be properly equipped and supported to undertake their duties safely and effectively. Advocacy will remain a key priority for SESVA WA.

3. DFES grant agreement

A significant milestone during the year was the confirmation of a DFES grant agreement for 2025–2026 with a three-year term.

Following consultation and feedback from SESVA, improvements were incorporated into the agreement. The agreement was signed on 30 June 2025 by the SESVA President and the DFES Commissioner.

This longer-term arrangement provides a more stable basis for the Association's planning and operations. It also reflects the value of maintaining a constructive relationship between SESVA, DFES, and the volunteer membership.

The Association will continue to ensure that grant arrangements support meaningful representation, sound governance, and outcomes that benefit SES volunteers and their units.

4. Strategic planning

During the year, SESVA commenced work on a new strategic plan.

The purpose of the plan is to provide a clear direction for the Association and to ensure that its activities reflect the priorities and concerns of member units. Consultation with members and regional representatives will be important as the plan is developed.

The strategic planning process is expected to consider:

- effective representation of SES volunteers;
- communication with members and units;
- advocacy on operational capability;
- volunteer welfare, support, and retention;
- governance and succession planning;
- regional participation; and
- the Association's relationship with DFES and other stakeholders.

A strong strategic plan will help SESVA remain focused, accountable, and responsive to members.

5. Governance and committee development

Good governance is essential to the credibility and effectiveness of the Association.

The Management Committee continued to meet during the year and considered matters affecting SES volunteers across Western Australia. The Association also continued to

review its committee structure and the distribution of responsibilities.

A proposal was considered to create a third Vice President position. The intention was to strengthen the executive structure, distribute workload, and improve the Association's capacity to support members and undertake representative work.

The Association also welcomed new committee representatives for the Kimberley, Pilbara, Midlands, North Coastal, South East and North East regions. Regional representation is essential to ensuring that the experiences of volunteers outside the metropolitan area are understood and reflected in the Association's advocacy.

I thank all committee members and regional representatives for their time and commitment. Committee work is often undertaken in addition to operational and personal responsibilities, and it is important that this contribution is acknowledged.

6. Communication with members

SESVA continued to use newsletters, website updates, committee communications, and other channels to keep members informed.

Communications during the year included updates concerning:

- governance and committee matters;
- the annual general meeting;
- Fit-for-Role discussions;
- fleet, equipment, and uniform issues;
- volunteer recognition;
- awards and achievements; and
- opportunities for member involvement.

Effective communication is a two-way responsibility. The Association will continue to improve the timeliness and clarity of information provided to members, while encouraging units and volunteers to raise issues through their regional representatives and the Management Committee.

7. Recognition and awards

The achievements of SES volunteers were recognized through the 2025 WAFES Awards.

Esperance SES received the SES Team Achievement Award. Joshua Yates of Margaret River SES was recognized as the SES Young Person of the Year, and Connie Reed of Newman SES received the Peter Keillor Award.

These awards demonstrate the professionalism, commitment, and community spirit of SES volunteers across Western Australia.

SESVA also congratulated SES volunteers who were named as finalists in the 2026 WAFES Awards. Regardless of the final award outcome, being nominated or selected as a finalist is a significant achievement and reflects the high standard of work being undertaken by volunteers.

I congratulate all nominees, finalists, recipients, and the units that supported them.

8. Wear Orange Wednesday

The Association supported Wear Orange Wednesday on 20 May 2026.

WOW Day provides an opportunity for communities, partner agencies, and governments to recognize the contribution of SES volunteers. It is also an important way to raise public awareness of the work undertaken by volunteers throughout the year.

Recognition events such as WOW Day are valuable, but they should be accompanied by practical support. Volunteers need appropriate equipment, effective training, reliable facilities, strong leadership, and a clear voice in decisions that affect their service.

9. Volunteer capability and preparedness

The capability of the SES depends on the readiness and confidence of its

volunteers. The year reinforced the importance of:

- fit-for-purpose vehicles;
- reliable communications;
- suitable personal protective equipment;
- appropriate uniforms;
- regular training and exercising;
- safe operating procedures;
- effective unit leadership; and support for volunteers after difficult incidents.

SES volunteers also contribute to broader emergency-management capability through cooperation with other emergency services. Publicly reported examples included joint preparedness and training activities involving SES members and other emergency-service personnel.

As hazards and community expectations continue to change, SESVA will advocate for a volunteer service that is appropriately resourced and prepared for future demands.

10. Membership and regional representation

SESVA recognises the importance of representing volunteers from every part of Western Australia.

Regional conditions vary considerably. Metropolitan, regional, remote, coastal, agricultural, and northern communities may face different operational challenges, including distance, availability of resources, travel requirements, climate, communications, and volunteer recruitment.

The Association will continue to encourage participation from all regions and to ensure that regional views are included in policy discussions and strategic planning.

The available public information does not provide a definitive membership total for the 2025–2026 reporting period. The Association's membership records and formal reports should be relied upon for that information.

11. Challenges for the Association

The Association continues to operate in an environment of increasing

complexity. Key challenges include:

- recruiting and retaining volunteers;
- balancing emergency-service commitments with work and family responsibilities;
- ensuring that volunteers are consulted about major changes;

- maintaining appropriate regional representation;
- securing sustainable funding;
- strengthening succession planning;
- ensuring that equipment and vehicles are replaced in a timely manner; and
- supporting volunteers' wellbeing and safety.

These challenges cannot be addressed by the Association alone. They require continued cooperation between SESVA, DFES, local governments, unit managers, regional representatives, and volunteers.

12. Priorities for 2026–2027

Looking ahead, the Association's priorities should include:

- Continuing constructive advocacy with DFES on Fit-for-Role arrangements.
- Monitoring the implementation of the three-year grant agreement.
- Progressing and consulting on the SESVA strategic plan.
- Continuing advocacy on fleet, equipment, uniforms, and operational capability.
- Strengthening regional representation and member engagement.
- Improving communication with units and volunteers.
- Supporting recognition of SES achievements and service.
- Reviewing governance and succession arrangements.
- Promoting volunteer safety, welfare, and sustainability.
- Ensuring that volunteers remain central to decisions about the future of the SES.

13. Acknowledgements

I thank the WA Governor, his Excellency Chris Dawson, Minister Reece Whitby, former Minister Paul Papalia, DFES Commissioner, senior DFES officers, staff, local government partners, and other emergency-service agencies for their cooperation during the year.

I also thank the SES Volunteers Advisory Committee, unit managers, regional representatives, and all members who provided feedback and contributed to discussions.

My appreciation goes to the SESVA Management Committee, executive officers, secretary, treasurer, and all volunteers who assisted with the Association's work. Your contribution is essential to the continued operation of SESVA.

Finally, I thank every SES volunteer and their families, employers, and supporters. Volunteers make an extraordinary contribution to the safety and resilience of Western Australian communities. That contribution deserves continued respect, recognition, and practical support.

14. Conclusion

The 2025–2026 year demonstrated the continuing importance of a strong and representative SES Volunteers Association.

SESVA has continued to advocate for volunteers, engage with DFES, support member units, participate in discussions about future capability, and recognise the achievements of SES members across Western Australia.

There is more work to do. However, with continued member participation, constructive engagement, and a clear focus on volunteer needs, SESVA is well placed to continue representing SES volunteers and supporting the future of the service.

Thank you for your commitment, your service, and your support of the Association.

Greg Cook ESM
SES Volunteers Association of Western Australia Inc.