



SES Volunteers

Association of WA (Inc)

One Association - Many Values

Local Managers Workshop – preparing for the Legislation Review

SESVA President Greg Cook opened the SES Local Managers workshop at Cottesloe on 9th July. In welcoming the 44 participants, of which all but the two presenters were SES volunteers. Greg highlighted the importance of taking this opportunity for consultation and discussion to develop a collaborative position before the government Green Paper is developed in relation to the consolidation of the three Emergency Service Acts.

The process being followed is one that respects the SES volunteers and their requirements into the future. Most importantly the discussion enables the sharing of information with each other so as to make the best decision on behalf of the SES volunteers.

The culmination of the workshop findings, ongoing consultation and further research into options that support a reset of the of the current legislation will empower the SESVA to represent SES volunteers in WA at this crucial juncture.

Guest presenter

Greg introduced guest presenter and workshop facilitator, Associate Professor Dr Michael Eburn. Michael is the leading Australian researcher in the area of emergency services and emergency management and law.

Michael's observations in relation to the legislation included:

- Not to make it worse than the current provisions.
- That SES is not expected to stop a flood or storm, as opposed to stopping a fire.
- SES personnel are all volunteers – there are no paid staff.
- There is no need for Units to be incorporated, refers to the current Act. 37.1.

Michael provided an overview of the different emergency services legislative arrangements in place for Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland to provide an opportunity for participants to gain an understanding of the approach taken on the east coast of mainland Australia.

Greg introduced Craig Masarei, former Chief Legal Officer with the Water Corporation, now retired. Craig has a long association with State legislation and the law in WA, is assisting the SESVA with the legislative process. Craig provided a summary of what to expect:

- The three Acts being consolidated are the WA Fire Brigades Act of 1942, the WA Bush Fires Act of 1952 and the Fire and Emergency Services Act of 1998.
- Need to lobby for what SES Units want to see included in the GREEN PAPER
- SES Brand is powerful – ORANGE.
- Cherry pick from the Recommendations of previous reviews - 2006, 2011, 2014, 2016 etc.
- A concept paper 2014 provides a position to start from.
- Decide if Local Government involvement is to be retained.
- Retain independence and the ability to fundraise

Workshop

Participants spent the afternoon workshopping their experiences in relation to volunteering and community emergency services, following these steps:



- what works well;
- what doesn't work; and
- what needs to change.

Refer APPENDIX for detail.

Next steps:

Communication:

- Develop a planned approach to be ready to inform the review process.
- On receipt of the GREEN PAPER from government, bring units back to Perth to workshop the contents.
- Share key ideas with government and senior DFES staff.

Develop a strategy on how to meet the needs of the community in the 'wish list'.

Determine what resources we need to do it.

Prepare summaries and cover documents and options for attendees of the next workshop.



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APPENDIX

Current arrangements - what seems to be working well:

Transparency.

Brand - not to be consumed.

Fund raising / donations. Careful not to preclude the option.

LEMC membership is permitted/allowed.

In summary:

- really like the brand - exist independently "There shall be an SES".
- Autonomy/empowerment.
- Centralised funding - not at the whim of the Treasurer.
- D.O. Natural Hazards with SES background (culture retention)
- Insurance - legal protection.
- Prescribed functions.
- Local engagement – community based.

Under the current arrangements – this what doesn't seem to be working well:

One culture.

Title - DFES needs to change to ESA (remove Fire)

Local government inconsistencies.

Need a charter e.g. Victorian, CFA.

- "A Parliament recognise Commitment to consult,....."

Similar to SES authority in Victoria e.g. half the board members to be volunteers (ask the CFA for their structure etc)

Culture/personalities.

Separate identity "There shall be a and it shall do.....and commit to volunteers....."

What needs to change:

Legislated inclusion-

- "there shall be an SESWA"
- "there shall be a Chief Officer"
- "there shall be Regional Officers who have a SES background"
- The SES culture will be maintained.
- Staff to be appointed under the Public Service Act.
- They shall be an authority (which appoints the CEO or Chief Officer - a board to recommend if government appointed).
- A board will be made up of half volunteers who are elected by the volunteers or the member units.
- Unit Management structure will be included.
- How far does Unit democracy extend?



- Training Academy as an RTO to be able to deliver recognised national training - ASQA
- All SES volunteers - no staff.
- Funding model to exclude Local Government.
- Maintain local government relationship and lines.
- SES to be granted a seat on the LEMC
- Local fundraising permitted.
- Provision for sustainability to stop SES or reduce likelihood of a Unit existing, to include non-local government aligned Units, such as Canine SES, CSU and SWORD SES Logistics.



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