

A Message from the Chief Executive, David Place



The State Budget was announced recently amid unprecedented challenges from the global financial crisis. Whilst the State Government has had to make some difficult funding decisions, it has fortunately continued its focus on community safety and our sector has, comparatively speaking, fared well.

We will benefit from a \$150m upgrade to the Government Radio Network over the next 4-5 years which will see the current analogue system used by police, ambulance and our fire and emergency services personnel transition to a digital network. Our annual capital programs continue to be supported with \$21m for 2009-10 including \$12.1m for CFS, \$6.2m for MFS and \$2.9m for SES.

Whilst our sector fared relatively well in terms of targeted savings measures, it is important to note the Government has established a Sustainable Budget Commission (SBC). The SBC will be asked to achieve additional budget improvement measures of \$750m over the next four years. This is a key component of the strategy to return the State Budget to surplus by 2012-13.

It will be important for the Board to take a lead role in identifying opportunities for the sector to maximise efficiencies that **do not** compromise our service delivery to the community for SBC to consider.

To this end the Board will hold a workshop in August to identify areas where we could approach things differently and maybe leverage our resources to greater effect.

An excellent example of how a new approach can achieve savings is featured on page 5. SAFECOM's David Lynch has secured Agency Accreditation from the Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure to build facilities which will see savings of up to \$1m each year for the CFS and SES. Initiatives like this are what the Board and I are keen to explore.

On a lighter note, I am pleased to see those who have performed above and beyond the call of duty over so many years being recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours. Heartfelt congratulations to you all.



SECTOR HIGHLIGHTS

As reported in the last edition of *COMMe^{nt}*, each agency is required to submit a Highlights Report to the Board aligned to the sector's six key focus areas. Apart from strategic and unit planning, preparing for Parliamentary Estimates and operational responses, the following are some of the highlights for June.

CFS

Leadership

Many managers have been representing CFS on the Bushfire Task Force subgroups, focusing on 11 thematic areas. CFS is the lead agency for future response in a changed climate and actions on 'Upper Extreme Risk'.

Prevention and Community Preparedness

Twenty-four volunteers have been trained to provide a bushfire education and awareness program to their local communities as part of the Volunteers in Community Education, or VOICE, pilot project.

Operational Preparedness

The Minister for Emergency Services has approved the purchase of additional Bulk Water Carriers, VHF radios and building condition audits.

Business Excellence

Mt Gambier, Tea Tree Gully, Kyneton and Swan Reach projects have reached practical completion.

MFS

Prevention and Community Preparedness

Twelve Road Awareness and Accident Prevention Program sessions were delivered to schools.

Operational Preparedness

Eighteen recruits graduated from the 14-week training program to join the MFS and 25 rescue specialists completed the Urban Search and Rescue course.

An Emergency Response Plan for ABB Grain Port Lincoln is being compiled.

Business Excellence

Paradise Fire Station has achieved practical completion and the steel structure of the new Seaford Fire Station has been completed.

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From the Board

Update from the June SAFECOM Board meeting.

Budget

The Board considered the fact that the new Sustainable Budget Commission will be seeking to review agency budgets given the Government's savings targets of \$150 million in 2010-11, \$250 million in 2011-12 and \$350 million in 2012-13.

The Board determined that it would be advisable to be proactive in terms of determining areas where more effective use of resources might be achieved across the sector. To that end, the Board will hold a workshop in the near future to brainstorm ideas.

Building Replacement

The Board endorsed the Non-Current Asset Policy (capital projects) subject to some minor amendments. The policy includes the requirement of the chief officer/executive to recommend agency annual and three-year capital expenditure plans for the approval of the Board. The Board will also approve the 10-year land and building plan.

The Board considered a draft discussion paper on building replacement principles. The paper provided guidance on when precincts, regional hubs and co-location are to be considered and referred to the need for assessing community risk and building condition. The Board requested the principles be updated to reflect the need to assess the economic, financial and social return on investment. The discussion paper included locations that presented opportunities for precinct/regional hub development.

The Board asked that the principles be provided to its next meeting for approval and they be used to assess the agencies three-year capital plans.

Once building condition audits and the Emergency Services Delivery Standards project have been completed, a 10-year building replacement plan will be developed.

False Alarms

From looking at agency highlight reports, the Board noted both MFS and CFS attend a significant number of false alarms. SAFECOM Strategic Services will work with the agencies to develop a Board paper on the issues and budget impacts.

Board Committees

The Board approved establishing a sub-committee called the Operational PPRR Committee to provide leadership on cross-sector aspects of operational preparedness, response and recovery. The committee will be made up of the chief officers and David Place. The Learning and Development Committee and the deputy chief officers will report to this committee.

Workforce Plans

The Board approved SAFECOM's workforce plan which will now be added to the intranet. Both MFS and CFS plans were tabled at the meeting and will be considered fully at the July meeting.

SECTOR HIGHLIGHTS Continued from page 1

SAFECOM

Leadership

A cross-sector meeting was held to discuss the work packages required to implement changes to the *Fire and Emergency Services Act*.

Prevention and Community Preparedness

The business case for a telephony-based emergency warning system for SA and associated community education strategies was completed.

Twenty-three media releases were issued for the sector promoting activities such as Volunteer Week, FloodSafe, the USAR 48-hour exercise, the Board's visit to the South-East and the homecoming of the CFS firefighter injured in the Victorian bushfires.

Sixty culturally and linguistically diverse media outlets were added to the media distribution list to increase the reach of media releases and safety messages.

Business Excellence

SLAs between SAFECOM Public Affairs and the MFS and CFS have been drafted, awaiting agency endorsement (SES's is already completed) and SLAs between Volunteer Strategy and Support and the CFS and SES have been provided to agencies for comment.

SES

Operational Preparedness

The Extreme Weather Hazard Plan has been completed and will be tabled at the next State Mitigation Advisory Group meeting.

Response

SES has evaluated a medium size vehicle (used and designed by Tasmania and NSW SES) that can be utilised as a specialised road crash rescue and a general purpose rescue vehicle. Two prototypes will now be built for further testing.

From April 23-27, SES responded to 446 calls for assistance around the metropolitan and Adelaide Hills areas during the storm and flooding event.

Business Excellence

Final preparations are underway to implement the Training Administration System (TAS), used in the CFS, into SES in the new financial year.

The SES is in the process of introducing a chaplaincy to the service.

Volunteers

T-shirts for Kinglake

By John Collins, MFS firefighter, on behalf of the Australian Professional Firefighters Foundation (APFF)

Our deployment to Victoria

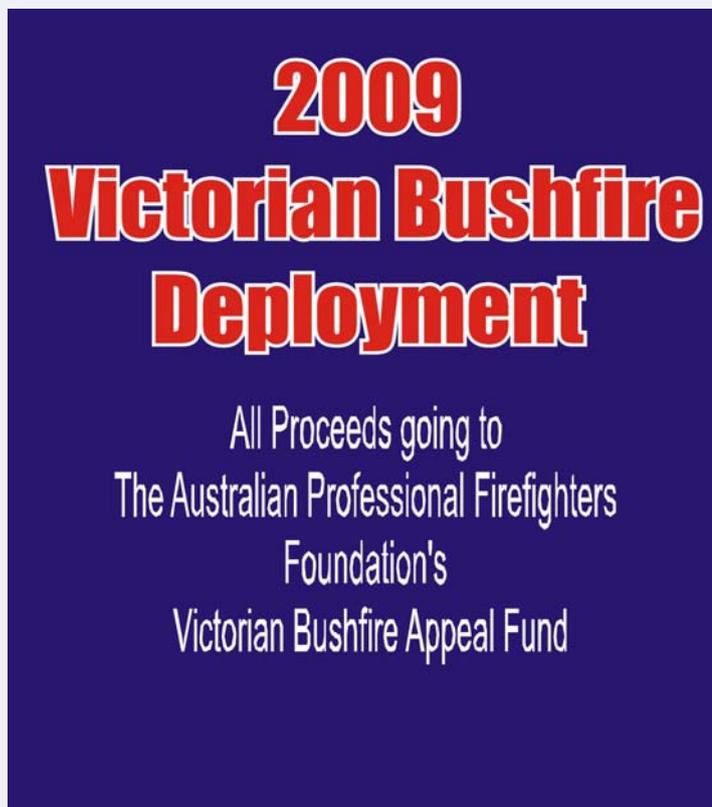
I was a member of a four-person volunteer Peer Support Team that was sent to the Victorian Bushfire area of Lilydale to look after the staff of CFA Region 13 Headquarters, Toolangi, Kinglake West and Kinglake.

The involvement of our two peer groups generated a very positive response with a genuine acceptance that we South Aussies (or Mexicans as they called us) had made the effort to come and help. Our role in Victoria was to offer the CFA staff a fellow fire service support avenue - someone they could talk to and relate to in their time of need.

The situations they had faced and the courage needed to do so had been remarkable. These people and their experiences really moved us and meeting the Kinglake Brigade was life changing. The difference those four days seemed to make, especially to the people of Kinglake, was quite amazing.

How the t-shirts evolved

During our visits to Kinglake we were asked if we could give them our t-shirts as a memento of our time spent in Kinglake. Of course we couldn't do this as we were required to wear them while on duty, however on our return we sought management approval to produce the t-shirts, which were funded by the APFF.



Above: A graphic of the text that appears on the back of the special edition 2009 Victorian Bushfire Deployment t-shirt. The front of the t-shirt is the same as the MFS fire and rescue t-shirts.



Above: John Collins (fourth from right) and Anthony Brice (second from left) with CFA members during their time at Kinglake.

They are available for everyone

We will fulfil our promise by giving 40 t-shirts to the Kinglake Brigade as a memento. The remainder of the t-shirts will be available for anyone who wishes to purchase them at \$20.00 per garment. They will be available within the next few weeks from either SAMFS Reception during normal weekday working hours or by ringing Billy on 0410 641 879 or John on 0419 845 783.

All proceeds of the sales of these shirts will go to the APFF Victorian Bushfire Charity Appeal.

Building Partnerships

David – the ‘Lynchpin’ to success

Last month a milestone - five years in the making - was achieved for SAFECOM that will see potential cost savings of up to \$1 million per annum for the CFS and SES.

SAFECOM's Building Project Officer, David Lynch finalised negotiations with the Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure (DTEI) to make the CFS/SES partnership only the second in the SA Government to receive Agency Accreditation to build facilities valued up to \$1 million. In certain circumstances, approval may even be extended for facilities valued greater than this.

In commending David for the initiative, SAFECOM Chief Executive David Place said it demonstrates how the service provided by SAFECOM can create efficiencies for the sector.

“It means that we will be able to manage CFS and SES construction projects that fall within these values, ensuring that the agencies not only save money, but have greater control over such projects,” he said.

“This is a great example of how SAFECOM has achieved a significant outcome for multiple agencies.”

SES Chief Officer Stuart Macleod and CFS Chief Officer Euan Ferguson also extended their thanks to David for achieving this positive outcome for their agencies.

“With Agency Accreditation under our belts, we can look forward to managing our own destinies in this critical part of service management. On behalf of the SA State Emergency Service, I thank David sincerely for achieving this milestone for all of us,” Stuart said.

Further to this, Euan said “We all sincerely thank David Lynch for his dogged tenacity in working towards this goal. He has put his heart and soul into achieving this outcome and worked harder and longer than could or should ever be reasonably expected.”

H1N1 Influenza (Swine Flu) Update

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As you would have seen in the media, Australia has shifted to a new phase in response to H1N1 Influenza 09 which is called AUSTRALIA Phase PROTECT. This phase recognises that Swine Flu is not as severe as originally thought, and the severity of the disease is mild in most cases, severe in some and moderate overall.

The key changes in the AUS Phase PROTECT include; identification and treatment with a particular focus on the vulnerable population and their early treatment, *voluntary* home isolation for sufferers of mild or moderate illness, testing and potential treatment with antiviral agents directed towards people with moderate or severe illness or those with underlying risk factors, increased monitoring of hospital admissions, and the end of widespread school closures and border control measures. For mild illness in otherwise well people there is no need for diagnostic testing or antiviral treatment as in essence this is a similar situation to seasonal flu.

The Federal Government has indicated that the vulnerable groups at an increased risk of severe illness from the virus are; pregnant women (particularly in second and third trimesters), people with morbid obesity, people with chronic illnesses such as heart disease, renal disease, respiratory disease such as chronic obstructive airways disease (COAD), asthma requiring ongoing treatment, diabetes, or those who are immunosuppressed from a specific disease or treatment.

Those in the ‘vulnerable’ category should keep a careful eye on their health and avoid contact with anyone who has flu-like symptoms.

In the latest developments, the Australian Government has ordered the first batches of H1N1 Influenza 09 vaccine but this still can be expected to take some months before it is ready for widespread distribution.

For further information on swine flu check www.flu.sa.gov.au

Community Resilience

The sector consistently works to build and maintain the safety and resilience of the South Australian community through a range of activities including community education initiatives, training, collaborative partnerships and special campaigns.

Fire safety awareness increases post campaign

Research has found that three out of five people are now aware that smoke alarms have a limited lifespan, almost doubling awareness following the successful Smoke Alarm Retirement Campaign.

This is evidence that key fire safety messages are beginning to penetrate the South Australian community mindset.

The campaign, jointly conducted by the MFS and CFS, was run over two weeks in late February/early March. During this time a limited paid advertising campaign was run, critically supported by extensive public relations work to reinforce the campaign's key message - that smoke alarms have a limited lifespan and should be replaced and upgraded at the end of their 10-year life. The campaign included editorial in mainstream metropolitan, regional and suburban media outlets (including press, radio and television) as well as membership-based magazines and community media. Media coverage was received in a total of 97 outlets which represents a broad reach across South Australia.



Surveys conducted at the Royal Adelaide Show over the last seven years showed that an average of only 34% of people surveyed each year knew that smoke alarms have a limited life. This awareness increased dramatically to 59% of those surveyed in a post-campaign follow up.

In another campaign win, almost 73% of those surveyed after the campaign indicated that if they owned their own home they would be likely to replace their smoke alarms when they reached their limited life of 10 years.

To ensure that the industry was up to date with the latest fire service recommendations, another focus of the campaign was to educate the electrical trade and smoke alarm retail outlets about new smoke alarm technology. The industry campaign took place in the four months leading up to the public campaign.

Trade retail outlets and wholesalers have confirmed a significant increase in the demand for information about smoke alarms, in particular information about photoelectric smoke alarms and lifespan, post campaign.

The campaign also generated a significant increase in the number of telephone enquiries received by the MFS which shows people are enthusiastic to get the facts on fire safety and in particular, details on smoke alarms. Statistics showed that over 1,100 people visited the information pages on both the MFS and CFS websites between the start of the campaign and the end of May.

The results of this campaign are a great example of how the public is becoming more receptive to fire safety messages and actively seeking avenues to increase their fire safety knowledge. Reinforcing safety messages such as these and conducting similar targeted campaigns will lead to a safer and more prepared community.

Our People

It's an honour

Over the June long weekend, five members of the fire and emergency services sector were recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours list. Congratulations go to the following recipients:

Order of Australia Medal

Vince Monterola AFSM

A volunteer CFS firefighter for 45 years and a previous recipient of the Australian Fire Service Medal, Vince has a long list of achievements, making him very worthy of the Order of Australia Medal.

Vince's achievements include; chairing the taskforce that led to the formation of SAFECOM, serving as SAFECOM's chairman, holding the position of CFS Chief Executive and heading up the efforts to help the Eyre Peninsula community recover after the 2005 "Black Tuesday" bushfires.

Although the recipient of some very prestigious awards, Vince says that his real reward is being a volunteer.

"That is the thing about the emergency services - you get a reward for everything you do, every time you go out to a fire or an accident, when people smile or say 'thank you', that's the real reward," he said.



Above: Vince Monterola at his home after receiving the OAM.

Australian Fire Services Medal

Gregory Frick

As a station officer at MFS city headquarters and having been a firefighter for 30 years, Greg has seen many young recruits come up through the ranks. Greg's career highlight is extending his years of firefighting experience to help young firefighters, some of whom are more than 30 years his junior.

"If you know people look up to you and you pass on something, then you've left a blueprint," said Greg.



Above: MFS Station Officer Greg Frick.

Our People

It's an honour

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Keith "Sandy" Taylor

With 50 years of volunteer firefighting under his belt, Sandy Taylor has many achievements to list. He has served 38 years on the management committee, was a member of the East Torrens Bushfire Prevention Committee, was elected deputy group officer for the East Torrens Group in 1994 until 2008 and is now a brigade lieutenant.

Sandy Taylor also loves to help up and coming firefighters.

"I like to see the young people coming up now and I help them, I was one of them once and the older people looked after me and now I'm giving back," said Sandy.

Chris Smith

MFS Commander Chris Smith has worked hard over his career to improve conditions for firefighters and their families.

"The job the firefighters do is a very stressful job - they see some terrible things from time to time," Chris said.

Having been in the industry for more than 30 years, Chris has been a member of the Firefighters Club, the retirement social committee and the United Firefighters Union. He also was a member of the Fire Service Fund (which provides support for sick or injured firefighters) which purchased five rehabilitation units for MFS staff and their families under Chris's watch.



Above: MFS Commander Chris Smith.

Neil Turner

A volunteer firefighter for 36 years, Neil was one of the first instructors at the State Training Centre at Brukunga and has also served on committees such as the Vehicle and Equipment Committee and the Chief Officers' Advisory Committee. He is now the branch president of the CFS Volunteers' Association at the Murraylands branch, a member of the Callington CFS, the deputy group officer of the Swanport Group at Murray Bridge and an instructor.

Neil enjoys his time as a volunteer and says he wouldn't have it any other way.

"It seems to be something that got in my blood and I can't let go. It's a big part of my life," said Neil.

Sources: Mount Barker Courier, Southern Times Messenger and the Guardian Messenger.

Articles and story ideas are welcomed. To contribute to COMment please email publicaffairs@safecom.sa.gov.au.