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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW SAFECOM DIRECTOR TO EMPOWER COMMUNITY SPIRIT AND COOPERATION IN EMERGENCIES

The SA Fire and Emergency Services Commission (SAFECOM) today announced the executive appointment of Annette Ferris as the Director of Community Resilience.

The SA Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner, David Place revealed the newly created role will support the fire and emergency services sector's key priority of community resilience.

SAFECOM, the agency responsible for supporting the CFS, SES and MFS by undertaking strategic policy, planning, governance and resource allocation, aims to empower and support communities to prepare for and effectively recover from the effects of emergencies.

"Community resilience is about developing strategic, targeted networks and partnerships with the focus of strengthening relationships to solve community issues such as emergency management," explains Mr Place.

"The Director of Community Resilience will address the need for local communities to engage in emergency management. Community engagement is one key area which is an important tool for educating the community and empowering people to change their behaviour," says Mr Place.

Mrs Ferris has enjoyed a long career in the public and private health service across the state, most recently having worked as the Manager, Clinical Service Improvements within the Mental Health Unit for the Department of Health.

Mrs Ferris' experience includes roles such as Director of Clinical Governance at Flinders Medical Centre and Senior Project Advisor for a state-wide improvement program within mental health.

Mrs Ferris holds a Masters of Health Administration specialising in scientific principles of quality improvement in health care and has worked in the area of safety and quality for the past nine years.

Mr Place says, "Annette has a range of experiences in dealing with prevention, preparedness, response and recovery issues in the health sector. Her contribution to these areas has been particularly in mental health reform which has required significant interaction with a broad range of communities, as has her work around disaster planning and recovery approaches."

Mrs Ferris, who is the President of the Australasian Association for Quality in Healthcare SA, says, "Increasing community involvement and awareness of emergency management at a grass roots level is a critical step in improving state preparedness for emergencies and disasters."

"Resiliency is about 'bouncing back' after a significant event/hazard. Communities and emergency services must develop a collaborative approach to planning, preparing, responding and recovering from all hazards," says Mrs Ferris.

As the Director of Community Resilience, Mrs Ferris' primary purpose will be to ensure social and economic challenges associated with the fire and emergency services sector's Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery Framework, are addressed through community engagement strategies and safety activities.

For further information please call SAFECOM Public Affairs:
MFS/SES Line: (08) 8204 3770, CFS Line: (08) 8463 4206

