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FORMAL COMMITMENT TO EMERGENCY SERVICES VOLUNTEERS

Premier Mike Rann says the State Government and Emergency Services sector have cemented their support for South Australian volunteers, by signing two volunteer charters.

The Country Fire Service (CFS) and the State Emergency Service (SES) Volunteer Charters outline the State Government's commitment to consulting and considering the views, needs and interests of South Australia's emergency services volunteers.

"There is no question that our commitment to our emergency services volunteers – to not only resourcing them, but also building strong relationships - has always been solid," Mr Rann says.

"By signing these Charters we are formalising the framework of those relationships."

The key principles of the Volunteer Charter are:

- to ensure consultation with volunteers about all matters which might reasonably be expected to affect them is carried out;
- to consider their views when approving or adopting new practices or policies or reviewing current practices or policies;
- to recognise that there is a mutual obligation and practice partnership based on respect between the parties;
- to take a fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory approach; and
- the principal priority of all is the safety of the South Australian Community.

"Our regard for the work carried out by our 17,500 emergency services volunteers can never be overstated," Mr Rann says.

"Their commitment to protecting others sees them risking their lives in the line of duty.

"Their passion for the safety of our communities makes them an integral part of our emergency services response."

Emergency Services Minister Carmel Zollo says it has taken two years to develop the Charters.

"It was important that there was thorough consultation and that we ensured the documents met everyone's expectations," Mrs Zollo says.

"They represent agreement about core values and responsibilities held by the Government, the emergency services agencies, the volunteer associations and the volunteers themselves.

“They build on other important initiatives instigated by the Rann Government, such as the setting up of the Volunteer Management branch of the SA Fire and Emergency Services Commission (SAFEKOM) which provides ongoing assistance and support.”

Volunteers Minister Jennifer Rankine says volunteers and their organisations are integral to the health and strength of our local communities.

“South Australians are outstanding volunteers with more than half the population over 15 years of age playing an active role,” says Ms Rankine.

“They contribute more than \$5billion in economic benefit to the state but, more importantly, contribute to our social wealth.”

“Volunteering generates a great sense of community spirit in our neighbourhoods and towns and this charter will work to build and maintain strong and supportive communities within this State.”