

Sonia's presentation to the AGM / General meeting on 8th September 2020

"... It has been a most unsettled 12 months for Secretariat activity on behalf of Members: The VA had confronted many difficult issues with government during the Chief Officer selection process but now that Mark Jones has been in office- and his managerial experience and respect for the CFSVA has been clearly demonstrated- the VA is most happy to work with him to advance the interests of volunteers. He understands that the previous top-down attitude of SAFECOM was detrimental to the provision of emergency services to the community and is fully supportive of our ground-up approach seeking government provision of our essential operating requirements.

In that regard also Vincent Tarzia as the new Minister for Emergency Services is a breath of fresh air after Corey Wingard proved to isolate himself from our Volunteer community.

The key agenda for the sector advisory committee (CFS, MFS, SES) is to take the sector forward and not be dictated to by government; ie., to take OUR requirements and decisions back to the SAFECOM Board.

An example of such urgency is that of Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL). This critical need was raised following the disastrous Wangaree fire in 2005 but nothing had been done about it by the former regime. We are now pushing hard for AVL implementation of this well-established technology in all of our appliances. (All Taxis are thus equipped and Pizza deliveries are routinely tracked with it!).

There has been a chronic lack of staff support to volunteers in the Regions to make our administrative load lighter- our role is to serve our own communities in emergency situations: not to do unpaid staff work for the government. In passing it was noted that a virtual epidemic of urgent CFS Station rebuilds is about to emerge.

The Keelty Report was welcomed as generally supportive of CFSVA objectives and reversing the lack of government support for urgent CFS requirements.

He reinforced our view that the SAFECOM role is to SUPPORT the needs of CFS and SES Volunteers- NOT for them to direct us and tell us what we can and cannot do.

In summary, Sonia St Albans stated that our new Chief Officer has resolved to stand up for Volunteers and change the previous culture of lack of support. \$300K has now been allocated for five extra staff for SAFECOM and the government WILL now consult with him representing our needs. The new combined major Command Centre will be announced shortly combining HQ staff of CFS, SES, SAFECOM, Executive MFS and the CFSVA Secretariat.

Finally, Sonia reported that the reason Chief Officer declined to send Volunteers to assist in California was that the risk of contracting COVID-19 there was currently unacceptable..."

Garth Morgan

CFSVA Representative, CLARENDON CFS BRIGADE