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Message from the Chief Officer



The South Australian Country Fire Service (SACFS) has consistently delivered high-quality public safety outcomes, but this has often relied upon extreme acts of personal devotion rather than effective planning.

Over the last five years the South Australian community has endured many challenges. Responses to fires at Pinery, Cudlee Creek and Kangaroo Island along with deployments to assist our interstate and international counterparts have significantly tested our capacity, capability and resilience, and enabled us to re-evaluate our organisation and establish our limitations.

The SACFS has a long and proud history of protecting lives and property, together with South Australian communities. We intend to sustain and build upon those traditions and the 2021-2025 Strategic Plan outlines our priorities and aims to empower our people and provide a supportive environment in which to operate. This plan ensures that we continue to put the community at the centre of all that we do and maintain our primary focus on service delivery.

The 2021-2025 Strategic Plan aims to build upon and strengthen our existing planning foundations and, importantly, inform our budget priorities and spending forecasts over the life of the Plan. A four-year term was chosen due to the variability in the strategic operating environment.

SACFS will maintain initiatives to support our understanding of the risks our communities face, and deliver targeted programs and services where they are most needed. We will continue to strive to reduce safety risks in our environment, and we will develop systems to drive our agency to achieve its goals. We will try new things. Where they are effective, we will do more of them. Where they aren't, we won't waste time and money and will shut them down fast.

We will embrace opportunities that will enrich the role of volunteers, and improve our delivery of planning, preparedness and response to the whole community in collaboration with the Emergency Services Sector. We will be accountable to our people, the South Australian Government and the community in everything we do.

Together, in partnership with key stakeholders and our communities, we will build a stronger SACFS and continue to protect lives and property in partnership with the community.

Message from the CFSVA





Sonia St Alban

Executive Director

Country Fire Service

Volunteers Association

The Country Fire Service Volunteers Association (CFSVA) is recognised under legislation as representing the interests of CFS volunteers and has over the years, been significant in it work with the Country Fire service (CFS) and its sector partners to make CFS the recognised and respected emergency service that it is today.

CFS' unique culture enables the service to be flexible, progressive, and highly relevant.

Defined by its volunteer focus and support of local communities, CFS has gained state-wide, national and international recognition, and is one of the most trusted brands within South Australia.

Planning for the future is imperative for CFS to enhance its strengths, its diversity, and continue the seamless delivery of a first-class emergency services which South Australian communities have come to expect and indeed depend on from CFS.

CFS volunteers play an integral role in the protection of life and property in South Australia, and over the years the role of CFS volunteers has shifted in line with the changing needs of their local and the wider community. CFS has matured from several small regional volunteer fire services to a 13,500 strong integrated, professional volunteer fire service.

The CFSVA support and commends the CFS' 2021-2025 Strategic Plan as it epitomises the spirit of CFS, recognises the ever-increasing expectations placed on CFS, and responds to the significant trust placed on CFS by the South Australian public.

The CFSVA is proud to have been part of this journey and looks forward to being part of the ongoing journey. The SA Country Fire Service (SACFS) evolved from a long and complex partnership between volunteers, local government and the South Australian Government in order to meet community safety needs.

The partnership began as an attempt to deal with fires in rural areas in 1913 when the Government gave Councils the right to appoint Fire Control Officers. Since then, there have been many changes, including the implementation of the SA Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005 on 1 October 2005 which superseded the Country Fires Act as the governing legislation of the SA Country Fire Service. To meet the safety needs of the community, the number and type of emergency responses provided has changed and grown. Today, SACFS responds to rural, structure and vehicle fires, road accidents, hazardous substances incidents and other community emergencies. Along with providing support to our partner emergency response services both within our own communities, nationally and globally, SACFS is proud to be a Registered Training Organisation, providing opportunities for volunteers and staff to gain nationally accredited training.

As South Australia's largest volunteer-based organisation, providing an emergency service dedicated to protecting life, property and environmental assets in outer metropolitan, regional and rural areas of South Australia, the SACFS is not defined by bushfire alone. A third of our work is vehicle related incidents, another third is structural fire, and a small but critical portion of our response work involves hazardous material threats. On average the SACFS attends to over 10,000 emergency events per year. Our Service works with other government and private sector agencies, industry and the community to reduce risks, control hazards and assist in recovery programmes.

The SACFS consists of over 13,500 volunteers (firefighters, cadets, and operational support) and approximately 190 full-time staff members, providing a range of fire and emergency services to communities across South Australia.

The extraordinary contribution of our volunteers is vital in ensuring the ongoing delivery of fire and emergency services.

In addition, we perform an important role with local government and other government agencies in fuel reduction prescribed burning activities, bushfire prevention, and community bushfire and fire safety education. Our business is predicated on risk management principles (of which safety is a key priority), which are incorporated into our business planning processes. SACFS has a strong focus on frontline service delivery to the community and supports communities through the delivery of programmes and raising awareness of bushfire risk and behaviour. There is an ever increasing demand for immediate and accurate public information which the SACFS delivers through new media and improved channels of communication. Our frontline service support function delivers state-of-the-art equipment, nationally accredited and service-level training, and a range of corporate services to ensure best practice in service delivery.





Corporate Leadership and Governance

SACFS structure is led by its Executive Leadership Team (ELT).

Decision-making Structure

SACFS is accountable to the South Australian community for the delivery of efficient and effective emergency services that respond to the community's needs. SACFS Executive Leadership Team is accountable for the leadership and strategy development that delivers benefits for all South Australians.

We aim to create a structure in which key decisions are taken by empowered managers at the appropriate level.

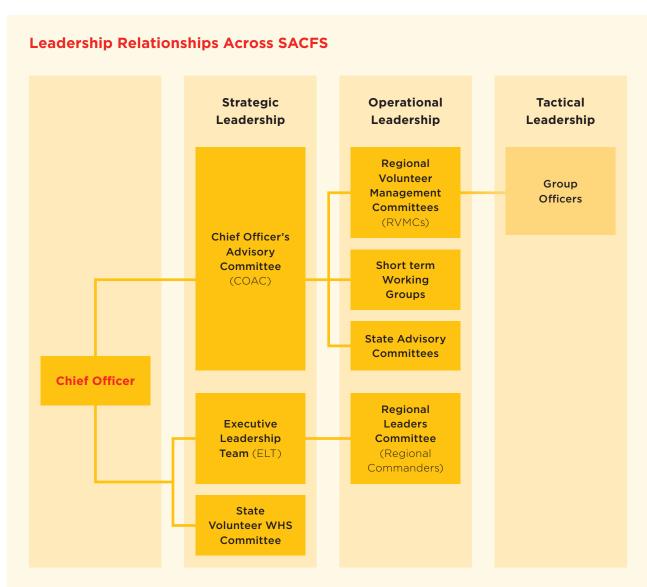


Leadership Relationships Across SACFS

COAC supports the strategic volunteer leadership of the SA Country Fire Service with volunteer representatives from regions and across the state. Through contribution and constructive input to the Chief Officer, COAC supports the agencies mission and values, and brings forward matters for decision or discussion.

Key Business Partners

SACFS takes great pride in serving and protecting the people of South Australia and on being considered a leading emergency services agency across Australia and internationally. As a commended and admired emergency service we recognise that we have an inherent responsibility to provide the community with the highest quality emergency service in the most productive and cost-effective way. We recognise the need to work collaboratively with communities, other key stakeholders, government and non-government agencies to deliver a seamless community focused service.



NB: Engagement between these groups occurs vertically as per the lines in the diagram, and also horizontally at the strategic operational and tactical leadership levels, respectively.

Achievements against the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan

2016-2020 Priority







Lead and support planning for community preparedness and risk reduction

Action and Outcome

Nine Bushfire Management Area Plans were delivered across the State ensuring that risks across the environment, communities and assets were identified and measured in partnership with stakeholders (conservation and land management groups and state and local government agencies).

Provide a trusted service to the community

Action and Outcome

Brigades attended 39,926 incidents, including responding to bushfire, structure fire, hazardous material incidents, road crash incidents and many more.

The Mid North Aviation Primary Response Zone was successfully implemented ensuring that resources, activities and capability meet risk profiles.

Positive and efficient use of resources

Action and Outcome

A significant portion of SAFCS heavy appliances were retrofitted under the Fire Truck Safety Systems project.

169 new appliances were procured for our members.

222 station/facility upgrades, as part of Project Renew, were completed.

24 new stations were built and commissioned.

56 Thermal Imaging Cameras (TICs) were supplied, creating efficiencies on the fire ground by identifying hotspots and potential hazard risks.







Value the safety and welfare of our people

Action and Outcome

A second set of PPC was provided for all operational firefighters, which has increased operational capability and reduced long-term exposure to harmful carcinogens.

A dedicated range of female PPC was introduced to support our ongoing commitment to equality and diversity.

AED's were rolled out to all Road Crash Rescue, HAZMAT Brigades and Group cars, increasing the safety and welfare of firefighters working in demanding and/or remote locations.

Ensure public value through efficiencies in resource management

Action and Outcome

A new Risk and Capability framework was delivered ensuring flexible and modern risk-based resource allocation models are enhanced for optimal service delivery.

56.53% implementation rate of the Local Funds Reporting System was achieved, improving the governance, support and reporting of Brigade managed funds.

Be a future focused organisation

Action and Outcome

Online training delivery uptake increased as a result of COVID-19 and the Simulation Learning Centre commissioned.

Planning commenced for delivery of a whole-of-staff incident management development program, including targeted training which supports our learning culture and recognises the value of acquiring new knowledge and expertise.

SACFS Breaking Barriers program was introduced, focusing on the sustainability of our workforce and implementation of positive changes to enhance our service and business for the future.

Strategic Challenges

Climate change

Emergency response services world-wide are being presented with unprecedented challenges from multiple directions. Climate change is altering our environment, with the increasing frequency and severity of weather events leading to increasing demands on response services. Scientific research is predicting longer, hotter summers leading to a higher frequency of bushfires with potentially catastrophic outcomes.

The challenges presented by our changing climate means SACFS will need to be innovative in how we approach our planning, prevention and response activities. We need to adapt and be flexible in our response, and become more efficient and sustainable in how we deploy resources to ensure the viability of our service.

SACFS intends to measure its carbon footprint, develop and implement policies and procedures that lead to a reduced impact on the environment and, where possible, align to the South Australian Government Climate Change Action Plan 2021-2025.

Service delivery

In South Australia response demands are changing. Climate change is resulting in more frequent and increasingly severe natural hazard emergencies, such as bushfires. Population growth and greater urbanisation is increasing the potential for threat to life, community infrastructure, property and the environment. Changes to demographics and the needs of communities are challenging current service delivery models which, if not addressed, may result in a reduction in our ability to respond to emergencies in a timely manner, putting communities at greater risk.

With a range of volunteering roles available to a significantly expanding community demographic, SACFS will seek ways to encourage and attract diverse cultures, ages and genders to our volunteer family and be innovative in the way we respond to emergencies.

It is critically important we continue to engage and educate communities in ways that build a culture that embraces this diversity, and think about how we communicate to our communities to ensure that messages are delivered, understood and acted upon by all.

Volunteerism and balancing conflicting demands

All of the emergency response activities of the SACFS are delivered by volunteers yet, in many contexts, they are being classified as employees and given an increasing number of managerial and administrative tasks.

SACFS recognises this increased workload demand and will seek ways to address these issues by:

- Increasing staffing levels to service volunteer support activities
- Seeking to lessen the administrative requirement placed upon volunteers and their officers, and
- Promoting volunteering and constantly striving to improve the volunteer experience.

Financial and operational viability

SACFS needs to remain financially sustainable in the face of projected population growth¹, an increase in the number and severity of natural disasters, and growing demand for our services.

The community and Government will expect integrated solutions and service delivery across government agencies. Challenges associated with meeting these expectations include managing coordination, accountability and governance of interdepartmental and cross agency initiatives.

In the spirit of this commitment, SACFS must instil a greater openness to working and communicating with other agencies. Increased cooperation should include sharing our resources and facilities wherever possible to maximise resources and outcomes for the community.

¹ Population projections for South Australia and Regions, 2016-41, May 2019, Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure

Our Strategic Directions

To meet the various challenges we are likely to face in the coming years, we will focus on five strategic directions to inform how we will continue to service South Australian communities and manage our business.

- Enabling safer communities through empowerment
- Enabling and delivering a safer, inclusive and sustainable workforce
- Improving governance
- · Focusing and driving continuous improvement, and
- · Partnering.

Implementing these strategic directions will ensure that we continue to grow and adapt to enable our Service to successfully meet upcoming external challenges and ensure we continue to deliver to the South Australian community.

Measuring our Success

During 2021-2025 and into the future, SACFS will focus on developing a robust outcomes-based approach to measuring our performance against our strategic directions. In developing our SACFS Annual plan the SACFS will develop and embed internal and external performance measures aligned to our five directions which will be used to monitor our performance and support benchmarking.

The Way Forward

At SACFS we already enjoy the benefits of working with partner agencies. We see the way forward as including significantly enhanced relationships with others to leverage greater fiscal efficiencies as well as enabling access to cutting-edge technologies. Some of this will be achieved in 2021 through the co-location of the SACFS, South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission, South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service and South Australian State Emergency Service. Through these relationships we will develop better ways of working together, with more consistent and common operating environments providing greater interoperability between response services within South Australia and throughout Australia.

Through supporting research and innovation and sharing information we are able to create a safer environment for our workforce and the community. We will seek to influence the national and international agenda for firefighting and rescue by being seen as a highly effective organisation.





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Strategic Direction 1

Why this is important

Keeping South Australian communities safe is at the heart of what we do, and in order for us to be effective we must listen to and understand their needs, and maintain the trust and respect of those communities.

Climate change means there is significant likelihood of more severe, more frequent and longer impact climatic events over the coming years. This, along with increasing development into peri-urban spaces, means we must change the way we work with communities to educate and empower them in prevention and preparedness of emergency events. It is also vital that we provide timely and accurate information to communities before and during emergency events to ensure they are able to make informed decisions in relation to their own safety.

Empowering and working with communities will build greater resilience in emergency situations, and enable them to better understand, act and recover.

What we are aiming for

SACFS aims to be the leading South Australian organisation in disaster risk reduction.

We seek to prepare communities for emergencies by partnering with them to deliver the services they need, so that they are more resilient, empowered, safe and better informed.

We will strive to provide timely, accurate and relevant public information during emergencies to support communities to take appropriate protective action.

SACFS will work with communities to enhance their understanding and knowledge of risk reduction, and empower them to prepare for and respond to fire and other emergencies.

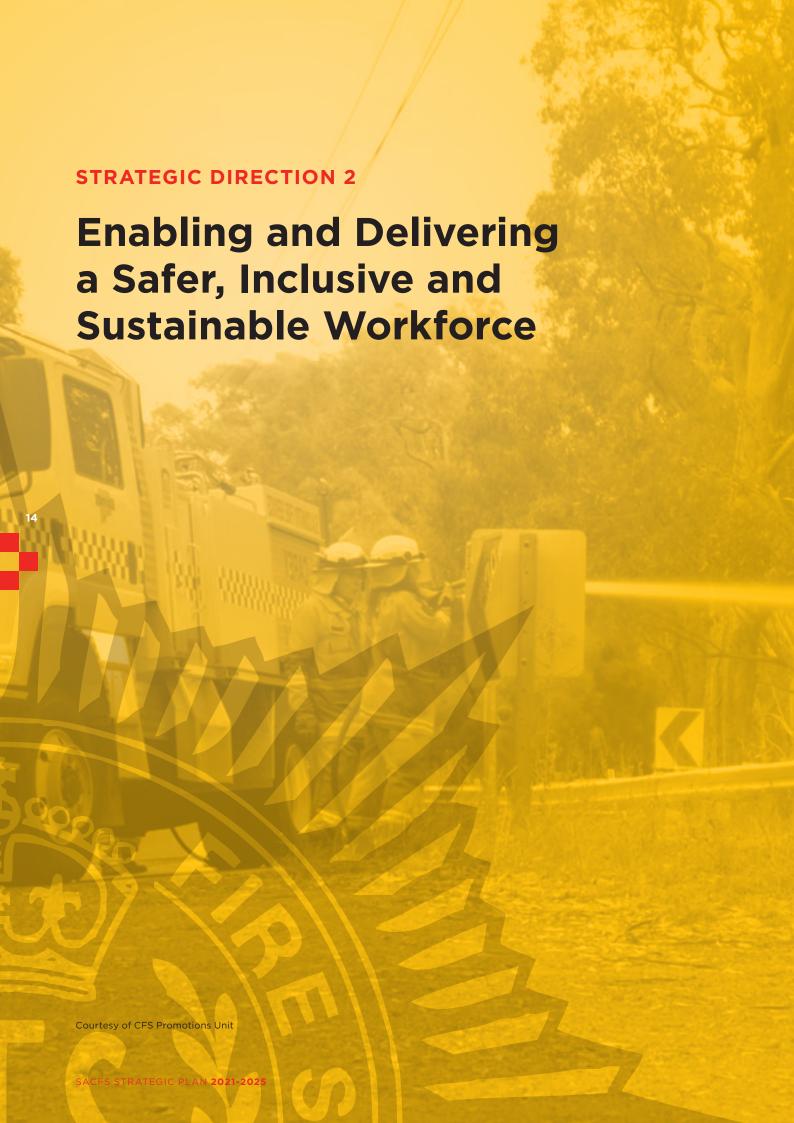
What we will achieve

Educate, inform and support communities by empowering them to become active participants in disaster risk reduction and mitigation

- Develop and implement programs and initiatives to educate and empower communities to mitigate their risks to the hazards in their community, in line with the State Bushfire Management Plan.
- Actively engage in process review of native vegetation fire risk management, including assessment and approvals, focusing on clear guidance, timeliness and validity.
- Inform communities of key local fire risks, including community infrastructure assets, and potential impacts during emergencies using the Bushfire Management Area Plan framework.
- Use evidence and research to gain an understanding of the impact of bushfires to develop resilience, prevention and preparedness programs for communities during emergencies.
- Actively promote CFS Brigades as a vital contributor and member of their communities through education and building awareness of their role in disaster risk reduction and mitigation.

Targeted, tailored, timely and accurate messaging prepares communities to act ahead of and during emergencies

- Ensure that SACFS continues to enhance public information and warnings capability to support communities to make informed decisions.
- Implement and actively communicate the new Australian Fire Danger Rating System, educating and informing communities on its use to improve their safety when making decisions.
- Review, update and support the community to understand and acknowledge appropriate Bushfire Safer Places and Last Resort Refuges, including how to best use them to increase their safety during fire danger and in the event of a bushfire.



Strategic Direction 2

Why this is important

SACFS volunteers and staff are often called upon to work in dangerous and complex environments - this is not expected to change, it is the nature of what we do.

Therefore, it is essential that we continue to be vigilant when it comes to safety and keeping our workforce and members safe. This will always remain a key priority.

It is imperative that we continue to learn from and adapt to our changing environment and directly support our members by implementing appropriate levels of doctrine, provide training and skills development opportunities which are delivered in consideration of our members, provide opportunities for skills acquired in training to be exercised and practiced, and equip our members with reliable, safe and effective tools of response.

By undertaking these actions, our members will have the skills and resources necessary to respond in the most safe and sustainable way possible.

What we are aiming for

Building and sustaining safety excellence through the provision of dedicated support to our members in the areas of equipment, training, safe systems of work and resources.

This will in turn prepare and enable our members to safely respond to emergency and disaster situations and in doing so, in every way possible, bring them home safe.

As a leading volunteer organisation within South Australia, SACFS is a Registered Training Organisation which provides exceptional training to our workforce and partner organisations. We will build on this capability to ensure that our members are trained, informed and practiced to an exemplary standard not only as firefighters, but also within all aspects of leadership, incident and emergency management.

What we will do

Equip and support our members to enable a safe, functional and effective response

- Enhance our members' awareness and understanding of the importance of mental health and wellbeing through targeted programs of work.
- Invest in volunteer leadership and incident management training to improve operational effectiveness, community safety and the safety of our members attending emergency incidences.
- Invest in our training facilities and infrastructure, to give our members access to the latest technologies to enhance practice skill sets and capabilities.
- Utilise technology to improve firefighter safety, by integrating Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) into the tactical, operational and strategic levels of the agency.
- Continue the rollout of e-learning modules to increase our members' access to training and development.
- Research and investigate opportunities to utilise technology to improve provision of intelligence to support timely and effective operational decisionmaking by our members.
- Provide Brigades and Groups with the necessary resources and information to improve decisionmaking and recommendations on the delivery of services aligned with the needs of their communities.

Establish research led and evidence based operational policies and procedures

- Develop, implement and effectively communicate a full suite of operational doctrines to ensure consistent and effective interpretation of best practice operational procedures, which are evidence-based and safety focused.
- Ensure our operational doctrine supports our members and represents a current, research-focused, evidence-based approach delivered in an easily accessible and user-friendly way.
- Develop and implement Standard Operating Procedures which include detailed risk assessments and align to best practice.
- Continue to deliver effective and operational doctrine-led training programs which support our members in the delivery of safe and best practice emergency response services to the community.

Strategic Direction 2

Establish clear and effective protocols focusing on the sustainability, diversity and inclusiveness of our members

- Ensure specific strategies to address work health and safety risks to our members are embedded in the SACFS's planning, and that key outcomes are reported against.
- Invest in the delivery of current and effective diversity, inclusion and wellbeing support programs for our members.
- Build and promote respect of, and relationships with Indigenous communities, to foster awareness, reconciliation and opportunities.
- Develop and implement a leadership, performance and development framework that drives SACFS culture, learning and improvement, and supports attraction, retention and succession planning.
- Develop and integrate workforce planning (inclusive of attraction, retention and succession) and pathways for volunteers and staff.
- Ensure SACFS member training records are accurate, enabling the identification of areas requiring additional investment and delivery by the SACFS in support of our members.
- Ensure all SACFS members have access to flexible training and professional development opportunities.
- Invest and deliver targeted recruitment programs to build workforce diversity and proactively drive inclusiveness.















Why this is important

Continuously reviewing and learning from situations, particularly when they do not go as planned, enables us to evolve and improve in every aspect of how we operate and perform.

To do this we need to embrace and support exceptional governance and a high-performance culture.

What we are aiming for

We will demonstrate good fiscal responsibility by maximising opportunities to deliver value for money through partnering with peer organisations, industry partners and stakeholders. We will develop best practice procurement and financial management strategies to enable us to maximise availability of resources to our members. We will embrace and implement effective, best practice processes and procedures which enable improved decision-making and implementation.

What we will do

Continuously improve our processes, performance and outcomes delivered

- Implement industry best practice governance and an organisational structure that enables the delivery of effective and safe services by our members to the community whilst meeting statutory requirements.
- Develop, implement and maintain an effective business planning cycle and performance reporting frameworks to support and inform, evidence-based decision-making.
- Develop and implement a continuous improvement culture through the development of, and reporting against, key performance indicators linked to our strategic plan and successful outcomes.
- Continue to proactively review and respond to identified gaps in performance and delivery of SACFS outcomes, followed up with effective, relevant and sustainable implementation plans that are enacted in a timely and appropriate manner.
- Establish and apply a Regulation and Compliance framework, with supporting policies and procedures that will enable the delivery of outcomes, evidencebased decisions and ensure the sustainability of our service to the community.
- Proactively engage with members to seek and identify areas of operational improvement and opportunities to enhance the delivery of services to the community.

Implement research-led, best practice corporate policies and procedures

- Review, update and effectively educate all members to ensure provision and active uptake of a suite of best practice corporate policies and procedures designed to support volunteers and staff, and to ensure financial, work health and safety and corporate risk is mitigated.
- Continue to actively pursue agency involvement, understanding and application of SACFS corporate policy.
- Review and test business continuity plans and ensure their implementation across all core functions and processes.



Why this is important

It is vital SACFS embraces new technologies and methodologies for optimising efficiency and responsiveness, and that we engage with our stakeholders and the broader community to ensure we are prepared to face upcoming challenges.

What we are aiming for

SACFS intends to be leaders in emergency response and emergency management, forging ahead with embracing new technologies to keep communities and our members safe.

With our emergency services partners, we will engage in research and innovation, and through optimisation of savings and public value, gain access to the best technologies available.

Working with our local, interstate and international counterparts we will use research and innovation to develop and implement best practice methodologies in resource utilisation and communication strategies for better community outcomes.

SACFS will continue to promote and encourage a culture of continuous improvement through evidence-based learning and decision-making, and with a focus on our key deliverables and the sustainability of the service for the future.

What we will do

Optimise efficiency and responsiveness to climate and disaster risks

- Engage with other Emergency Services providers to leverage research and innovation that enables us to optimise efficiency and responsiveness through development of, and participation in, improved information platforms and shared technologies.
- Strive to contribute to the delivery of outcomes from the South Australian Government Climate Change Action Plan 2021-2025.
- Proactively engage with our members to collaboratively identify learning and improvement opportunities, to increase our efficiency and responsiveness to risks within the communities.

Embrace innovation and research to drive performance improvement

- Review existing funding models for Groups and Brigades with the aim to improve financial stability and sustainability, provide clarity and transparency, and to enable improved decision-making by CFS for better community outcomes.
- Define the requirements for volunteer leaders, develop and implement a plan to ensure our volunteer leaders are equipped to provide leadership and drive improvement within our Brigades and Groups.
- Proactively respond to and progress major incident recommendations in a timely manner.
- Implement a research-led and evidence-based approach, including policy and procedures, to facilitate research adoption and improvements in service delivery.
- Implement an effective and responsive fleet and asset management system to enable effective monitoring and management of critical CFS assets.



Strategic Direction 5

Why this is important

As a volunteer-based emergency services organisation our members will operate alongside other organisations, communities and groups, making our interoperability, locally, nationally and internationally, vital.

What we are aiming for

SACFS will partner with a range of other emergency services.

These include emergency management organisations, service providers, community groups and Traditional Land Owners to enhance outcomes for South Australian communities.

What we will do

Work with partner agencies to deliver best practice response services

- Deliver Nationally Accredited Incident Management and Emergency Management training to personnel from our key partner agencies in support of a coordinated and multiagency approach to incident management.
- Strengthen our partnership with the Australian
 Defence Force (ADF) to improve interaction, planning
 and ongoing understanding of their capabilities and
 processes, including the establishment of a large
 air tanker refilling capability at Royal Australian Air
 Force (RAAF) Base Edinburgh in conjunction with the
 National Aerial Firefighting Centre.
- Proactively participate in collaboration forums with emergency management partners.
- Develop an 'open data' information sharing framework to effectively share data and information across partner agencies and jurisdictions.
- Proactively and positively promote engagement and consultation with members on the delivery and sustainability of emergency response services to our communities.

Partner with Traditional Land Owners to support natural disaster resilience

- Engage with Traditional Land Owners to explore the relationship between Indigenous land and fire management, and natural disaster resilience.
- Actively engage with and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in remote, high priority communities to manage emergencies.





