

# MFS Chief Officer's UPDATE

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Government  
of South Australia



## News from the Chief Officer and Chief Executive

### Welcome to the December 2020 edition of the Chief Officer's Update.

We are heading towards the end of 2020, a year that has seen the world and our lives disrupted by a Pandemic. It is certainly not the year we expected it to be, but all of us have adjusted and worked flexibly to keep our colleagues, families and the community safe.

A special mention must go to the COVID Taskforce, led by ACFO Roy Thompson which has been ably supported by personnel in many roles across the organisation, including MFS Commander Greg Howard, SO Joe Hansen and Scientific Officer Mel D'Ambrosio from Special Operations. MFS Media and Communications staff have worked hard to keep personnel informed as the situation's continued to change, while many departments have contributed information and initiatives, including Operations, HR and Wellness and Safety.

Working collaboratively, Special Operations, day working and operational staff have achieved a large body of COVID-19 work that is [available on the MoW](#).



Unfortunately, South Australia is currently dealing with an outbreak. We must remain ever-vigilant in supporting workplace and community safety by:

- Not attending work while sick with any cold or flu like symptoms
- Maintaining physical distancing (1.5m)
- Maintaining good personal (*and in particular*) hand hygiene
- Using appropriate respiratory etiquette
- Ensuring that rooms and offices meet density requirements (1 person per 4sqm indoors, 1 person per 2sqm outdoors).

### Bushfire season

Bushfire season has started across South Australia, and with it, our first grass and bushfires for the 2020-21 season.

Recently CFS Chief Officer Mark Jones and I joined CFS and MFS personnel (above, right) at the launch of the [Be Bushfire Ready Campaign](#), led by hazard leader the CFS. It was an excellent event reinforcing that we all work together as fire agencies over bushfire season for the community.

This year's TV, digital, radio and print campaign focuses on personal stories of people impacted by last season's SA bushfires, with those community members encouraging all to be prepared.

After a tragic and challenging bushfire season across Australia in 2019-20, we are seeing a later start to the season this year. While rainfall has kept the landscape greener for longer, it has also contributed to increased growth that is drying off.

I'd like to remind you all to be vigilant about crew safety. We stand ready to respond to incidents in MFS area and to support our CFS brothers and sisters with incidents in CFS area.

### Project HQ progress

Construction of the new Project HQ at Keswick started in July 2020 and is progressing well. If you would like to know more about the project, visit the [SAFECOM Intranet](#) for information & Frequently Asked Questions.



Above: 2020 Bushfire Season Campaign Launch with MFS & CFS Chiefs & personnel.



Above: The MFS Road Awareness Program (RAP) team visits Moonta. More RAP news, page 2.



Above: MFS Angle Park Structural Firefighting Training Facility.

## APTC Facility

MFS Recruits recently became the first to experience using the new APTC Structural Firefighting Training Facility, with wider operational use to follow.

Well done to all involved in the project, it will be exciting to see the burn hall enhance the skills and safety of all firefighters in the years ahead, and to see it influence the way we battle structure fires.

## Pt Pirie Kidtober

KIDtober was a collective of child-focused activities around the Port Pirie Regional Council area that was showcased online this year.

Port Pirie A-Shift filmed a tour of the station and the video was shared widely on Facebook and on the KIDtober website, much to the delight of locals, during the October school holidays. The video was one of the creative ways we continue to reach out to the public at a time when COVID has restricted most community engagement.

Below: Kidtober video recording at Port Pirie Fire Station.



## Whyalla Suicide Prevention Network

Recently MFS Employee Support Coordinator Dennis Taylor and MFS Retained Firefighter Paul Trickey participated in a Whyalla Suicide Prevention Network event.

ESC Taylor reported that it was one of the most empowering and uplifting events tackling mental health issues that he has ever attended. Regional emergency services personnel and relatives shared their personal stories of loss and survival, which positively impacted the listening audience.

The audience included Regional MFS Commanders Shane Heffernan and Mick Shepherd with local police and emergency services and the Whyalla Retained MFS crew. The event reinforced the importance of speaking up, seeking help and how families can support those impacted by mental health issues including PTSD.

The [Whyalla Suicide Prevention Network is on Facebook](#) and a local newspaper article about the recent event is [available here](#).

## Recruit Course underway

After the easing of COVID restrictions, Recruit Course 57 commenced in September with the MFS.

It's fantastic to see the recruits rapidly developing their firefighting skills. We are due to see our newest firefighters graduate this month. Thanks as always to the Learning and Development team for their considerable effort to shape every recruit into becoming an operational firefighter. Good luck to all recruits as your careers begin.

## Regional Update

The disruption of COVID-19 has seen MFS regional crews being adaptable by holding modified training via Microsoft Teams. Station training also recommenced in June while adhering to physical distancing and occupancy rules. Thank you all for being flexible and patient as we continue protective measures across the organisation – including in the lead up to Christmas.

Information sessions and regional assessments for new recruits have been completed across some regional stations and are ongoing.

## RAP Team - Welcome Josh & Tayla



Above: RAP Co-Presenter and crash survivor Eli Murn, RAP Coordinator Josh Byerlee, CSRD Business Support Officer Courtney Henderson and Community Engagement Administration Officer Tayla Barry (R).

RAP presentations resumed in August and we welcomed Senior Firefighter Josh Byerlee to the RAP team as the full time RAP Coordinator after being a part-time RAP presenter for several years. We also welcomed Community Engagement Administration Officer Tayla Barry (R). Several firefighters in regional SA also joined the RAP family and began presentations in their communities after restrictions eased in late September.

## Minister attends Rostrevor RAP

In October, Minister Tarzia attended a RAP at his former school, Rostrevor College, and he was impressed by the positive impact the program has on young people. I was proud to see the efforts of the entire RAP team. Thank you to Paradise Station A Shift for attending on the day as well.

## Walk for a Veteran 2020

An Australian Professional Firefighters Foundation (APFF) team comprising of MFS and Air Services members took a 35km hike through the bushfire-affected Adelaide Hills this year as part of the annual SmartBar Walk for a Veteran with PTSD event. Now in its fifth consecutive year, the August 22 event raises much-needed funds for defence force and emergency services personnel affected by Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and other mental health issues.

So far, the event has raised over \$46,000 for Royal Society for the Blind's Operation K9, Heroes on the Homefront (HOTH), Australian Professional Firefighters Foundation (APFF), and CFS Foundation – SA. The APFF team raised \$10,170. The APFF will use the funds raised for an industry-led wellbeing program to support their members.

## Summer home fire safety

As the weather turns warmer and more people are spending time outdoors, it's time to pay attention to fire safety around the use of BBQs, pool chemicals, fuels for lawnmowers and the maintenance of air-conditioners and similar electrical appliances.

MFS Community Engagement Officers and regional firefighters have been on air, online and in print reminding the community ways to stay safe heading into summer.

In winter, Home Fire Safety Week also covered fire safety messages commonly see during winter such as outdoor comfort fires, cigarettes, cooking and electrical fires. The MFS paired up with the EPA and CFS to launch Home Fire Safety Week alongside previous Emergency Services Minister Corey Wingard.

The week garnered positive media coverage in metropolitan Adelaide and regional South Australia and increased engagement with audiences both offline and online. We continue to strive to make the South Australian community safer through education to help reduce preventable fires.

The Community Safety & Resilience Department (CSRD) has contributed tremendous work including creating fire safety videos for social media and the release of a '[Rate your Home Fire Safety](#)' checklist. The interactive PDF checklist, accessible from the MFS website, allows the community to compare their homes with a legislation governed workplace and take practical steps to protect their loved ones. This handy checklist can be used all year round.

## Independent Review

In June, South Australia's Independent Review into the 2019/20 Bushfire Season, led by former Australian Federal Police Commissioner Mick Keelty AO, was finalised. If you wish to access a copy of the review and the SA Government's response, [click here](#).

## Bushfires Royal Commission

In late October, the Royal Commission into national Natural Disaster Arrangements Report was tabled in federal parliament. You can access a copy of the report [here](#).



Woodville Fire Station officer Brett Harvey with senior firefighters Justin Casagrande, Peter Takos and Craig Hermann at Molba's Chocolate Factory they helped save. Picture: Mark Brake

## Brett's soldiering on for mates who are suffering

**REBECCA BAKER**  
AT 42, father of two Brett Harvey has experienced more than his fair share of heart-wrenching experiences. As a young soldier with the Australian Army, he was sent "out there" during the 1999-2005, having shifted "with the air force," "a rotational team" to bring home the nine Australian Defence Force personnel killed in a helicopter crash on the Indonesian island of Nias. In December last year, an MFS officer at Woodville Fire Station, Mr Harvey, "beyond horrific conditions fighting the Adelaide Hills bushfires." But, he maintains, he is one of the lucky ones – many of his mates who served in Iraq and Afghanistan came home permanently damaged from their tours of duty. It is one of the reasons he is preparing to take part in this year's SmartBar Walk for a Veteran with PTSD event – many of his mates will do it in their full firefighting kit. "I know some of my mates have definitely been affected by the experiences over there – and also the fire service, too," he said. "I know a lot of friends who have suffered. Our job involves dealing with people on their worst days, and we have to deal with that and we take it home – attending a car accident with kids involved always brings it home for me." Mr Harvey describes the December 2019 day in which he and his firefighting colleagues helped "save" Mama's Chocolates factory at Woodville, as one of his most harrowing. "It was definitely the hardest day I have ever had firefighting," he said. "Just the best and trying to do the best we could was really, really tough. Trying to put out the warehouse fire was pretty insane, and we were pretty exhausted by the end of it." The charity event will start at Woodville Oval on August 22, aiming to raise \$20,000 for support organisations including Heroes on the Homefront, Australian Professional Firefighters Foundation and F' CFS Foundation. **TO REGISTER, GOOGLE MAP\*** 2020 SMARTBAR

Above: Walk for a Veteran Article in The Advertiser.

## Pride Where You Are 2020

Pride March Adelaide was cancelled in 2020 due to COVID-19 and replaced with a social media initiative 'Pride Where You Are' (see below). Thank you to all who participated.

Events such as these are important in terms of creating an environment of belonging both within our organisation and in the wider community.



Above: MFS SO Jo-Anna Kenney, on exchange in the NT, celebrates SA's Pride Where You Are with NT colleagues.

Below: Various MFS shifts and departments contributed to Pride Where You Are, including D-Shift.



## Schools Fire Safety Program & Competition

The annual Poster and Multimedia Competition this year received 936 entries, more than the number of entries combined in 2018 and 2019. This means almost 1000 students received fire safety messaging and the learning materials provided on the MFS website. This has been an incredible achievement by the Community Safety and Resilience Department, particularly Program Activity Coordinator Shelley Roylance.

Winners for each year level have been selected thanks to a combined effort of the CSRD.

## Storytime initiative

Firefighter Todd Micke made a special appearance in [City of Holdfast Bay's Storytime Online](#) at Brighton library. He read a children's storybook and shared fire safety message in a fun, engaging way that was easy for young children to understand. While this opportunity was an initiative by the council, the video inspired us to reach out to the community in creative ways during COVID restrictions.

Another video engaging young children was organised by Adelaide City Libraries and Community Engagement Officer Phil Evans and was shared live on Facebook.

## Vinnies CEO Sleepout

In June, ACFO Peter Button, ACFO Peter Mason and I spent the night in our own backyards as part of a modified Vinnies CEO Sleepout. It's the fifth consecutive year the MFS has taken part in the charity initiative to assist the homeless. Every night in South Australia, an estimated 6000 people are homeless and sleeping rough. We've raised more than \$7,500 towards the cause and donations to the MFS team. Thanks to all who donated. Every bit counts.

## MFS Open Day

Sadly due to COVID-19 our annual Adelaide Station Open Day did not go ahead on Pageant Day, to protect staff, emergency response and the community.

For those who missed the event, MFS Media and Communications Officer Josephine Lim and Adelaide Station's A Shift worked together to produce a [station tour video](#) for the public to enjoy.

*Wishing you all a safe and happy festive season with family and friends.*

*Michael Morgan*

MFS Chief Officer and Chief Executive.



## A moment with Sally...

**Name & Title:** Sally Woolford, Diversity and Inclusion Project Manager (pictured, left).

**When did you join the MFS?** I joined the MFS in June 2020 working as a consultant to support the implementation of the Culture and Diversity initiatives and White Ribbon reaccreditation across the organisation.

**What do you love about your work?** I love working with great organisations undertaking culture and change initiatives. For me I love to turn strategy and theory into deeply practical things that each person can do to create or enhance really positive respectful workplaces. I love the challenge of change and seeing great outcomes when we manage change really well. Often people and organisations don't realise how diverse and inclusive they are or can be, so teasing that out is really enjoyable.

**Hobbies?** I have a young son so most of my spare time is spent running around with him playing footy or soccer or riding bikes. I've also danced (ballet) for too many years to count so enjoy doing this when I get a spare moment (very rare!).

**Favourite movie:** Gladiator - a bit old now but action packed.

**Favourite album:** I spent most of my years in the UK during the indie era and so love 1990's music. I'll go with Blur - Parklife - upbeat and fun and reminds me of being young and carefree!

## A moment with Tayla...

**Name:** Tayla Barry (pictured, right).

**Title:** MFS Community Engagement Administration Officer.

**When did you join the MFS?** October 2020.

**What do you love about your work?** Interacting with different people and assisting with putting out the message of road awareness and safety.

**Hobbies:** Painting, reading and baking.

**Favourite Movie:** Not a movie person!

**Favourite Music:** I enjoy listening to little bit of everything.

