CFS FOUNDATION
Supporting Volunteer Firefighters

ANNUAL REPORT

2025-2026







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ABOUT US

The CFS Foundation provides financial relief to SA CFS volunteers and their families who have suffered tragedy through death, injury or significant loss of property whilst protecting their communities. There are over 13,500 CFS volunteers located in 425 brigades throughout South Australia.

Our purpose is to provide CFS volunteers the same unflinching support they give our entire community daily. Support from individuals and the community is vital to ensure we can continue to assist our volunteers now and into the future.

With a changing climate and forecasts of hotter conditions and more extreme weather events, the demand on volunteers is only likely to increase and the Foundation will be there to support them.

CFS volunteers give their time freely to protect our community and are often victims themselves. This is where the CFS Foundation steps in, with the invaluable help of partners, sponsors, community and industry, to provide support to them and their family.

The CFS Foundation supports those, who volunteer to protect ... YOU



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

It is an honour to reflect on another year of the Country Fire Service Foundation and, most importantly, to recognise the extraordinary commitment and selflessness of South Australia's CFS volunteers.

Every day, our volunteers demonstrate courage, compassion and dedication as they respond to bushfires, floods, road accidents and other emergencies. They give their time willingly, often at considerable personal sacrifice, balancing their responsibilities to family, work and community while remaining ready to respond whenever they are needed. They are truly inspirational, and on behalf of the communities they protect, I extend our sincere thanks.

This year has also been marked by great sadness following the tragic passing of CFS firefighter Peter Curtis, who lost his life while undertaking firefighting duties at Pinkawillinie Conservation Park in November 2025. We extend our heartfelt condolences to Peter's family, friends and fellow volunteers. We also acknowledge the many other volunteers and families who have experienced injury, property loss or personal hardship while serving their communities.

These circumstances reinforce why the CFS Foundation exists. Our role is to provide practical financial assistance to volunteers and their families during some of their most difficult times. While our contribution can never compare with the sacrifices volunteers make, we are privileged to stand alongside them and assist in their recovery.

The Foundation's work would not be possible without the generosity of our sponsors, partners, donors and supporters. As an independent, non-government-funded charity, we rely on your financial contributions, advocacy and generosity to ensure we can continue supporting the CFS volunteer family. You are an important part of our extended team, and we sincerely thank you for standing with us.

I also acknowledge our Patron, Vince Monterola AM AFSM, and our Ambassadors, Brenton Ragless and Nathan Van Berlo, for their continued advocacy.

Good governance remains central to the Foundation's success. I sincerely thank my fellow Board members for their commitment and thoughtful contribution: Karen Ross (Vice Chair), David Stobbe (Treasurer), Sue Renner, Anne Lucas, Rob Nelson, Andrew Lawson AFSM, Brett Loughlin AFSM and Nathan Watts AFSM.

To our CEO, Gloria Berni, and Melanie McCarthy, I extend my appreciation for their professionalism, dedication and genuine care for the volunteers we serve. The Foundation achieved its objectives during the year while maintaining an operating cost of less than two cents for every dollar raised. This reflects a strong commitment to ensuring that the greatest possible proportion of funds is available to support volunteers.

As we reflect on the year, we are reminded that behind every CFS uniform is a person with family, responsibilities and a life beyond volunteering. Yet, time and again, these remarkable people put the needs of others first. They are the quiet heroes of our communities and it is our privilege to support them.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the Foundation's work. I look forward to continuing our important work together in support of those who give so much to protect us all.



John Lynch OAM
Chairman
Country Fire Service Foundation

A YEAR IN REVIEW

Deep Creek Bushfires
A Community United in the Face of Fire



In February 2026, bushfires swept through the Deep Creek and Cape Jervis region, triggering one of the year's largest multi-agency responses. Thanks to the extraordinary efforts of CFS volunteers, the fire was halted just 1km from Cape Jervis, preventing significant loss of life and property.

Over more than 10 days, crews battled a 60km fire perimeter with 4,592 hectares burnt. At the height of operations, around 100 fire trucks and 500 firefighters were deployed daily, with approximately 5,000 personnel contributing across the incident.

Aerial support was critical, delivering 1,072 water drops and more than 3.2 million litres onto the fireground. Community support was exceptional, with local businesses and volunteers providing meals, supplies and morale-boosting treats - including Krispy Kreme delivery by CFS Wellbeing Officer Jana Wurriehausen in the Foundation's Mitsubishi Triton.

The Deep Creek response was a powerful reminder of both the dedication of our CFS volunteers and the strength of the communities that stand beside them.

Appreciation Hampers for Deep Creek Firefighters



Following the Deep Creek bushfires, an extraordinary display of community generosity helped recognise the efforts of the many CFS volunteers who responded to the emergency.

The CFS Foundation team worked with Sammie from Limitless Quality Solutions to launch an initiative to deliver 'Appreciation Hampers' to the brigades involved in the firefighting campaign.



With generous support from local breweries, McLaren Vale wineries and South Australian businesses including Bickford's Australia and Arnott's, enough donations were received to assemble 48 hampers for CFS brigades.

While it was not possible to provide hampers to every brigade involved, with more than 150 brigades contributing to the campaign, the gesture was well received and reflected the gratitude felt across the wider community.

To every volunteer who answered the call during the Deep Creek fires, thank you. Your commitment, courage and tireless service did not go unnoticed.

A YEAR IN REVIEW

Supporting our CFS volunteers

The CFS Foundation acknowledges with deep sadness the passing of CFS firefighter Peter Curtis on Sunday 23 November 2025 while undertaking remote firefighting operations on the Eyre Peninsula.

Peter was serving with a National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) brigade strike team, deployed to assist with a scrub fire in Pinkawillinie Conservation Park, west of Kimba. His passing is a tragic reminder of the risks faced by CFS volunteers who selflessly put themselves in harm's way to protect their communities, landscapes and the lives of others.



Supporting CFS volunteers and their families through difficult and life-changing circumstances remains the heart of the Foundation's purpose. Throughout the year, the Foundation provided financial assistance to volunteers and their families facing a range of challenging circumstances, including serious injury, personal hardship and significant property damage.

While each circumstance is unique, our commitment remains the same - to provide practical support when it is needed most and to stand alongside the volunteers who give so much to protect South Australian communities.





RAA Strengthening Road Crash Rescue Training Capability

The CFS Foundation is proud to support initiatives that strengthen operational capability across South Australia through the support of RAA.

This year, Tom Phelan was appointed as State Training Delivery Officer – Road Crash Rescue within the Urban Team at the State Training Centre, Brukunga.

The three-year position has been made possible through the generous support of the RAA in partnership with the CFS Foundation, reflecting a shared commitment to improving Road Crash Rescue capability across the state.

Tom brings valuable experience from the Infrastructure and Logistics Team, alongside extensive knowledge of specialist equipment, fleet management and operational support systems.

This investment will significantly enhance training capacity, supporting increased delivery of Road Crash Rescue courses, 24P upskilling, revalidations and Heavy Rescue training aligned with the rollout of new appliances.

The Foundation gratefully acknowledges the RAA's continued commitment to improving volunteer capability, safety and operational readiness.

RAA Grants Deliver Valuable Support to Brigades

In addition to supporting the State Training Delivery Officer position, the RAA further strengthened its commitment to CFS volunteers through a generous contribution of $75,000 to fund a CFS Small Equipment and Wellbeing Grants Program.

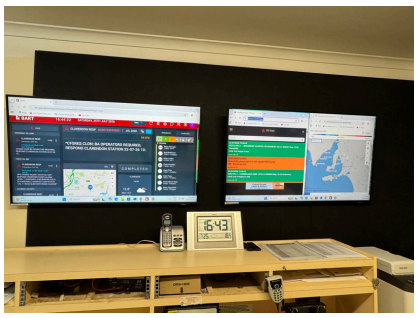
Brigades were invited to apply for grants of up to $2,000 to assist with the purchase of operational equipment and wellbeing initiatives that support volunteers both on and off the fireground.

The response was overwhelming, with more than 95 brigades submitting applications valued at over $167,000. The strong demand highlighted the importance of initiatives that directly support volunteer wellbeing and operational effectiveness.

The Foundation has worked closely with CFS management to review applications and maximise the impact of available funding.

We sincerely thank the RAA for its ongoing partnership and investment in the safety, wellbeing and capability of South Australia's CFS volunteers.







Supporting Volunteer Development Through Interschutz 2026

The CFS Foundation is proud to support the professional development of volunteers through opportunities that build knowledge, capability and innovation.

This year, the Foundation funded two experienced volunteers to attend Interschutz 2026 in Hannover, Germany, the world's largest fire and rescue conference and exhibition.

The successful recipients were Grant Fensom, Kingsley Group Officer from Port MacDonnell Brigade, and Kym Eagle, Lower Eyre Peninsula Group Officer from White Flat Brigade.

Held every four to five years, Interschutz attracts approximately 85,000 attendees and more than 1,300 exhibitors from 61 countries, showcasing the latest developments in firefighting, rescue and emergency management.

Attendance at the Conference provided an invaluable opportunity for Kym and Grant to engage with global leaders, explore emerging technologies and gain insights into future innovations in vehicles, equipment, communications and safety systems. The knowledge gained will help inform future capability planning and contribute to continuous improvement across the South Australian CFS.



Investing in Future CFS Leaders

The Foundation was proud to support this year's Youth Advisory Council Emerging Leaders Program, which brought together around 70 young CFS volunteers from across South Australia.

A highlight of the program was a special question-and-answer session with Nathan Van Berlo, Assistant Coach of the Adelaide Crows and Ambassador for the CFS Foundation.

Nathan shared valuable insights into leadership, resilience, maintaining focus under pressure and the importance of mindfulness in high-pressure environments. Participants quickly identified parallels between elite sport and emergency service operations, leading to meaningful discussion and reflection.

The program provided an inspiring opportunity for young volunteers to connect, learn and develop the skills that will help shape the future leadership of the CFS.







Police Credit Union Celebrates International Firefighters' Day

A simple gesture of appreciation can make a meaningful difference.

On International Firefighters' Day, Glenn from Police Credit Union's Tea Tree Plaza branch visited Tea Tree Gully CFS Brigade to thank volunteers for their ongoing service to the community.

Armed with a generous supply of Fruchocs, Glen surprised members during their regular training night, providing a welcome treat and an opportunity to acknowledge the remarkable work undertaken by CFS volunteers.

The thoughtful visit reflected Police Credit Union's ongoing support for South Australia's emergency service personnel and was well appreciated by brigade members.





A Mitsubishi Triton Supporting Volunteer Outcomes

The Foundation received a new Mitsubishi Triton, generously provided through the ongoing support of Mitsubishi Motors Australia.

The vehicle plays a vital role in supporting Foundation activities across South Australia, assisting with community engagement, fundraising initiatives, donation collection and volunteer support programs.

Reliable, practical and versatile, the Triton ensures the Foundation team can continue travelling throughout the state to connect with volunteers, brigades, supporters and donors.

We sincerely thank Mitsubishi Motors Australia for its continued partnership and support of the CFS Foundation.



Farewell to Alysha and Welcome to Mel

The Foundation farewelled Alysha Baldock during the year following seven years of dedicated service to the Foundation. She made a valued contribution across the Foundation's administration, communications and supporter engagement activities. Her enthusiasm, creativity and professionalism, together with her genuine commitment to supporting CFS volunteers, were greatly appreciated by the Board, volunteers, colleagues and supporters.

We thank Alysha for her significant contribution to the Foundation and wish her every success as she embarks on the next chapter of her career.

The Foundation also welcomed Melanie McCarthy to the team as our new Administration Officer. In addition to her role with the Foundation, Mel also works part-time with the CFS Air Desk, bringing valuable experience, enthusiasm and a strong understanding of the CFS community.

We look forward to Mel's contribution as the Foundation continues to strengthen its administration and support services.





2025 CFS Foundation Luncheon

The 2025 CFS Foundation Luncheon raised more than $25,000 in support of CFS volunteers and their families.

Held at Observatory 23, the event brought together supporters, sponsors, donors and community leaders for an afternoon of connection, generosity and celebration.

A special thank you goes to all businesses and individuals who donated items for the silent auction, live auction and wine wall. Their contributions helped create an engaging and memorable experience for guests while significantly boosting fundraising outcomes.

We also acknowledge Thorn-Clarke Wines, our inaugural Wine Sponsor, for their valued support.

Our sincere thanks go to everyone who attended, including MC Brenton Ragless and guest speaker Nik Stanley, whose contributions helped make the day both entertaining and inspiring.

Beyond the funds raised, the luncheon strengthened the community of supporters who stand behind the Foundation and the volunteers we proudly serve.






2025 Triple Zero Charity Ball

The 2025 Triple Zero Charity Ball brought together members of South Australia's emergency services community and supporters to recognise the dedication of those who serve on the frontline and raise funds to support emergency service personnel and their families.

The event proudly supported four organisations: the CFS Foundation, Police Legacy, the Australian Professional Firefighters Foundation and the Stafford Wulff Paramedicine Scholarship.

Guests enjoyed an evening of entertainment, celebration and connection, with funds raised through the generosity of attendees, sponsors and donors. The event highlighted the strong sense of community that exists across South Australia's emergency services and the continued commitment of supporters to giving back to those who serve.

The CFS Foundation extends its sincere thanks to everyone who attended, sponsored, donated or contributed in any way to the success of the 2025 Triple Zero Charity Ball. Their generosity helps ensure vital support is available to emergency service personnel and their families when it is needed most.

FUNDRAISING

Generating income through various initiatives and third party fundraising occurs on a regular basis and this financial year saw a myriad of fundraising .



Hills Heat Softball Club - CFS Round.
A huge thank you to the Hills Heat Softball Club and the wider softball community for hosting the CFS Round at Anembo Park in Littlehampton!
It was a fantastic night, with plenty of great competition, team spirit and excitement on the softball diamond.
We sincerely appreciate everyone involved for their time, generosity and dedication in making the evening such a success.

Highbury Hotel Bingo Night - Held a DJ Bingo night to celebrate their 155 birthday and raised $1220 for the CFS Foundation.

Ginny Pig Distillery - held a musical bingo night and raised a whopping $2250 for the Foundation and $2250 for Mt Compass CFS brigade.





Direct Collect have a 10c can recycling program in place. They will deliver the bin to your workplace and replace it when its full. You can look after the environment and also nominate the CFS Foundation to be the recipients of the cash back from your cans.



OTRGive App - Thanks to the many people who have downloaded the OTR App and chosen “Australian Volunteer Firefighting Associations” as their charity of choice. The CFS Foundation is the South Australian recipient of these donations.

Thanks to the many other individuals and organisations who supported the Foundation during the year with fundraising and donations.

Bequest Acknowledgements

The CFS Foundation has been privileged to receive bequests from benevolent individuals seeking to establish an enduring legacy for our CFS volunteers.

These bequests are held in our Volunteer Support Fund in order to provide immediate financial support to CFS volunteers and their families when they are impacted whilst volunteering for the South Australian Country Fire Service.

These bequests are graciously received and valued.



SPONSORS













SUPPORTERS











PATRON & AMBASSADORS

Vince Monterola AM AFSM - CFS Foundation Patron



Vince Monterola AM AFSM - Patron “For more than **50** years I have served in EFS/CFS, as a fire-fighter, Station Officer, Brigade Captain, Group Officer, Deputy Board Chairman, Chief Executive and other roles. Over all that time, rather than becoming blasé about the service and commitment of our volunteers I have become increasingly impressed by their selflessness and their professionalism. I have seen the sacrifices they have made and the suffering they have endured; family, vocation, leisure time, have all been neglected at times because community demands for safety from fire and other emergencies were given priority. Because I hold our volunteers in such high regard and know the dangers they often face I have been keen to support them through the Foundation since it began almost 20 years ago. To have been invited to serve as Patron is a great honour and I look forward to further serving these worthy men and women.”

Brenton Ragless - Ambassador



“My interest in the CFS began at the age of five when I tagged along with dad to the Eden Hills Brigade, and on finishing school in 1993 I followed in his footsteps to become an active volunteer firefighter. Over the years I’ve also been a full-time CFS spokesman, supported many CFS Volunteers Association projects, and joined the Cherry Gardens Brigade to provide ground support for air operations. I’m delighted and privileged to be a CFS Foundation Ambassador and hope that you’ll join me in supporting your local heroes”.

Nathan Van Berlo - Ambassador



We are proud to have Nathan Van Berlo as an Ambassador for the CFS Foundation. Nathan recognises the value CFS Volunteers provide to our communities and is excited to see how he can provide some positive assistance to the Foundation. “It’s a great honour to be involved with such a wonderful and proud organisation and I encourage people to donate so we can provide support to CFS volunteers and their families when they most need it”.

BOARD MEMBERS



John Lynch OAM - Chairman

John retired in 2018 as the Chief Executive Officer with the Royal Flying Doctor Service and joined the CFS Foundation as a Board Member in March 2019. He commenced working with the RFDS at its Broken Hill base as Accountant in 1986 and assumed the position of CEO in 2000.

In March 2019, John joined the Board of the CFS Foundation, bringing with him a wealth of leadership experience and strategic insight. He was elected Chairman in January 2020 and has since led the organisation through a series of impactful initiatives that continue to strengthen support for CFS volunteers across South Australia.



Karen Ross - Vice Chair

Karen is currently the Group General Manager People and Culture at Flinders Port Holdings based in Port Adelaide. She has over 25 years experience in senior management roles in a diverse range of industries and is a subject matter expert in the field of industrial relations, organisational development and driving HR strategy to align with business outcomes. Karen was previously the General Manager, Innovation, Digital and Brand at Elders Ltd and prior to that held positions in financial services, airlines and utilities sectors as well as leading the integration of another agribusiness following an international merger. Her experience ranges from running large operational business units as well as corporate services.



David Stobbe - Treasurer

David has a Bachelor of Business (Accounting) and is a member of CPA Australia with over 15 years' finance experience gained in the private sector utility industry. David has a strong business acumen; sound accounting proficiency in the areas of management reporting, budgeting and forecasting and business partnering. Through his other board/ committee appointments he has extensive experience in governance, sponsorship and fundraising with a community focus.



Brett Loughlin AFSM GAICD - CFS Chief Officer

Brett started with the South Australian CFS in 2015, when he took up the post of Region 1 Commander. Since that time, Brett went on to perform the role of Director, Preparedness Operations and Director, Regional Operations, CFS Executive Director, Operations and was appointed CFS Chief Officer in September 2022. Prior to joining CFS, Brett served with NSW RFS for over 10 years, in that time he worked in the Northern NSW and led the Namoi/Gwydir (North West NSW encompassing Narrabri and Moree) and Mid North Coast (Coffs Harbour) Teams. These were demanding and dynamic roles in which Brett delivered strong support across regional farming areas, and managing issues associated with large population centres, both areas frequently dealt with significant complex incidents.



Andrew Lawson AFSM

Andrew is a strategic thinker, experienced in turning conceptual ideas into achievable policy and realistic outcomes. With ten years of executive level experience with the South Australian Country Fire Service (CFS) as Deputy Chief Officer and thirty years' experience in the South Australian Emergency Management sector Andrew understands effective emergency service delivery, from operational, preparedness, response and recovery perspectives. In his roles with CFS, Andrew worked closely with the South Australian State Emergency Service, ForestrySA, Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources, Bureau of Meteorology at regional, State and national levels.

BOARD MEMBERS



Sue Renner

Sue has experience in legal, risk management and governance gained over a number of years and joined the CFS Foundation Board in 2019. Prior to her current role, Sue was Principal of Sue Renner Advisory and previous to this she was employed by ElectraNet fullfilling in-house legal roles where she was responsible for a range of functions including input into major transactions, contracting services, regulatory compliance and management of legal issues. Sue has extensive experience on Boards including in the not for profit sector.



Rob Nelson

Rob has more than 20 years of senior management experience and has been a leader of successful business and project teams across multiple business units, with extensive experience in the financial services and agricultural industries. He is currently the Commercial Manager at Tarac and joined the CFS Foundation Board in 2019. He is highly experienced in developing strategy and risk management programs, managing compliance and governance, and post-merger business integration. Rob is a Fellow of CPA Australia. He holds a Degree in Accounting from the University of SA and an MBA from the University of Adelaide.



Nathan Watts AFSM

With more than 20 years of experience in the property industry, Nathan is widely recognised as a strategic thinker, an excellent communicator, and a highly motivated leader.

A dedicated CFS volunteer since 1998, he currently serves as a firefighter in the Adelaide Hills, where he lives with his wife and three young children. Nathan also brings with him a wealth of operational knowledge and experience, which is complemented by his significant contribution across numerous committees and working groups



Anne Lucas

Anne is a highly experienced communicator, marketer and change specialist with a background in journalism and public relations and is assistant Director Engagement for the Murray-Darling Basin Authority. She has more than 10 years of experience in senior positions in the financial services sector and has played a key role in delivering successful engagement communications and change projects, including national marketing campaigns. Anne has a track record of raising money for charity and experience on not-for-profit Boards and is in her second year on our Board. She holds a Master of Communication Management, Graduate Diploma in Marketing and Bachelor of Arts in Journalism from the University of South Australia.

STAFF MEMBERS



Gloria Berni - Chief Executive Officer

Gloria joined the CFS Foundation in 2018 and has over 30 years' experience in senior management roles across a diverse range of industries including 13 years managing the local television station in Port Lincoln between 2000 – 2013. During her time there, she experienced first hand the devastation bushfires can cause and how important CFS volunteers are to keeping the community safe.

Since returning to Adelaide, Gloria has worked for a range of not-for-profit organisations in business development and general management before joining the CFS Foundation, initially as joint-CEO and then taking on the role full-time as Chief Executive Officer in January 2020 during the ravaging bushfires of that summer.



Alysha Baldock - Administration Manager (until Oct 25)

Alysha joined the CFS Foundation in 2018 and manages the administration and social media platforms plus provides support to the Chief Executive Officer. Her extensive background in management and administration from varying industries has ensured she brings a multitude of skills to this small team including marketing, promotion and events.

Over the years, Alysha has developed a strong passion for assisting CFS volunteers and values their important roles in keeping regional communities and Adelaide fringe areas safe and continually seeks ways the CFS Foundation can improve their volunteering experience.



Melanie McCarthy - Administration & Social Media (from Oct 25)

Melanie works part-time as the Social Media and Administration Manager for the CFS Foundation, alongside a part-time role as a State Operations Officer with the Country Fire Service (CFS) at Headquarters in Keswick.

As part of the State Air Desk, she coordinates aircraft, crews and resources across South Australia during the Fire Danger Season, bringing calm decision-making and strong communication skills to high-pressure environments.

Balancing both roles, Melanie is passionate about supporting colleagues and contributing to the safety of South Australian communities. She looks forward to playing a key role within the CFS Foundation team, supporting volunteers and regional communities across the state