

MEDIA RELEASE

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FIRE PRESIDENTS CALL FOR RECOGNITION OF VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

On Wednesday 12 February, the Executive of CAVFA met in Melbourne to discuss the recent and ongoing horrific bushfire season impacting so much of the country.

CAVFA has been overwhelmed by the generosity of the Australian community, only surpassed by our volunteer firefighters and their incredible efforts over so many months.

The key theme of the meeting was recognition of volunteers, both for their recent efforts and their continuing commitment to their communities.

As such, CAVFA is calling for the generosity extended by the Australian community to be felt by every volunteer firefighter through respect and support into the future.

CAVFA recognises both federal and state support during the bushfire crisis and encourages both levels of government to work together to examine the broader issues that directly affect volunteer firefighters.

For example, the addition of Defence resources was both an asset and an opportunity to do things better in the future.

CAVFA's view of a capable and resilient volunteer firefighting resource includes:

- Improving safety, health and welfare strategies for volunteers, including mental health support;
- Reviewing compensation and reimbursement of costs schemes, ensuring there is no detriment to the valuable ethos of volunteerism;
- Appropriate resourcing for firefighting appliances, equipment and fire ground communications;
- Providing consistency of volunteer protections across states.

“Looking after our volunteers is looking after our Australian communities,” CAVFA President Andy Wood said.

“While states provide support to volunteer firefighters, we need to be honest about where those resources are falling short, and what role all governments should play to ensure respect and recognition of our volunteers.

“As a result, CAVFA is reaching out to the Prime Minister to find a collaborative way forward to demonstrate the respect due to our firefighting volunteers,” he said.

The Council of Australian Volunteer Fire Associations (CAVFA) is a collaboration of eleven volunteer fire brigade associations within Australia.

Through its member associations it represents over 250,000 volunteer firefighters and operational support volunteers across the country.