

Emergency Service Volunteers — update June 2016

Transcript

Acting QFES Media Director, Matthew Rigby:

At the recent summit in Townsville, the Commissioner made a number of announcements, can you cover off on those for us Mike?

Deputy Commissioner Emergency Service Volunteers Mike Wassing:

The Commissioner made a number of announcements, in particular that volunteers throughout QFES will have access to Office 365. That will give them a standard email address which they'll be able to utilise to engage in two-way communication with the department and locally amongst themselves, but it also comes with a range of other features, including Skype so they can video conference. This is recognising Queensland is very remote and that technology is very important to us.

The Commissioner also announced the fuel and vehicle maintenance for Rural Fire Service vehicles. That will see an annual inspection for the fleet within RFS, paid for by QFES, but also fuel paid for as well to enable local fire brigades to better utilise other funding streams provided locally to support the preparedness within their communities.

Matt Rigby: I suppose that's key in terms of that announcement, this is on top of what already happens at a local level, isn't it?

DC Wassing: This is not replacement funding, this is new funding and it actually enables the local fire brigade to improve their operational efficiency and provide a greater level of service within their local community.

Matt Rigby: You mentioned before Mike, part of the Office 365 is having people better connected with the department. Can you also let us know what is happening in that area with the Volunteer Information Portal?

DC Wassing: There's a range of activities to make sure we get better connected with our volunteers. Part of that is our Volunteer Information Portal (VIP). The VIP is now being integrated with the broader package of the Human Capital Management System and that will see an end-to-end aspect of all of the paid and volunteer workforce operating within the one system. With the VIP we're now at the stage where we're going to form a local consultative group made up of volunteers and Jade Keogh, who is our project manager, will be calling for nominations for that consultative group and that will have volunteers basically helping to build a tool we will need into the future.

Matt Rigby: With all these things happening Mike, what's going to happen in terms of rolling these out?



DC Wassing: I've taken Assistant Commissioner Tom Dawson offline with a small team and they're working within a taskforce, Taskforce Action, and over the next three months, Tom and his small team will be working with the associations to fundamentally provide these services - the fuel, the vehicle maintenance, the Office 365 - but a number of other quick deliverables that will help our volunteers into the future.

Matt Rigby: Mike, can you tell us a bit about your trip to Hells Gate?

DC Wassing: I had a wonderful opportunity to travel to Hells Gate, about 50km east of the Northern Territory border, in the Gulf of Carpentaria. Fundamentally, the program was about the local ranger program. Together with RFS, traditional owners as well as pastoralists, brought together by the Aboriginal Council, the program was not only about fire and better burning programs, but a common outcome in terms of reduced weeds, better fire in the landscape, reduced fuel loads and better outcomes for pastoralists. The outstanding message was local people working together to solve a local problem and to see the benefits of that transpose into real world outcomes for the people in the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Matt Rigby: Can you tell us a bit about the polo shirt for SES as well?

DC Wassing: It's got the uniform aspect on it, it's got the SES aspect on it, so it's quite clearly identified, but a great bit of field wear for SES volunteers we will start rolling out very soon. At the same time, as I mentioned, we will also soon be rolling out the new formal uniform which will be the light blue for SES replacing the current white shirts and at the same time for RFS staff and volunteers, going into the new light blue shirt with new shoulder patches as well.

Matt Rigby: One of the things I know you're really keen about is trying to engage with volunteers so can you tell us about the survey coming up as well?

DC Wassing: We need and want volunteers to inform our future. A key aspect of that is actually surveying our volunteers to understand what their needs are, not just tomorrow or the next day but long term. The volunteer survey, which will commence on 11 July and run for approximately a month through to early August, is an opportunity for our volunteers throughout QFES to tell us what your needs are and some of the areas where you see improvement opportunities, and we want to know the areas we're doing well in now. All of that will give us a better knowledge base in terms of how we can improve our services and working with volunteers into the future. The volunteer survey is entirely confidential, no names, no pack drills, but we really want to know what your thoughts are.

Matt Rigby: So Mike, there's a lot of stuff happening, do you want to tell us about that?

DC Wassing: There are some amazing opportunities coming up as well. The Australasian Police and Emergency Services Games are coming up in October at the Sunshine Coast. This is a wonderful opportunity for volunteers and staff to come together and compete against other countries as well as each other and other states as well. Also very importantly, we've currently got the blood challenge underway at the moment. The blood challenge is an opportunity for us to give blood, and one person can save potentially three lives or more just by giving blood. Go to your normal blood bank and indicate you're a member of QFES and that will help us and other people as well.



Matt Rigby: Thanks so much for your time today out of your busy schedule, we appreciate it.

DC Wassing: Thanks for the opportunity to share some current and future information with our staff and volunteers and continuing to improve our engagement.

