



## The Country Fire Service Volunteers Association

*"Representing the interests of CFS Members"*

May 17 2010

Manager  
Philanthropy and Exemptions Unit  
Personal and Retirement Income Division  
The Treasury  
Langton Crescent  
PARKES ACT 2600

Dear Sir

### **Deductible Gift Recipient Status for SA Country Fire Service Brigades**

The Country Fire Service Volunteers Association (CFSVA) represents the 15,000 volunteers of the South Australian Country Fire Service (CFS).

On behalf of our members, the Association would like to make comment on the exposure draft of legislation that will extend tax deductible donation support to all volunteer bushfire brigades.

All brigades in South Australia currently hold Public Benevolent Institution status. This is administered through the CFS Group structure which provides the GST and annual return support to the brigades.

The Association recognizes that the draft legislation would effectively:

1. take away the PBI status held by the brigades, whilst allowing them to retain DGR status; and
2. allow the current system of individual brigades holding public funds to be retained.

The Association does not support the stripping of PBI status from the brigades. Some brigades already employ additional help in terms of cleaners and administrative support. Whilst we believe that no CFS brigade currently takes advantage of the PBI rules in terms of fringe benefits in setting employment conditions, this could change in the future

as the bureaucratic impost on brigades increases. The CFSVA would therefore not like to see this status removed.

The Association fully supports the current system of allowing individual brigades holding public funds to be retained. The system appears to work well in South Australia. and CFS brigades would certainly be extremely upset to be made to move to a centralized system.

The CFSVA also is a PBI, as are a handful of volunteer fire brigade welfare associations around the state. The CFSVA takes advantage of the PBI status in terms of the fringe benefit rules, and would not like to see this status removed. Most volunteer fire brigade associations around Australia receive limited funds on which to support the interests and welfare of the 240,000 volunteer firefighters in Australia. Whilst only a few currently enjoy PBI status, all the associations would find it easier to recruit and retain key employees with the status. If PBI status was removed from those associations currently holding it, this would put pressure on their ability to provide services to volunteers.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information

Yours sincerely

Wendy Shirley  
Executive Director