

# BUSH FIRE SERVICE/SES/FESA

The FESA volunteers do amazing work that largely goes unreported and unseen for legal reasons. The present day FESA has emerged over decades out of local fire-fighting groups, and the start of a State Emergency Service (SES) unit in Hyden from about '96.

Fire fighting in rural areas was under the Bush Fires Board/Country Fire Authority for decades, acting through the Shire. But brigades were always short of equipment and operating funds, reliant on their own local fund raising. Fire-fighting was generally done by ad hoc volunteer groups as needed. Hyden relied officially on an old Leyland parked in the Shire yard with a maximum speed of 80kmph, next to useless it is said. An approach made to the newly formed Fire and Emergency Services (FESA) HQ in Albany in the late '90s resulted in a formal brigade created in Hyden. They got new trucks specially built from the chassis up, and training. Townsman Geoff Parr, John Duthie and Ashley Rogers were active initially. There was a 2-3 man crew per truck, later 4-5, all volunteers. The volunteers saw service as part of living in a small community like Hyden. A new truck for East Hyden was also planned...

In '96, the Silver Chain asked for local back-up on accidents, so a meeting was arranged with SES Albany to train some locals in road rescue and other emergencies. A road rescue trailer was bought from Williams with all the hydraulics needed that were needed for the jaws, and the SES supplied a Land Rover style vehicle. About 25 volunteers were trained on 2x3 day courses at the start. These vehicles were stationed at the Shire depot yard at the back of town. There was limited crossover between the fire and emergency groups initially. Later, the latter shifted to their own SES shed, opened on 15 July, '99 by the Minister for Emergency Services, Hon. Kevin Prince MLA. There were awards and celebrations at the opening. The original volunteers are now down to about 5 regulars, but others join to keep the 15 man strength of FESA as a merged group.

Unfortunately, the door of the SES shed proved too narrow for the FESA vehicle, it was only car size! The building and roller door had to be re-configured before it could be used. The SES work demands a lot of training to handle the wide range of situations they can face when called to an incident.





At the site of an incident, apart from rescue of the injured by the Silver Chain, investigation of the cause and road clearance (in absence of Police) can be a critical extra role for FESA units, hence the confidentiality. At the Airport base the Ambulances are always ready to go...

