BEFORE THE SES .........

1942 Australian Government advertisement  50 Years of the State Emergency Service  The year is 1936, George VI becomes King of England after King Edward VIII abdicates, and Western Australia makes voting compulsory in state elections.

Australian Commonwealth and State Ministers agreed in 1936, that for civil defence purposes, they would train key personnel in preparation for gas attacks, provide equipment, manuals, technical information and advice. This was the very beginning of Australia’s Civil Defence Service.

During WWII, many Australians were volunteers, appointed as Air Raid Wardens by the National Emergency Services, monitoring air raid security and breaches of blackout regulations. In cities and towns around the country, evacuation procedures were planned and practised.

After the war, around the late 1940s, the Commonwealth reactivated the Civil Defence Service, and during the 1950s the States accepted responsibility for civil defence organisations. Each State formed a headquarters and volunteer units at local government level.

THE LEAD UP TO HOW WE KNOW SES TODAY.....

The ‘State Emergency Service’ (SES) was formed in 1959 for the purpose of ‘coping with civil disaster, including fires, floods, cyclones, railway accidents, crashed aircraft, explosions and the search for lost persons’.

In 1961 the State Emergency Service was amalgamated with the Civil Defence Organisation and was known as the ‘Civil Defence and Emergency Service of Western Australia’. This followed a Royal Commission on bush fires and a government review into ways to combat cyclones and floods.

A standard wooden alarm rattle most commonly used by Air Raid and Civil Defence Wardens to warn residents of potential air raids or gas attacks
In 1968 the Commonwealth Director of Civil Defence produced a handbook for Volunteers to refer to on Radiological Defence. The manual describes some of the methods and procedures to be observed in countering the effects on the civil population of fallout from nuclear weapon attack.

In 1974 the organisation was renamed the Western Australian State Emergency Service. The headquarters was located at the ‘Bunker’ in Belmont, and there were SES units located at Westrail and the Swan Brewery. At a local level, SES units were known as Local Volunteer Emergency Services Units but by the end of the 70s they had moved to be referred to as State Emergency Service Units.

Today the WA State Emergency Service is part of the Fire and Emergency Services Authority of Western Australia (FESA) after it was formally established as a statutory government authority, responsible for the Fire and Rescue Service, the Bush Fire Service and the State Emergency Service. FESA is responsible for a number of hazards in Western Australia including tropical cyclones, floods, storms, earthquakes and tsunami. It is also the combat agency for land search, road crash rescue, and cliff and cave rescue. Traditionally these hazards have been assigned to the SES.

FESA highly values State Emergency Service Volunteers. The extraordinary commitment that they make to their community and the State is greatly appreciated. Much time, training and personal sacrifice that is given is to be commended. FESA is also grateful to the families and employers of SES Volunteers who provide support and enable individuals to volunteer when needed.
CIVIL DEFENCE AND EMERGENCY SERVICE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA CIRCA 1968
SES VOLUNTEERS AT MEETINGS, INCIDENTS AND TRAINING