

RFS Volunteer Membership

Purpose

This service standard has been issued under Section 38(1) of the *Emergencies Act 2004* by the ACT Rural Fire Service Chief Officer.

The purpose of this service standard is to outline membership categories and status, including the necessary skills and service requirements, to volunteer with the ACT Rural Fire Service (ACTRFS).

Applicability

This service standard is applicable to all volunteer members of the ACTRFS.

Background

The ACT RFS is responsible for protecting life, property and the environment from all bush and grass fires in rural ACT areas. Activities include

- Hazard reduction and supporting land management
- Working with people living in the rural area to make sure they have everything they need to protect themselves and their property
- Responding to fires in rural areas in the ACT
- Engagement and education activities to ensure the community has the information they need to stay safe before, during and after bushfires and other emergencies.

The ACTRFS has more than 450 active volunteer members who are based in eight brigades across the ACT.

The ACTRFS provides a range of membership categories and statuses to reflect the broad range of activities that are undertaken by our volunteers, and the diversity of our membership.

This membership service standard intends to provide clear guidance about the skills, experience and standard required to achieve and maintain membership with the ACTRFS.

Responsibilities

Position	Responsibilities
Members	<p>Must comply with all ACTRFS standard operating procedures (SOPs), policies and guidelines.</p> <p>Achieve the minimum training and fitness level requirements for their membership category.</p> <p>Regularly participate in Brigade activities to maintain their skill currency and membership status.</p> <p>Advise the Brigade Captain, President or their delegate of any change in circumstances that might affect or change the members membership category or status.</p> <p>On resignation, return all ACTRFS issued personal protective clothing/personal protective equipment and any other service issued items such as ID card to ACTRFS HQ or their appropriate Brigade representative.</p>
<p>Brigade Captain and/or Brigade President*</p> <p>*Brigade Membership Officers, if appointed, may assist the Brigade Captain or President to undertake any or all of these responsibilities.</p>	<p>Provide opportunities and support members to achieve and maintain their membership category and status.</p> <p>Advise the ACTRFS Membership Officer of any changes to a members membership category or status.</p> <p>Advise members who wish to exit from the Service about how to return any equipment in a timely manner.</p> <p>Contact members who have not maintained the necessary membership requirements and request the return of ACTRFS property.</p> <p>Return surrendered ID cards to ACTRFS Membership Officer.</p>
ACTRFS Membership Officer	<p>Process and administer all new member applications.</p> <p>Maintain Membership Register for all ACTRFS members which will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - personal information (contact details, next of kin); - member attendance; - working with vulnerable people card status; - fitness level; - training records; - any other details required by the ACTRFS Chief Officer <p>Ensure any returned ID cards are deactivated and destroyed.</p>

Position	Responsibilities
<p data-bbox="191 170 456 201">ACTRFS Chief Officer*</p> <p data-bbox="191 275 597 449">This responsibility is delegated to Brigade Captains and Officers although all Brigade members are responsible for maintaining their own service skills and capability.</p>	<p data-bbox="659 170 1330 201">Accepts, rejects or suspends membership to the ACTRFS</p> <p data-bbox="659 222 1406 289">Ensures Brigade members are appropriately trained, equipped and physically capable of performing the tasks they undertake.</p>

Maintaining Membership: Guiding Principles

The ACTRFS is committed to establishing and maintaining inclusive and safe workplace practices that enable volunteers to train and undertake the duties required of the ACTRFS. This commitment ensures that all ACTRFS volunteers are prepared and capable of supporting the community and other emergency service organisations during emergencies and community events, and to operate safely and effectively.

The ACTRFS recognises that throughout their volunteer membership, a change in circumstance may affect a member's opportunity to participate. In recognition of such changes, the ACTRFS membership service standard provides clear guidance, and flexibility to move between membership categories and status.

Regular attendance by members at Brigade activities is critical to maintain skills and relationships; and helps to determine membership category and status. All members of the ACTRFS are expected to:

- maintain core skills and fitness levels to safely undertake work.
- Be aware of Service policies, procedures, and other relevant matters.
- Be conscious of the skill levels and limitations of the other volunteers of the Brigade

This service standard intends to ensure the needs of all members are considered. The ACTRFS aims to ensure members in each membership category are supported.

Brigades may impose higher Membership Standards by alteration of their Brigade Constitution, in consultation and with approval from the Chief Officer. Once approved by the Chief Officer, supplementations can be made to Brigade Constitutions.

Brigades are not able to alter or adjust the requirements of members below that of this Service Standard.

Membership categories

There are four types of membership within the ACTRFS. The table below describes each of the categories, and the standard that applies to that category.

Category	Description	Standard
Firefighter	Brigade members who undertake fire suppression activities and other operational duties.	<p>Achieve and maintain minimum mandatory training qualifications (eg: Bushfire Fighter)</p> <p>Achieve and maintain the level of physical fitness required in accordance with ACT RFS Service Standard 3.1.3 Work Capacity Test.</p> <p>Hold a current ACT Government Working with Vulnerable People card, in accordance with the <i>Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act 2011</i> and the <i>ACT ESA WWVP Policy</i></p> <p>Meet any Brigade specific requirements</p>
Operational Support	<p>Brigade members who provide support to Brigade or frontline operations but are not active participants in direct firefighting activities. These members would generally not be expected to perform roles forward of staging areas.</p> <p>Examples include vehicle movements or ground support at a staging area and Incident Management Team (IMT) personnel.</p> <p>These members may be required to enter operational firegrounds under escort of an Active Firefighter.</p>	<p>Achieve and maintain the level of physical fitness required in accordance with ACT RFS Service Standard 3.1.3 Work Capacity Test.</p> <p>Hold a current ACT Government Working with Vulnerable People (WWVP) card, in accordance with the <i>Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act 2011</i> and the <i>ACT ESA WWVP Policy*</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Note: members in this membership category may not be required to hold a current WWVP if they do not come into contact with vulnerable people - for example - providing only administrative support in an Emergency Coordination Centre; or providing only administrative and managerial support across the ESA including in a Brigade or Unit. <p>Meet any Brigade specific requirements</p>
Brigade Support	Brigade members who provide support at a Brigade level and undertake administrative functions <u>only</u> . They do not take part in any fire suppression activities or other ESA operations, for example: Brigade secretaries.	<p>Achieve and maintain the level of physical fitness required in accordance with ACT RFS Service Standard 3.1.3 Work Capacity Test.</p> <p>Maintain working with vulnerable people card</p> <p>Hold a current ACT Government Working with Vulnerable People card, in accordance with the <i>Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act 2011</i> and the <i>ACT ESA WWVP Policy*</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Note: members in this membership category may not be required to hold a current WWVP if they do not come into contact with vulnerable people - for example - providing only administrative support in an Emergency Coordination Centre; or providing only administrative and managerial support across the ESA including in a Brigade or Unit. <p>Meet any Brigade specific requirements</p>
Junior Member	<p>Junior members are Brigade members between 16 and 18 years of age, who undertake fire suppression and other operational or support roles. Junior members require 2:1 supervision at all times and participation exclusions apply.</p> <p>Junior members may perform support roles if they or the Brigade executive deem them to be suitable but must comply with all restrictions specified under 'Junior membership' in this service standard.</p>	<p>Achieve and maintain the level of physical fitness required in accordance with ACT RFS Service Standard 3.1.3 Work Capacity Test.</p> <p>Hold a current ACT Government Working with Vulnerable People card, in accordance with the <i>Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act 2011</i> and the <i>ACT ESA WWVP Policy</i></p> <p>Meet any Brigade specific requirements</p>

Membership status

There are three types of membership status recognised by the ACTRFS. The table below describes each status and outlines the standard that applies to each status.

Status	Description	Standard
Active Member	Members who are available for current activities in accordance with their membership category.	Active members are required to attend 20 hours per calendar year across training, operations, meetings, and/or community events. Active members must maintain contact with Brigades in accordance with their prescribed membership categories
Inactive Member	Members who are not currently available for activities in accordance with their membership category. Reasons for inactivity may include (but not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - members who have not maintained contact with their Brigades and do not meet to the minimum membership standards. - Overseas or interstate work postings - maternity/paternity leave Volunteers are assumed to be inactive if they have failed to confirm membership status over a period longer than 12 months.	Inactive members must maintain some contact with their Brigade to regularly confirm their membership. While holding this status, no time of service will be counted. Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Members who wish to become active again must attend at least 2 brigade training sessions in the 2 months immediately to the changed status; and demonstrate to the Brigade leadership that their skills are appropriate for the task to be undertaken. - Members who are absent for longer than two years without approval from ACTRFS HQ, following endorsement from their Brigade Captain or President will be re classified as former member and may require a new membership application process to be conducted if they wish to become active again.
Former member	Volunteers whose membership with the ACTRFS has ceased. Reasons for this status include (but not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Members who have remained inactive for longer than 2 years without approval from ACTRFS HQ following endorsement from 	While holding this status, no time of service will be counted.

	<p>their Brigade Captain and/or President.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Members have advised their Brigade or a member of staff that they are no longer available to remain within the ACTRFS in any capacity. 	
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Membership assessment

Membership may be assessed on a case-by-case basis and in consultation with ACTRFS Membership Officer, Brigade Captains and/or Presidents and the member involved. Active members who do not meet the minimum standards as set out by this Service Standard may have their status changed to Inactive Member and/or Former Member.

The Chief Officer ACTRFS has the responsibility for ensuring that only those volunteers who are appropriately trained, equipped and physically capable of performing their duties are tasked according to their abilities. It is role of the Brigade Captains and Presidents, and volunteers to follow the processes and procedures to ensure volunteers can meet their obligations to maintain their membership status.

Changing membership category

Brigade members must advise the Brigade President or Captain, preferably in writing, if they intend to change their membership status.

If a member makes no contact with the Brigade over a 12-month period, that member will be deemed as Inactive. No contact is to be interpreted as no meaningful contact, recognising the circumstances of the individual member. The level of meaningful contact is dependent on the membership category held and the individual's ability to maintain skills. Brigades may place further requirements for meaningful contact above the Service Standard.

Any changes in membership status by the Brigade executive is to be followed up with the affected member in writing. Brigades are to inform the ACTRFS Membership Officer of any changes in membership status.

For members changing their **membership status** from inactive to active that member must attend at least 2 full brigade training sessions in the 2 months immediately before changing status as familiarisation and demonstrate to the Brigade leadership that their skills are appropriate for the task to be undertaken.

Leaving the Service

Any member who resigns from the service must, within 7 days of their resignation in accordance with the agreement signed at time of issue, return all equipment issued to them by the ESA Resource Centre, the ACTRFS or the Brigade. All equipment, including ID cards, is to be returned to ACTRFS HQ or their Brigade's Captain or President or their Delegate in accordance with Section 197, of the *Emergencies Act 2004*. The Equipment Officer will forward the ID card to the Membership Support Officer within 21 days of the resignation, for destruction.

Junior Members

Agreeing to accept junior membership

The decision to accept junior members (16-18 years old) is a Brigade decision and must be reflected in the Brigade's constitution and approved by the Chief Officer. If a Brigade elects to accept junior members, the following additional requirements apply:

- The Brigade's constitution must be formally amended to reflect the acceptance of junior members before any junior member is accepted.
- Brigades must appoint a Junior Member Coordinator (and Deputy Coordinator if the number of Junior Members warrants it), who is an adult member of the Brigade with responsibility for the development and welfare of junior members.

Applying for junior membership

The following additional conditions apply to a junior membership application:

- A Junior Member Application contains a declaration which must be signed by the consenting adult (parent or adult guardian), which acknowledges the inherent risks associated with the nature of the work undertaken by ACTRFS. This may include exposure to trauma or death. The consenting adult also agrees to the junior member participating in limited activities of the Brigade, including undertaking appropriate training and fire suppression activities.
- All candidates for junior membership must pass the same training requirements, fitness standards, and safety and security checks as adult candidates.
- In accordance with Brigade practice for all new members, a junior member must be deemed ready for operational fire suppression duties by the Brigade Captain.

Operational considerations for junior members

When considering junior membership and when selecting junior members, Brigades should consider several operational factors as well as the restrictions described in the next section:

- The additional duty of care required from both the Brigade and ACTRFS.
- The 2:1 adult supervision requirement to ensure that junior members are supervised at all times, such as Brigade training, committee meetings, community education events.
- This supervision requirement does not include operational roles with higher workloads, such as Driver/Pump Operator and Crew Leader. Junior members are limited to operational duties that involve a Heavy Tanker or a five-person crew.
- Appropriate risk assessment in relation to the fire season and level of danger – a lack of life experience and situational awareness may impose additional risk to the junior member and the crew.

Restrictions on junior members


Junior members may take part in Brigade activities including training and fire suppression activities where there is parent or adult guardian consent with the following restrictions:

- Junior members will only be permitted onto a fireground as a member of a five-person tanker crew. This practice allows for the increased supervision requirements and appropriate mentoring for junior members.
- For days with a forecast FBI of 50 or higher (Extreme FDR), junior members must not engage in firefighting, but may be assigned to support duties.
- Junior members are not eligible to participate in interstate task forces or strike teams, or undertake activities of any kind which involve an overnight stay.
- Junior members are not eligible to participate in any activities related to RAFT operations

Version history

Author	Version	Version Approval Date	Summary of Changes
Joe Murphy	1.0	02/01/2019	Version 1.0
Stephen Carter	2.0	20/02/2020	Reviewed and updated to include junior membership
Craig Hicks	3.0	13/12/2022	Reviewed and updated to incorporate changes to membership categories and status

Approved by

Name	Title/Role	Signature	Date
Rohan Scott	CO ACT RFS		02/08/2023

Document Owner

Position	Section
Assistant Director Volunteer Membership	Volunteer Management Team

Next review due: Two years from approval

Related documents

Document name
1.1.4 Alcohol and Drug Consumption and RFS Activities Service Standard
3.1.3 Work Capacity Test Service Standard
3.1.5 Appointment and Duties of Group Officers Service Standard
3.1.6 Powers of Members Service Standard
RFS Volunteer Membership SOP
ESA Arrangement for Working with Vulnerable People ESA022
ACT RFS Training Information Book
ACT Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act 2011 (WWVP Act).
Emergencies Act 2004

Signed documents will be scanned and filed in TRIM.