



SERVICE STANDARD 1.5.1 MANAGEMENT OF NSW RFS POLICY DOCUMENTS

ITEM	DESCRIPTION
Version Number	1.2
SOPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> SOP 1.5.1-1 Development and Review Process for Service Standards and Policies> SOP 1.5.1-2 Approval and Publication Process for Service Standards and Policies
Policy Owner	Executive Director, Membership and Strategic Services
Policy Contact	Director, Corporate Planning, Risk and Learning
Approved Date	13/11/2019
Effective Date	13/11/2019
Next Review Date	13/11/2024
Document Control	Electronic - Printed Copies are Uncontrolled

1 Purpose

- 1.1 Policy document is a term that refers to NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) Service Standards, Policies, and any other relevant documents issued by the Commissioner under section 13 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997*.
- 1.2 Policy documents provide:
 - a. A mechanism by which the activities of NSW RFS members can be coordinated across the State;
 - b. Direction for compliance with relevant legislation and government policies;
 - c. A consistent approach to tasks and levels of service;
 - d. A mechanism to assist with continuous improvement of the NSW RFS operational and management systems; and
 - e. Support for the NSW RFS governance arrangements including risk management.
- 1.3 This Service Standard sets out the process for the development and maintenance of Service Standards, Policies, and related documents including the processes for:
 - a. Development or review;
 - b. Consultation;
 - c. Approval;
 - d. Repeal; and
 - e. Identification of policy gaps.
- 1.4 This Service Standard does not cover the processes related to the development, maintenance and review of Operational doctrine. Operational doctrine is to be developed in line with an approved internal process set by the Operations directorate, and include steps of development or review; consultation; approval;

repeal; and identification of policy gaps. Operational doctrine is to be signed off by Executive Director, Operations. Refer to Service Standard 3.1.6 Operational Doctrine for more details.

- 1.5 In case of any conflict between a policy document and Operational doctrine, manual or guideline, the policy document will take precedence.
- 1.6 In case of any conflict between legislation and a NSW RFS policy document, the legislation will take precedence.
- 1.7 This Service Standard seeks to comply with the Consultative Arrangements Policy and Guidelines 2012, issued as Treasury Circular NSW TC 14/23.

2 Definitions

2.1 For the purpose of NSW RFS policy documents, the following definitions apply:

- a. **Act:** the *Rural Fires Act 1997*.
- b. **Administrative update:** a policy document review that is:
 - i. minor in nature to align with organisational structure and/or process; or
 - ii. is undertaken to align with legislative or regulatory changes.
- c. **Approved date:** the date the Commissioner signs the memorandum approving publication of a policy document.
- d. **Area Commander:** responsible for service delivery within their remit (previously Regional Manager).
- e. **Brigade:** a rural fire brigade formed under the Act however named or described.
- f. **Commissioner:** the Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service.
- g. **District:** a district, zone or team of the NSW RFS.
- h. **District Manager:** a district manager, zone manager or team manager.
- i. **Effective date:** the date the policy document becomes effective, usually the date of publication, unless otherwise indicated. Note: the policy document remains effective until such time as it is replaced by an updated version or formally repealed.
- j. **Field officer:** a brigade captain, senior deputy captain or deputy captain.
- k. **Group officer:** a person elected to be an officer of a group of brigades under section 19(2) of the Act.
- l. **Guidelines:** written statements that describe the actions suggested to be followed. They provide guidance and suggested “better practice” processes,.
- m. **Local authority:** (i – iii as defined in the Dictionary in the Act) means:
 - i. In relation to land that is situated within an area within the meaning of the *Local Government Act 1993* – the council of the area, or
 - ii. In relation to land within the Western Division (other than land referred to in paragraph (i)) – the Western Lands Commissioner, or
 - iii. In relation to Lord Howe Island – the Lord Howe Island Regional Council; or
 - iv. In relation to Jervis Bay Territory - the NSW RFS under Ministerial Agreement delegating powers under the *Jervis Bay Territory Rural Fires Ordinance 2014*.
- n. **Member:** any member of the NSW RFS, either volunteer or staff, who has met all joining criteria.
- o. **Minister:** the Minister administering the Act.
- p. **Next review date:** usually five years from the Approval date, unless there are requirements prescribing a shorter review cycle (e.g. annual). This is the date the review must be completed by.
- q. **NSW RFS:** the NSW Rural Fire Service.

- r. **Operational doctrine:** a generic term for 'that which is taught' by the NSW RFS as regards considerations and methods for dealing with incidents and related activities e.g. training manuals, operational protocols and Standard Operating Procedures. Refer to SS 3.1.6 for more detail.
- s. **Policy contact:** NSW RFS director/manager with the day-to-day responsibility of implementation of the policy.
- t. **Policy document:** NSW RFS Service Standards, Policies, SOPs, and any other relevant documents.
- u. **Policy owner:** the relevant Executive Director.
- v. **Regulation:** the Rural Fires Regulation 2013.
- w. **Repeal:** to formally revoke or withdraw a policy document with the approval of the Commissioner.
- x. **Service:** the NSW Rural Fire Service.
- y. **Standard Operating Procedures (SOP):** when annexed to a policy document form part of that document.
- z. **Staff member:** a salaried member of the NSW RFS.
- aa. **Volunteer member:** means an officer or member of a brigade.

3 Policy

- 3.1 Any prescribed process, or service-wide statement of position, should be issued by way of a service standard or policy to ensure appropriate authority and promulgation.
- 3.2 **All** members must comply with service standards. **Staff** members must also comply with policies.
- 3.3 A failure to comply with a service standard or policy may result:
 - a. In the case of a volunteer member – disciplinary action in accordance with Service Standard 1.1.2 Discipline; or
 - b. In the case of a staff member – action under the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013*.
- 3.4 All policy documents must be developed, reviewed, consulted, endorsed or repealed in accordance with this Service Standard and its SOPs.
- 3.5 There are two types of policy documents (see clause 3.37 for details) made under section 13 of the Act:
 - a. Service Standards – which apply to all members, that is, both staff and volunteer members; and
 - b. Policies – which apply only to staff members.

Note: Standard Operating Procedures when annexed to a policy document form part of that document.
- 3.6 Unless otherwise stated, Service Standards are issued by the Commissioner in a form that assumes that:
 - a. The relevant local authorities have entered into a Rural Fire District Service Agreement (RFDSA);
 - b. The RFDSA specifies that the Commissioner will exercise the functions conferred on the local authority by or under the Act; and
 - c. The Commissioner has delegated certain functions to other members.
- 3.7 All policy documents are to be in the current format, as approved by Director, Corporate Planning, Risk and Learning (CPRL). Current templates are available on the Intranet or from the Policy Unit.
- 3.8 The current version of a policy document is the latest version published on the NSW RFS internal Intranet, MyRFS, and/or the NSW RFS public website.
- 3.9 A policy document takes effect on the date of issue (that is, publication) unless another date is specified as the Effective Date in the document.
- 3.10 It is important to note that the provisions of any policy document remain effective until such time as a revised version is actually issued (published), or the policy document is formally repealed.
- 3.11 Any member may identify the need for a policy document to be developed or reviewed.
- 3.12 The management, coordination and records of the development or review of all policy documents are the

responsibility of the Policy Unit within the CPRL section.

- 3.13 Policy owners are responsible to ensure their policy documents are current at all times.
- 3.14 Development of a new policy document, or a review may be triggered by:
- a. The five year policy review cycle;
 - b. Amendments to, or repeals of, legislation or government policies impacting on NSW RFS compliance obligations;
 - c. The outcome of a gap analysis of policy documentation;
 - d. The outcome of a risk assessment; and/or
 - e. Amendment to the organisational structure and associated changes to role responsibilities.
- 3.15 The Policy Unit must be advised at the commencement of the development of a new policy document, or a triggered review outside the normal review cycle.

Review of policy document

- 3.16 A review of a policy document may involve:
- a. Comprehensive update e.g. if a legislated obligation has completely changed,
 - b. Administrative changes e.g. updating position titles; or
 - c. Repealing a policy document e.g. if the content has been incorporated into another policy, or if the requirement for a policy no longer exists.
- 3.17 The review of a policy document should be completed five years after the date of approval.
- 3.18 A policy should be reviewed sooner than the five-year review date if:
- a. A risk assessment identifies that an issue has a Critical or High risk rating and a related policy document exists; or
 - b. Determined as necessary by the relevant policy owner.

Development of a new policy document

- 3.19 For the development of a policy document, information must be provided regarding the issue to be addressed (including resourcing and implementation implications).
- 3.20 A form to capture this information must be completed, signed by the relevant Executive Director, and should be forwarded to the Policy Unit **prior** to work commencing.
- 3.21 Urgent policy documents may be developed and published on a case-by-case basis at the Commissioner's discretion. It is recommended such policy documents be reviewed in 12 months rather than the normal five-year cycle.

Consultation

- 3.22 The NSW RFS will undertake a comprehensive consultation process wherever practicable.
- 3.23 In general, policy documents undergoing development or review should be released for a three-month consultation period.
- 3.24 In certain circumstances the consultation period may be increased, reduced or waived – for example, when amendments to the policy document are administrative or mandatory (e.g. legislative), or at the discretion of the Commissioner or policy owner),
- 3.25 Draft policy documents released for consultation must be tabled at the next Corporate Executive Group meeting.

Post Consultation

- 3.26 Once the consultation period has closed, the Policy Unit will advise the policy owner and policy contact person, and supply any feedback received.
- 3.27 Feedback should be considered by the policy contact person/policy owner, and the Feedback Record template completed. Appropriate updates should then be undertaken, with every effort made to have the

policy document finalised in time to table at the next Policy Review Committee (PRC) meeting.

- 3.28 In the event that feedback received leads to significant changes to the initial draft, the policy owner may consider releasing the updated draft for a further round of consultation.

Repeal of policy documents

- 3.29 The Commissioner may from time to time, repeal policy documents which are no longer applicable.
- 3.30 To commence the repeal of a policy document, information must be provided to the Policy Unit advising the reason/s for the proposed repeal, with any supporting documented evidence and the signed approval of the relevant Executive Director.
- 3.31 A copy of the policy document, and the supporting justification, will be tabled at the PRC for endorsement to repeal, prior to the Commissioner for sign off.
- 3.32 Once the Commissioner's approval has been received, the Policy Unit will arrange for the removal of the repealed policy document from all platforms where it had been published.

The Policy Review Committee (PRC)

- 3.33 The purpose, operations and membership of the Policy Review Committee (PRC) are defined in its Charter.
- 3.34 The PRC is chaired by the Executive Director, Membership and Strategic Services and the Executive Officer (XO) is the Senior Project Officer – Policy.
- 3.35 The PRC plays an oversight and coordinating role for NSW RFS policies, service standards and other documents as appropriate from time to time.
- 3.36 No policy document can be referred to PRC without the written approval of the policy owner (relevant Executive Director) being provided to the Policy Unit, for inclusion in the PRC agenda.

NSW RFS Policy Documents

- 3.37 The table below shows the types of policy documents.

Name	Role	Applies to	Available on
Service Standard (SS)	Written statements on the operation, management, co-ordination and control of the NSW RFS, and are issued by the Commissioner under section 13(1) of the <i>Rural Fires Act 1997</i> .	All members	MyRFS Intranet Internet
Policy	Written statements that relate to the administration and management of the NSW RFS. They should be read in conjunction with the <i>Government Sector Employment Act 2013</i> and associated Regulation and Rules. <i>Note: Policy may also be developed by the Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee which would bind its member agencies. These are separate from NSW RFS Policies</i>	All staff members	Intranet Internet
Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) which are linked to, and form a part of a SS or policy	Written statements describing the actions to be followed in operational and other situations such as training. They detail the way service standards and policies are to be applied.	All members; or All staff members	As above

- 3.38 Policy documents may be supported by other documents such as Operational Protocols, manuals, handbooks, guidelines, local rules, or local standard operating procedures.

Reporting

- 3.39 Outcomes of the policy management processes are reported to the CEG, Rural Fire Service Advisory Council (RFSAC), and Joint Consultative Committee (JCC).

Status of NSW RFS Policy Documents

3.40 The table below shows the different status a policy document may hold.

Status	Comment	Reports provided to
Current Service Standard	Approved by the Commissioner and published on MyRFS and the NSW RFS public website. Takes effect on date indicated on the front of the Service Standard (usually the date of publication).	
Current Policy	Approved by the Commissioner and issued by publication on the Intranet and the NSW RFS public website. Takes effect on date indicated on the front of the Policy (usually the date of publication).	
For review	A policy document which has a Next Review Completion Date within two years of current date.	PRC
In development	A new policy document in the process of being developed by the policy owner, relevant business unit and stakeholders, in liaison with the Policy Unit.	PRC
Overdue for review	A policy document beyond the five-year review period, for which the review has not yet commenced. <i>Note: The provisions of any policy document remain effective until such time as a revised version is actually published, or the policy document is formally repealed.</i>	PRC
On hold	A policy document that is due for review or overdue, but the review needs to be delayed. This status can only be flagged when the following information is provided to the Policy Unit by the policy owner: a. The reason for the delay (with documented evidence where available); and b. An estimated time frame for when the review will be undertaken and be completed.	PRC
Repealed	A policy document that no longer has effect. The policy document may have been replaced by a new version, the content included in a different policy document, or the matter no longer requires a NSW RFS policy statement.	

Note: For further clarification on policy document status, the Policy Unit can be contacted on [Policy and Service Standards Feedback](#)

4 Related documents

- > [Rural Fires Act 1997](#)
- > [Local Government Act 1993](#)
- > [Government Sector Employment Act 2013](#)
- > [Treasury Circular NSW TC 14/23 - Consultative Arrangements Policy and Guidelines 2012](#)
- > [Policy Review Committee Charter](#)
- > [Service Standard 3.1.6 Operational Doctrine](#)
- > [Policy P4.1.3 Procurement](#)
- > [Policy P5.1.9 Obtaining Legal Advice](#)
- > [Proposal for the Development or Review of a Policy Document - Form](#)

5 Amendments

AMENDMENT DATE	VERSION NO	DESCRIPTION
5 October 2001	1.0	Initial Release as SS 1.1.1
6 December 2006	2.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Repealed and remade SS 1.1.1 v1.0 > Major review and update
21 May 2007	2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Repealed and remade SS 1.1.1 v2.0 > Clause 1.1 > Clause 2.12 referring to revocations > Definitions SOP1.1.1-1 > Flowchart amended SOP 1.1.1-2
3 June 2009	2.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Repealed and remade SS 1.1.1 v2.1 > Revised to include Operational Protocols (e.g. Management of Asbestos Incidents)
30 July 2012	2.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Repealed and remade SS 1.1.1 v2.2 > Amended to reflect current organisational alignment and practice > Amended to reflect SAP terminology > Addition of new clause 3.5
2 December 2016	1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Repealed and remade SS 1.1.1 v2.3 > Renumbered to align with revised Index to SS 1.5.1 v1.0 > Amendments made in accordance with recommendations arising from the NSW RFS Policy Framework review, undertaken in consultation with the Department of Justice. > Definitions moved from an SOP into the policy document, for consistency with other policy documents > Forms removed from the Service Standard > Amended to reflect current organisational alignment
26 February 2019	1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Repeals and remakes SS 1.5.1 v1.0 > Reviewed to align with resolutions of CEG and PRC (October/November 2018) regarding the functions and charters of both committees.
13 November 2019	1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Repeals and remakes SS 1.5.1 v1.0 > Reviewed to align with current processes

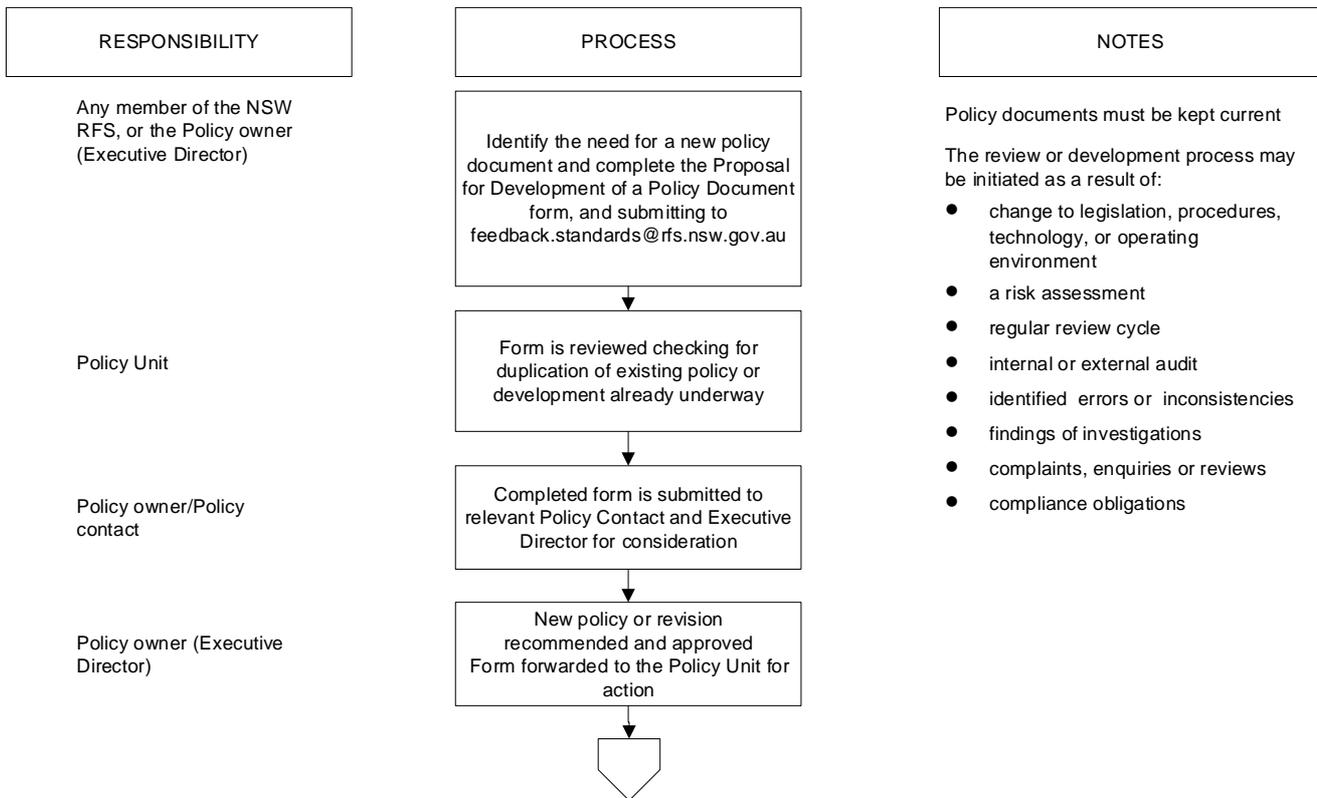
SOP 1.5.1-1

DEVELOPMENT PROCESS FOR SERVICE STANDARDS AND POLICIES

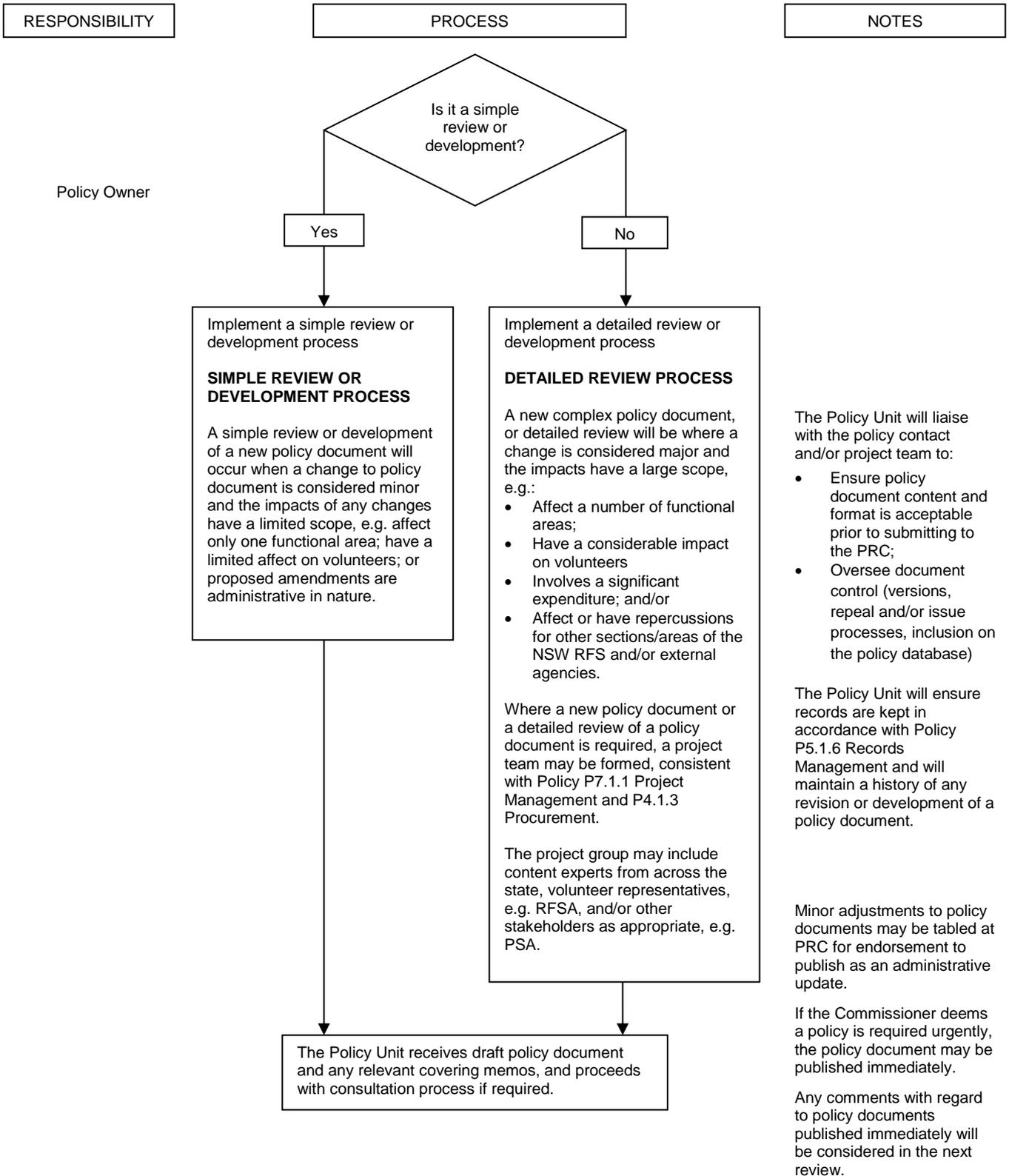
1 Purpose

1.1 This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) provides details of the process to develop a Service Standard or Policy.

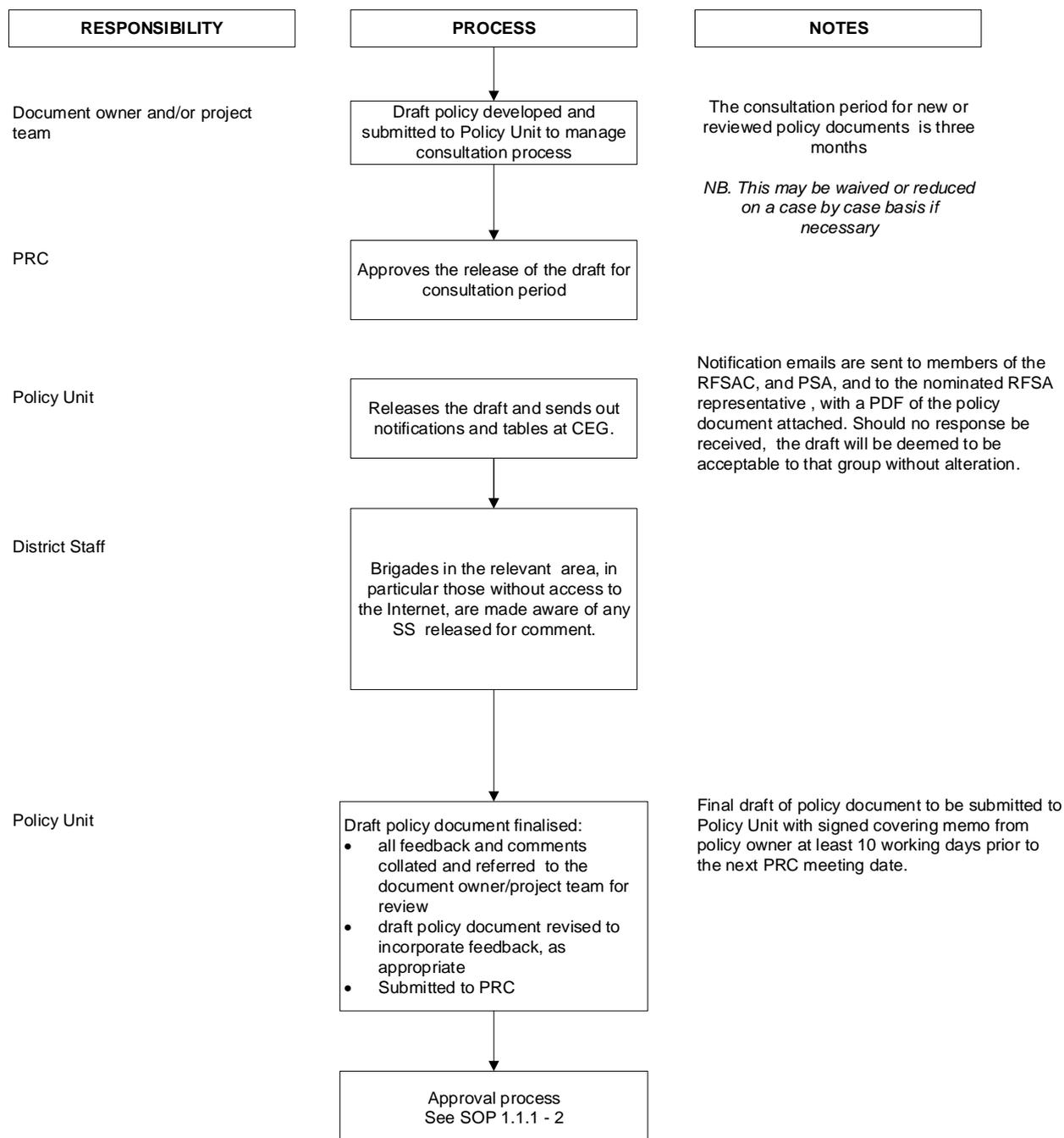
2 Procedures



Determination made on the level of review or development required



The Consultation Process



LEGEND	
CPRL – Corporate Planning, Risk and Learning	PSA – Public Service Association
EDMSS – Executive Director Membership and Strategic Services	PRC – Policy Review Committee
JCC – Joint Consultative Committee	RFSAC – Rural Fire Service Advisory Council
	RFSA – Rural Fire Service Association

3 Related forms

- > None

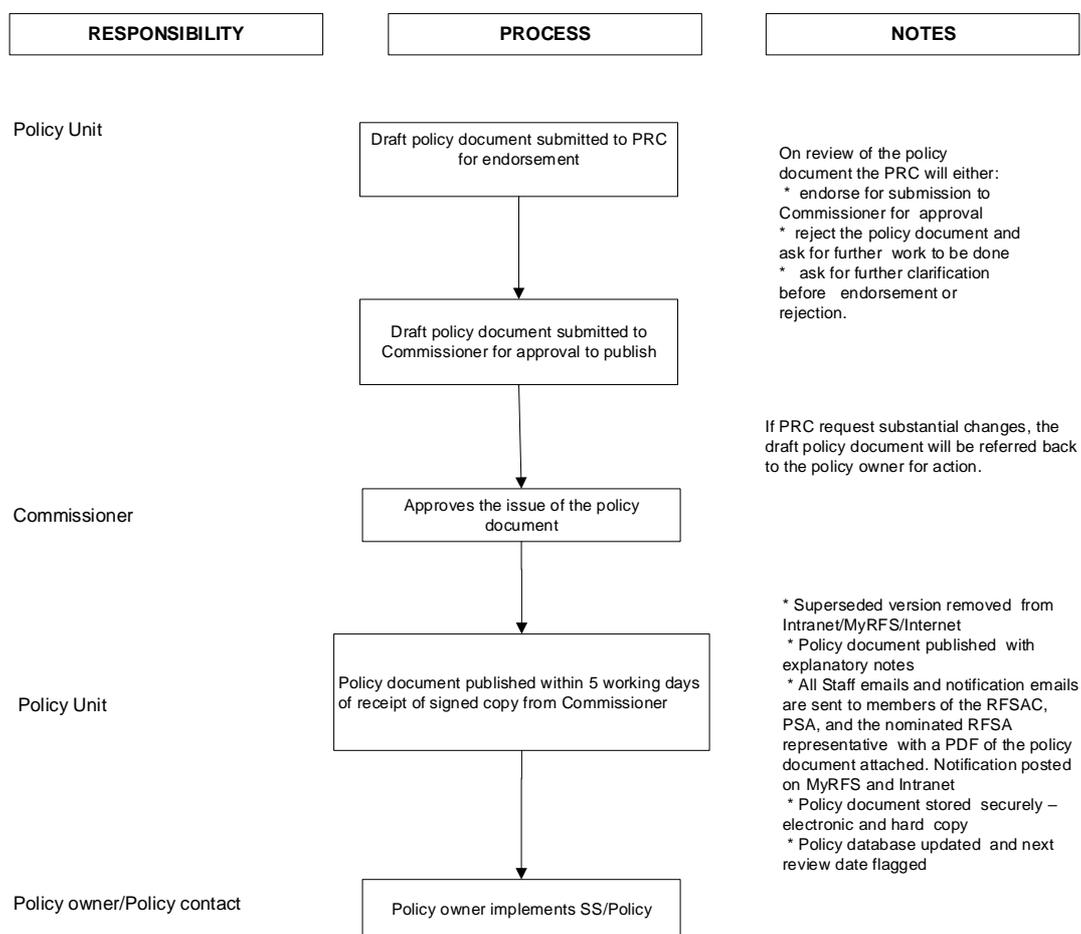
SOP 1.5.1-2

APPROVAL AND PUBLICATION PROCESS FOR SERVICE STANDARDS AND POLICIES

1 Purpose

1.1 This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) provides details of the process of approval and publication of a policy document. Note: the same workflow is followed for the repeal of a policy document.

2 Procedures



LEGEND

CPRL – Corporate Planning, Risk and Learning
 EDMSS – Executive Director Membership and Strategic Services
 JCC – Joint Consultative Committee

PRC – Policy Review Committee
 PSA – Public Service Association
 RFSA – Rural Fire Service Association
 RFSAC – Rural Fire Service Advisory Council

3 Related forms

> None