



SERVICE STANDARD 2.1.6

VOLUNTEER MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS

ITEM	DESCRIPTION
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SOPs	➤ SOP 2.1.6-1 Police Checks and Service Checks
Owner	Executive Director People & Strategy
Contact	Director People & Culture
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1 Purpose

- 1.1 The NSW RFS is committed to maintaining a diverse and sustainable membership, reflective of the communities we serve.
- 1.2 Effective application systems and processes support brigades to attract and retain sufficient members with capabilities aligned to service needs.
- 1.3 The requirements that must be satisfied by an applicant before attaining volunteer membership are designed to maintain the position of trust held by NSW RFS members in the community.
- 1.4 This Service Standard outlines:
 - a. the conditions that apply to all new, re-joining, transferring, and dual membership applicants; and
 - b. the requirements and process for police and service checks of membership applicants.

2 Definitions

- 2.1 For the purpose of this service standard, the following definitions apply:
 - a. **Additional brigade:** a second brigade that an existing member is seeking to join;
 - b. **Brigade:** a rural fire brigade formed under the Act, however named or described;
 - c. **Dual member:** a member who has applied for and been accepted as a member of both an existing and additional brigade;
 - d. **Existing brigade:** the brigade an applicant for dual membership already belongs to;
 - e. **Junior member:** a member of a brigade aged from 12 years and under 18 years of age who is not a probationary, ordinary or associate member of that brigade;
 - f. **Police Check:** a Nationally Coordinated Criminal History Check (NCCHC) is a collation of all police and conviction history information about an individual (the applicant) that is releasable by police

agencies in Australia. The check is conducted by the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC).

- g. **Probationary member:** a member who has been accepted by the brigade but who has not yet met the criteria for attaining ordinary or associate member status;
- h. **Service Check:** a comprehensive review is undertaken of previous or existing membership and applications within the NSW RFS associated with the applicant.
- i. **Special provisions:** allow people that are unable to provide the required identification due to exceptional circumstances, the ability to seek special provisions subject to ACIC's NCCHC Handbook. See SOP 2.1.6-1 and the Special Provisions Check Guide for more detail.
- j. **Transfer:** includes an existing member transferring from one brigade to another and a junior member transitioning to probationary membership.

3 Policy

- 3.1 Members of the community can seek to become part of the NSW RFS by applying to join a rural fire brigade.
- 3.2 All applications for membership will be fairly considered and managed in a timely and effective way.
- 3.3 The process for applying for membership is set out in the membership application system and associated guides.
- 3.4 All members with a role in assessing membership applications have a responsibility to ensure that those who are accepted as members are: reasonably capable of carrying out their duties; willing to abide by the standards and values of the NSW RFS; and are not likely to pose a risk to their own safety or the safety of others.

Requirements of applicants for probationary membership

- 3.5 An applicant who is seeking probationary membership of a NSW RFS brigade must:
 - a. be at least 18 years of age; or 16 years of age with the permission of a parent or guardian;
 - b. agree to abide by all NSW RFS standards of conduct and behaviour;
 - c. disclose any reportable conduct, criminal convictions, and whether they have previously been removed from the NSW RFS or another volunteer organisation;
 - d. declare any health conditions relevant to assessing their ability to safely undertake required duties;
 - e. be capable of, and reasonably available for, the role they are seeking in the brigade they wish to join; and
 - f. otherwise be a fit and proper person to be a member of the NSW RFS.

Requirements of applicants for junior membership

- 3.6 An applicant who is seeking junior membership of a NSW RFS brigade must:
 - a. be from 12 and under 18 years of age and have the permission of a parent or guardian; and
 - b. meet relevant requirements outlined in Clause 3.5 (excluding a.).

Residency status

- 3.7 Residency status is not a criterion for membership application, however consideration should be given to each applicant's ability to be able to undertake the necessary training and duties required for the role for which they are applying.

Police Check and Service Check

- 3.8 A Police Check will be conducted for all applicants aged 16 and over upon District endorsement of the application.
- 3.9 A Service Check will be completed on all applicants upon District endorsement of the application.

Junior members applying for probationary membership

- 3.10 A junior member who reaches the age of 16 may apply for probationary membership of their existing brigade or another brigade. A junior member aged 16 to 17 years must have the permission of a parent or guardian to be considered for probationary membership. A Police Check will be conducted upon District endorsement of the application.
- 3.11 A junior member accepted as a probationary member of their existing brigade may have their period of service as a junior member recognised in their probationary period.
- 3.12 A junior member who has reached the age of 18 and has not applied for probationary membership should be advised by the brigade or District that their name will be removed from the brigade register unless an application is received.

Dual membership applications

- 3.13 An existing member may apply to join an additional brigade with the following considerations:
 - a. a member may not join an additional brigade in the same rural fire district or zone as their existing brigade unless their dual membership application is endorsed by the District Manager;
 - b. a member may join another brigade in another rural fire district; and
 - c. a dual member may not be appointed as a field officer in more than one brigade unless they have written permission from the District Manager or District Managers.

Applications for transfer of membership

- 3.14 A member applying to transfer from one brigade to another will cease to belong to their original brigade once they have been accepted as a probationary member of their new brigade.

Declining a membership application

- 3.15 An application can be declined at any time during the application process. A brigade may decline an application if: the requirements listed in this Service Standard are not met; there are no suitable roles available for the applicant in that brigade; or if, following due consideration of the application, the brigade determines the applicant does not meet the needs of the brigade at that time.
- 3.16 If an application is declined at any point following brigade endorsement, the applicant may lodge an appeal within 21 days of being notified of the decision.
- 3.17 If an application is declined at any point following District endorsement, the applicant will cease to be a member of the brigade. If the applicant subsequently appeals the decision and the appeal is upheld, the applicant's membership will be reinstated.

Commencement of membership and participation

- 3.18 The applicant's probationary or junior membership of the brigade is deemed to have commenced on the date the application is endorsed by the District Manager, however their participation in brigade activities is restricted until the Police Check (for those aged 16 and over) and service checks are completed, and final approval from Membership Services is received. Some roles may also require a medical assessment.
- 3.19 Following District Manager endorsement and prior to receiving approval from Membership Services, a probationary or junior member may, under the supervision of an ordinary member:
 - a. undertake the NSW RFS safety and volunteer induction programs;
 - b. participate in brigade or district orientation programs;
 - c. attend brigade meetings as an observer; and
 - d. participate in NSW RFS training programs.
- 3.20 Prior to receiving approval from Membership Services, a probationary member must not:
 - a. drive any NSW RFS vehicle, appliance or boat;
 - b. have unsupervised access to any NSW RFS premises or equipment;

- c. have access to brigade funds or participate in unsupervised fundraising activities on behalf of the brigade or NSW RFS;
- d. participate in any NSW RFS activity that directly involves children, including junior members;
- e. participate in any operational activity, including hazard reductions; or
- f. be issued with any personal protective clothing or equipment (PPC/PPE), uniform or other brigade equipment other than on a temporary loan basis for the purpose of participating in a NSW RFS training program.

3.21 The Executive Director People & Strategy may, at their absolute discretion, enter the name of an applicant who is not a current member of the NSW RFS and whose application has been endorsed by a district manager, on the brigade register as a probationary or junior member.

Participation in activities for dual and transferring membership applicants

3.22 An existing member who has applied to join an additional brigade or transfer to another brigade and whose application has been endorsed by the District Manager may, at the discretion of the District Manager:

- a. drive a NSW RFS vehicle, appliance or boat, provided they are qualified to do so;
- b. have access to NSW RFS premises or equipment and be issued with PPC or PPE, uniform or other brigade equipment; and
- c. participate in operational activity, including hazard reductions, provided they are qualified to do so.

3.23 Prior to receiving approval from Membership Services a member who has applied to join an additional brigade or transfer to another brigade, may not:

- a. participate in any brigade activity that directly involves children, including junior members; or
- b. have access to brigade funds or participate in unsupervised fundraising on behalf of the brigade.

Commencement of training

3.24 A probationary member must successfully complete the NSW RFS safety induction prior to commencement of training and assessment if it is not integrated into their initial training program, i.e. Bush Firefighter (BF).

4 Related documents

- > [Rural Fires Act 1997](#)
- > [Rural Fires Regulation 2013](#)
- > [Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission National Police Checking Service](#)
- > [SS 1.1.7 Code of Conduct and Ethics](#)
- > [SS 1.1.21 Stand Down, Removal from Membership and Notification of Criminal Charges and Convictions](#)
- > [SS 2.1.2 Brigade Constitution](#)
- > [SS 2.1.5 Child and Youth Participation in NSW RFS Activities](#)
- > [Electronic Membership Application System Training and Support Guides](#)

5 Amendments

AMENDMENT DATE	VERSION NO	DESCRIPTION
20 November 2003	1.0	> Initial release titled 'Brigade Membership/Transfer Application'
12 February 2004	1.1	> Repealed and remade SS 2.1.6 v1.0 > "Fit and Proper" criteria added to pages 9 and 10
21 January 2005	1.2	> Repealed and remade SS 2.1.6 v1.1

AMENDMENT DATE	VERSION NO	DESCRIPTION
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Application for membership/Transfer Form and Application for Junior Membership added
14 September 2005	1.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Repealed and remade SS 2.1.6 v1.2 ➤ Application for Membership Form Sections 1 and 2 amended ➤ Application for Junior Membership
8 June 2007	2.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Repealed and remade SS 2.1.6 v1.3 ➤ Title change to 'Joining the RFS as a Volunteer Member (including Transfer Applications)' and updated to new format
5 April 2012	3.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Repealed and remade SS 2.1.6 v2.0 ➤ Comprehensive review to update to current organisational alignment and practice
4 August 2014	3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Repealed and remade SS 2.1.6 v3.0 ➤ General review to ensure compliance and updated to reflect organisational alignment and practice
20 November 2018	3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Repeals and remakes SS 2.1.6 v3.1 ➤ Amended to align with SS 2.1.2 Brigade Constitution v3.0
20 December 2021	4.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Repeals and remakes SS 2.1.6 v3.2 ➤ Repeals and incorporates updated content from SS 2.1.8 Criminal History and Disciplinary Record Checks for NSW RFS Volunteer Members v1.3 ➤ Amended to align with e-membership

SOP 2.1.6-1

Police Checks and Service Checks

1 Purpose

1.1 This SOP provides guidance on the process for Police Checks and Service Checks.

2 Procedures

Police Check

- 2.1 The NSW RFS engages the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC) to conduct a Nationally Coordinated Criminal History Check (NCCHC) on individuals aged 16 and over who are applying for membership of any NSW RFS brigade, known as the Police Check.
- 2.2 The Police Check is conducted following District endorsement of the application and prior to approval to progress to probationary membership with no limitations.
- 2.3 The result of the Police Check, along with other information gathered during the membership application process, will assist Membership Services to make a determination as to whether the probationary (limited) member is a fit and proper person to be a member of the NSW RFS.
- 2.4 Applicants under the age of 16 years applying for junior membership are not required to undergo the NCCHC process.
- 2.5 The Commissioner may, from time to time, identify specific roles or functions and direct that a member who is appointed to such a role or directed to carry out such a function must first consent to the NSW RFS undertaking a Police Check.
- 2.6 The fact that a NCCHC or service check discloses information about an applicant will not automatically result in a determination that the person is not a fit and proper person to be a member of a brigade, or undertake a particular role or function. The decision to progress or decline an application will be made on a case by case basis following due consideration of all available information.
- 2.7 If due to exceptional circumstances the applicant is unable to provide the required identification documents, they may seek special provisions in order to facilitate a Police Check. Examples of special provisions include but are not limited to, whether the applicant:
 - a. was not registered at birth;
 - b. is a refugee;
 - c. is homeless;
 - d. lives in a remote area; or
 - e. was recently affected by (natural) disasters.

Service Check

- 2.8 A Service Check is a review of any existing or previous memberships or applications with NSW RFS associated with the applicant. Service Checks are undertaken by Membership Services following District endorsement of the application.
- 2.9 This check is undertaken to inform the NSW RFS of any issues that may impact the decision regarding an application. Examples of issues include but are not limited to:
 - a. Whether the applicant has previously been a member of the NSW RFS and has been stood down/removed for serious conduct or disciplinary reasons; or
 - b. Whether an applicant has previously been denied membership for reasons that have not otherwise been disclosed in the current application.

Dual or transferring applicants

- 2.10 A member whose dual or transferring membership application is declined due to information disclosed in the Police Check may have their existing membership reviewed in accordance with SS 1.1.21 Stand Down, Removal from Membership and Notification of Criminal Charges and Convictions.

Charges pending conviction

- 2.11 Applicants are asked to disclose whether they have any criminal charges which are pending a court outcome at the time of application. If an applicant has:
- a. a charge or charges pending court outcomes; or
 - b. a current Community Corrections Order that is not due to resolve within two weeks
- the application will be declined and the applicant advised to reapply following an outcome or resolution of the matter.

Convictions

- 2.12 Any convictions that are either disclosed by the applicant or discovered through the NCCHC will be assessed along with other available information. The decision to progress or decline the applicant is made on a case by case basis.
- 2.13 In the case of a conviction:
- a. for a comparatively minor offence; and
 - b. which has been followed by a substantial period of good behavior,
- the application may be progressed if it is determined that the risk of accepting the member is minimal.
- 2.14 In the case of a person who has been convicted of an offence involving:
- a. a "sexual offence" as defined in section 7(4) of the Criminal Records Act, 1991 (NSW) or a similar offence in another jurisdiction;
 - b. any dealings with or involving a person under the age of 18 years;
 - c. dishonesty, including theft or fraud;
 - d. assault or violence against a person;
 - e. the death or injury of another person;
 - f. the importation, manufacture, cultivation, sale, distribution or trafficking of drugs;
 - g. terrorism, however described;
 - h. arson or the setting of fires, however described; or
 - i. public mischief or the making of false alarms
- the NSW RFS must be satisfied that the person is a fit and proper person to be a member of a brigade despite that conviction.

3 Related forms

- [NSW RFS Online Membership Application Form](#)