

# South Australian Country Fire Service Volunteer Charter



## INTRODUCTION

The volunteer members of the Country Fire Service (CFS) are fundamental to emergency management in South Australia. Their value and importance is recognised and highly regarded by the South Australian community. Volunteers and the commitment they bring to the community through delivering professional fire and rescue services remain the core strength of the CFS.

CFS Volunteers selflessly bring time and life skills to protect life and property, preventing and suppressing fire to create a safer community. They deliver professional fire, rescue and community services across South Australia and actively promote community resilience.

This Charter provides a framework for the commitment to protect the needs and interests of volunteers.

It represents an agreement that the Government of South Australia, South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission (SAFECOM) and Country Fire Service (CFS) will commit to:

- consulting with volunteers and the Country Fire Service Volunteers Association (CFSVA) about all matters that might reasonably be expected to affect them, and
- considering their views when adopting or approving new practices and policies or reviewing current practices or policies.

The Government of South Australia is committed to working in partnership with the volunteer sector through the shared values and commitments as detailed in the *Advancing the Community Together* partnership signed in 2011. This Charter builds on this agreement specifically supporting CFS Volunteers.

This Charter was written in consultation with the Government of South Australia, SAFECOM, CFS, CFSVA and CFS Volunteers and recognises that these parties operate under the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005*.

## INTENT

The intent of this volunteers' Charter is to ensure:

- consultation with volunteers occurs about all matters that might reasonably be expected to affect them; and
- consideration of their views when approving or adopting new practices or policies
- consideration of their views when reviewing current practices or policies
- recognition that there is a mutual obligation and practical partnership based on respect between the parties
- that a fair, reasonable and non discriminatory approach is taken by all, and
- the safety of the South Australian community.

This Charter identifies the key roles and responsibilities of the parties as set out below.

## Country Fire Service Volunteers

### Role

CFS Volunteers are drawn from communities throughout South Australia to participate in an integrated fire and emergency service. This is a practical partnership based on mutual respect for the CFS, the staff employed by the CFS, and personnel of other organisations. It ensures that community safety needs are met to the best of their collective abilities.

CFS Volunteers depend on the goodwill and practical support of their families, friends, employers and local communities to enable them to serve, recognising that time available to them is limited by the needs and demands of their families, employment, and other obligations. CFS Volunteers do not contribute their time for financial reward but expect to gain satisfaction from service, achievement, personal development and camaraderie.

### Responsibilities

CFS Volunteers will:

- provide their services for the protection of life, property and the environment, prevention and suppression of fires, or when the need arises as provided by the *Fire and Emergency Service Act 2005*
- undertake other relevant duties to create a safer community in a mutually respectful and active partnership with the staff of the CFS, other organisations and the community
- commit to the *Safety First - Come Home Safe* principles and operate safely in accordance with the policies and procedures of SAFECOM and the CFS
- undertake appropriate training and planning to ensure their personal safety and enhance the delivery of services in creating a safer community
- exercise the powers vested in them by the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005* and Regulations in the best interests of the community
- recognise and support the elected Association representatives and the consultative mechanisms as agreed with SAFECOM and the CFS
- be committed to working in harmony and consultation with SAFECOM and the CFS, and
- seek to resolve differences of opinion internally in the first instance.

## South Australian Country Fire Service Volunteers Association

### Role

The CFSVA is recognised as an association representing the interests of members of the CFS. It may take such steps as may be reasonably available to it to advance the best interests of CFS Volunteers. The Association provides an additional means of consultation and communication and is a representative body for CFS Volunteers through its organisation structure and through the CFS and SAFECOM.

### Responsibilities

The CFSVA will:

- fairly represent CFS Volunteers to protect and progress their interests and welfare within the emergency services sector
- ensure that consultation occurs with volunteers about all matters that might reasonably be expected to affect them
- consider their views when adopting or approving new practices and policies
- work to secure conditions ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of CFS brigades and their development
- encourage continuous improvement of fire fighting skills and operational equipment
- promote the observance of safety standards, and
- endeavour to increase community awareness of the CFS brigades and their activities.

## Government of South Australia

The Government of South Australia supports and recognises the role that emergency service volunteers play in our community.

The Government supports the energy, dedication and enthusiasm of CFS Volunteers by providing support to emergency services. It provides appropriate facilities and equipment to ensure that members are trained and resourced. The *Advancing the Community Together* partnership provides a framework between the volunteer sector and the Government of South Australia to meet its strategic goals. This Charter develops this partnership further for CFS Volunteers and the Government of South Australia.

The Government of South Australia supports volunteers by:

- recognising, valuing, respecting and promoting CFS Volunteers, their families and employers for their contributions to the well-being and safety of the people of South Australia
- ensuring that relevant legislation appropriately recognises the needs and interests of CFS Volunteers who provide their service in accordance with the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005*
- providing protection for volunteers under the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005*, *Volunteers Protection Act 2001*, *Work, Health and Safety Act 2012* and *Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1986*
- ensuring appropriate mechanisms are in place to enable consultation with volunteers and the CFSVA about all matters that might reasonably be expected to affect them
- considering their views when adopting or approving new practices and policies.
- committing to developing active and positive communication networks and respecting one another's confidential information and,
- ensuring volunteers are kept informed and up to date with issues and their views accurately represented

The Government works through two specific agencies in supporting CFS Volunteers: SAFECOM and the CFS.

## South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission

### Role

SAFECOM provides governance, strategic direction and organisational support and management to the emergency services sector. It is accountable to Government and to the community. The emergency services sector comprises the Commission and the three emergency services organisations, Country Fire Service, State Emergency Service and Metropolitan Fire Service.

### Responsibilities

SAFECOM will:

- recognise, value, respect and promote CFS Volunteers, their families and employers for their contributions to the well-being within the community
- ensure that volunteer views, opinions and concerns are considered before adopting any new or revised policies, procedures or approaches which might reasonably be expected to affect them as CFS Volunteers
- recognise and promote innovation, safety and efficiency within the CFS
- use various mechanisms to consult with stakeholders, unions and associations and other government agencies to discuss matters of common concern in relation to CFS Volunteers, and
- promote a team based performance culture throughout the emergency services sector.

## South Australian Country Fire Service

### Role

The CFS is a community based fire and emergency service funded by government. It is dedicated to protecting life, property and the environment from fire and other emergencies in outer metropolitan, regional and rural South Australia to create a safer community whilst protecting, supporting and enabling CFS personnel in an environment of continuous improvement.

### Responsibilities

The CFS will:

- recognise value, respect and promote CFS Volunteers
- commit to consultation with volunteers and the CFSVA about all matters that might reasonably be expected to affect volunteers
- consider their views when adopting or approving new practices and policies or reviewing current practices or policies
- recognise that the CFSVA is an association that represents CFS Volunteers
- ensure that consultative mechanisms are in place
- provide necessary resources to enable volunteers to deliver agreed services in a safe and effective manner
- recognise and acknowledge that a primary responsibility of the CFS and people employed by the CFS is to nurture and encourage volunteers and to facilitate and develop their skills and competencies
- recognise and acknowledge the value of the time that volunteers provide to the CFS, and
- ensure that volunteer time is used to maximum advantage.

## SIGNATORIES

The parties commit themselves to use and apply the Charter in the spirit of mutual respect and goodwill and to work together in that spirit, in accordance with the key principles set out in this Volunteer Charter. The Charter will be reviewed as required by agreement of the parties or at the end of four years from its date of commencement.

This Charter commences on the 30th day of April, 2013.

Jay Weatherill

Hon Jay Weatherill MP  
Premier

Michael O'Brien

Hon Michael O'Brien MP  
Minister for Emergency Services

Tony Piccolo

Hon Tony Piccolo MP  
Minister for Volunteers

Mr Tony Harrison

Chief Executive, South Australian Fire and Emergency Services  
Commission on behalf of SAFECOM

Mr Greg Nettleton

Chief Officer, South Australian Country Fire Service, on behalf of CFS

Mr Roger Flavell

President, South Australian Country Fire Service Volunteers  
Association, on behalf of CFS Volunteers

