

# Volunteer Charter

NOVEMBER 2021



## ACT Volunteering Statement

Volunteers are a vital part of the ACT Emergency Services Agency's (ESA) strategy to meet its obligations to the community and the ACT Government. These obligations include protecting life, property, and the environment across the Australian Capital Territory (ACT).

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|  <p><b>RECOGNISED</b></p> <p>Volunteers in the ACT are acknowledged and celebrated.</p> <p>The ESA, community organisations, businesses, and individuals all play a role in promoting volunteering within the ACT.</p> |  <p><b>VALUABLE</b></p> <p>Volunteers make a vital contribution to life and the community in the ACT.</p> <p>Volunteers draw on their passion, skills, and experience to build a more inclusive, creative, safe and sustainable city and region.</p> |  <p><b>DIVERSE</b></p> <p>Volunteers are people of all ages and abilities who contribute in many different ways.</p> <p>The ESA, employers and other organisations demonstrate commitment to social inclusion and diversity by encouraging and supporting volunteers from all walks of life.</p> |  <p><b>SUPPORTED</b></p> <p>Volunteers are included in the life of the ESA and have clear roles.</p> <p>The ESA is committed to best practice in volunteer management, to providing appropriate training and support, and take pride in the role of volunteers.</p> |
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## ACT Public Service Values and Behaviours

The ACTESA Values and Signature Behaviours underpin the conduct and behaviour of volunteers, and inform ethical decision-making.

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| <b>RESPECT</b> | <b>INTEGRITY</b> | <b>COLLABORATION</b> | <b>INNOVATION</b> |
|----------------|------------------|----------------------|-------------------|

  
 Andrew Barr MLA  
 ACT Chief Minister

  
 Mick Gentleman MLA  
 Minister for Police & Emergency Services

  
 Georgeina Whelan, AM, CSC & BAR  
 Commissioner, ACT Emergency Services Agency

  
 ACT Volunteer Brigades Association

  
 ACTSES Volunteers Association

  
 Mapping and Planning Support Group

  
 Community Fire Unit Consultative Committee

  
 ACT Fire Brigade Historical Society

This Charter is dated the 17th Day of November 2021

## Preamble

Volunteers of the ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA) are fundamental to emergency management in the Australian Capital Territory. Volunteers are valued and their commitment to protecting the ACT Community remains a core strength of the ESA. The individual and collective interests and needs of volunteers must be protected to enable them to deliver services safely and effectively. The ESA must always consult, so far as is practicable, its volunteers about the issues that affect them as volunteers.

This Charter recognises that the ESA volunteers operate under the Emergencies Act 2004 (ACT). It is a statement of principles that apply to the relationship between the ACT Government, the ESA, the Volunteer Associations, and ESA's volunteers.

## This Volunteer Charter

- is an agreed commitment by the ACT Government, the ESA, the Volunteer Associations, and volunteers from the ACT Rural Fire Service, the ACT State Emergency Service, the Mapping and Planning Support Group, and the ACT Fire & Rescue, to each other
- it ensures that the ACT Government and the ESA will commit to consultation with volunteers about all matters that may affect volunteers
- it provides the framework for the inter-relationship between the parties, and requires the conduct of the parties in meeting their Charter commitments to be judged against the following principles:
  - is it fair?
  - is it just?
  - is it reasonable?
  - does it discriminate against volunteers?
  - are the outcomes practicable and sustainable?
  - is it in the best interest of the safety of the Community?
- is an enduring commitment between the parties. The Charter shall be reviewed as required by the parties or at the end of three years from its date of signing
- is to be read in conjunction with any guidelines issued by the Commissioner under the Emergencies Act 2004. This includes any documents which support the alignment of expected conduct for volunteers with paid employees of the ACT Public Service through values and signature behaviours

## The Government recognises and acknowledges the Volunteers commitment. The Territory shall provide support to the Volunteers subject to the following principles:

- recognise, value, respect and promote Volunteers, their families and employers for their contributions to the well-being and safety of the people of the ACT
- ensure that legislation appropriately recognises the needs and interests of Volunteers who provide their services in good faith in the delivery of services and that the legislation and its administration adequately protects Volunteers and their dependants from financial losses and other liabilities
- consult with the elected representatives of Volunteers on all matters which may impact upon Volunteers including changes to current applicable legislation, proposed new legislation and the adequacy of resources to enable Volunteers to deliver the agreed services

## Volunteers of the ACT Emergency Services Agency:

- are drawn from the ACT Region to ensure that community safety needs are met to the best of their collective abilities
- depend on the goodwill and practical support of their families, friends and employers to enable them to serve as Volunteers. The time available to them is limited by the needs and demands of their employment, families and other obligations
- do not contribute their time for financial reward but do expect to gain satisfaction from service, achievement, personal development, camaraderie and recognition by the Government
- selflessly bring time and life skills to assist and protect life, property and the environment

## Volunteers in the ACT Rural Fire Service:

- prevent and suppress fires to create a safer community
- actively promote fire prevention works and provide fire, emergency and community services across the ACT

## Volunteers in the ACT State Emergency Service:

- assist and protect the community in times of storm and flood emergencies, to alleviate the impact of incidents on life, property and the environment
- actively promote storm and flood prevention and community services across the ACT
- actively work with other emergency services, ACT Government and community organisations to promote and support emergency preparedness, prevention, and mitigation strategies across the ACT to help ensure a safer and more resilient community

## Volunteers in the Mapping and Planning Support Group:

- bring time and professional skills through the application of Geographic Information System, mapping and other services
- are drawn from spatial information professionals employed or living in the ACT region

## Volunteers in the ACT Community Fire Units:

- enhance the safety of the ACT Community through their commitment to the Community Fire Unit program
- as volunteer members of ACT Fire & Rescue, Community Fire Unit members contribute to community resilience of residents living near the urban bushland interface. Through their efforts, the ACT Community is more informed and prepared to deal with bushfire emergencies

## Volunteers in the ACT Fire Brigade Historical Society:

- are devoted to recording the history of firefighting in the ACT and surrounding regions. They record and maintain the history of the fire service's development since 1913 by restoring, presenting and interpreting its extensive collection of memorabilia and vehicles. Through this, the ACT community is educated on developments in fire prevention and the response capability which is evident within ACT Fire & Rescue
- provides a support mechanism for retired firefighters, where they can continue to work and provide meaningful support to the ACT community after they retire from active service

## The ACT Emergency Services Agency recognises the commitment of Volunteers and shall provide its services and support to Volunteers consistent with the following principles:

- to recognise, value, respect and promote ACT Rural Fire Service, ACT State Emergency Service, Mapping and Planning Support Group and ACT Fire & Rescue Volunteers who come from widely divergent communities with differing needs and characteristics, as core partners with people employed by the ACT Emergency Services Agency
- to recognise and acknowledge that a primary responsibility of the ACT Emergency Services Agency, and people employed by the ACT Emergency Services Agency, is to nurture and encourage Volunteers and to facilitate and develop their skills and competencies
- to recognise and acknowledge the value of the time that Volunteers provide to ACT Emergency Services Agency and ensure that Volunteer time is used to maximum advantage
- to acknowledge that policy development and change should always be considered in terms of its potential to support and facilitate the Volunteer contribution and the particular situation of local brigades and units
- to recognise that the ACT Volunteer Brigades Association, ACT State Emergency Service Volunteers Association, Mapping and Planning Support Group and Community Fire Unit Consultative Committee, represent Volunteers in general and ensure there is meaningful consultation, allowing enough time for real involvement, with the elected representatives of Volunteers on all matters which may impact upon Volunteers before the adoption or implementation of any new or changed policies, procedures or approaches
- to ensure that Volunteer views, opinions and concerns are fully considered before adopting any new or changed policies, procedures or approaches which impact on them as Volunteers
- to provide the resources necessary to enable new or changed policies, procedures or approaches which impact on Volunteers to be implemented efficiently and effectively
- to provide adequate resources to enable Volunteers to deliver agreed services
- to provide administrative, operational and infrastructure support to enable Volunteers to perform their roles safely and effectively within available resources
- recognise and respect the needs of Volunteers which are derived from their Volunteer service and provide effective and comprehensive support services within available resources including but not limited to:
  - where appropriate providing protection against the financial consequences of extended litigation and arranging adequate legal representation with respect to proceedings involving Volunteers arising out of their activities
  - Work Health & Safety support and development of the safest possible working environment for Volunteers
  - procedures to address issues of discrimination in a fair, just and timely manner
  - counselling and welfare support
  - training
  - support and assistance for Volunteers in applying for employment as permanent ACT Emergency Services Agency employees
  - compensation for accidents, injuries and losses

## The Volunteers provide their services to the best of their abilities consistent with the following principles:

- to provide their services for the protection of life and property, and the environment and undertake other relevant duties to create a safer and more resilient community in a mutual, respectful and active partnership with the ACT Government, other organisations and the community
- to operate safely and undertake appropriate training and planning to ensure their personal safety and enhance the delivery of services in creating a safer community
- to exercise the powers vested in them by the Emergencies Act 2004, Commissioner's Guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures in the best interests of the community
- to recognise and support the ACT Volunteer Brigades Association, the ACT State Emergency Service Volunteers Association, the Mapping and Planning Support Group and the Community Fire Unit Consultative Committee, and the consultative mechanisms as agreed with ACT Emergency Services Agency
- to be committed to working in harmony and consultation with the ACT Government, including the ACT Emergency Services Agency and seek to resolve differences of opinion internally in the first instance
- to recognise the ACT Public Service values through positive interaction with the ACT Government, including staff and volunteers of the ACT Emergency Services Agency, and with their respective Service

## The Commitment:

The parties commit themselves to use and apply the Charter in a spirit of mutual respect and goodwill and to work together in that spirit to resolve any disputes that may arise between the ACT Government, the ACT Emergency Services Agency, the Volunteer Associations and the Volunteers by reference to the key principles set down in this Volunteer Charter.

