



WOMEN

IN EMERGENCY SERVICES STRATEGY

A Pathway to a Diverse & Inclusive Workforce



ACT
Government



**ACT EMERGENCY SERVICES AGENCY
DECEMBER 2015**



MINISTERIAL FOREWORD



I would like to acknowledge the tremendous work undertaken by the women and men in our emergency services. Our emergency responders need to be physically fit and maintain high standards of service in order to care and protect us in our time of need. It takes a certain type of person to be an emergency service worker or volunteer, and their dedication and integrity is highly appreciated in return.

The *Women in Emergency Services Strategy* (WIES Strategy) has been developed in consultation with our emergency service personnel, along with key stakeholders, and supports the ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA) being an inclusive and diverse workplace, and realises the aspirations of the ACT Women's Plan.

Diverse and inclusive workplaces improve our understanding of the different needs, vulnerabilities, interests, capacities and contributions of people within our communities.

Research shows that incorporating gender considerations into emergency management has resulted in more resilient communities through more effective emergency planning and response.

The ESA has 2,500 emergency service employees and volunteers who specialise in a wide variety of roles including firefighters, paramedics, mechanics, mapping specialists, system specialists, risk analysts, call centre operators, stores personnel, policy writers, trainers, community liaison officers, and many others.

This WIES Strategy seeks to identify those areas where we need to focus our efforts and implement initiatives to attract, recruit, retain and develop women in our emergency services.

The WIES Strategy will inform the development of workforce plans by our emergency services and further supports the ESA in its strategic planning.

This strategy identifies a series of targeted actions, taking the ESA on a journey to achieve greater diversity through inclusion.

I congratulate the ESA on implementing a range of initiatives to ensure it is an inclusive workplace, and is able to harness the benefits that inclusion and diversity can provide.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Joy Burch". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Joy Burch MLA
ACT Minister for Police and Emergency Services

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

Emergency service agencies across Australia are responding to a range of issues and challenges including an aging population, climate change, new technological opportunities, tighter fiscal environments, higher levels of scrutiny and changing community expectations.

These challenges require innovative responses including how we might re-design our services to better position emergency services to be more responsive and effective.

Embracing and harnessing the strengths that diversity and inclusion provide is fundamental to transitioning our emergency services into the future.

The Women in Emergency Services Strategy aims to recruit more women into our emergency services as well as supporting the development of our women into leadership roles.

As an organisation we need to:

- appreciate the historical effects that traditional roles and stereotyping has had on our workplaces;
- continue to review trends, data and research that will identify areas we need to improve;
- review our policies to ensure gender equity is delivered and we continue to be an employer of choice;
- implement a range of practical measures that encourage and support women; and
- re-profile our workforces to reflect the communities we serve.

Our strategy provides a systematic approach in ensuring that the ACT Emergency Services Agency is an inclusive workplace.

I congratulate our ESA men and women who through their involvement in the Women in Emergency Services Working Group, Advisory Committees and through the wider consultations undertaken, have championed the principles of diversity and inclusion. I look forward to this continued commitment and reporting on our achievements.



Dominic Lane AFSM
Commissioner
ACT Emergency Services Agency

SNAPSHOT

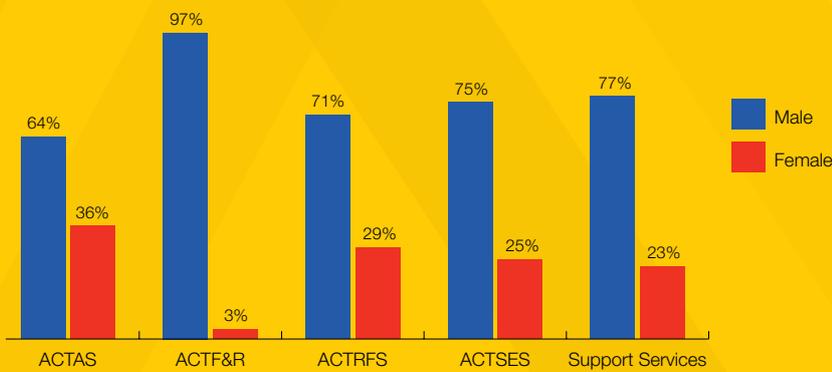
The ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA) is a business unit of the ACT Justice and Community Safety Directorate (JACS). The *Emergencies Act 2004* outlines the functions and powers of the ESA Commissioner and Chief Officers and outlines the functions of the four emergency services: ACT Fire & Rescue (ACTF&R), ACT Ambulance Service (ACTAS), ACT State Emergency Service (ACTSES) and ACT Rural Fire Service (ACTRFS).

The ESA consists of paid staff and volunteers. As at June 2015, the ESA workforce consisted of 657 staff and 1,869 volunteers. ESA personnel are public servants under the *ACT Public Sector Management Act 1994*. Our Volunteers volunteer for ACTRFS, ACTSES, ACTF&R Community Fire Units (CFU) and in Mapping and Planning Support (MAPS).

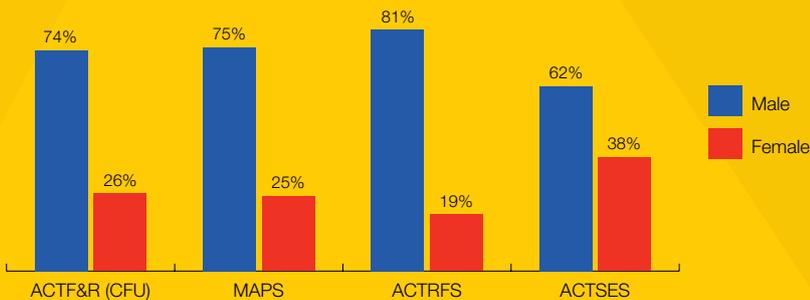
In the ACT Public Service, women constitute 65% of the total workforce, but that figure is significantly lower in ESA. Analysis of the gender throughout emergency services indicates that the representation of women in paid employment is approximately 18% and the representation of women in the volunteer workforce is approximately 26%.

The breakdown within each Service varies with ACTAS having the highest representation of women with 36%, compared to ACTF&R where women represent 3%.

Staff Gender Profile - June 2015



Volunteer Gender Profile - June 2015



MOVING FORWARD

The Women in Emergency Services Strategy (WIES Strategy) provides the overarching strategic framework, which guides the work of ESA to achieve results.

Our areas of focus are guided by the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission's *Women in male-dominated industries: A toolkit of strategies*¹ and were also identified by women in ESA throughout the consultation processes to develop this strategy. Our work is also influenced by the experiences of women in other male dominated workforces such as the Australian Defence Force and policing.

The work undertaken to discuss gender diversity has positioned our people to understand and appreciate the reasons behind this plan and we will continue to work with our people to identify barriers to achieving our shared goals. There are a range of initiatives, which will assist us on our journey to achieve the plan's objectives. These include:

- training our staff to be aware of gender bias and stereotyping;
- identifying potential barriers to an inclusive and diverse workforce and developing initiatives that reduce or eliminate their impact on women;
- developing targets where needed, and implementing access and equity or equal employment opportunity programs to meet them;
- improving conflict resolution and complaint handling processes;
- activities and initiatives to promote compliance with anti-discrimination legislation;
- reviewing our employment frameworks and their application to reflect contemporary workplaces; and
- annual reporting on our progress.

For those areas where we believe the challenge is greater, it is incumbent upon the managers and leaders throughout ESA to set realistic and achievable targets, and benchmark our performance.

One of the important aspects of this WIES Strategy will be the governance and clear accountability measures to ensure the expectations around the strategy are delivered. A supporting action plan will guide ESA in realising our goals and fits under the wider umbrella of the ESA Strategic Plan 2015-2020.

This WIES Strategy is a critical step along the pathway towards a diverse and inclusive workforce.

1. Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (2013) *Women in male-dominated industries: A toolkit of strategies*. www.humanrights.gov.au



