

4. VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

QFRS Rural Operations continues to develop goals and strategies that recognise, support, train and safeguard our volunteers. The aim is to ensure volunteers' continuing ability to provide excellent service in our increasingly demanding service delivery environment. Strategies that provide comprehensive support, particularly those relating to training, essential equipment and targeted recruitment and retention, are seen by QFRS as critical to continued volunteer participation.

Membership of a brigade is open to all persons who satisfy the membership requirements.

The minimum age for membership is 16 years. QFRS does not permit any formal involvement of children younger than this age in any brigade activity. While there is no upper age limit or standard of physical fitness required, in the case of firefighter members, it must be acknowledged that:

- firefighting demands a high level of cardio-respiratory fitness and function;
- no reasonably available method of clinical or other screening will detect all persons medically unfit to act as firefighters on the grounds of cardio-respiratory fitness and function;
- there is a statistically significant risk that persons aged 60 years or more will be unable to operate effectively as firefighters without placing their health at risk; and
- QFRS, the brigade management committee, the officer-in-charge of firefighting operations and individuals themselves have equal responsibility to ensure that people do not place themselves at unwarranted risk to their health or life.

QFRS Rural Operations recognises the dedication and commitment of its volunteers through the award of a range of medals and certificates. Australian Honours may be awarded to members of Australian Fire Services, including volunteers. Awards may be made for bravery, meritorious service or long service. Certificates may be awarded where the instance of bravery, meritorious service or long service falls short of the qualifying criteria for Australian Honours, or where the unique nature of the voluntary service is to be recognised.

QFRS Rural Operations has a responsibility towards volunteers to establish policies, practices and procedures for brigade activities that are in the best interests of the workplace health and safety of brigade members and others whose assistance is requested during operations. Brigade activities include suppression of fire, hazard mitigation, training, public education and awareness, reasonable fund-raising activities, administration, maintenance of equipment, construction and maintenance of fire stations and any other activities authorised by QFRS Rural Operations.

QFRS Rural Operations accepts that it may not always be practical to abide by the accepted standards for safety and that some risk is an accepted part of emergency response. In recognising this risk, QFRS Rural Operations develops and encourages the use of processes and equipment to minimise the risk; but does not encourage action which places the lives of members or the public in danger.