



## MEMBER PROGRESSION CRITERIA

This document is designed to compliment the Member Progression Guide and indicate minimum performance and participation rates for members to maintain active firefighter status as well as progress through the ranks within the Brigade. It is designed to support firefighter safety and the professional development of the brigade as a whole and guide the First Officer's management of member development. It remains the First Officer's responsibility to ensure firefighters are trained appropriately as well as operate appropriately to perform the duties required and it is through consultation with the Management Team, these identified progression criteria are used in the process of individual member development.

Whilst certain benchmarks have been established; the Brigade recognises that individuals may encounter problems such as injury or work constraints over a short period and so special arrangements can be made via the First Officer to assist members maintaining their currency. The brigade also understands that identified training and experience opportunities may not always be available and so allowances can be made. For example; if a training course such as Two Day ICS has not been offered within a period of time before AGM Elections; suitably qualified members can still be proposed for positions within their capabilities but that member must undertake the missing training as soon as the opportunity arises.

Progression through Crew Leader, Officer and First Officer ranks requires members to undertake structured training programs. Under current state training procedures, participants are either Competent or Not Yet Competent when entered into these training courses with no clear timeframes. This open ended arrangement does not allow for timely management of people operationally and so the Brigade has put in place conditions for members being nominated by the Brigade to undertake development training. To demonstrate ability and motivation to undertake the course, nominated members need to complete each respective program within 12 months (up to 18 months with exceptional circumstances). Assessments as part of these programs need to be completed within three attempts. Failure to undertake the course within these conditions means that the members will be asked to withdraw from the course.

### **1. Active Fire-fighters**

The brigade is made up of operational and support members. The brigade needs to introduce a distinction between Active Operational and In-active Operational Fire-fighters. This is based on the brigade's OH&S responsibilities to ensure any fire-fighters engaged in hazardous operations need to have had relevant and recent training to minimise risks to themselves and their team mates.

The Definition of Being Active:

In a 12 month period; a member should participate in:

- at least two of the four Core Training Days
- at least one normal training session every two months
- at least one hazard reduction burn

It is obviously desirable to attend at least one incident every year as well as make an effort to attend brigade meetings, PR Activities and Fund Raising exercises to maintain team relations and have a proactive input to the ongoing running of the brigade.

If members go inactive; they will not be eligible for Service medals such as the National Medal or the Diligent Service Medal for that time. After 12 months of being inactive, Members will be requested to return or be re-categorised as a support member role. If they do not wish to remain members; they will be asked to return their PPE and resign from the Brigade. If they do not respond to brigade contact, they will be removed from the Brigade membership.

Members also have an obligation to advise brigade management of any injury or illness that might affect their ability to effectively and safely carry out their duties as an operational fire fighter. This period off operational duties will not impact on their eligibility for service medals. Where necessary; a doctor's clearance may be required before being accepted back into an Operational status.

## **2. Fire-fighter Minimum Skills Assessments**

Fire-fighters who complete the new members course are required to participate in all aspects of brigade operations prior to undergoing assessment for FMS. There is no minimum time limit but obviously regular attendance at training and supervised participation in at least one hazard reduction burn would be essential. The member will be expected to operate in a crew at any incident under the supervision of a vehicle OIC following the assessment and so the member needs to be competent and confident in their own abilities prior to the assessment.

## **3. Crew Leaders**

All fire-fighters will be encouraged to undertake training in all modules available up to the level of Senior Fire-fighter. There is no time limit. The brigade needs to ensure that a depth of leadership is maintained and the Crew Leader role is the first level of this function. The suggested number of Crew Leaders required by the Brigade is currently 6 (2 per appliance). Nominations from Senior Fire-fighters will be sought as candidates for the Crew Leaders course annually. As there are only a limited number of Crew Leader positions available within the brigade; a process will be put in place to rank candidates in their current state of development so that the brigade puts forward the most suitable candidates for progression. Crew Leaders are expected to function as vehicle OIC's at any kind of incident, control level one incidents and under study Officers at more serious incidents.

Candidates for Crew Leader vacancies must meet the following minimum criteria:

- At least three years service as an Active Firefighter
- Involvement at grass, forest and hilly terrain fires
- Involvement with at least four incidents as a vehicle OIC
- Involvement as a Sector Commander or Incident Controller (coached or alone)
- All FMS and all available FAS qualifications achieved
- Ability to go on the roster, even for short or limited time frames.
- No Code of Conduct issues for the previous two years

In addition; each candidate will undergo an in field practical exercise supervised by three senior Officers to assess the candidates ability to apply safe as well as sound fire ground judgement in practical applications. The outcomes need to illustrate a candidate's fundamental understanding of the theory of QFRS policies and procedures as well as Brigade SOP's when applied in practise in the field. This exercise is designed to be repeatable for all candidates and could potentially be used to ensure currency of existing Crew Leaders at a later date. There are two scenarios as part of the exercise; a vegetation fire in hilly terrain and a remote structure property protection fire. Ultimately, the First Officer needs to approve the candidate to Area Office to undertake the course.

Candidates also need to be honest with themselves as far as suitability for undertaking the Crew Leaders course. If they do not plan to remain an active, operational member of the brigade for more than 2-3 years due to work or family commitments, health, age or ongoing injury issues or academic constraints; then they should wait or abstain progression until their circumstances change as positions are limited. The permanent issue of yellow helmets on completion of the course will be under review once currency issues are addressed and so status should not be a motivational factor in the decision to undertake this training.

Special dispensation will be given to members who have obtained leadership skills separate to their Rural Fire Service training.

#### **4. Officers**

The brigade requires a certain number of Officers (3-4) to play a senior operational role such as managing larger and more complex incidents (Level 2 and above) as well as play a significant role in the development of new senior fire-fighters and crew leaders.

An Officer would get asked to act as First Officer at times and so must be able to possess leadership and management skill potential as appropriate.

The most senior Officer on scene at an incident is legally responsible for everything that happens, whether they are IC or not. These members need to be fully prepared for that responsibility.

Officer positions will be filled via the current Brigade voting process on a bi-annual basis or when the need arises. Criteria based elections mean that candidates for the election need to have met the following criteria before they can be nominated:

- At least two years service as an Active Crew Leader
- Experience as Incident Control on a fire ground.
- Completed IMS Two Day Course
- Demonstrated ability in IMT roles during at least two large incidents (level 2 or 3).
- Plan and manage a hazard reduction exercise
- In the future; Officers candidates will be required to undertake the Officer Course prior to being able to be selected for a vote.

Once again; as per Crew Leaders, candidates need to be honest with themselves prior to seeking or accepting an Officer position. There are significant additional time and effort burdens that an Officer must be able to fit into their lives well above and beyond other roles. An additional self criterion for Officers is their willingness to act as First Officer. If they do not wish to be considered as First Officer if a vacancy eventuates, then they should step back to being a Crew Leader to ensure future leadership development opportunities.

By adopting this criteria based election process, the brigade can be confident that they have a formal development approach for their leaders and confidence that their leaders have been given the appropriate training. This process also ensures members are not placed in dangerous circumstances before being ready to deal with them in a safe and professional manner. It also may mean that the brigade does not have sufficient Officers at an election and so candidates would get voted in at a later date once they had completed their training requirements.

## **5. First Officer**

As per the current practise; the First Officer would be voted in based on the most suitable officer who is ready willing and able to undertake the role. QFRS will also approve this appointment to ensure minimum standards for safety and professionalism are met.