



# POLICY P3.2.9

## NSW RFS OPERATIONAL OFFICER (OpO) PROGRAM

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Version Number	1.1
SOPs	> None
Owner	Executive Director, Operations
Contact	Director, Regional Services
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### 1 Purpose

- 1.1 This policy provides an industrial framework for implementation of the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) Operational Officer (OpO) Program, and outlines the benefits and conditions of the OpO Program and how employees can gain access to it.
- 1.2 This policy draws authority from legislation including the *Rural Fires Act 1997*; the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013*; and the *Government Sector Employment Rules 2014*. In addition, the Public Service Commission Assignment to Role Guidelines 2014 and the Crown Employees (Transferred Employees Compensation) Award (TECA) 2009 are also relied upon in this policy.
- 1.3 Further details can be found in the Operational Officer Handbook which has been developed to provide clear direction, procedures and guidance on the implementation and operation of the OpO Program and this Policy.
- 1.4 In addition, the OpO Training Information Book has also been developed to outline training and development of employees on the OpO Program.
- 1.5 NSW RFS employees who are not assigned to an OpO role are not subject to this policy.

#### The Operational Officer (OpO) Program

- 1.6 The OpO program is an initiative by the NSW RFS providing enhanced training and development opportunities for employees to build their skills base, knowledge and experience and at the same time create a skilled and mobile workforce that enhances organisational capacity across NSW.

## 2 Definitions

- 2.1 For the purpose of this Policy, the following definitions apply:
- a. **Assignment Tenure:** Period of time not exceeding two years.
  - b. **Commissioner:** the Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service or the Commissioner's delegated representative.
  - c. **District location:** Includes all and any part of singular specific NSW RFS District, Team or Zone.
  - d. **GSE Act:** The *Government Sector Employment Act 2013*.
  - e. **GSE Rules:** The *Government Sector Employment Rules 2014*.
  - f. **OpO Category Areas:** Geographical areas defined in this Policy for Rotation purposes. These OpO areas demonstrate the typical operational and administrative demographics that the OpO Program seeks to expose to its OpO employees. See page 8 for map.
  - g. **OpO employee:** is an employee of the NSW RFS classified under the RFS classification in the *Crown Employees (Rural Fire Services) Award* who has been assigned to an OpO role.
  - h. **RF ACT:** The *Rural Fires Act 1997*.
  - i. **Staff Assignment:** refer to Part 4, Division 5, Section 46 of the Government Sector Employment Act 2015.
  - j. **TECA:** the *Crown Employees (Transferred Employees Compensation) Award 2009*.

## 3 Policy

### Relationship to the GSE and NSW RFS Policies

- 3.1 The provisions of *Section 46 – Assignment to roles in work classifications* of the GSE Act do **not** apply to rotations or promotions as described in this OpO Policy. Section 46 allows the Commissioner of the NSW RFS as the head of the agency to assign employees to specific roles to enable the flexible deployment of staff resources within the agency and to develop the capabilities of staff. Voluntary rotations and promotions are not deployments.
- 3.2 The provisions of *Part 6 – Transfers and secondments* of the GSE Rules do **not** apply to this policy as these “**employer-initiated transfers or secondments**” only apply to transfers or secondments between government sector agencies and **not** to transfers or secondments within the same government agency.
- 3.3 Applications for staff assignments to other roles within the NSW RFS are **not** dealt with by this policy. These are governed by Section 46 of the GSE Act and the Public Service Commission (PSC) Assignment to Role Guidelines.
- a. Where a staff assignment is approved in accordance with Section 46 of the GSE Act and the Public Service Commission (PSC) Assignment to Role Guidelines it is **not** a rotation as defined in this Policy and therefore not eligible for financial assistance and reimbursement under this Policy.
  - b. However, where the staff assignment is to a location that is itemised in this policy as an OpO Category Area, the length of service in that area shall count towards completing a placement in that area.

### Access to the OpO Program

- 3.4 There are two ways to access the OpO Program:
- a. By application and approval at existing NSW RFS Level to the corresponding OpO Level to the relevant Executive Director; or
  - b. Within the NSW RFS by promotion or staff assignment.

### OpO roles in the NSW RFS

- 3.5 The Executive Director, Operations may from time to time identify roles in the organisation that will assist in achieving the objectives of the OpO Program.
- 3.6 These OpO roles shall be designated in an OpO roles register that is maintained and updated by the Executive Director, Operations.

### OpO Levels

- 3.7 This policy establishes the following OpO Levels for the purpose of appointment to and promotion within the OpO Program:
- OpO Level 1 (RFS Officer Level 4/5)
  - OpO Level 2 (RFS Officer Level 6/7)
  - OpO Level 3 (RFS Officer Level 8/9)
- 3.8 The Executive Director, Operations may add or modify Levels to meet organisational needs.

### Probation

- 3.9 External applicants will be subject to the normal NSW RFS six (6) month probation period.
- 3.10 During the probation period, there will be mandatory training that must be successfully completed by the probationary OpO employee.
- 3.11 Failure to successfully complete this training may result in either:
- Extension of the probationary period; or
  - Annulment of the probation.

### OpO Category Areas

Area	OpO Category Area	Districts Covered
A	Western	37, 45
B	Riverina	33, 34, 35, 36
C	Central Plains	39, 40, 43, 44
D	Central Ranges	14, 26, 38, 41, 42
E	Southern Ranges & Alpine	29, 30, 31, 32
F	South Coast	27, 28
G	Greater Sydney	16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25
H	Central Coast	12, 13, 15
I	North Coast	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
J	Northern Ranges	6, 7, 9
K	Northern Plains	8, 10, 11

See map attached to this Policy

### Allocation to an OpO Category area

- 3.12 An OpO employee is initially placed in a designated OpO Category Area in a specific OpO role and Level. Once placed into an OpO Category Area, an OpO employee will have the choice to remain in that area until they choose to;
- Apply for a promotion; or
  - Move to different OpO Category Area through staff assignment.

## Offer of Rotation

- 3.13 Annually the NSW RFS will review the placement of all OpO employees in the OpO Program. Those employees who are near the completion of their assignment tenure may be offered assignment in an OpO Category Area that they have not yet been placed in, as part of available rotations across all areas.
- 3.14 Offers will be dependent on availability of suitable roles in those OpO Category Areas.
- 3.15 Where an offer is made for rotation, the OpO employee may:
- Accept the rotation;
  - Decline the rotation; or
  - Decline the rotation on this occasion, and advise that they would like to be made another offer in the next OpO placement reviews.

## Promotion within the OpO Program

- 3.16 As an OpO employee successfully completes their placement in one or more of the OpO Category Areas, they will increase their suitability and prospects for qualification to promotion to the next level of the OpO Program (e.g. from OpO Level 1 to OpO Level 2).
- 3.17 Promotional opportunities are normally advertised annually but may also be advertised at any other time as determined by the NSW RFS.
- 3.18 Applying for promotion in the OpO Program differs from applying for other roles in the NSW RFS outside of the OpO Program. A comparison of the application processes follows:
- Outside of the OpO Program**, an employee (RFS Level 4/5) will normally apply for a specified role in a specified location (e.g. RFS Level 6/7 at Taree) and tailor their application to that role. Their application will be assessed against the criteria for the role by way of merit selection in accordance with Part 3 – Merit-based employment of the GSE Rules.
  - Within the OpO Program** an employee will be applying for the next OpO Level up, but not to a specific role at a particular location at that next level.

In this case, application for promotion to the next OpO level up will need to address criteria required to perform in categories where the higher OpO Level roles exist at the time.

*Note: Part 3 – Merit-based employment* of the GSE Rules allows “**employment decisions**” to be made in a number of ways including the merit based selection for a particular role described in clause 3.18 (a) above; and assessments that take into account the long and short term capability needs to meet the objectives of the relevant agency and existing workforce capabilities.

- 3.19 OpO employees accept that in the promotion process, they will not be applying for a specific role **location** and will make their decision to apply for any OpO promotion on this basis.
- 3.20 Successful applicants for promotion to the next OpO Level will be considered along with other successful applicants to the next OpO Level and will be matched to an OpO Category Area at which they have not yet completed a placement.
- 3.21 An OpO employee will not be eligible for; remain in; or be offered an OpO Category Area either by way of rotation or promotion, for which they have already completed a placement.
- 3.22 The only exception to clause 3.21 above will be in circumstances where the Executive Director, Operations has granted an exemption.

## OpO Promotion and Rotation Review Panel (OpO PRRP)

- 3.23 The Commissioner will establish an OpO Promotion and Rotation Review Panel (OpO PRRP) to manage the implementation and operation of rotations and promotions in the OpO Program.
- 3.24 The operation and governance of the OpO PRRP will be administered as outlined within the Operational Officer Handbook.

- 3.25 The OpO PRRP shall facilitate the timely movement of OpO employees to different OpO Category Areas as agreed with the OpO employee through rotations at their existing OpO Level.
- 3.26 In its assessments and deliberations, the OpO PRRP will take into account:
  - a. Organisational needs, priorities; and capabilities; and
  - b. The objectives of the OpO program in terms of OpO employees gaining experience in the various OpO Category Areas.
- 3.27 When considering rotation and/or promotion, the OpO PRRP will ensure there is equity and procedural fairness in its assessments, deliberations and recommendations.

#### **Financial Assistance, Reimbursement and TECA**

- 3.28 Where an OpO employee relocates his or her residence as a result of a rotation to another OpO Category area within the OpO Program, they shall be entitled to apply for financial assistance and if approved, reimbursement of expenses incurred up to the value of \$5,000 for each placement.
- 3.29 Where an OpO employee can clearly demonstrate that any rotation to another OpO category area, will result in expenses in excess of the financial assistance provision in 3.28 above they may make an additional application.
- 3.30 Such application shall be made in writing with justification provided to the Executive Director, Operations for approval.
- 3.31 Records shall be retained for audit purposes.
- 3.32 TECA shall have application in accordance with the eligibility defined in the TECA Award and also in consideration of the Public Service Commission Assignment to Role Guidelines.

#### **Record of Placement in OpO Category Areas**

- 3.33 The NSW RFS shall maintain a register for each OpO employee of the successful completion of placements in the OpO Category Areas.
- 3.34 This register shall be used by the OpO PRRP when considering rotations and promotions.
- 3.35 A copy of this record shall be made available to the OpO employee every time it is updated.

#### **Access to OpO Policy**

- 3.36 Access to this OpO Policy shall be:
  - a. Made available to all applicants to the OpO Program at the time of advertisement;
  - b. Attached and referred to in letters of offer of employment to candidates who have been successful in being offered an OpO role in the OpO Program;
  - c. Explained at Induction for new employees to the OpO Program;
  - d. At any time on the NSW RFS Intranet policy page; and
  - e. At any time on the NSW RFS public website.

## **3 Links**

- > [Government Sector Employment Act 2013](#)
- > [Government Sector Employment Rules 2014](#)
- > [Rural Fires Act 1997](#)
- > [Crown Employees \(Public Service Conditions of Employment\) Award 2009](#)
- > [Crown Employees \(Transferred Employees Compensation\) Award 2009](#)
- > [Crown Employees \(Rural Fire Service\) Award](#)
- > [Public Service Commission Assignment to Role Guideline 2015](#)
- > [Service Standard 6.1.2 Qualifications for NSW RFS Members](#)
- > [P3.2.3 Annualised Conditions Allowance](#)

- > [P3.3.1 Professional Development](#)
- > [NSW RFS Operational Officer Handbook](#)
- > [NSW RFS District and Operational Officer Training Information Booklet](#)

## 4 Amendments

AMENDMENT DATE	VERSION NO	DESCRIPTION
2 December 2016	1.0	Initial release
TBA	1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Repeals and remakes P3.2.9 v1.0</li> <li>&gt; Minor administrative amendments to align OpO Category Areas with local government areas following amalgamations (table in clause 3.11; addition of reconciliation table - page 7)</li> <li>&gt; Map updated (page 8)</li> <li>&gt; Removal of references to P3.3.2 NSW RFS Permanent and Temporary Staff Transfers (repealed on 4/05/2017)</li> </ul>

## Reconciliation of OpO Map Variations following local government amalgamations

OpO Category Area	OpO Category Area	Districts Covered	Districts Now Covered	Variation
A	Western	39 47	37 45	47 no longer exists 39 now in Central Plains
B	Riverina	35 36 37 38	33 34 35 36	37 now in Western 38 now in Central Ranges
C	Central Plains	41 42 45 46	39 40 43 44	41 now in Central Ranges 42 now in Central Ranges 45 now in Western 46 no longer exists
D	Central Ranges	44 43 28 40 15	14 26 38 41 42	44 now in Central Plains 43 now in Central Plains 28 now in South Coast 40 now in Central Plains 15 now in Central Coast
E	Southern Ranges & Alpine	31 32 33 34	29 30 31 32	34 now in Riverina 33 now in Riverina
F	South Coast	29 30	27 28	29 now in Southern Ranges & Alpine 30 now in Southern Ranges & Alpine
G	Greater Sydney	17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27	16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25	27 now in South Coast 26 now in Central Ranges
H	Central Coast	12 13 14 16	12 13 15	16 now in Greater Sydney
I	North Coast	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	No change
J	Northern Ranges	6 7 9	6 7 9	No change
K	Northern Plains	8 10 11	8 10 11	No change
See map attached to this Policy				

**Yellow** = These have changed to a different OpO category

**Green** = Shows where the yellow highlighted items have moved to

# NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE - OpO Category Area/Districts/Zones/LGA

