





## RPL GUIDELINES

**APPLYING RECOGNITION STRATEGIES IN THE SERVICE** 

**V3.2** 

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Added RPL webinar link

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### 1. What is RPL?

#### **Overview**

Recognised Prior Learning (RPL) is an assessment process. It allows for competency/s to be assessed which may have been gained through formal learning, non-formal learning or informal learning.

### FORMAL LEARNING

- Structured program of instruction
- Linked to an AQF Qualification or Statement of Attainment
- Examples a certificate, diploma or university degree

### NON-FORMAL LEARNING

- Structured program of instruction
- Does not link to an AQF
  Qualification or
  Statement of Attainment
- Examples professional development workshops

#### INFORMAL LEARNING

- Often non-structured in a traditional sense
- Does not link to an AQF Qualification or Statement of Attainment
- Examples through experience incl. on the job, social, family, hobby or leisure activities



**RPL** <u>must</u> be made available to all members. RPL allows members who already have the skills, knowledge and experience to be 'on boarded' quicker, which is good for member morale and increases the Services operational capability.

#### SERVICE STANDARD 6.1.3 TRAINING IN THE NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

Training Standard Operating Procedure 9 – Recognition (TSOP – 9) defines the procedures for recognition of qualifications and existing competency gained from previous experience or training. Section 2.2 states:

Recognition may include:

- automatic recognition recognition of a corresponding qualification or units issued by another Registered Training Organisation;
- b. **credit transfer** recognition of another qualification that covers all of the relevant competencies needed;
- c. recognition of current competency based on a portfolio of sufficient suitable evidence; or
- d. **assessment on demand** completing the normal assessment without doing any training.





**Not sure?** When in doubt about anything training related you should refer to Service Standard 6.1.3 Training in the NSW Rural Fire Service in the first instance. You can download Service Standard 6.1.3 by visiting MyRFS.

#### **Recognition strategies**

The Learning and Development team are responsible for determining the systems which govern how training is conducted in the NSW RFS. A part of that responsibility is to ensure NSW RFS assessment methodology is sound and meets the required training package standards. NSW RFS assessment methodology ensures all recognition strategies can be supported including:

- · Third party evidence
- Supporting documentation
- Assessment on demand

- Direct observation
- Recognition Interview (questioning)
- Work samples

#### **RPL ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY**

The assessment design process undertaken by the Learning and Development team ensures assessors have rigorous assessment tools, which allow them to make well-informed assessment decisions, including making a determination on an RPL application.

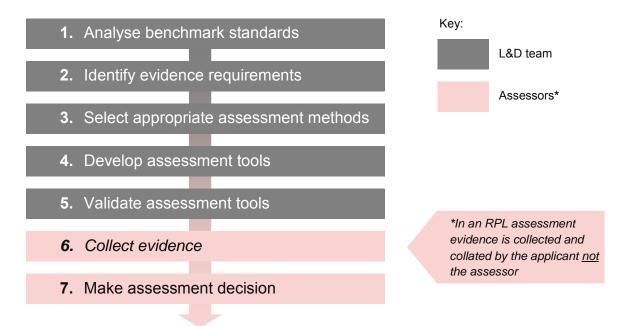


Figure 1 NSW RFS Assessment Methodology

#### ASSESSMENT GUIDES AND RECOGNTION TEMPLATES

All NSW RFS courses have a Training and Assessment Strategy, which specifies how Training and Assessment is to be carried out and an Assessment Guide with corresponding assessment tools to allow assessors to determine an assessment outcome. NSW RFS Assessment Guides contain recognition templates including:

- 1. Credit Transfer Evidence Summary template
- 2. Recognition Evidence Summary template (see sample)



The Recognition Templates are tools which have been purpose built for the effective processing of RPL. If a member has asked for RPL provide them with the recognition templates from the relevant assessment guide and explain that their evidence must correspond with the items listed.



Use of the Recognition Templates ensures the correct parameters have been set to assess any evidence submitted by the RPL candidate.

#### THIRD PARTY EVIDENCE

Third party evidence could include:

- Information from a supervisor or manager which outlines:
  - How long they have supervised the member
  - What the members' responsibilities were (i.e. list of duties)
  - What skills or competencies the member successfully perform, while carrying out their duties ( the <u>Evidence Summary template</u> may assist with this)
  - Further contact details of the person providing the report (i.e. phone number or email address)
  - Signature of the person providing the report

#### Testimonial from a peer

- A letter from a peer authenticating an achievement (i.e. leading a crew)
- Further contact details of the person providing the testimonial (i.e. phone number or email address)
- Signature of the person providing the testimonial



There should be an appropriate balance between third party evidence and evidence from other sources. Always verify third party reports by following up on the phone or via email.

#### SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Supporting documentation could include:

- Transcript of formal qualification including
  - Statement of Attainment
  - Certificate or Diploma
  - Degree, Graduate Certificate, Masters Degree, Doctorate
  - Awards
- Certificate of completion or participation for non-formal courses or workshops
- Membership documentation to clubs etc which link to obtaining skills (informal learning)





The supporting documentation listed above should also be signed by a JP (where photocopies are being provided)



#### **ASSESSMENT ON DEMAND**

Where members believe they have the knowledge and skills necessary, but lack documented evidence they can discuss this with the Assessor and request 'assessment on demand'. Assessment on demand allows members to complete the assessments prescribed within the Assessment Guide of the relevant course, without taking part in the learning in the lead up to assessment.

#### **DIRECT OBSERVATION OR 'CHALLENGE TEST'**

Where an assessor determines there are gaps within a members' RPL evidence they can discuss with them the option of demonstrating their skills within those areas. Often in areas where evidence is weak or the assessor needs clarification that the member knows NSW RFS procedure (relevant particularly for members applying for RPL from kindred emergency services agencies).

Direct observation could include:

- Arranging to observe a member 'on the job'
- Simulating a realistic environment for the member to demonstrate skills
- Challenge test where part of an assessment is undertaken and observed by the assessor



#### **RECOGNITION INTERVIEW**

A recognition interview should ideally be performed after the assessor has reviewed all the members' RPL evidence. The recognition interview gives the assessor an opportunity to ask further questions where evidence is weak and discuss items which need clarification.





WATCH IT NOW! Go to the <u>Case Studies section</u> and watch a selection of Recognition Interviews.

#### **WORK SAMPLES**

Work samples could include:

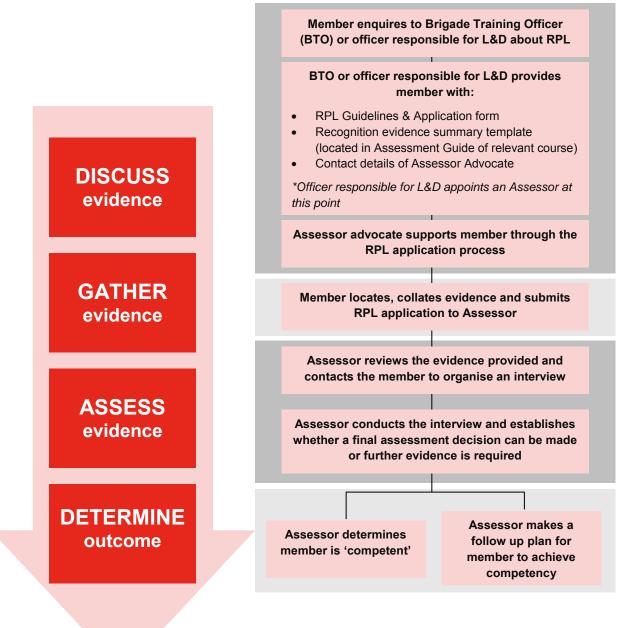
- Reports (i.e. risk management reports, incident reports)
- Written plans (i.e. training plans)
- · Recorded briefings or debriefings

## 2. RPL process

#### **Overview**

#### MEMBERS ARE INFORMED THAT RPL IS AVAILABLE

All workbooks attached to NSW RFS courses have a section which outlines that RPL is available to all members. Trainers and assessors should discuss this section of this workbook and answer any questions members have.

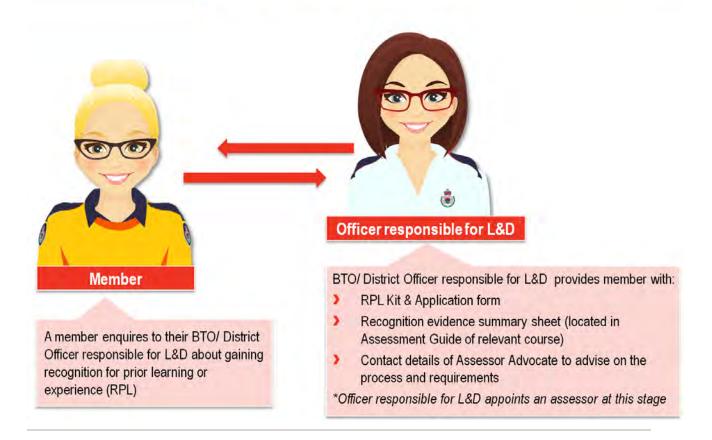


#### **Step-by-step process**

#### **Discuss evidence**

## DISCUSS evidence

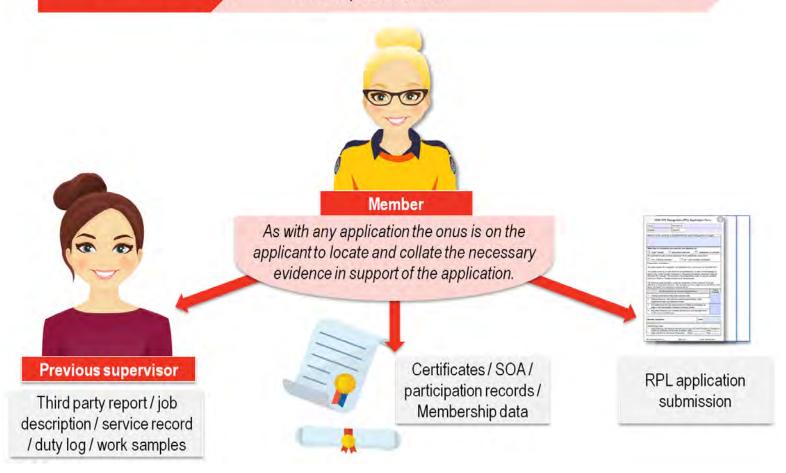
- Member is provided with all necessary information incl. contact details of an Assessor Advocate
- Assessor Advocate discusses the different types of suitable evidence as listed in the RPL kit with the member



#### **Gather evidence**

# GATHER evidence

- Member locates and collates evidence relating to the criteria listed in the evidence summary sheet from the relevant Assessment Guide
- Member submits RPL application form with evidence attached to BTO or Officer responsible for L&D



#### **Assess evidence**

# ASSESS evidence

- Assessor reviews the evidence provided by the member and contacts the candidate to organise a suitable time for an interview or (where evidence is weak) discusses other options.
- 2. Assessor conducts the recognition interview



#### Recognition interview question starters

- Tell me about a time when you ...?
- What do you do when ...?
- In the NSW RFS we have procedures for ... can you tell me about them?

#### **Useful documents**

- > RPL Kit
- Service Standard 6.1.3 SOP 9

## RPL applicants should be well-prepared for their recognition interview. They can do this by:

- Reading the RPL kit and evidence summary sheet from the relevant assessment guide
- Making notes against the evidence summary sheet
- Collecting and collating all evidence and submitting evidence prior to the recognition interview



#### **Determine outcome**

## DETERMINE outcome

- Assessor makes a determination and either:
  - Signs the ADF and awards competency
  - Identifies the gaps and develops a plan for the member to achieve competency



#### Assessor makes a determination based on:

- Alignment of evidence to the units of competency
- The rules of evidence is the evidence valid, sufficient, authentic and current?

VALID

Does the evidence demonstrate the skills, knowledge and attributes as described in the module or unit of competency?

SUFFICIENT

Does the quality, quantity and relevance of the assessment evidence enable a judgement to be made of a learner's competency?

**AUTHENTIC** 

Is the evidence presented for assessment the learner's own work?

CURRENT

Does the assessment evidence demonstrate the learner's <u>current</u> competency? Is all or part of the evidence from the past 18 months?

### 3. Case studies

#### 1. Credit transfer - Safe Working on Roofs (SWR)

#### SAFE WORKING ON ROOFS (SWR) – RECOGNITION OF CURRENT COMPETENCY

**WATCH VIDEO** 

Kelly has been a member of the State Emergency Service (SES) for 10 years, has recently joined her local NSW RFS brigade and is eager to get out there with her fellow team members. Kelly completed her Safe Working on Roofs qualification with SES within her first few years of service and she's been an active member ever since, regularly attending medium to large scale incidents.





<b>∠</b> NOTES			
	 <del> </del>	 	

#### 2. Assessment on demand – Off Road Driving (ORD)

#### OFF ROAD DRIVING (ORD) – ASSESSMENT ON DEMAND

Chelsea holds a medium rigid license and has been a part of a 4WD club ever since she got her license 5 years ago. She partakes in yearly courses with the club and has extensive driving experience across diverse terrains including the desert, rainforest and water crossings. Chelsea's senior deputy captain has been taking her out in the Cat 1 to practice her Off Road Driving skills and Chelsea is confident that after a few more lessons she'd like to request an assessment on demand.

#### **WATCH VIDEO**





NOTES		

#### 3. Recognition interview – Breathing Apparatus Operator (BAO)

#### **BREATHING APPARATUS OPERATOR (BAO) - COMPETENCY CONVERSATIONS**

**WATCH VIDEO** 

Troy has been a member of the NSW RFS Helensburg brigade and has worked at a busy station with Fire and Rescue for 8 years. Troy is BA qualified in his current paid role and is keen to have the qualification recognised by the RFS.





Notes			

## 4. Appendices

### **RPL** application form



Nan	ne:	Member ID:		
Brig	jade:	District:		
Nati	ional Units, modules o	or qualifications for which rec	ognition is so	ught:
Wha	at type of recognition	process are you applying for	?	
	Credit Transfer	Recognition interview	Assessment	t on demand
Doy	you believe you need a	an Assessor from outside the	local area?	
	Yes – External Assess	or No-local Ass	essor is suitabl	е
Pre	paration of evidence			
You	have applied for recogn	nition of competency for a cours	se run by the N	SW RFS.
	NSW RFS course. This	is found in the Assessment Gu of Learning & Development.	ence Summary iide. A copy is a	Sheet for available
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#### Applicant quick reference guide



Make sure your supporting evidence relates to the skills and knowledge that are needed for the qualification.

#### Steps for RPL success:

- Speak to your BTO or Officer responsible for L&D and discuss your evidence
- Read the Evidence Summary template for the course applicable to your RPL application and start thinking about the types of evidence you do and don't have (<u>refer to p. 19</u>)
- Start compiling evidence and continue to seek guidance from your BTO, the Officer responsible for L&D or your assigned Assessor Advocate
- Use the tools in this guide to compile evidence, which shows you have current skills

#### Strong Vs weak evidence

#### **STRONG EVIDENCE**

- You can give explanations or demonstrations of how to do parts or all of something, and you can answer specific questions
- References, preferably on letter-head, signed and dated by member who is competent in the subject matter for which you are seeking recognition
- Performance reviews/appraisals relevant to what you are seeking recognition for
- Supervisor's reference detailing tasks you performed (see Third Party reference tool)
- Emails and minutes of meetings attended by you which provide proof of work undertaken
- Recently produced work samples and proof they have been produced by you
- Authenticated and dated photographs or videos of work samples in progress
- Evidence that provides a picture of consistent performance over time
- Evidence from a similar qualification at the same level or higher that you are seeking recognition for, which lists the skills and knowledge covered in the qualification

#### **WEAK EVIDENCE**

- Assurances you can do it "I've been doing it for years" or evidence by exception – eg, "I must be working safely I've still got all my fingers!"
- Personal references with general character comments rather than specific examples of what you have done
- Job descriptions/position descriptions that are not signed off by a supervisor to say you completed all the skills to a suitable level
- Journals and diary entries not supported by a third party
- Unauthenticated work samples which you cannot prove are your own work
- Unauthenticated pictures, video or photographs of work or products
- Old work samples not current examples
- Copy of an organisation's policies & procedures with no evidence of how you applied them
- A resume with no other supporting documentation
- Evidence from a different qualification level, eg from a Level 1 when you are seeking a Level 3 qualification



If your evidence is weak, but you still feel you have the skills and knowledge to be deemed competent, ask your Officer in Charge of L&D for 'Assessment on demand'.

#### Assessor quick reference guide

The Recognition Evidence Summary template from the Assessment Guide is the key document needed by the Assessor during the recognition interview. The job of the Assessor is to ask questions and look for evidence of competency based on the criteria listed.



Assessors should note that candidates think in terms of the job, roles and their experiences – not units of competency. The **Assessor must make the links and draw out the examples/evidence they need.** 

#### **RECOGNITION INTERVIEW**



Read the Evidence Summary template thoroughly and ensure you are well versed with what a competent member can and can't do.

You do not need to ask a question for every point on the Evidence Summary template. Have a look at areas where you feel evidence is not strong or insufficient, and use the question starters to help the Candidate provide more evidence.

#### **QUESTION STARTERS**

- Tell me of a time when you....?
- Tell me about how you.....?
- What do you do when.....?
- How do you....?
- In the NSW RFS, we have procedures for.... can you tell me about them?
- How would you.....?
- Have you ever had to....?
- · What happened and what would you do next time?
- Talk me through the process of how you would....



Caution should be used when conducting an RPL assessment to ensure standard assessment procedures are applied and adhered to. It is not appropriate to under or over assess. A candidate should not be held to a higher standard because they have applied through the RPL process.

#### **Evidence Summary Template (sample only)**

## RECOGNITION (RPL/RCC) EVIDENCE SUMMARY Bush Firefighter 2014

Name: John Southerly	Member ID: 464646
Brigade: Ashberg HQ	District: Ashberg

#### Competencies for which recognition is being sought:

- · PUAEQU001B Prepare, maintain and test response equipment
- PUAFIR204B Respond to wildfire
- PUAFIR215 Prevent injury
- PUAOPE013A Operate communications equipment
- PUATEA001B Work in a team

Evidence required	Evidence provided and comments
Actively risk assess  / Identify hazards and risks relating to work tasks  / Display situational awareness while working  / Communicate hazards to team members  / Identify safe refuges on the fireground  / Carry, select and wear appropriate PPE  / Decontaminates/clean hands at end of task	INT: Firefighter NPWS experience covered all points. 21/11/2013 KW Example risk assessment form provided.
Work as part of a team  ✓ Choose effective method to communicate across the team/organisational structure  ✓ Encourage others and support the different role/tasks assigned to other members  ✓ Request assistance with tasks as required  ✓ Listen to, confirms and follow instructions regarding tactics and tasks  ✓ Contribute to discussions during team briefing and safety briefings  ✓ Give and receive feedback constructively during after action review	INT: John explained times when he had worked on firegrounds with the NPWS, when he worked on interagency fires, and when he had worked as a liaison between NPWS and NSW RFS on firegrounds. — all interview, backed up by written references from his direct manager on his liaison roles on large fire events over the past 10 years. 21/11/2013 KW
Prepare and test equipment  ✓ Prepare and inspect firefighting equipment  ✓ Report faulty/damaged equipment that fails testing and log as appropriate  ✓ Use Safety Data Sheets	INT: NPWS use same radio systems; and SDS for same materials PRAC: given a portable radio and showed basic fault finding/ reporting process. 21/11/2013 KW
Operate communications equipment  Turn on, change channels and transmit/receive messages on fireground and GRN radios  Test and maintain communications equipment  Try basic trouble shooting on non working radio  Report faulty/damaged radios  Use alternate communication method when first method fails  Secure radio in safe location	PRAC: John was given a portable radio and through demonstration and questioning showed competency against the criteria. 21/11/2013 KW

#### Proceed to fire INT: Was shown BF Assessment practical scenario two photo card. Share observations about location, fuel type and Able to discuss/demonstrate fire behaviour on approach currency against criteria. ✓ Gain access safely to the area with minimal TPE provided about activities damage to resources and environment undertaken on fireground. 21/11/2013 KW ✓ Report evidence relevant to cause of fire and protect area Respond to wildfire TPE: NPWS Firefighter duties and experience statement covered Identify and report information about competencies. 21/11/2013 KW topography, weather and fuel features that may INT: Explained different methods affect fire of dry ext'ing/attack fire fighting Select and use appropriate firefighting equipment including hoses, pumps, tanker, PRAC: John was required to show how he would follow SOP for extinguisher, ladder, hydrants Overrun - showed competency. ✓ Build a fire break 21/11/2013 KW Use dry extinguishing methods Use attack firefighting techniques Use defensive firefighting techniques Use drip torch appropriately in a back burn ✓ Demonstrate overrun drill Participate in mop up and patrol TPE: NPWS Firefighter duties and experience statement covered Identify ways to black out/mop up fire edges competencies. INT: Explained different methods. 21/11/2013 KW Maintain patrol of a perimeter or sector of a Recover and maintain equipment TPE: NPWS Firefighter duties and experience statement covered Replace & report missing/ damaged competencies, 21/11/2013 KW equipment INT: Explained issues associated Equipment is made up and re-stowed ready with spillages. 21/11/2013 KW for next task as per RFS procedures Complete equipment checklists Refuelling is completed with consideration for spillage and environmental impact NPWS firefighter - sufficient Completion of firefighting activities to accepted commonality to RFS, TPE provided/PRAC showed can complete standard, within timeframes and in accordance with NSW RFS procedures activities to accepted standard If no, has plan been made with Is evidence is valid, authentic and current?(Y)/ N Y/Ncandidate to fix identified gaps? Is there sufficient evidence? / N Assessor name: Keith White Date: 21/11/2013 Signature: Keith White Member ID: 454545 Attach any other supporting comments or documentation, along with this recognition evidence summary, to the Assessment Declaration Form for processing.

### Third party evidence tool



CANDIDATE		ss with your third party evidence provider, including the et from the course you are submitting your RPL evidence for
THIRD PARTY EVIDENCE PROVIDE	Thank you for providing You may be contacted b	evidence for the candidate to assist in their RPL application by the NSW RFS for verification purposes.
	To Whom	It May Concern
	si	kills in/as
(insert candidate	ates name)	kills in/as(insert industry or position title)
I verify that the above	named person has:	
		for a period of years and/or months.
period.List activities ar		g activities and displayed the following skills during this idence summary sheet and list any activities/skills that may
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period.List activities and be relevant):  Contact details:  Name:  Position:  Relationship to candid	nd skills (please refer to the ev	I understand that this reference is being used to assess the candidate's competency for all or pa

(Assessor signature)

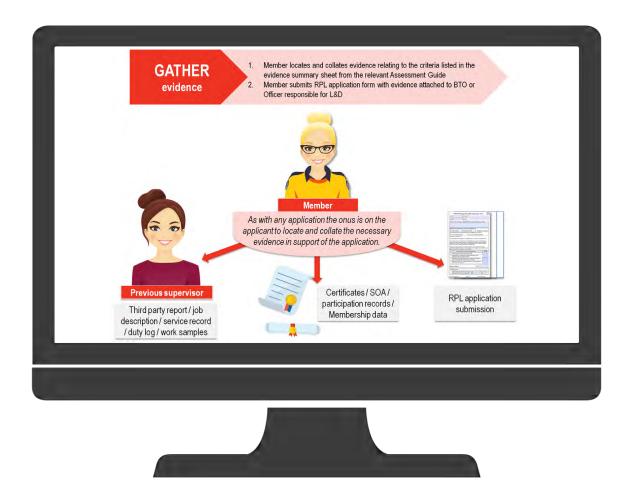
OFFICE USE ONLY - Assessor has evaluated the above evidence X\_

DATE:

#### **RPL Webinar**

With such a large membership base spread right across the State it's almost impossible to have regular catch ups with every district, let alone every brigade! But keeping the lines of communication open are so important, so the Learning and Development team have started scheduling regular webinars to ensure those involved or interested in Training and Assessment within the NSW RFS have the most up-to-date advice and information as possible.

The benefit of webinars is the ability to interact with participants and we encourage everyone to ask lots of questions, take part in polls and raise any topics of concern.





WATCH IT NOW! Missed out on our RPL webinar? No worries click here to watch it now.