



# South Australian State Emergency Service Volunteer Charter

## Introduction

The volunteer members of the State Emergency Service (SES) are fundamental to emergency management in South Australia. Their value and importance is recognised and highly regarded by the South Australian community. Volunteers and the commitment they bring to the community through prevention, preparedness, response and recovery activities remain the core strength of the SES. SES Volunteers selflessly bring time and life skills to protect life and property from storms and floods, to perform rescue operations and support other emergency services to create a safer community. They provide emergency management and community services across South Australia and actively promote rescue and flood mitigation and community preparedness for emergency management.

This Charter provides a framework for the commitment to the protection of the needs and interests of SES Volunteers.

It represents an agreement that the Government of South Australia, the South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission (SAFECOM) and the SES will commit to:

- consulting with SES Volunteers and the South Australian State Emergency Service Volunteers' Association (SASESVA) about all matters that might reasonably be expected to affect them, and
- considering their views when adopting or approving new practices and policies or reviewing current practices or policies.

The Government of South Australia is committed to working in partnership with the volunteer sector through the shared values and commitments as detailed in the 'Advancing the Community Together' compact signed in May 2003.

This Charter builds on the compact specifically supporting SES Volunteers. This Charter was written in consultation with the Government of South Australia, SAFECOM, SES, SASESVA and SES Volunteers and recognises that SES Volunteers, the SES, SAFECOM and the SASESVA operate under the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005*.

## Intent

The intent of this Charter is to ensure:

- consultation occurs with SES Volunteers about all matters that might reasonably be expected to affect them, and
- consideration of their views when approving or adopting new practices or policies
- consideration of their views when reviewing current practices or policies
- recognition that there is a mutual obligation and practical partnership based on respect between the parties
- that a fair, reasonable and non discriminatory approach is taken by all, and
- the safety of the South Australian community.

This Charter identifies the key roles and responsibilities of the parties as set out below.



## South Australian State Emergency Service Volunteers

### Role

SES Volunteers are drawn from communities throughout South Australia to participate in an integrated emergency service. This is a practical partnership based on mutual respect for the SES, the staff employed by the SES and personnel of other organisations. It ensures that community safety needs are met to the best of their collective abilities.

SES Volunteers depend on the goodwill and practical support of their families, friends, employers and local communities to enable them to serve, recognising that the time available to them is limited by the needs and demands of their families, employment and other obligations. SES Volunteers do not contribute their time for financial reward but expect to gain satisfaction from service, achievement, personal development and camaraderie.

### Responsibilities

SES Volunteers will:

- provide their services for the protection of life, property and the environment, where the emergency is caused by flood or storm or when the need arises as provided by the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005*
- provide specialist rescue services such as road crash rescue, structural collapse rescue, reconnaissance and search and rescue
- undertake other relevant duties to create a safer community in a mutually respectful and active partnership with the paid staff of the SES, other organisations and the community
- operate safely in accordance with the policies and procedures of SAFECOM and the SES
- undertake appropriate training and planning to ensure their personal safety and enhance the delivery of services in creating a safer community
- exercise the powers vested in them by the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005* and Regulations in the best interests of the community
- recognise and support the consultative mechanisms as agreed with SES
- recognise that the SASESVA is an Association that represents the interests of SES Volunteers
- be committed to working in harmony and consultation with SAFECOM and the SES, and
- seek to resolve differences of opinion internally in the first instance.

## South Australian State Emergency Service Volunteers' Association

### Role

The SASESVA is recognised as an association which represents the interests of SES Volunteers. It is empowered to take such steps as may be reasonably available to it to promote and advance the best interests of SES Volunteers. The Association provides an additional means of consultation and communication for them. On behalf of, and in the interest of SES Volunteers, it liaises with the State Emergency Service executive management, SAFECOM and the Minister for Emergency Services, to identify and develop strategic directions in providing emergency services in South Australia on behalf of and in the interests of SES Volunteers.

### Responsibilities

The SASESVA will:

- fairly represent SES Volunteers to protect and progress their interests and welfare within the emergency services sector
- ensure that consultation occurs with volunteers about all matters that might reasonably be expected to affect them
- consider their views when adopting or approving new practices and policies or reviewing current practices or policies
- work to secure conditions ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of SES Units and their development
- encourage continuous improvement of volunteer skills and operational equipment
- promote the observance of safety standards
- endeavour to increase community awareness of SES Units and their activities
- provide a single voice and proactive arm for SES Volunteers that derives from outside Government, and
- encourage SES Volunteers in meeting SAFECOM and SES strategic obligations and directions.

## Government of South Australia

The Government of South Australia through its agencies SAFECOM and the SES supports and recognises the role that emergency service volunteers play in our community.

The Government supports the energy, dedication and enthusiasm of SES Volunteers by providing support to emergency services. It provides appropriate facilities and equipment to ensure that members are trained and resourced. The 'Advancing the Community Together' partnership provides a framework between the volunteer sector and the Government of South Australia to meet its strategic goals. This Charter develops this partnership further for SES Volunteers and the Government of South Australia.

The Government of South Australia supports SES Volunteers by:

- recognising, valuing, respecting and promoting volunteers, their families and employers for their contributions to the wellbeing and safety of the people of South Australia
- ensuring that relevant legislation appropriately recognises the needs and interests of volunteers who provide their services in accordance with the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005*
- providing protection for volunteers under the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005*, *Volunteers Protection Act 2001* and the *Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare Act 1986*
- ensuring appropriate mechanisms are in place to enable consultation with volunteers and the SASESVA about all matters that might reasonably be expected to affect them, and
- considering their views when adopting or approving new practices and policies or reviewing current practices or policies.

The Government works through two specific agencies in supporting SES Volunteers, SAFECOM and the SES.

## South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission

### Role

SAFECOM provides governance, strategic direction and organisational support to the emergency services sector. It is accountable to Government and to the community. The emergency services sector comprises the Commission and the three emergency service organisations, the South Australian State Emergency Service, the South Australian Country Fire Service and the South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service.

### Responsibilities

SAFECOM will:

- recognise, value, respect and promote SES Volunteers, their families and employers for their contributions to the wellbeing of the community
- ensure that volunteer views, opinions and concerns are considered before adopting any new or revised policies, procedures or approaches which might reasonably be expected to affect them as SES Volunteers
- recognise and promote innovation, safety and efficiency within the SES
- use various mechanisms to consult with stakeholders, unions and associations and other Government agencies, to discuss matters of common concern in relation to SES Volunteers, and
- promote a team based performance culture throughout the emergency services sector.

## South Australian State Emergency Service

### Role

The SES is a community based rescue and emergency service funded by Government. It is dedicated to protecting life, property and the environment from flooding, storms and other emergencies throughout South Australia.

With a vision of a 'safe and prepared community' the SES mission is to:

- provide an effective rescue service for the community of South Australia by SES Units, that render immediate assistance during emergencies and disasters
- assist the community to cope with natural or other emergencies, and
- protect and support SES Volunteers by providing an environment of continuous improvement.

### Responsibilities

The SES will:

- recognise, value, respect and promote SES Volunteers
- commit to consultation with volunteers through the SASESVA and other advisory groups, about all matters that might reasonably be expected to affect SES Volunteers
- consider their views when reviewing current practices or policies
- consider their views when adopting or approving new practices and policies
- recognise that the SASESVA is an association that represents SES Volunteers
- ensure that consultative mechanisms are in place
- provide necessary resources to enable SES Volunteers to deliver agreed services in a safe and effective manner
- recognise and acknowledge that a primary responsibility of the SES and people employed by the SES is to nurture and encourage volunteers and to facilitate and develop their skills and competencies
- recognise and acknowledge the value of the time that volunteers provide to the SES, and
- ensure that volunteer time is used to maximum advantage.

## Signatories

The parties commit themselves to use and apply the Charter in the spirit of mutual respect and goodwill and to work together in that spirit, in accordance with the key principles set out in this Volunteer Charter. The Charter will be reviewed as required by agreement of the parties or at the end of four years from its date of commencement.

This Charter commences on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2008.

					
Hon Mike Rann MP Premier	Hon Carmel Zollo MLC Minister for Emergency Services	Hon Jennifer Rankine MP Minister for Volunteers	Mr David Place Commissioner of Fire and Emergencies	Mr Stuart Macleod ESM Chief Officer, South Australian State Emergency Service	Mr Warren Hicks Chairperson, South Australian State Emergency Service Volunteers' Association