

# BECOMING A FIREFIGHTER IN AUSTRALIA

A COMPARATIVE GUIDE TO TRAINING  
PATHWAYS ACROSS ALL STATES



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# Firefighter Jobs in Australia: Training, Salaries, and How to Join

Australia's firefighters are revered for their courage and community service. **Firefighter jobs** offer a unique blend of excitement, teamwork, and the chance to protect lives and property. This comprehensive guide explores what it takes to become a firefighter in Australia – from required training and entry tests to salary ranges and career pathways – covering every state and territory.

We'll also look at volunteer firefighting opportunities, specialised units (bushfire, rescue, aviation, HAZMAT), future challenges, and diversity initiatives in the fire services. Whether you dream of **becoming a firefighter** or are simply curious about the profession, this guide will walk you through national standards and state-by-state details on **firefighter training**, **firefighter salaries**, and how to join the ranks of Australia's firefighting heroes.

## Introduction to Firefighter Careers in Australia

Firefighting in Australia is more than just battling flames – it's a multifaceted career path with roles in urban firefighting, bushfire control, road accident rescue, hazardous material management, and community education. Firefighters are on the front line of emergencies: responding to house fires, bushfires, car crashes, chemical spills, and natural disasters. It's a **physically demanding and mentally challenging job** that requires quick thinking, teamwork, and resilience.

### Career vs Volunteer Firefighters:

Australia's fire services consist of both career (paid) firefighters and volunteer firefighters. Career firefighters work full-time (or part-time/"retained") for urban fire brigades, typically in cities or large towns, and undergo extensive recruit training. Volunteer firefighters serve with rural or regional brigades, usually on-call for bushfires and local emergencies. Both play vital roles – for example, the NSW Rural Fire Service and Country Fire Authority (Vic) are among the largest volunteer-based emergency services in the world, protecting vast rural areas.

### National Standards:

While each state and territory runs its own fire agencies, there are common standards across Australia. All career firefighters must pass rigorous fitness tests (such as a shuttle run beep test to level 9.6) and practical firefighting aptitude tests. They all receive comprehensive training that often results in nationally-recognised qualifications (for instance, recruits often earn a Certificate II in Public Safety (Firefighting) upon completion of training). Core skills – like operating fire trucks, wearing breathing apparatus, handling hoses, ladders, and other rescue tools – are similar nationwide, ensuring firefighters can work together on major incidents. A spirit of cooperation exists between agencies; during large bushfire campaigns, career and volunteer crews from different states frequently team up.

### Application Process Overview:

Getting a coveted **firefighter job** is highly competitive. Thousands of applicants vie for a limited number of positions each recruitment round. Generally, the firefighter recruitment process includes:

- **Online Application & Eligibility Screening:** Candidates must meet baseline criteria (citizenship or permanent residency, minimum age 18, and usually a driver's license). Applications often involve addressing selection criteria or answering questions to gauge motivation and relevant skills.
- **Aptitude and Psychometric Testing:** Most services administer written exams or online tests covering verbal reasoning, numerical ability, mechanical/spatial reasoning, and psychological profiles. These assessments evaluate cognitive skills and personality traits suited to emergency work.
- **Physical Fitness Testing:** All firefighters must be fit. A multi-stage shuttle run (beep test) is commonly used to assess cardiovascular endurance – typically requiring level 9.6 to pass. Many services then have a Physical Aptitude Test (PAT) or similar, where applicants perform



firefighting tasks (hose dragging, ladder climbing, casualty drags, crawling through confined spaces, etc.) within time limits. These job-simulation tests ensure candidates have the strength and stamina for fire ground conditions.

- **Interviews and Team Assessments:** Shortlisted applicants often attend an assessment centre or panel interview. This may include group problem-solving exercises to test teamwork, as well as formal interviews (using behavioral questions) to judge personal attributes like communication, integrity, and commitment.
- **Medical Examinations and Background Checks:** Candidates who progress will undergo thorough medical checks (vision, hearing, lung function, etc.) to confirm they can safely perform firefighting duties. Police background checks are also conducted. A driving history check is typically required, and a good driving record is expected due to the need to drive fire appliances under emergency conditions.
- **Offer and Recruit Training:** Successful candidates receive an offer of employment and then undertake an intensive recruit training course (usually 13–20 weeks at a fire academy) as a probationary firefighter. Only upon completing this course do they graduate and join fire stations as fully operational firefighters.

Each state's process has its nuances, which we will detail in upcoming sections. Importantly, **you do not need prior firefighting experience to apply** – training is provided from the ground up . However, you do need dedication, physical fitness, and the right attitude to serve the community .

## Firefighter Training and Career Development:

Recruit training is essentially a firefighter “boot camp” that covers fire science, practical skills, rescue techniques, and fitness. Courses range from about 13 weeks (e.g. NSW Fire and Rescue) up to 20 weeks (e.g. Fire Rescue Victoria, ACT Fire & Rescue) depending on the agency. After the initial academy, graduates typically spend a probationary period (6–12 months) consolidating skills on the job . Over the first few years, firefighters complete further modules and assessments to become fully qualified. Career progression then can lead to ranks like Senior Firefighter and Station Officer, or specialist roles (e.g. in fire investigation, community education, urban search and rescue, etc.). We'll discuss specialisations later in the guide.

## Salary and Roster:

Firefighting is a well-compensated career with attractive leave entitlements. Most firefighters work in rotating shifts to provide 24/7 coverage. A common roster is the “10/14” schedule – two 10-hour day shifts followed by two 14-hour night shifts, then four days off (8-day cycle) . Some services, like Fire and Rescue NSW, use a 24-hour shift system (24 on, 24 off, then 5 days off) . Base salaries for recruit firefighters range roughly from **AUD \$60k to \$75k per year** depending on the state , increasing to around **\$80k–\$100k** after a few years once qualified. Overtime and allowances (for nights, weekends, hazard work, etc.) can significantly boost take-home pay ([Applying to be a firefighter? What is the pay & lifestyle like? - Reddit](#)). Later in this guide, we provide a comparison table of **firefighter salaries in Australia** and other key stats across states.

With this overview in mind, let's dive into the specifics for each state and territory, since joining procedures and agencies differ.

# National Overview of Firefighter Roles, Training, and Application Processes

Before examining each jurisdiction, it's helpful to understand how Australia's fire services are structured nationally:

- **Urban Fire Services:** Every state/territory has a primary urban fire service responsible for cities and towns, generally comprised of full-time career firefighters (e.g. Fire Rescue Victoria, Fire and Rescue NSW, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services). These services handle structural fires, vehicle accidents, rescues, and HAZMAT in their areas. They maintain fire stations with crews on 24/7 duty and run formal recruitment campaigns for new firefighters typically once every year or two.
- **Rural Fire Services:** Bushfire response in regional areas is largely handled by volunteer-based organisations (e.g. NSW Rural Fire Service, Country Fire Authority in Victoria, Country Fire Service in SA, Bush Fire Brigades in WA). These volunteer firefighters are mobilised for grass, scrub, and forest fires. Career firefighters also respond to bushfires (especially when threatening towns or infrastructure), and during extreme fire seasons large multi-agency task forces are assembled. Nationally, bushfire fighting capacity is immense – NSW RFS alone has over 70,000 volunteers. Training and equipment for volunteers are provided, but the joining process is separate from career firefighting jobs (discussed later).
- **Combined Emergency Services:** Some states integrate multiple services. For example, Queensland's QFES includes urban fire, rural fire, and State Emergency Service (SES) under one umbrella. The NT Fire & Rescue Service operates alongside NT Police and Emergency Services in a combined agency (NT PFES). The ACT Emergency Services Agency oversees ACT Fire & Rescue, ACT Rural Fire Service, ACT Ambulance, and ACT SES together. Despite integration at management level, the recruitment for each frontline role is distinct.
- **Standardised Training:** There is a high degree of commonality in firefighter training across Australia. Recruits in all states train in firefighting techniques (hose drills, pump operation, search and rescue in smoke, ladder work, etc.), road accident rescue, first aid, hazardous materials, and often basic bushfire fighting. By the end of a recruit course, a firefighter is equipped to handle the diverse incident types they may face and usually receives formal qualifications (e.g. a **Certificate II in Firefighting Operations**). After recruits graduate and start at a station, they typically enter an "on-shift development" program (ranging from 8 months to 3+ years) to achieve full competency as a Qualified Firefighter.
- **Common Entry Requirements:** While specific prerequisites differ slightly, all Australian fire services expect candidates to be adults (minimum 18 years old) with at least a car driver's license (and eventually a heavy vehicle license to drive fire trucks). Good health and fitness are mandatory. Most services require Australian or NZ citizenship or permanent residency. Many require a first aid certificate prior to or by the end of recruit training. Educational requirements vary – some require completion of Year 12 or a trade, others simply require a good standard of literacy/numeracy which is tested via aptitude exams. No fire service in Australia has a height requirement or gender restrictions; all welcome applicants from diverse backgrounds and have active diversity recruitment programs (more on that in a later section).
- **Multi-Stage Selection:** The journey to **become a firefighter** usually spans several months. For example, Fire and Rescue NSW's 2025 recruitment opened in March and ran through aptitude testing, interviews, physical assessments from March to June, with recruit class commencing later in the year. Similarly, Fire Rescue Victoria's selection process is around 6–12 months from application to job offer. Candidates must successfully pass each elimination stage. It's common for hundreds (even thousands) of people to be cut at each stage, leaving

only the top ranking candidates for the limited academy places . Persistence is key – unsuccessful candidates often reapply in subsequent rounds after further preparation (which is allowed in all jurisdictions).

- **Remuneration and Leave:** All career firefighters in Australia are salaried, with wages determined by state industrial agreements. Typically, recruits are paid a trainee wage during the academy (around **\$1,000–\$1,400 per week** depending on state). Upon graduation, this rises. For instance, a first-year firefighter in Victoria earns about **\$1,552 per week** (roughly \$80k per year) ; in NSW about **\$1,612 per week** (about \$84k/year) . These are base rates; actual earnings with shift penalties and overtime can be higher. Firefighters also enjoy generous leave – commonly around **8–9 weeks of annual leave** due to the 24-hour shift system. Other benefits include superannuation (often defined-benefit schemes in some states), paid parental leave, and strong medical and welfare support (acknowledging the job’s physical and psychological risks).

In summary, firefighting careers in Australia are well-structured and respected, but the entry bar is high to ensure only the most capable and committed make it through. Next, we will break down **how to become a firefighter** in each state/territory, including specific requirements and processes for their fire services, as well as the salary ranges and progression in each.

## Victoria: Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) and Country Fire Authority (CFA)

### Fire Services in Victoria Overview:

In Victoria, firefighting services are split between **Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV)** – the career firefighting agency covering metropolitan Melbourne and major regional centres – and the **Country Fire Authority (CFA)** – a largely volunteer-based organisation covering rural and semi-rural areas (including bushfire response and small town brigades). FRV was formed in 2020, combining the former Metropolitan Fire Brigade and career staff from CFA into one organization. CFA continues as a volunteer service with over 1,200 brigades statewide, responding to bushfires, grassfires, and supporting FRV at larger incidents. For someone seeking **firefighter jobs in Victoria**, FRV is the pathway for paid professional firefighting, whereas CFA offers volunteer firefighting opportunities.

### Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) – Career Firefighters

#### About FRV:

Fire Rescue Victoria is a modern fire and rescue service with approximately 4,000 career firefighters serving Melbourne and selected major regional cities/regional towns. FRV firefighters attend structure fires, road accidents, rescue incidents, hazardous material incidents, medical first response, and major bushfire emergencies (often in support of CFA). FRV has stations in metropolitan Melbourne and regional cities like Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo, etc.

### Minimum Requirements (FRV):

To be eligible to apply for FRV as a recruit firefighter, candidates must meet these key criteria:

- **Age and Residency:** Be at least 18 years old (there is no upper age limit) and be an Australian or New Zealand citizen, or hold Australian permanent residency.



- **Driver's License:** Hold a current Australian driver's license. Unrestricted full car (automatic or manual) license is required – **provisional or learner permits are not accepted** . Additionally, FRV requires that you have held your license for at least 2 years by the recruit course start date . If successful, recruits will need to obtain a **Heavy Rigid (HR) truck license** by the end of training (FRV provides guidance on this) .
- **Health and Fitness:** Be physically and medically fit for firefighting. FRV mandates a medical clearance from your doctor before participating in their fitness assessments . Applicants must have “appropriate all-round strength and fitness” and no debilitating health issues . Eyesight (with or without correction) and hearing must meet functional standards.
- **Education:** FRV does not specify a formal education level in its requirements; however, candidates must exhibit strong problem-solving and interpersonal skills. In practice, many applicants have completed Year 12 or higher. All applicants undertake cognitive testing during recruitment to ensure literacy/numeracy competency.
- **Character Checks:** A clean criminal record (particularly regarding serious offences) and good driving history are required. FRV conducts National Police Checks and has strict **criminal history and driving history policies** – for example, applicants with 8 or more demerit points will be disqualified. Honesty is expected; any false information can exclude an applicant .
- **COVID-19 Vaccination:** As of 2025, FRV requires recruits to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 (3 doses) .
- **No Prior Experience Needed:** You do **not** need to have been a volunteer or have fire experience – FRV provides all training to those who meet the above requirements and are selected .

*FRV Diversity Note:* FRV actively encourages people from diverse backgrounds (women, culturally diverse communities, etc.) to apply, emphasizing that there is “no ordinary job” and anyone with the right attributes and dedication can become a firefighter.

## FRV Recruitment Process:

Fire Rescue Victoria typically runs recruit campaigns periodically (not continuously). Recent campaigns have opened for short windows (e.g. one week in July 2024 for the 2025 intake) due to high demand . The selection process is extensive, spanning 6 to 12 months . Key stages include:

- **Online Application:** Applicants complete an online form on the “**Become a Firefighter**” website (FRV's recruitment portal) when applications open. You will need to supply evidence of citizenship/residency and license, and possibly answer questions illustrating your motivation and alignment with FRV values . Previous unsuccessful candidates are allowed to re-apply in future rounds .
- **Written Selection Test:** Eligible applicants are invited to a written exam which usually covers cognitive abilities (verbal comprehension, numerical reasoning, mechanical reasoning, etc.) and may include some personality or situational judgment components . This assesses your problem-solving skills and aptitudes relevant to firefighting.
- **Assessment Center (Group Assessment):** FRV uses a group assessment stage where candidates participate in team-based tasks . This might involve group problem-solving activities observed by assessors, aiming to test communication, teamwork, and leadership in a simulated setting.
- **Shuttle Run (Beep Test):** Candidates must pass a 20-metre shuttle run to a set standard. FRV requires achieving **level 9.6** on the beep test . This test evaluates cardiovascular fitness and is pass/fail (no extra credit for going beyond 9.6). FRV provides fitness preparation guidance for the shuttle run on their site .

- **Personality Profile:** A psychological profile questionnaire is administered to assess traits like resilience, teamwork, stress tolerance, etc. . This helps build a holistic view of each candidate.
- **Selection Interview:** A panel interview is conducted for those who make it through the earlier stages. The interview often contains behavioral questions (e.g. asking about a time you worked in a team, or dealt with conflict) and scenario questions. FRV's interview assesses motivation, interpersonal skills, and whether you embody the values and attitudes expected of a firefighter . Prepare using examples from work or life that demonstrate teamwork, problem-solving, community service, and safety mindset.
- **Physical Aptitude Test (PAT):** Candidates then undergo a series of practical physical tasks simulating firefighting activities . FRV's PAT typically includes tasks such as climbing a ladder, carrying heavy equipment, dragging fire hoses, victim rescue drag, and other strength/endurance challenges. This is done wearing a helmet and other gear. The tasks are timed and scored as pass/fail (designed to match real job requirements – you either meet the standard or not) .
- **Order of Merit and Conditional Offer:** FRV uses an order-of-merit ranking after all tests and interviews . Top-ranked candidates are offered positions in the recruit course (others may be placed in a reserve pool). If you receive an offer, it is conditional upon final checks.
- **Medical Assessment:** A thorough medical exam by FRV's Brigade Medical Officer ensures you are fit for duty. This includes general health check, fitness assessment verification, and may involve tests like lung capacity (given firefighters wear breathing apparatus) .
- **Final Offer and HR Licence:** Upon clearing medicals and reference checks, you'll receive a final offer to join the recruit class. At this stage, FRV instructs recruits to obtain a Heavy Rigid driver's licence if they haven't already (this must be done before the end of the recruit course) .

## FRV Recruit Training:

Training for new FRV firefighters is **20 weeks long** . Recruits train at the FRV Training Academy in Craigieburn (north of Melbourne). The course is intensive and paramilitary in style – expect early mornings, physical training, classroom lectures, and lots of drills. Key aspects of the **20-week recruit course** include:

- Fire science theory (learning about fire behavior, building fire safety, hazardous materials).
- Practical skills: hose handling, pump operation, ladder drills, forcible entry, search and rescue techniques in smoke, ventilation tactics, and use of firefighting foam.
- Breathing Apparatus training: operating in full gear with oxygen tanks in heat and darkness.
- Live-fire simulations: fighting controlled fires in training structures to practice interior attack and extinguishment.
- Road accident rescue: using hydraulic rescue tools (“jaws of life”) to extricate accident victims .
- Specialist introductions: basics of HAZMAT response, urban search and rescue, and emergency medical care (CPR, first aid).
- Physical fitness and strength conditioning throughout (to ensure recruits can meet ongoing physical demands).

Recruits are continually assessed via exams and practical tests. Discipline and teamwork are emphasized. On completing the course, recruits graduate and are assigned to an FRV fire station as a

**Firefighter Level 1** (probationary firefighter). They must then complete three years of on-the-job development and further modules to become a fully Qualified Firefighter (Level 3).

**Salary and Benefits (Victoria):** Fire Rescue Victoria offers attractive salaries. During the 20-week recruit training, recruits earn a **weekly salary of about \$1,113.60** (gross) . Upon successful completion of the course, this jumps to **\$1,552.63 per week** as a Firefighter Level 1 – which equates to roughly \$80,000 per year. The pay then increases at defined milestones:

- After 12 months (Firefighter Level 2): **\$1,581.36 per week** .
- After 24 months (Firefighter Level 3): **\$1,613.62 per week** .
- After 36 months, upon achieving Qualified Firefighter rank: **\$1,738.86 per week** (about \$90.2k/year) .

These are base rates as per the FRV Operational Staff Agreement. Firefighters also earn additional penalty rates for night shifts, overtime for call-backs, and other allowances, so actual earnings can be higher. FRV firefighters get **nine weeks of annual leave** per year (taken in two blocks due to the rolling roster) , and full benefits like superannuation (the Emergency Services Superannuation Scheme) , and paid parental leave after 12 months service . The standard roster is the 10/14 shift (2 days, 2 nights, 4 off) .

## **Career Progression:**

After qualification, firefighters can pursue promotion exams to become Leading Firefighter and then Station Officer (who leads a station crew). FRV also offers specialist career paths – experienced firefighters can join units like High Angle Rescue Team, Marine firefighting (if in port areas), HAZMAT technicians, or Urban Search and Rescue (USAR). Victoria also has specialist wildfire training for career crews who assist the CFA in major bushfires. Leadership development is robust – many FRV senior officers hold diplomas in management. For those entering FRV from CFA or interstate services, FRV has a “lateral entry” process as well.

# **Country Fire Authority (CFA) – Volunteer Firefighters in Victoria**

## **About CFA:**

The Country Fire Authority is a volunteer-based fire service that protects Victoria’s country areas, provincial towns, and outer metropolitan fringes. CFA has around 54,000 volunteer members, including operational firefighters and support members ). CFA brigades respond to bush and grass fires, structural fires in their communities, road accidents (particularly in areas where FRV is not present), and support FRV during major emergencies. For many Victorians, the local CFA brigade is the first line of defense against fire.

## **Volunteering with CFA:**

Becoming a CFA volunteer is an excellent way to serve the community and can be a stepping stone for those considering a firefighting career. **Everyone is welcome to join CFA** – there are roles for operational firefighters as well as non-operational support (e.g. radio communications, community education) ). Key points on joining CFA:

- **Age Requirements:** You must be at least 16 years old to become a CFA volunteer firefighter (members under 18 will have restricted duties until they reach adulthood). Many brigades also have **Junior/Cadet programs** for teenagers aged 11–15 to learn basic skills and fire safety, preparing them for future membership ).
- **Application Process:** The process usually starts by contacting your local CFA brigade or filling out an online “expression of interest” form on the CFA website . The brigade will invite you to meet them and learn about the volunteer commitment. If you wish to proceed, you fill out membership forms and undergo a **background check** (including a National Police Check). Applicants over 18 are required to complete a *Working with Children Check* as well since CFA does community work.
- **Training:** New volunteers undertake the **General Firefighter (GFF) training course**, often called “Minimum Skills” or Bushfirefighter training. This training is usually scheduled locally (could be over several weekends or evenings). It covers basic firefighting theory, bushfire behavior, pump operation, radio communications, safety procedures and some practical hose and equipment drills. Volunteers must demonstrate competence in core skills to become operational. Depending on brigade type, further training is offered in areas like structure fire attack, breathing apparatus (for brigades that support interior firefighting), chainsaw use, first aid, map navigation, etc.
- **Probation and Acceptance:** After training and required checks, you’ll be officially accepted as a CFA brigade member (typically brigades vote to accept new members, which is generally a formality after you’ve been training with them). New volunteers usually serve a probation period (6 or 12 months) during which they gain experience under supervision.
- **Role and Time Commitment:** CFA volunteers are on-call responders. There are no set hours – you respond to incidents when available. Brigades conduct regular training drills (often one night a week or fortnight) to keep skills fresh. Volunteers might also participate in fuel reduction burns, community fire safety education, fundraising events, and equipment maintenance sessions. The time commitment is flexible, but active firefighters are generally expected to attend a certain percentage of training and incidents to maintain competency.
- **Firefighting Duties:** CFA volunteer firefighters primarily handle bushfires and grass fires – protecting farms, national parks, and rural towns. They also respond to structure fires in areas without FRV coverage, car fires, and assist at road crashes (many CFA brigades, especially in country towns, are trained in road accident rescue). During Victoria’s fire season, CFA volunteers form strike teams that might deploy anywhere in the state (or even interstate) to combat large bushfires – a notable example is the 2019–2020 “Black Summer” fires where CFA volunteers worked alongside NSW RFS crews for weeks. CFA volunteers undergo additional incident-specific training as needed (e.g. operating in Strike Teams, using aircraft for water drops coordination as Ground Observers, etc.). Specialist volunteer roles within CFA include *Crew Leaders*, *Strike Team Leaders*, *Sector Commanders*, as well as specialists in Communications, Staging Area management, and more.
- **No Pay (but some compensation):** CFA volunteers are **unpaid**. They do it to protect their community. However, volunteers are provided with full personal protective equipment and training free of charge, and are covered by insurance while on duty. In long campaigns, their food and lodging is provided. Employers of volunteers are protected by law when releasing employees for emergency duties, and there are State programs to compensate self-employed volunteers for lost income during major deployments (to encourage volunteer availability). Some volunteers in administrative roles may receive honoraria or expense reimbursements, but **there is no salary** – volunteering with CFA is about community service and camaraderie.
- **Career Pathways:** Serving as a CFA volunteer can provide valuable experience if one later pursues a career firefighter job, but it is not a formal prerequisite. FRV does not require applicants to have been CFA volunteers (and many successful FRV recruits are not). That said, volunteer experience can develop relevant skills and demonstrate commitment –

qualities looked for in career firefighter recruitment. Some CFA volunteers do eventually transition to paid roles (either with FRV in Victoria or with other agencies).

In Victoria's fire system, FRV and CFA work closely together. In areas where their jurisdictions meet (called "boundary areas"), CFA volunteer brigades might respond alongside FRV crews. There are also CFA brigades co-located with FRV stations in outer suburbs – often FRV handles urban emergencies and CFA volunteers provide surge capacity and handle bushfire risk on the urban fringe. The two services have an integrated dispatch and support system.

## **CFA in Metropolitan Melbourne:**

Notably, after the 2020 reforms, CFA volunteers no longer operate in Melbourne's inner suburbs (those stations became FRV). But on Melbourne's outer suburban edge, many communities still rely on volunteer brigades (e.g. the Dandenong Ranges area, Mornington Peninsula, and outer growth corridors). These "outer metro" CFA brigades can face both bushfire risks and structure fires in areas of expanding housing – they often work jointly with FRV if available. It's a unique arrangement, but it underscores that **volunteer firefighting is integral even in Australia's most populous state**.

If you live in Victoria and want to **become a firefighter**, you have these two avenues: pursue a competitive spot with FRV for a paid career, or join your local CFA brigade as a volunteer (or do both – some people volunteer with CFA to gain experience while waiting to get into FRV). Both avenues involve extensive **firefighter training** and a commitment to serving the community.

## **Summary (VIC):**

Fire Rescue Victoria provides world-class training and solid salaries for its career firefighters, with a tough recruitment process (aptitude tests, physical tests, etc.) . CFA offers volunteer firefighters a chance to serve in their communities, with flexible involvement and training provided locally ). Together, they make Victoria's fire services robust, protecting city and country alike. (Refer to the **References** section for links to FRV recruitment and CFA volunteering information.)

## **New South Wales: Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW) and NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS)**

New South Wales has a dual fire service structure: **Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW)** is the urban paid firefighter service covering cities and towns, while the **NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS)** is a predominantly volunteer service protecting rural areas and towns, primarily focused on bushfire prevention and response. Additionally, FRNSW employs **On-Call (Retained) Firefighters** in many smaller communities – these are part-time, paid firefighters who serve in FRNSW brigades on an on-call basis (bridging the gap between full-time and volunteer).

## **Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW) – Permanent and On-Call Firefighters**

### **About FRNSW:**

Fire and Rescue NSW is one of the world's largest urban fire services, with over 6,500 firefighters (around 4,000 permanent full-time and 2,500 on-call retained) across 335 fire stations. FRNSW handles structural fires, road crash rescue (in many areas), hazardous material incidents, severe weather response, and medical assist calls across metropolitan Sydney, regional cities, and towns. The

service motto is “prepared for anything, anytime, anywhere,” reflecting the diverse emergencies they attend. If you want a **firefighter job in NSW**, FRNSW is the main employer.

## **Permanent (Full-Time) Firefighter Requirements (FRNSW):**

To become a permanent full-time firefighter with FRNSW, you must meet these essential requirements:

- **Citizenship:** Australian or New Zealand citizen, or Australian permanent resident .
- **Education: Higher School Certificate (Year 12)** or an equivalent qualification is required . FRNSW will accept a range of equivalents – for example, a trade certificate (Cert III), a university degree, or a completed apprenticeship in lieu of Year 12 . This ensures applicants have a baseline of education (the recruit course itself involves study and exams).
- **Driver’s License:** A current NSW Class C driver’s license (or equivalent from another state) with **no restrictions (full license)** . If you only have an automatic car license, that’s acceptable to apply, but note you’ll need to drive heavy manual vehicles eventually. FRNSW requires recruits to obtain a **Medium Rigid (MR)** license by the end of training – you don’t need the MR at application, but you must complete an MR licence knowledge test or hold an MR prior to appointment . (They do *not* pay for the MR license training/test, so candidates handle that themselves.) Essentially, you apply with a car license, but before you start at the academy you must show evidence of passing a heavy vehicle theory test or obtaining an MR truck license.
- **First Aid:** Applicants **must hold a current first aid certificate** (Provide First Aid HLTAID011 or equivalent) at the time of recruitment . This is to ensure basic emergency medical knowledge.
- **Fitness:** Be physically fit and able to pass the FRNSW Physical Aptitude Test (PAT). No specific benchmarks like timed runs are given beyond the PAT and beep test, but you should be in excellent health. You will need to provide a medical clearance and undergo a thorough physical exam during recruitment.
- **Character:** FRNSW expects a good driving and criminal record. They conduct driving history checks – e.g. drink-driving convictions or a pattern of unsafe driving can disqualify you . A criminal record check is also performed (certain offences will likely bar an applicant).
- **Other:** FRNSW uses a merit selection system, but they also value “diverse work/life experiences” . While not a formal requirement, having some life experience (e.g. work history, community involvement, volunteer experience) can strengthen your application, as it can demonstrate qualities like teamwork, service, and resilience.

## **FRNSW Permanent Firefighter Recruitment Process:**

FRNSW recruits permanent firefighters via an annual campaign (in recent years). The process is competitive, streamlined, and largely online in initial stages. The 2025 campaign, for example, followed this general timeline and steps :

1. **Application:** The recruitment opens online via the Iworkfor.NSW or FRNSW careers portal. Applicants complete an application form, which includes confirming you meet requirements (citizenship, education level, license) and answering some short questions . No resume or cover letter is required for FRNSW – they have a standardized online form. All who meet eligibility move to the next step (FRNSW typically does not cap applications – *everyone* who



applies and meets basic criteria is invited to sit the aptitude test) . *Fun fact:* FRNSW often sees 5,000+ applications in a campaign, so be prepared for a competitive journey.

2. **Online Aptitude Assessments:** After applications close, candidates receive a link to online assessments (usually gamified or standard cognitive tests). These **psychometric tests** evaluate verbal reasoning, numerical reasoning, abstract reasoning, mechanical aptitude, and sometimes situational judgment . You typically have a few days to complete them. **All candidates** get to do this first round – it’s a major filter. FRNSW then shortlists based on these results.
3. **Video Interview (Online):** In recent campaigns, FRNSW has used one-way video interviews. If you score well on the aptitude tests, you are invited to record a video interview via an online platform. You’ll be given several questions (behavioral and motivational) and you record your answers on camera. This assesses your communication and presentation. After submission, recruiting staff evaluate the videos.
4. **Assessment Center (Verification Testing & Team Exercises):** Those who advance may be called to an Assessment Centre. Here, FRNSW might verify your earlier test scores with supervised re-testing (to ensure authenticity) . They also often run group exercises or “speed interviews”. For example, you might do a **team problem-solving exercise** with other candidates to observe your teamwork and leadership, and/or a short face-to-face interview or impromptu presentation (format can vary year to year). This stage evaluates interpersonal skills and how you perform in person.
5. **Physical Aptitude Test (PAT):** Candidates then undergo the FRNSW Physical Aptitude Test – typically scheduled over several days for groups of candidates. The FRNSW PAT is a well-known exam. It includes a series of sequential tasks simulating firefighting duties, such as:
  - **BEEP Test:** First, a shuttle run is conducted as part of the PAT day – FRNSW requires reaching **9.6** on the beep test (pass/fail).
  - **Equipment Carry:** Carrying heavy equipment (e.g. dragging a charged fire hose, carrying coils of hose or a foam drum).
  - **Ladder Raise and Extension:** Demonstrating ability to handle ladders.
  - **Forced Entry Simulation:** Using a sledgehammer on a sled device (to simulate forcible entry – often called the “Kaiser” in PATs).
  - **Tunnel Crawl:** Crawling through a dark confined space tunnel, wearing a blackout mask (tests claustrophobia and agility).
  - **Victim Drag:** Dragging a 90 kg mannequin a set distance (to simulate rescuing an unconscious person).
  - **Hydrant Task or Ceiling Breach Simulation:** Repeatedly raising and lowering a weighted object overhead (simulating pulling down ceilings or opening hydrants). These tasks are usually done in succession wearing a weighted vest (to mimic gear) – it is pass/fail, with strict time limits for each component. FRNSW publishes a PAT preparation guide so candidates know what to expect .
6. **Panel Interview:** After passing the PAT, candidates attend a final panel interview (with FRNSW officers and HR personnel). This in-depth interview covers your understanding of the firefighter role, motivation to join, and specific examples of how you meet the selection criteria (teamwork, community service, resilience, etc.). Be prepared to discuss your work

history, how you handle stress, and what you know about FRNSW. This is a critical stage to impress upon the panel that you have the personal qualities to be an effective firefighter.

7. **Medical & Background Checks:** A comprehensive medical examination ensures fitness for duty (vision standards, hearing, lung function, musculoskeletal health). Psychological evaluation may also be done (to assess mental resilience for trauma exposure). Background checks on character (criminal history, employment references) are completed at this stage.
8. **Job Offer and Training:** Finally, the top-performing candidates are offered employment as Recruit Firefighters. Offers are conditional on maintaining fitness and perhaps completing any remaining prerequisites (like obtaining the MR license if not already done). Once you accept, you'll be slotted into a recruit class at the FRNSW Emergency Services Academy.

This process spans several months. For example, in 2025: applications closed mid-March, online tests in late March, video interviews by early April, assessment center and PAT in May-June, with recruit classes likely starting later in the year. FRNSW often runs two recruit classes per year (each class around 100 trainees split into smaller squads).

## **FRNSW Recruit Training:**

Training of new firefighters is conducted at the **Fire and Rescue NSW State Training College**, located at Orchard Hills, Western Sydney. The **recruit course is 13 weeks long**. During this time, recruits (called "trainees") are paid at the recruit firefighter rate and undergo intensive training Monday–Friday.

### **Key components of the 13-week FRNSW recruit training include:**

- **Firefighting Skills:** Recruits learn to combat structure fires, including how to advance hoses inside buildings, search smoke-filled rooms for victims, ventilate smoke, and extinguish flames with water and foam. Realistic fire training props and burn rooms are used.
- **Heat Acclimatization:** Operating in the fire training "hot cell" facilities with live fire while wearing full protective gear and breathing apparatus to build tolerance and correct techniques.
- **Road Crash Rescue:** FRNSW is a primary rescue agency in NSW, so recruits are trained in motor vehicle accident rescue – stabilizing crashed cars, cutting open vehicles with hydraulic tools, and safe casualty handling.
- **Hazmat Training:** An introduction to hazardous materials response – learning to identify chemicals, use detection equipment, and practice spill containment and decontamination procedures.
- **Urban Search and Rescue (USAR):** Basic training in USAR techniques such as lifting heavy objects, breaching concrete, shoring up collapsed structures (FRNSW houses Disaster Response specialists, so recruits get a taste of this).
- **Height and Confined Space:** Rope and ladder work including rescuing people from multi-story buildings or trenches.
- **First Aid and CPR:** While recruits come in with first aid certificates, FRNSW enhances medical training, including oxygen therapy and defibrillator use, as firefighters often assist ambulance crews.

- **Physical Training (PT):** Maintaining and improving fitness with regular PT sessions, as well as specific training to ensure everyone can meet physical job demands.
- **Theory and Exams:** Classroom sessions on fire behavior, building construction, firefighting tactics, hazardous materials theory, and FRNSW operational procedures. Recruits must pass written exams and practical skill assessments regularly.
- **Certification:** Upon graduation, recruits receive a **Certificate II in Public Safety (Firefighting and Emergency Operations)**, a nationally recognized qualification. They also earn specialist certificates such as Road Accident Rescue.

After 13 weeks, a graduation ceremony is held, and recruits are sworn in as firefighters (rank: Firefighter). They are then posted to fire stations across NSW as needed. A new firefighter in FRNSW enters a probationary period on shift, often assigned a workplace mentor at their station. Over the next couple of years, they must complete a “Development Program” workbook and further assessments to be confirmed as a **Qualified Firefighter** (which typically occurs after around 24 months of service).

## Salary and Benefits (NSW):

FRNSW firefighters are employed under the Crown Employees (FRNSW Permanent Firefighting Staff) Award. The pay structure as of 2023/24 is roughly:

- **During recruit training (Trainee Firefighter):** approx **\$1,397.60 per week** (around \$72.7k per year).
- **After graduation (Firefighter Level 1):** approx **\$1,612.62 per week** (about \$83.9k per year). This is the base annual salary for a firefighter in their first year on station.
- **Senior Firefighter:** After 4 years of service and completion of required modules, firefighters progress to Senior Firefighter rank which is a higher pay grade (generally around \$90k+ base).
- **Leading Station Officer and beyond:** FRNSW officers (Station Officer, Inspector, Superintendent, etc.) earn higher salaries as per rank (these roles come with years of experience and promotional exams).

FRNSW firefighters enjoy similar benefits to other states: approximately 6–8 weeks of leave (they accrue leave in a way that accounts for the 24-hour shift cycles; FRNSW’s roster typically grants 4–5 consecutive days off in an 8-day cycle). They have strong union representation (Fire Brigade Employees’ Union) which negotiates conditions like overtime, meal allowances, etc. There are opportunities for overtime at fires, special duties at major events (which are paid at overtime rates), etc., meaning many firefighters can earn above the base. Also, FRNSW has specialty allowances – for example, a firefighter who is a qualified rescue operator or hazmat technician might get extra allowance.

## On-Call (Retained) Firefighters (FRNSW):

In NSW, many smaller towns and suburbs are served by **on-call firefighters** who are part of FRNSW. These firefighters are not full-time employees but are paid a stipend and hourly rates when responding to incidents. They undergo a similar (but slightly abridged) training program and perform the same emergency roles in their communities. Key points:

- **Retained Firefighter Role:** On-call firefighters carry a pager and respond from home or work to the fire station when an incident happens. They staff the fire engine and handle emergencies, but the call volume is lower than city stations. Retained crews might handle, say, 50–200 calls a year (varies by location).

- **Employment Terms:** Retained firefighters receive a small retaining fee (to compensate for being on-call) and are paid per callout and for training nights. For instance, they might be paid a set hourly wage for minimum hours each call. It's essentially a part-time job; many retained firefighters have other primary employment.
- **Recruitment:** Recruitment for retained firefighters is usually station-specific. FRNSW regularly advertises for retained firefighters in towns where vacancies exist (often year-round or as needed). The requirements are similar: you need to live/work within a certain distance of the fire station (often 5 to 10 minutes response time), be fit, and have a manual driver's license (with the ability to get an MR license). The selection may involve an interview, physical aptitude test (a version of the PAT), and medical check. Training for retained recruits is usually modular – they complete an initial training course (perhaps 2–3 weeks intensive or spread over weekends) and additional courses over their first year. A simplified recruit course (covering core firefighting, BA, and first aid) is provided.
- **Integration:** Retained firefighters wear the same uniform and perform alongside permanent firefighters at big incidents. Some retained stations are in regional towns, others in outer Sydney areas that don't have a full-time crew but still need fire coverage. It's worth noting that FRNSW is unique in maintaining a retained system – in some other states, the equivalent might be an auxiliary firefighter program (like QLD) or volunteers (like WA VFRS).

Many people choose the retained route if they want to serve as firefighters but can't commit to full-time (or as a way to gain experience while trying to get into permanent ranks). FRNSW even has an internal pathway for retained firefighters to transition to permanent roles – occasionally they run a “Retained to Permanent Firefighter” intake for those with a few years of service.

## Career Progression in FRNSW:

After a few years as a firefighter, you can undertake the Station Officer examination process to move into an officer rank (which involves written exams on procedures and leadership, as well as practical incident management assessments). FRNSW offers various specialist courses to its firefighters: e.g. becoming a Rescue Operator (needed to work on the rescue truck), HAZMAT technician, Marine firefighter (for those working in Sydney's fireboat), and so on. There are also opportunities to join the prestigious Urban Search and Rescue Task Force (who respond to major disasters worldwide).

## NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) – Volunteer Bushfire Fighters

### About RFS:

The NSW Rural Fire Service is the **world's largest volunteer fire service**, with approximately 72,000 volunteers in over 2,000 brigades statewide ([Join the NSW RFS - NSW Rural Fire Service](#)). The RFS is responsible for combating bushfires and grassfires in all rural areas of NSW, as well as the outskirts of cities. They also assist with structure fires in country towns (especially where FRNSW is not nearby) and help during storms, floods, and search & rescue as needed. The RFS ethos is community volunteerism – “neighbors helping neighbors” in times of fire.

### Key aspects of the RFS and how to join:

- **Volunteering Roles:** While many think of the RFS as bushfire fighters (and indeed that's the primary role), volunteers can serve in various capacities:
  - **Firefighting members:** Those who undergo bushfire training and respond to fires on the frontline.

- **Support members:** Those who assist with logistics, communications (operating radios), catering, incident management support, etc., especially during large operations.
- **Community Educators:** Volunteers who focus on bushfire safety education for residents.
- **Brigade positions:** There are opportunities to become brigade officers (Captain, Senior Deputy, Training Officer, etc.) through election as one gains experience.
- **Joining Requirements:** The RFS welcomes people from age 16 upwards (16–18-year-olds can be junior members with parental permission) . There are **no specific fitness or education prerequisites** – though naturally, firefighting roles require a level of physical capability. One must have a reasonable level of fitness to undertake bushfire fighting (which can involve hiking with heavy gear). A driver’s license is not mandatory to join (though to drive trucks you’ll need the appropriate license and will usually be an experienced member). Background checks are conducted; people with serious criminal histories may not be accepted.
- **How to Join:** To join the RFS, you typically:
  1. **Find your local brigade.** You can use the RFS website to find brigades near you or contact the RFS district office for your area ([Join the NSW RFS - NSW Rural Fire Service](#)). Many brigades have information sessions or weekly training nights where prospective volunteers can drop in.
  2. **Apply:** You fill out an application form and membership questionnaire. This includes a police check consent. Some areas have online EOI forms, but usually it’s done through the local brigade or district.
  3. **Brigade Approval:** The brigade will meet you, explain expectations, and vote to accept you as a new member (subject to training completion). You’ll receive a Volunteer Membership Handbook and be assigned a mentor.
  4. **Basic Training (BF course):** New RFS volunteers must complete the **Bush Firefighter (BF)** training course, as outlined in the **RFS Candidate Guide** ([Join the NSW RFS - NSW Rural Fire Service](#)). This course is often around 4 days long (may be spread as night sessions and weekend practicals). It covers understanding fire behavior, using firefighting equipment, truck familiarization, map reading, two-way radio use, safety procedures like burnover drills (fire entrapment survival), and basic firefighting tactics for grass, scrub, and forest fires. There is also a **fitness drill** known as the *Pack Test* that some RFS districts use: walking 3.22 km in 30 minutes carrying a 20.4 kg pack – this simulates carrying gear during a fire and ensures baseline fitness. Not all districts require the Pack Test for all members, but it’s encouraged for frontline firefighters.
  5. **Assessment and Probation:** After training, you’ll be assessed (both a written quiz and practical skills assessment). Upon passing, you’re classified as a “**Bush Firefighter**” and can attend incidents under supervision. New members typically serve a probation period (e.g. 6 months to a year) where they gain experience and the brigade sees their commitment.
- **Duties:** RFS firefighters primarily respond to bushfires. This can involve:
  - Crewing fire tankers (rural fire trucks) to contain bushfires by spraying water or fire retardant.

- Backburning – lighting controlled fires ahead of the main fire to consume fuel.
  - Creating fire breaks with hand tools or bulldozers.
  - Protecting houses in rural settlements by extinguishing spot fires and clearing vegetation.
  - Some RFS brigades, especially in regional towns, also respond to house fires, car accidents (providing initial response and fire protection), and other emergencies like searches for missing persons.
  - During the off-season, duties include hazard reduction burning (planned burns to reduce fuel loads) and public education (helping residents prepare their bushfire survival plans).
- **Time Commitment:** RFS volunteer commitments vary widely. Some brigades in high-risk areas might respond to dozens of fires each summer and train weekly. Others in quieter areas may have only a few callouts a year. During major campaign fires, volunteers might be deployed for days at a time to different parts of NSW (or even interstate). The RFS has a robust incident management system – volunteers can volunteer for deployment on strike teams that rotate through large fires. Employers often support RFS volunteers by allowing leave during fire emergencies (and NSW has legislation protecting volunteer emergency workers’ employment).
  - **Leadership and Advancement:** Within RFS, experienced volunteers can become Crew Leaders (in charge of a truck) and Strike Team Leaders (in charge of multiple crews). They undergo additional courses like Crew Leader (CL) and Incident Management training. The RFS also has paid staff at district levels (many of whom started as volunteers) – for example, Fire Control Officers and Operations Officers who manage regional brigades. So volunteering can potentially lead to a paid career in fire management or related fields, but the frontline firefighting positions in RFS remain volunteer.

## Training and Equipment:

RFS volunteers are provided with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – yellows (protective clothing), helmet, gloves, goggles, and boots. They train on a range of appliances: from 9-tonne Category 1 bush fire tankers (3000L+ water capacity heavy trucks) to smaller 4WD slip-ons for rugged terrain. The RFS training is comprehensive for bushfire scenarios, and additional modules exist for village firefighting (if a brigade is involved in structural firefighting) and for specialized roles like chain saw operator, tanker driver, or communications operator .

The RFS operates the “**Prepare, Act, Survive**” public campaign, and volunteers often assist in community events, educating about bushfire readiness.

## Women in the RFS:

The RFS, like CFA, actively encourages female volunteers and has many women in frontline and leadership roles. There are targeted programs to increase diversity, recognizing that a mix of backgrounds strengthens the service.



## RFS and FRNSW Collaboration:

NSW has a legislated geographic split for primary responsibility – roughly, FRNSW handles cities and towns, RFS covers country areas. But they frequently support each other. In major bushfires encroaching on suburbs, FRNSW crews join the fight (e.g. the 2001 Black Christmas fires around Sydney, or 2013 Blue Mountains fires). Conversely, in large structure fires or accidents in country towns, FRNSW might send the nearest crew to assist the RFS. There's even a system where certain areas are "dual jurisdiction." RFS volunteers often protect property in remote areas that FRNSW can't reach quickly. Both services sit under NSW emergency management frameworks and coordinate through the Rural Fire Service's control for bushfire emergencies (RFS typically takes command of bushfire incidents even if FRNSW crews are present, and FRNSW takes command for structure fire incidents even if RFS crews assist).

For a person looking to **"become a firefighter" in NSW**, the summary is: if you seek a **full-time paid career**, target FRNSW permanent firefighter recruitment. If you prefer to serve the community on a volunteer basis (especially for bushfires) or want to gain experience, join the RFS (or possibly FRNSW retained if near one of those stations). Many do both – it's not uncommon for someone to volunteer with RFS and later apply to FRNSW, or even volunteer with RFS while being a paid FRNSW retained firefighter in town. NSW values both services deeply; during the 2019–2020 bushfire crisis, FRNSW and RFS stood shoulder to shoulder, and firefighter numbers (paid and volunteer combined) were critical to protect communities.

### Summary (NSW):

Fire and Rescue NSW offers a challenging and rewarding career with an intensive selection process and academy training. It features a **24-hour shift roster** and attractive starting salary around **\$83k** plus benefits for new firefighters. The NSW RFS provides volunteer firefighters the training and support to protect their communities from bushfires, with a flexible joining process and roles for people of all skills ([Join the NSW RFS - NSW Rural Fire Service](#)). Both organisations prize teamwork, bravery and community service – becoming a firefighter in NSW, whether through FRNSW or RFS, means joining a proud tradition.

*(See **References** for links to FRNSW recruitment info and RFS volunteer joining pages.)*

## Queensland: Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES)

In Queensland, all firefighting services (and other emergency services) are integrated under **Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES)**. QFES encompasses the **Fire and Rescue Service (FRS)** – the career firefighters in urban areas, the **Rural Fire Service (RFS)** – volunteer brigades for bushfires in rural areas, and the **State Emergency Service (SES)** – volunteers for floods, storms, rescues. Our focus here is on the firefighting roles. Unique to QLD, in addition to full-time firefighters, there is a category of **Auxiliary Firefighters** who are paid part-time firefighters in smaller towns. So if you're interested in **firefighter jobs in Queensland**, you could aim to become a full-time firefighter (with QFES Fire and Rescue) or an auxiliary (part-time) firefighter, while volunteer opportunities exist in the Rural Fire Service for bushfire roles.

## QFES Fire and Rescue (Urban Career Firefighters)

### About QFES Fire and Rescue:

Career firefighters in QLD are part of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, a division of QFES. They operate in all major cities (Brisbane, Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Townsville, Cairns, etc.) and large regional towns. They respond to structure fires, vehicle accidents (QFES handles road crash rescue across most of QLD), hazardous material incidents, technical rescues (swiftwater, vertical rescue, building collapse), and assist in natural disasters. QFES firefighters also fight bushfires in and around towns and often support the Rural Fire Service during big wildfire events.

### Minimum Requirements (QFES Firefighter):

QFES has some of the more specific prerequisites for recruit applicants, aimed at ensuring candidates have maturity and life experience. According to the official QFES Firefighter Recruitment Candidate Information Pack and recent recruitment criteria:

- **Education:** You must have successfully completed **Year 12 or equivalent**. QFES will accept equivalent qualifications recognized by the Queensland education authorities (e.g. a Certificate IV or higher, or if educated overseas, a comparable level). Proof is required.
- **Work Experience:** QFES uniquely **requires a minimum of 2 years full-time (or equivalent part-time) paid work experience**. This means after finishing school or tertiary studies, you should have spent at least 2 years in the workforce (in any field). They value life and employment experience – having dealt with colleagues, customers, and responsibilities in a workplace. This requirement filters out very young applicants who may lack real-world experience.
- **Licence:** A **manual open (unrestricted) driver's licence** is mandatory. Specifically, QFES says you need a manual C class licence held for at least 1 year. If you already have a Medium Rigid (MR) or Heavy Rigid (HR) licence that's even better, but not required at application. Essentially, within one year prior to applying you must have been driving independently (no learner's permit) for at least 12 months. If you hold only automatic, that's an issue since they say manual. Most likely you'll need to either get a manual licence or they may allow evidence of manual driving competency.
- **First Aid:** Holding a current first aid certificate (Provide First Aid) is not listed as mandatory in QFES ads, but it is highly desirable and often required by the time of recruit course. The information pack suggests a *Blue Card* (Working with Children check) is highly desirable too.
- **Physical Fitness:** You must be physically, mentally, and medically fit. QFES explicitly requires medical clearance from a GP before the physical testing (to ensure you're safe to test). They have a multi-stage physical assessment (beep test and an **Operational Focused Abilities Test (OFAT)**) to evaluate fitness. They do not set a specific height/weight, but you should be in good shape to perform strenuous tasks in heat.
- **Citizenship:** Australian or New Zealand citizen, or Australian permanent resident (this is standard).
- **Character:** Applicants must pass criminal history checks. A history of repeated criminal offences or any serious offences could bar entry. Integrity and a clean background are important due to the community trust involved.

- **Other Desirable Skills:** QFES mentions it values diverse skills – for example, having a truck licence (MR/HR) or a *Working with Children Blue Card* or volunteering experience could strengthen your application (even though not mandatory). They also look for community-mindedness.

In summary, Queensland’s career firefighter intake expects candidates to be at least in their early 20s (given the 2-year work requirement) and to bring some real-life experience to the table, beyond just meeting basic fitness and academic criteria .

**Recruitment Process (QFES Firefighter):** QFES runs periodic recruitment campaigns (not every year consistently; they announce when needed). The process typically has these stages :

- **Application:** Submit an online application via the Queensland Government SmartJobs website or QFES recruitment portal during an open campaign. The application will include verifying you meet all mandatory requirements (education, license, work experience) and may have some short answer questions. You’ll need to provide documentation like a driver’s licence history, proof of Year 12, etc., if progressed.
- **Cognitive Ability Test:** Eligible applicants are invited to online cognitive tests. QFES uses a cognitive and psychometric testing stage to assess things like literacy, numeracy, abstract reasoning, and personality traits (team orientation, stress tolerance, etc.).
- **Assessment Centre:** Those who pass initial testing might attend an assessment which could include:
  - A **Beep Test** (shuttle run) to level 9.6 (QFES sets 9.6 as the pass mark, matching other states) . This is a standalone pass/fail – you aren’t ranked on how far beyond 9.6 you go, only that you meet at least 9.6 .
  - **Physical Ability Test (OFAT):** Queensland’s OFAT is quite comprehensive. It is a series of **10 sequential tasks** that simulate operational duties, done while wearing a weighted vest. It includes:
    - Carrying and holding heavy rescue equipment (e.g., holding a 20+ kg spreader tool at chest height for a period) .
    - A six-station circuit: likely involving ladder climb, hose drag, equipment carry, crawl, etc.
    - A high-pressure hose drag: dragging a charged hose reel over distance .
    - All parts are timed and must be completed to standard (no extra points for fastest time – just pass/fail). QFES allows one retest of the OFAT if you fail initially (within the campaign’s testing period) .
  - QFES often runs practice or “Come and Try” days to help candidates understand the OFAT requirements – taking advantage of those is wise.
- **Interviews:** If you pass the physical components, you proceed to a formal interview, usually a panel from QFES (could include senior officers, HR). This is often a **behavioural interview** with questions about teamwork, leadership, why you want to be a firefighter, examples of using your initiative, etc.. QFES uses structured questions aligned to their core values.

- **Psychological Assessment & References:** There may be a further psych evaluation (questionnaires or one-on-one with a psychologist) to assess mental preparedness for the stresses of the job. References and background checks are conducted.
- **Merit List and Medical:** Candidates who succeed in the above are placed on a merit list. QFES will then conduct thorough **medical exams** (vision, hearing, lung function, fitness, blood tests, etc.) to ensure you meet firefighter health standards. This includes assessing your ability to wear breathing apparatus and work in heat.
- **Offer of Employment:** Top candidates receive offers to join the QFES recruit training program as Recruit Firefighters. If there are more successful candidates than positions, some may be placed in an eligibility pool for future courses.

QFES emphasizes that each phase must be passed – e.g. failing the beep test or OFAT ends your application for that round. It's a rigorous process, but those who prepare well (both physically and in presenting their life experience positively) have a good shot.

## Recruit Training (QFES):

Queensland Fire and Rescue recruit firefighters undergo a **16-week training program**. The training is full-time (M–F, likely 8am–4pm schedule) at either the **School of Fire & Emergency Services Training (SFEST) in Brisbane (Whyte Island)** or the **Northern Academy in Townsville**. Recruits may be split between these academies depending on where they will be posted (the curriculum is the same). Key details of the QFES recruit course:

- It lasts **16 weeks** and is very intensive, covering practical and theoretical instruction in firefighting and rescue.
- Subjects include breathing apparatus, fire behavior, structural firefighting tactics, wildland firefighting, pump operations, road crash rescue, technical rescue awareness (vertical rescue, swiftwater rescue basics), hazardous materials response, first aid, and driving skills.
- Recruits in QLD also spend time on **community education and fire safety** training – as firefighters do a lot of hazard prevention work.
- The course is not live-in (unless you're from out of town and need provided accommodation). Recruits are paid during training at the recruit firefighter rate (see "Salary" below), and are expected to commit fully – absences can seriously affect continuation (missing more than 2–3 days can derail your ability to pass) .
- Assessments: There are regular exams and practical evaluations. You must attain required competency in each subject to graduate . Failure to reach competency can result in termination of employment (as noted in the info pack) .
- The training is **Monday to Friday, roughly 8:00am to 4:00pm** (with possible extra hours or weekend work if needed for certain exercises). Physical training is built in, and discipline is maintained – you're expected to behave professionally and safely at all times (attitude and behavior are monitored as well) .
- Locations: Brisbane's academy (at Whyte Island) has extensive facilities including fire training props (LP gas fires, burn buildings), a confined space training area, and a mock village. Townsville's academy supports recruits destined for Northern region postings.

- On completion, recruits graduate as firefighters and are allocated to a fire station (location depends on service needs, you must be prepared to serve anywhere in QLD). They then enter a probationary phase on shift for 12 months where they continue to learn on the job.

## Salary and Conditions (QLD):

Queensland firefighters are among the better paid in Australia, especially after the first year. As of the latest figures (2024):

- **Recruit Firefighter (during 16-week training):** approximately **\$2,774 per fortnight** (gross) , which is about \$72,125 per annum. This is the trainee wage while at the academy.
- **Firefighter (on completion of recruit course):** approximately **\$3,742.61 per fortnight** . That equates to about \$97,308 per year for a first-year firefighter posted to a station. This suggests QLD's base pay is relatively high (likely factoring in an average of shift penalties).
- These numbers align with QFES Certified Agreement rates which put a firefighter's base salary in the high \$90k range. Given overtime and other incidentals, many firefighters in QLD earn over \$100k in their initial years.
- **Annual Leave:** QFES firefighters get around 7 weeks of annual leave (aligned with the 4-on/4-off roster pattern). Specifically, they work a **"4 days on, 4 days off"** roster (2 day shifts 8am-6pm, 2 night shifts 6pm-8am, then 4 off) . Rosters are set 12 months in advance and include the requisite leave periods .
- **Superannuation:** QFES is a state government employer, so standard government super schemes apply (with employer contributions).
- **Other Benefits:** QFES firefighters have access to study assistance, opportunities to specialize (QFES has technical rescue teams, community safety roles, etc.), and relatively good upward mobility given the size of the service.

## One special category in QLD worth mentioning is Auxiliary Firefighters:

### QFES Auxiliary Firefighters (Part-Time)

**About Auxiliaries:** Queensland uses auxiliary (paid part-time) firefighters to staff fire stations in many smaller towns and rural communities that are not large enough for full-time crews. Auxiliaries are basically the QLD equivalent of NSW's retained firefighters or WA's volunteer fire & rescue (except auxiliaries are paid). They respond to fires, accidents and emergencies in their area and support full-time crews when needed.

- **Role and Pay:** Auxiliaries are paid a retaining fee plus an hourly rate when responding or training . As of recent figures, auxiliary hourly rates range roughly from \$28 to \$35 per hour depending on rank/experience ([How To Become A Paid Firefighter In Queensland - Flashover](#)). They also get paid for attending the mandatory training drills (often weekly).
- **Requirements:** To join as an auxiliary, one typically must live or work very close to the fire station (so that you can respond quickly when a call comes). You need a C class driver's license (and likely will need an MR license after joining to drive the truck). Fitness and a medical check similar to full-time are required. Many auxiliaries are on a pathway to become full-time firefighters or are individuals with other careers who serve their community part-time.

- **Recruitment:** Auxiliaries are recruited by local QFES Area Commands as needed. Often positions are advertised on QFES or government job boards as “Auxiliary Firefighter – [Town Name]”. The selection is simpler than for full-time – typically an interview and a physical/practical test, plus medical/fitness clearance. Auxiliary recruits undergo a training course (often around 2–3 weeks at the academy or locally) covering core firefighting skills, then they serve at their station on an on-call basis.
- **Examples:** Many Queensland towns like Roma, Port Douglas, Longreach, etc. have auxiliary-only fire stations. Larger cities like Cairns or Toowoomba might have a mix – main station crewed by full-time, some outer stations by auxiliaries.

For someone wanting to **become a firefighter in Queensland**, the auxiliary route is a viable paid position especially if you are regionally based or as a stepping stone while waiting for a full-time intake. Auxiliaries are respected and integral to QFES – they attend the same types of jobs as full-timers within their communities.

## Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ) – Volunteer Firefighters

Queensland’s **Rural Fire Service (RFSQ)** is the volunteer arm, consisting of about 30,000 volunteers in approximately 1,400 rural fire brigades across the state. These brigades protect rural communities and large tracts of bushland from wildfires.

Key points about volunteering with the RFSQ:

- **Roles:** RFSQ volunteers primarily fight bushfires in rural and semi-rural areas. They conduct hazard reduction burns in cooler months. Many brigades also respond to other local emergencies (e.g. assisting landowners with controlled burns, responding to cyclone damage). Some RFS brigades in remote areas might even be the only fire responders for any incident (since QFES urban crews might be far away).
- **Joining:** You must be at least 16 (those 16–17 need guardian consent) ([Rural Fire Service Queensland Volunteer](#)). There’s no upper age limit, but you need to be fit enough for the tasks. The process involves contacting the local Rural Fire Brigade or the Area Office. Fill out an application including a police check. You’ll then undertake the **General Firefighter (GF) training** which is similar to other states’ bushfire training. It covers bushfire behavior, safe firefighting techniques (mostly defensive firefighting, using vehicles, knapsack sprays, rake-hoe tools, etc.), and also some structure fire defensive strategies for when protecting farm houses (though RFSQ’s focus is wildfires).
- **Structure:** QLD’s rural brigades vary – some are very small (just a few farmers with a slip-on unit), others are well-resourced with multiple large appliances. There are different classifications: e.g. Primary producer brigades, village brigades (in rural towns, sometimes tasked with structural firefighting as well).
- **Training & PPE:** Volunteers are provided PPE (usually yellow Nomex bushfire gear, similar to other states). The training is competency-based and volunteers can progress to Crew Leader, etc., with additional courses.
- **Fire Wardens:** Uniquely, QLD has local fire wardens (often rural brigade captains) who manage permits for burning off in their communities.

Volunteering with RFSQ is comparable to CFA or RFS in other states – it’s about community spirit and protecting rural Queensland from fires.



## Career Integration:

Some RFSQ volunteers do become auxiliary or full-time QFES firefighters. QFES values that experience but does not require it.

## Summary (QLD):

Queensland's fire services offer multiple pathways. The **QFES Fire and Rescue** full-time firefighter role requires not just fitness but also prior work experience and education. Those who succeed enjoy a well-paid career (about **\$97k first-year salary**) and comprehensive training for a wide variety of emergencies. **Auxiliary firefighters** serve part-time, responding from home or work, and are a crucial part of Queensland's emergency response, especially outside metro areas. Meanwhile, the **Rural Fire Service** welcomes volunteers to help manage bushfire risks and respond to fires in country areas. If your goal is to **become a firefighter in Queensland**, you can consider applying for QFES's rigorous recruit program or start by gaining experience as an auxiliary or RFS volunteer, depending on your situation. (See **References** for QFES recruitment info and RFS volunteer links.)

## South Australia: Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) and Country Fire Service (CFS)

South Australia's firefighting framework consists of the **South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS)** – the career fire service covering Adelaide and major towns – and the **South Australian Country Fire Service (CFS)** – a volunteer-based service handling rural and bushfire response across the state. Additionally, the MFS operates some “retained” (part-time) firefighter stations in regional areas. If you're looking at **firefighter jobs in South Australia**, MFS is the paid service to target, while CFS offers volunteer firefighting roles.

### SA Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) – Career Firefighters

**About MFS:** The MFS is a professional fire service with approximately 1,000 firefighters operating out of 36 stations. They serve the city of Adelaide and many larger regional cities (e.g. Gawler, Mount Gambier, Whyalla, Port Pirie, Port Augusta, Port Lincoln). The MFS handles structural fires, road crash rescues (in metro Adelaide and some regions in cooperation with SES), hazardous material incidents, and firefighting in urban fringe bushland (though for large bushfires, CFS takes lead). The MFS has a proud history dating back over 150 years and is highly regarded for its efficiency and close-knit culture.

### Minimum Requirements (MFS):

The MFS has similar criteria to other urban services, with an emphasis on driving credentials:

- **Age & Residency:** Must be 18 or older. You must have the right to work in Australia (citizen, permanent resident, or valid work visa aligning with at least the training period). MFS does not impose an upper age limit; they welcome mature applicants.
- **Education:** The MFS historically required a minimum of Year 10 education; however, in recent recruitment rounds they have specified **Year 12 completion as a minimum** (as indicated by community sources and internal discussions) ([SA MFS Recruitment Round : r/AussieFirefighter - Reddit](#)). Officially, they may not list it as a strict prerequisite on the

website, but having Year 12 or higher is strongly advisable. Many applicants have trades or tertiary education.

- **Driver's Licence:** This is critical: **you must hold a current unrestricted South Australian Class "C" (car) licence at time of applying, and *provisional licenses are not accepted*** . In practice, that means you must have your full licence (no P plates). Moreover, you need to have held your full licence for at least one year to be eligible to obtain a Medium Rigid (MR) licence in SA . The MFS requires recruits to obtain an MR truck licence prior to commencing the recruit course (if you get an offer, you must get your MR before day one of training) . Many applicants therefore will already have an MR or HR licence, which is an advantage. Note that the licence must be manual transmission capable.
- **First Aid:** MFS recently **removed the requirement** to have a Senior First Aid certificate at application . However, they *do* require that by the time a recruit course starts, you have a current Provide First Aid certification . So you don't need it to apply, but you'll need to get it (if you don't have it) once selected.
- **Medical & Fitness:** Applicants must meet medical, fitness, and physical aptitude standards. The MFS will test strength, fitness, and the ability to work at heights and in confined spaces (. If you progress, you'll undergo a firefighter medical exam. Good vision (with or without glasses) and color vision is important; certain conditions like epilepsy might be disqualifying – MFS assesses case by case.
- **Character:** A National Police Check is part of recruitment. Significant criminal history could exclude you. The MFS also has a drug and alcohol screening during selection. Visible tattoos are acceptable *provided* they are not offensive and can be covered by uniform if required (MFS uniform policy allows tattoos but expects a professional appearance).
- **Other Qualities:** The MFS looks for teamwork, communication skills, and community-mindedness. While not a formal "requirement," having some life/work experience (like NSW, SA tends to favor those who have been in the workforce or community service) is beneficial.

## MFS Recruitment Process:

The MFS runs recruit courses based on operational needs – in recent years there have been roughly one or two courses per year, with around 18 recruits per course . The process includes:

- **Application:** Candidates fill out an online application via the MFS recruitment portal when a campaign opens. This includes personal details, qualifications, and often short essay-style questions (MFS historically asked for written responses to prompts, e.g., describing examples of teamwork or why you want to join, each with a word limit) ([Recruitment Process | Metropolitan Fire Service](#)). You'll also submit your resume and any required documents (licence, proof of education, etc.). MFS applications require care – writing clearly and addressing criteria is important, since they often explicitly score those essay questions.
- **Aptitude Testing:** Those who meet initial criteria are invited to a written aptitude test. The MFS aptitude exam typically covers literacy, numeracy, mechanical reasoning, and problem-solving. It might also include a psychometric component (personality or emotional intelligence test). This is usually a timed test done at a testing center or online proctored.
- **Physical Aptitude Test (PAT):** The MFS has a Physical Aptitude Test designed to simulate firefighting tasks. According to training sources, the test involves completing **11 simulated firefighting tasks within a set timeframe** . Tasks include:

- Climbing a ladder and working at height.
- Hose drag and roll.
- Carrying heavy equipment up stairs.
- Forcible entry simulation (using a hammer machine).
- Victim (dummy) drag.
- Confined space crawl in full gear.
- Perhaps a beam walk in gear (balance test). All tasks likely need to be done sequentially, possibly under 10 minutes or so (exact parameters are provided to candidates in a preparation guide). It's very physically demanding – upper body strength and endurance are key. The MFS often runs practice PAT sessions or provides a detailed outline so candidates can train specifically for it .
- **Psychometric Test:** The MFS may have an additional psych test (like a personality questionnaire or cognitive test) separate from the aptitude test. In some recruitment rounds they integrated this with aptitude, or in others it's after PAT.
- **Interview:** If you pass the tests and PAT, you'll face an interview panel. The MFS interview is structured with behavioral questions. They expect candidates to use STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result) format in answers ([How to Become a Firefighter in South Australia](#)). Questions might cover examples of teamwork, conflict resolution, handling stressful situations, commitment to community, etc. As with other services, demonstrating knowledge of the MFS and a genuine motivation is critical.
- **Reference Checks & Background:** The MFS will contact referees to validate your employment history and personal character. They also verify your claims (education, licences).
- **Medical & Fitness Assessment:** A comprehensive medical exam by an occupational physician will ensure you meet firefighter health standards. The MFS uses tasks like step tests or VO2 assessments sometimes, and hearing/vision tests.
- **Offer:** The top candidates are offered positions in the recruit course. If you are successful, you'll need to complete any outstanding requirements (e.g., get that MR licence or first aid cert as instructed) before the course starts .

The entire selection can be quite drawn-out – often 4–6 months from application to job offer . It's also not uncommon for hundreds to apply for just a dozen or two positions, making it very competitive.

## MFS Recruit Training:

The MFS recruit course is approximately **16 weeks** long . Training is conducted at the MFS Angle Park Training Centre in Adelaide (and some drills at Adelaide Station and a short rural firefighting stint at the State Training Centre in Brunkunga).

Key aspects of the training:

- Recruits train weekdays, generally on a daytime schedule but with some night exercises. They learn structural firefighting, breathing apparatus use, search and rescue, ladder work, pump operations, and urban rescue skills similar to other states.
- The course includes a **two-day live-in component at the CFS State Training Centre in Brunkunga**, where recruits likely receive bushfire fighting orientation (gaining familiarity with wildfire behavior, rural firefighting techniques, and CFS procedures – as MFS often supports CFS in major fires).
- The bulk of training at Angle Park covers: firefighter safety, fire behavior, hose drills, fire suppression tactics, HAZMAT basics, road crash rescue (in SA, the MFS does rescue in metro and some towns, while CFS or SES do rescue in other areas, but MFS training covers it since they operate in Adelaide's road rescue), and teamwork development.
- Assessments are continuous. Recruits must maintain academic scores and practical proficiency or face remedial training/possible removal.
- MFS recruits are paid during training at the recruit wage per the Enterprise Agreement (we'll discuss salary next).

After 16 weeks, recruits graduate and are posted to a fire station (usually in the Adelaide metro area initially, but possibly to a regional MFS station if needed). There's a probation period (likely 12 months) during which they must prove themselves on shift.

## Salary and Benefits (SA):

South Australian MFS firefighters are employed under the SAMFS Enterprise Agreement. Pay rates (as of 2024) approximately:

- **During Recruit Training:** Recruits are paid the **Recruit Firefighter Award Rate** – which was around *\$55,000–\$60,000 per year* historically. (The exact current figure is given in the Enterprise Agreement; an updated source indicates around \$1,100–\$1,200 per week during training).
- **After Graduation (Firefighter Level 1 / Fourth Class Firefighter):** The base salary jumps. According to a 2024 compiled data, a **First Year Firefighter in the MFS earns about \$90,982 per annum (base)** ([2024 SALARIES : r/AussieFirefighter - Reddit](#)). This aligns with SA's relatively high wage rates, reflecting additional consolidated leave loading, etc. Indeed, an **MFS First Class Firefighter (4th year)** earns around \$91k, and **Senior Firefighter** about \$95–\$98k.
- The MFS Enterprise Agreement 2022 lists incremental steps: Firefighter 4th Class, 3rd Class, 2nd Class, 1st Class, then Senior Firefighter etc., with each class corresponding to years of service/training completed. By Year 4, firefighters become First Class Firefighters on roughly **\$91,199**. Senior Firefighter goes just under \$99k. (These are base – actual earnings can be higher with shift penalties.)
- **Leave:** MFS firefighters work the 10/14 roster (2 days, 2 nights, 4 off) similar to others, which gives them around **8 weeks of leave** (in two blocks) per year.
- **Super & Benefits:** They have a solid superannuation scheme (through SA Super or similar). Other benefits include long service leave, opportunities for salary packaging (some states allow packaging of vehicles or such, need to confirm for SA).

- The MFS is known to have good work-life balance with the 4 days off rotation, and Adelaide's cost of living is lower than Sydney/Melbourne, making the salary attractive.

## Regional Retained Firefighters (MFS):

The MFS also operates retained (on-call) crews in some regional towns where call volume doesn't justify full permanent crews. For example, towns like Port Pirie, Port Augusta, Whyalla have some permanent and some retained firefighters working together. Retained MFS firefighters are paid per response similarly to NSW's retained model. They train regularly and are held to similar fitness standards. Recruitment for retained positions is local and requirements are similar (likely needing to live within a certain response time to station). This is another employment avenue in SA, albeit part-time.

## SA Country Fire Service (CFS) – Volunteer Firefighters

**About CFS:** The Country Fire Service of SA is a volunteer service with around 13,500 volunteers across 425 brigades. The CFS covers almost all of South Australia outside the metropolitan Adelaide and major town areas protected by MFS. CFS's primary focus is bushfire fighting and protection of rural communities, but CFS brigades also respond to structure fires in country towns, grass fires, road crashes (CFS does road crash rescue in many rural areas of SA), and even support the MFS in peri-urban fringe areas. They handle incidents like bushfires, farm fires, HAZMAT spills in country areas, and assist SA Ambulance or SES as needed.

**Volunteering with CFS:** To become a CFS volunteer:

- **Find a Brigade:** There are CFS brigades in almost every rural locality. Interested individuals can call the **Volunteer Recruitment Hotline (1300 364 587)** or visit the CFS website to find local brigade contacts. Often, attending a brigade training night to express interest is the first step.
- **Apply:** Fill out an application form (with personal details, background, skills). A basic police background check is done. Once approved, you become a probationary member of the brigade.
- **Training:** New CFS recruits complete **Level 1 Bushfire Fighting (BF1)** training, which is essentially the "General Firefighter" course. This covers understanding fire behavior, safe work in wildfire situations, using firefighting pumps and hoses, map reading, radio communication, and basic first aid. They also learn about CFS command structure and SOPs. Training is often delivered at a regional level (maybe over a few weekends). After this, there are additional modules available such as Structural Firefighting Level 2 (for brigades that might assist MFS or handle structure fires), Road Crash Rescue training (for designated rescue brigades), Chainsaw operations, and leadership courses.
- **Commitment:** Volunteers attend regular brigade training (typically once a fortnight or month, depending on brigade). During fire danger season (roughly November to April), they must be ready to respond to incidents, which can be frequent on extreme weather days. CFS brigades also participate in strike teams that travel to large fires elsewhere in SA or interstate.
- **Roles:** Within CFS, volunteers can be firefighters, brigade officers, radio operators, etc. Brigades have rank structures (Captain, Lieutenants, etc., who are elected by members). Experienced volunteers may join Incident Management Teams in various roles during big emergencies.

- **Youth:** CFS has a Cadet program for ages 11–18 in many brigades ([Help me with volunteering for the CFS : r/Adelaide - Reddit](#)). Cadets train in basic skills (without active fire exposure until older) to build the pipeline of future firefighters.
- **Equipment:** CFS provides volunteers with PPE (usually orange Nomex for bushfires, and some brigades also have structural PPC for internal firefighting). They operate various appliances: big rural tankers (Category 3 and 4 appliances), quick response 4WDs, bulk water carriers, and specialized vehicles for rescue or communications. Volunteers are trained to drive and operate these (with appropriate licences).
- **Integration with MFS:** In some areas on the edge of Adelaide or larger towns, CFS and MFS have joint response agreements. For example, in the Adelaide Hills, both MFS stations and CFS brigades may respond to house fires. The CFS also backs up the MFS in extreme bushfire situations near Adelaide (like the 2020 Cudlee Creek fire). CFS firefighters can and do fight structure fires if they arrive first in rural towns (until an MFS or fire duty crew can take over).
- **Interstate Deployment:** CFS volunteers often deploy interstate for major disasters (e.g. to Victoria or NSW for bushfires, as happened in the 2019-20 fires).

Volunteering in the CFS is a respected way of life in many SA rural communities – it’s common for **Volunteering in the CFS:** Serving as a CFS volunteer is highly respected in SA’s country towns – many brigades are multi-generational, with parents and children volunteering side by side. The commitment is flexible and adapted to the community: brigades typically train weekly or monthly, and members respond when available.

During summer fire season, employers often understand if a CFS volunteer needs to leave work to fight a local bushfire. The CFS provides all necessary equipment and insurance coverage for its volunteers. While **CFS volunteers are unpaid**, they gain significant skills (many obtain nationally recognized firefighting qualifications through the CFS) and the reward of safeguarding their community. For anyone in SA wanting to **become a firefighter** without making it a full-time job, joining the CFS is the way to go – you’ll learn wildfire **firefighter training**, operate fire trucks, and potentially save homes and lives during bushfires.

## Summary (SA):

South Australia’s MFS offers a professional firefighting career with an approximately **16-week recruit training** program and a starting salary around \*\*\$60k during training and ~\$90k+ upon achieving firefighter rank】 ([2024 SALARIES : r/AussieFirefighter - Reddit](#)). The selection process emphasizes written applications, physical and psych tests, and a thorough interview . The Country Fire Service, on the other hand, provides extensive **volunteer firefighting opportunities** – from battling bushfires to responding to accidents – across SA’s rural and regional areas. Together, the MFS and CFS form an integrated network: the MFS protecting cities and towns with highly trained crews, and the CFS guarding the vast country areas with dedicated volunteers. (See **References** for links to MFS recruitment and CFS volunteer information.)

## Western Australia: Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES)

Western Australia’s fire and emergency services are coordinated under the **Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES)**. DFES is a combined agency that oversees career firefighting, bushfire



volunteering, State Emergency Service, marine rescue, and more. For firefighting, DFES manages the **Career Fire and Rescue Service** (the full-time firefighters predominantly in Perth metro and large regional centers), and supports **volunteer brigades** including the **Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service (VFRS)** and **Bush Fire Service (BFS)** (which is under local governments but guided by DFES). This means if you aim for a **firefighter job in WA**, you would likely join DFES as a career firefighter, whereas volunteer firefighting in WA is done through local brigades (either VFRS or BFS) affiliated with DFES.

## DFES Career Fire & Rescue Service – Career Firefighters in WA

**About DFES Fire & Rescue:** Western Australia’s career firefighters (about 1,200 in number) are stationed mainly in the Perth metropolitan area and key regional cities (e.g. Albany, Bunbury, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Karratha, Broome, etc.) . They respond to structure fires, road crashes (DFES handles road rescue in WA outside Perth; within Perth, road rescues are handled by fire crews in many areas as well), HAZMAT incidents (like chemical spills and gas leaks), and technical rescues. Bushfires on the rural-urban fringe and within national parks are usually handled by volunteer Bush Fire Brigades, but career crews assist in major bushfires especially around populated areas. The WA career service also has specialized capabilities like urban search and rescue, a firefighting **aviation unit** for water-bombing coordination, and marine firefighting at Fremantle Port.

**Minimum Requirements (DFES Career Firefighter):** DFES outlines clear prerequisites for firefighter applicants :

- **Citizenship:** Australian or New Zealand citizens, or Australian permanent residents may apply .
- **Education:** No specific formal educational certificate is mandated (a high school education is assumed). However, applicants must pass cognitive ability tests during recruitment to demonstrate literacy and numeracy. Many applicants have trade qualifications or higher education which can be advantageous in demonstrating ability to learn.
- **Driver’s Licence:** A current **unrestricted C-class driver’s licence** is essential at application . Because firefighting involves driving heavy appliances, DFES also requires that during the process (when requested, later in selection) you provide evidence of a **Heavy Rigid (HR) driver’s licence**. In practice, you can apply with just a car licence, but **before training starts you must obtain an HR licence** (synchromesh gear box). DFES explicitly lists “Current WA or National HR licence” as a requirement to be provided when asked . Many candidates therefore get their HR licence proactively.
- **First Aid:** Must possess a current **Provide First Aid certificate (HLTAID011)** at the time of application . Higher first aid qualifications (like advanced resuscitation HLTAID015) are also required later in the process – DFES expects proof of Advanced First Aid and Advanced Resuscitation certification during selection (these can be obtained during the recruitment period if not already held).
- **Fitness:** DFES has strict fitness and medical standards. Candidates must be able to pass the physical tests (including a beep test and a rigorous physical aptitude test – details below) and ultimately undergo a medical exam. The ability to work at heights (no debilitating fear of heights) and in confined spaces is required (. DFES also requires a pre-entry medical clearance from a doctor before you attempt their physical tests .
- **Other checks:** Applicants need to provide a National Police Certificate (criminal history check) and a Working With Children Check at later stages. They also must show proof of COVID-19 vaccination (per current WA government requirements for critical occupations) .

- **Character and Values:** DFES looks for attributes like resilience, teamwork, community focus, and adherence to safety. The application process includes written tasks that gauge your alignment with DFES core values.

In short, to even apply in WA you must have a full driver's license and first aid certificate, and be ready to get your HR truck license and advanced first aid qualifications during selection. WA's prerequisites are a bit more extensive upfront than some other states, reflecting the broad skillset DFES expects.

## DFES Firefighter Recruitment Process:

DFES conducts firefighter recruitment semi-regularly (approximately yearly as needed). The process is a multi-stage merit-based selection, often described in their information pack :

- **Online Application:** When recruitment opens, candidates apply via the DFES website or WA government jobs portal. **Four essential documents** must be attached: proof of citizenship, a copy of your C-class licence, your first aid certificate, and a written application addressing specific questions. DFES typically asks you to write about why you want to join and how you demonstrate their values in a one-page written statement. Not providing any of these documents correctly will result in rejection of the application.
- **Aptitude and Psych Testing:** Qualified applicants (who submitted all requirements) are invited to cognitive and personality assessments. DFES uses **online aptitude tests** covering verbal reasoning, numerical reasoning, spatial/diagrammatic reasoning, and mechanical reasoning. There is also a personality profile test to ensure candidates' traits align with firefighting competencies (teamwork, stress tolerance, etc.). This stage is usually done online.
- **Physical Assessments:** DFES calls their physical test the **Physical Agility Test** or specifically the "**Circuit, Working at Heights, Tunnel Crawl and Beep Test**" stage. The physical assessment components include:
  - **Beep Test:** Multi-stage shuttle run. The pass mark is typically level 9.6 (as with other states). It is conducted at a DFES site and must be completed under DFES supervision (outside results not accepted).
  - **Circuit Test:** A series of job-simulation tasks done in succession and timed. According to DFES info, this includes a "**6-station test**" where candidates perform tasks such as hose drags, ladder raises, equipment carries, and forcible entry simulations one after another.
  - **Working at Heights Test:** Likely climbing the training tower or ladder, then performing a task (like hauling equipment) at height to ensure you're comfortable and can follow instructions off the ground.
  - **Tunnel Crawl:** A confined space crawl in darkness (possibly with obstacles) to test claustrophobia and agility . These tests collectively form DFES's **Operational Focused Abilities Test (OFAT)** (a term QFES uses – DFES uses similar tasks) and are **pass/fail** with no extra credit for speed. You either meet the standard or not. DFES allows candidates one retake of the physical tests within the testing period if they fail initially .
- **Interviews:** Those who pass the physical stage progress to the panel interview. DFES's interview covers behavioral questions and scenarios designed to assess your understanding of the role and how you've demonstrated key attributes (e.g., "Tell us about a time you worked

effectively in a team under pressure”). They also evaluate your motivation and knowledge of what a WA firefighter’s job entails. You may be asked how you plan to handle traumatic incidents or shift work – answering in a way that shows resilience and self-awareness is important.

- **Final Checks:** A “**Final Validation**” stage involves verifying all certifications (like ensuring you have indeed gotten your HR licence, advanced first aid, etc. if that was pending). Also, medical examinations by DFES doctors are done. DFES will check vision (color vision is essential because firefighters must discern different colored signals and materials), hearing, lung function, and overall health. A fitness stress test may be included. They’ll also process your police clearance and Working With Children check.
- **Offer and Training:** Finally, an offer of employment is made to the top candidates to become **Trainee Firefighters**. The selected recruits start the **21-week DFES Trainee Firefighter School**. Note: DFES often forms a **pool** of eligible candidates – if you meet all standards but rank just outside the immediate number of positions, you might be kept in a holding pool for future courses (so not all who “pass” get an immediate offer if there are more passers than slots).

The DFES firefighter selection is highly competitive – it’s common for several thousand applications to be received , with only a few dozen positions available in a given recruit school (often 20–30 recruits per class).

## **Recruit Training (WA):**

WA’s Trainee Firefighter School is **21 weeks** long , one of the longer courses in Australia. Key points about the training:

- It takes place at the **DFES Training Academy in Forrestfield (Perth)** – a state-of-the-art facility with simulation props, drill yard, burn house, etc.
- Recruits are on a **temporary contract** for the duration of training (upon graduation they are offered permanent firefighter positions).
- The curriculum includes: **Structural firefighting** (offensive and defensive tactics, live-fire exercises), **Wildfire fighting** (since Perth has bushfire-prone areas; career crews need to know bushfire ops), **Road Crash Rescue** (DFES is a primary rescue service across WA – recruits learn to stabilize vehicles and use rescue tools), **Hazmat** (techniques to identify and mitigate hazardous materials incidents), **Urban search and rescue awareness**, **Fire appliance driving and pump operations**, **Fire safety and community education**, and **physical conditioning** throughout.
- There’s a strong focus on safety and teamwork. WA’s course also covers the **DFES core values** and how firefighters must model them, even as recruits .
- A **heavy rigid driving component** is included – if you didn’t have HR, by the end of training you must pass it (DFES provides facilitation for this licence during training) .
- Assessments include written exams on fire science and DFES procedures, practical skill sign-offs (for example, tying knots, operating breathing apparatus, effecting rescues, etc.), and scenario evaluations.

- After 21 weeks, trainees graduate and are assigned to a fire station (mostly in Perth initially). They must then complete a 5-year Firefighter Development Program on-shift, including further assessments and study, to progress to fully qualified Senior Firefighter .

## Salary and Benefits (WA):

WA firefighters under DFES have competitive salaries. The WA Government jobs site recently listed **Trainee Firefighter salary at ~\$73,127 per annum**. After graduation, a Probationary Firefighter (Firefighter Grade 1) earns more – typically around **\$84k–\$88k per annum** base. WA’s current industrial agreement would detail exact figures for each rank. (For context, an earlier source indicated around \$86k for a new firefighter and around \$113k at 4th year with no overtime ([Become a Firefighter | Kennewick, WA](#)) – WA’s cost of living allowances might factor in). On top of base pay, WA firefighters get:

- Penalty rates for nights and weekends (the 2x2x4 roster is used, similar to other states).
- Generous leave: roughly 6 weeks annual leave plus additional leave due to the shift system.
- Superannuation per public sector norms.
- Uniforms and PPE provided (DFES firefighters wear distinctive gold-colored turnout gear).

One notable aspect: Western Australia’s vast size means postings can be anywhere – new firefighters might be posted to regional centers far from Perth depending on service needs. However, the majority will serve in Perth’s metro stations initially.

## Volunteering in WA (Bush Fire Brigades and Volunteer Fire & Rescue)

Western Australia has an extensive network of volunteer firefighters, split mainly into:

- **Bush Fire Service (BFS):** These are Bush Fire Brigades, typically managed by local government shires with support from DFES. They are responsible for bushfires in rural areas, pastoral lands, and even outer metro fringe. Many are truly volunteer (unpaid) and focus solely on wildland firefighting and burning off.
- **Volunteer Fire & Rescue Service (VFRS):** These are brigades in regional towns that handle both bushfires and structural fires/rescues in their communities. They are directly under DFES. Members are volunteers but their brigades may attend house fires, car crashes, and support the career crews if needed.
- **DFES also supports** other volunteer services like the SES (for storms/rescues) and Marine Rescue, but for firefighting specifically, BFS and VFRS are key.

To volunteer in WA:

- You can join a **Volunteer Fire & Rescue Service brigade** if your town has one (common in larger towns that aren’t big enough for career station but need more capability than a bush brigade). You’ll train in both urban and bushfire skills. DFES provides training and equipment. E.g., Geraldton, Albany and many country towns have VFRS units.
- Or join a **Bush Fire Brigade** through your local Shire for bushfire response. Training is usually focused on bushfire safety, using rural appliances, and communications. Volunteers in BFS often respond to grass and scrub fires on farms, in national parks, etc.

In both cases, volunteers undergo courses similar to other states (Bushfire Fighter, Structural Firefighter if applicable, and can advance to Crew/Brigade Captain roles). Western Australia's sheer area means volunteers are absolutely crucial – for instance, remote communities in the Kimberley rely on Bush Fire Brigades or VFRS for any fire emergencies.

Volunteer firefighters in WA do not get salaries (except some local governments may pay an honorarium to brigade chiefs, etc., but generally it's unpaid). However, like elsewhere, they receive workers' compensation coverage, and DFES funds their equipment and training. WA also has a **Volunteer Fuel Card scheme** providing fuel cost assistance to emergency services volunteers as a recognition.

Those looking to get involved in firefighting in WA without making it a career can reach out via DFES's **Volunteering recruitment website** ([Career firefighting - DFES](#)) or directly to local brigades. The **DFES Volunteering Hub** helps prospective volunteers find roles across six services (including fire) ([Careers and Volunteering - Department of Fire and Emergency ...](#)).

## Summary (WA):

Western Australia's DFES offers a path to become a career firefighter with a **21-week training academy** and a starting trainee salary of about **\$73k**. The selection process is detailed – requiring first aid and heavy vehicle licenses and putting candidates through tough physical and aptitude exams. Career firefighters in WA enjoy diverse work (structural, rescue, bushfire support) and are part of a large emergency management agency. At the same time, WA's enormous geography relies on thousands of **volunteer firefighters** in both bushfire brigades and town fire brigades. For community-minded individuals, volunteering with a local brigade is a fulfilling way to **become a firefighter** on a part-time basis, helping protect WA from bushfires and other hazards. (*Reference links: DFES firefighter recruitment info, DFES volunteer recruitment page.*)

## Tasmania: Tasmania Fire Service (TFS)

Tasmania is unique in that it has a single integrated fire service – the **Tasmania Fire Service (TFS)** – which includes both career firefighters and volunteer firefighters under one umbrella. The TFS is responsible for all fire suppression and rescue across Tasmania, encompassing urban firefighting in cities and bushfire response in rural areas. Within TFS, career brigades (with paid firefighters) operate in the cities and larger towns, while volunteer brigades protect smaller communities and work alongside career crews during major fires. This unified structure means **firefighter jobs in Tasmania** and volunteer opportunities are all managed by the same organisation.

**About TFS:** The Tasmania Fire Service has around 300 career firefighters and over 4,000 volunteers across 230+ brigades ([\[PDF\] Tasmanian Fire Service are Recruiting Volunteers NOW!](#)). Career fire stations are located in Hobart, Launceston, Devonport, Burnie and a few other key locations, providing 24/7 coverage in those urban areas. Volunteers staff brigades in suburban fringes, rural towns, and remote areas. TFS firefighters (both career and volunteer) handle structural fires, vegetation fires, road accidents (in Tas, the fire service often does road crash rescue statewide), and hazardous materials incidents. They also contribute to building fire safety inspections and public education.

## TFS Career Firefighters (Hobart, Launceston, etc.)

**Minimum Requirements (TFS career):** The TFS recruit criteria are similar to other states' urban services:

- **Age and Residency:** Must be at least 18. Australian/NZ citizenship or permanent residency is required.
- **Education:** TFS does not mandate a specific level like Year 12 on paper; however, candidates must demonstrate the ability to learn and pass aptitude tests. In practice, most have completed Year 12 or higher.
- **License:** A manual driver's licence (car) with no restrictions is required (. You should have this at application. If from interstate, an equivalent full licence is acceptable. Like others, eventually you'll need a Heavy Vehicle licence; TFS generally requires obtaining a Medium Rigid licence during recruit training (TFS provides driver training as part of the recruit course for those who need to upgrade).
- **First Aid:** TFS encourages having a first aid certificate. It may not be an official prerequisite, but it's often expected by start of recruit training.
- **Fitness:** Must meet TFS medical and fitness standards. The TFS physical abilities test is comparable to others – including a shuttle run (beep test), stair climbs with equipment, ladder tasks, confined space crawl, victim drag, etc. The TFS assess physical capability to work safely at heights and in confined spaces as **essential requirements** (.
- **Character Checks:** A police background check and conviction checks (including for arson, violence, etc.) are conducted (. A history involving serious offenses (especially arson – obviously a firefighter must have no history of fire-setting!) will exclude an applicant.
- **Team and Community Skills:** TFS selection criteria explicitly include things like ability to work in a team, communication skills, commitment to excellence, and knowledge of safe work practices (. These are evaluated via interviews and written application responses.

## Recruitment Process (TFS):

The Tasmania Fire Service runs a firefighter recruitment typically every 1–2 years, depending on vacancies (the number of career stations in Tas is smaller, so hiring is infrequent and competitive). Recent processes have included:

- **Application:** An online application through the TFS recruitment portal. It includes addressing selection criteria in writing. For example, TFS might ask candidates to submit written responses demonstrating teamwork experience, communication skills, and understanding of TFS values (. This is a critical part – those who best meet criteria on paper are invited to the next stage.
- **Physical Fitness Assessment – Shuttle Run:** TFS's first physical hurdle is the **beep test to level 9.6** (same standard as mainland) . They hold this at multiple locations or allow a supervised remote shuttle run in some cases . It's pass/fail.
- **Cognitive Ability and Psychometric Assessment:** Candidates who pass the beep test then complete an aptitude test (covering literacy, numeracy, abstract reasoning) and a psychometric assessment. Often this is done online or at a testing center in Tas.
- **Physical Abilities Assessment (PAA):** The TFS PAA is similar to a PAT. It involves a series of firefighting task simulations to test strength and endurance – typically: dragging charged hoses, carrying equipment, using a sledgehammer on a forcible entry machine, climbing ladders, dummy drag, and crawling through a dark space. All tasks must be completed to

standard (timed or with proper technique). TFS provides “Physical abilities videos” on their recruitment site to show exactly what is expected , so applicants can prepare.

- **Interview and Reference Checks:** Those who clear the physical and aptitude stages are then interviewed by a TFS panel. The interview is structured around the selection criteria (teamwork, communication, commitment, understanding of firefighter duties) (. Interviewers in TFS may also pose hypothetical scenarios and ask how you’d respond. After the interview, reference checks are conducted on shortlisted candidates.
- **Medical Examination & Final Selection:** A full medical check ensures fitness for duty. The top-performing candidates are selected for recruit training. TFS may create an order of merit and fill a course of a certain size (for example, a recruit course might be only 8–12 people given the small size of TFS).

## Recruit Training (TFS):

Tasmania Fire Service recruit training is approximately **15 weeks** long . Key features:

- It’s conducted predominantly at the **Cambridge Training Complex** near Hobart (this is TFS’s main training center) . For recruits posted to the north (Launceston/Burnie), some components occur in those regions as well, so that training is statewide . For instance, recruits spend around 5 weeks training in the region they’ll be allocated to, ensuring familiarity with local terrain and brigades.
- The 15-week **Firefighter Development Program** is split into phases:
  - **Introduction Phase:** Learning TFS structure, policies, basic appliance (fire engine) knowledge, and meeting fellow recruits and instructors .
  - **Building Phase (~9 weeks):** Intensive skills training in core firefighting disciplines: breathing apparatus, structural firefighting techniques, use of pumps and hoses, wildland firefighting, road crash rescue, urban search and rescue awareness, hazardous materials, driving emergency vehicles, first aid, etc. . Recruits rotate through practical drills and classroom lessons, gradually building competency in each area.
  - **Consolidation Phase (final 6 weeks):** Recruits practice what they learned in scenario-based exercises – simulated emergencies, multi-appliance incidents, night drills, etc., including “simulated shift rotations” where recruits run through the routines of fire station shifts with instructors role-playing scenarios. They are assessed through practical scenarios and written tests. Toward the end, they must demonstrate they are “shift ready” – able to function as a firefighter on a crew.
- Unique element: TFS’s recruit program explicitly mentions a **water safety component** – recruits will be required to enter water (in full gear) as part of training . This suggests training for scenarios like flood rescue or to ensure confidence performing tasks near water.
- After graduation, new firefighters serve a 6-month probationary period on station (rotating through shifts under supervision of experienced officers). Once they pass probation, they become permanent firefighters with TFS.

## Salary and Career (Tas):

The Tasmania Fire Service pays its firefighters under the Tasmanian Fire Fighting Industry Employees Award. As of 2024, the pay rates (with a 3% increase due Dec 2024) are approximately :

- **Firefighter – Year 1:** \$69,219 per annum (this would be the recruit/post-recruit starting salary).
- **Firefighter – Year 2:** \$78,227 .
- **Firefighter – Year 3:** \$82,188 .
- **First Class Firefighter (Year 4):** \$91,199 .
- **Senior Firefighter (Year 5 and 6):** around \$95k–\$98k .
- **Station Officer** ranges \$109k–\$111k .

These figures show Tasmanian firefighters progress to a similar salary range as mainland counterparts by the fourth year (low \$90k's) . The cost of living in Tasmania is a bit lower, making the wage competitive.

Firefighters in TFS work the standard 10/14 roster (2 days, 2 nights, 4 off) and receive similar benefits: generous sick leave, long service leave, etc. Because TFS is smaller, career progression might have fewer positions at higher ranks, but the tight-knit nature can be rewarding – you're quickly known across the service.

## TFS Volunteers

**About TFS Volunteers:** Of the 230 brigades in Tasmania, the majority are volunteer or mixed (combined career/volunteer) brigades. Volunteer firefighters in TFS engage in:

- **Bushfire response:** A major role, protecting Tasmania's forests, farms, and rural towns from bush and grass fires. Tasmania sees severe bushfires (like the 2013 Dunalley fires) where volunteers are crucial.
- **Supporting urban incidents:** In areas without a nearby career station, volunteer brigades respond to house fires, car fires, etc. In areas with career presence, volunteers provide backup or surge capacity.
- **Road Crash Rescue:** In many rural parts of Tasmania, volunteer brigades are trained and equipped for vehicle accident rescue.
- **Community events and fire prevention:** TFS volunteers do fire safety demonstrations, assist in fuel reduction burns, and educate residents about bushfire plans.

## Joining TFS as a Volunteer: The process is akin to other states:

- Contact the local brigade or the TFS regional office to express interest. TFS has a **“Join Us – Become a volunteer”** page guiding people to volunteer opportunities.
- Fill out an application form and undergo a police check.
- Train in **Basic Firefighter (Brigade Member) Level 1** which covers fundamental firefighting, pump operation, safety, and incident management awareness.
- Many brigades have weekly training nights.



- Volunteers are issued PPE (often the same yellow turnout gear as career staff, plus rural gear if needed).
- Specialist training like breathing apparatus, chainsaw use, or navigation is provided as required by the brigade's role.

Tasmania's smaller population means volunteer and career firefighters often know each other and work closely. A big bushfire might see career crews and volunteer crews operating side by side under a unified Incident Management Team (often staffed by TFS personnel from both ranks).

## Summary (TAS):

Tasmania Fire Service offers the benefits of a combined system: **career firefighters** enjoy a well-rounded role (urban and bushfire response) with a close community vibe, after completing a thorough **15-week recruit course**. Starting salaries are around **\$69k, rising to \$91k by fourth year**. Competition is stiff due to infrequent recruit intakes. Meanwhile, **volunteer firefighters** are integral to TFS, protecting local areas and reinforcing the career crews during major emergencies. If you live in Tasmania and are interested in fire services, you can aim for a coveted career position or join the TFS as a volunteer to **become a firefighter** in your community. (*References: TFS recruitment portal for career and volunteer information.*)

## Northern Territory: Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service (NTFRS)

The Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service (NTFRS) is part of a combined agency (NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services). NTFRS is relatively small but covers vast areas with a mix of career and auxiliary firefighters, and works alongside Bushfires NT (a separate agency managing rural bushfire volunteers). For those considering **firefighter jobs in the NT**, the main avenue is NTFRS's career firefighter roles in Darwin, Alice Springs, and a few other centers, as well as auxiliary (on-call) firefighter roles in smaller towns. Volunteer bushfire brigades are organised under Bushfires NT for outback and pastoral regions.

**About NTFRS:** NTFRS operates career fire stations in Darwin (and surrounding suburbs), Alice Springs, Katherine, Tennant Creek, and Yulara (near Uluru). These firefighters handle structural fires, road crashes, bushfires threatening communities, airport rescue firefighting in some cases (Darwin Airport has a separate ARFF but NTFRS liaises), HAZMAT, and general emergency response. Because of the NT's remoteness, NTFRS firefighters often have to be quite resourceful – stations are far apart and backup can be hours away. NTFRS has roughly 250 career firefighters and around 50 auxiliaries, making it the smallest Australian fire service by numbers.

### Minimum Requirements (NTFRS career): The NTFRS outlines its criteria clearly :

- **Age and Residency:** 18 or older. Must be an Australian citizen or permanent resident (or have appropriate work rights).
- **Education and Experience:** NTFRS requires **one** of the following: a *Year 12 certificate*, **or** a completed trade certificate (apprenticeship) **or** a tertiary qualification, **or** in absence of formal quals, the applicant must demonstrate **“considerable employment experience (minimum two years full-time work), life skills and interaction with a variety of people”**. In other

words, they want evidence that you have the skills and maturity – either through finishing high school, gaining a trade, higher education, or significant work/life experience.

- **License:** A current “open” driver’s licence (no provisional) is needed . You also must be able to obtain a manual Medium Rigid licence by recruit course start – evidence of that ability (like passing an MR theory or holding an MR/HR licence) is required at interview stage .
- **First Aid:** Must hold a current senior first aid certificate (Apply First Aid).
- **Fitness:** Physically fit and healthy – NTFRS uses a Physical Aptitude Test (very similar to other states’ PATs) and a beep test in selection. They even run “come and try” days for prospective applicants to practice the PAT . Given the climate (tropical heat in the Top End), good endurance is vital.
- **Character:** “No significant criminal history\*\*” . Applicants are expected to have a clean record (minor traffic infringements aside).

## Recruitment Process (NTFRS):

The NTFRS recruitment is streamlined due to the smaller candidate pool but still rigorous. Key stages include:

**Application:** Submit an application through the NT Government jobs site when NTFRS is recruiting. You’ll need to attach evidence of your prerequisites (license, first aid, education/work history). Given NT’s small size, they often interact closely with candidates – e.g., offering information sessions or “come and try” days where you can practice the Physical Aptitude Test.

**Fitness Test:** NTFRS requires completing a fitness test – this includes the multi-stage **beep test (level 9.6)** and likely additional gym-based assessments or a **Pack Carry test** (they have used a test of walking 5 km with a 20 kg pack in the past). The NT climate can be extreme, so they ensure candidates have solid endurance.

**Physical Aptitude Test (PAT):** Similar to other states, an NTFRS PAT simulates firefighting tasks: ladder climb, roof walk, hose drag, casualty rescue (dummy drag), confined space tunnel, and equipment carry under timed conditions. NTFRS hosts practice days for this in Darwin and Alice Springs so applicants know what to expect. During the actual test, you’ll need to complete all tasks successfully to pass.

**Aptitude and Psych Testing:** Applicants sit cognitive ability tests and personality profiling. Because NTFRS works closely with NT Police/EMS, their testing is often conducted through the same recruitment team (the NT Public Safety Recruitment). Expect problem-solving questions and scenarios measuring your judgement and critical thinking.

**Interview:** A formal interview panel (usually senior NTFRS officers and HR) will assess your motivation, understanding of the role, and ask for examples of how you meet their criteria (teamwork, dealing with stressful situations, communication, etc.). Be ready to explain how you’ll cope living in the NT’s conditions (heat, remote incidents) and your commitment to the NT community, as retention of recruits is important for them.

**Medical & Background:** A thorough medical exam is conducted (including a lung function test given the tropical climate and need to wear breathing apparatus). They’ll also finalize background checks. The NTFRS emphasizes an ability to adapt to both city and very remote operations, so psychological resilience is assessed as well.

Those who perform best across these areas receive offers. The NTFRS usually recruits small classes (perhaps 12 or so recruits for Darwin, sometimes combined with a few for Alice Springs).

## **Recruit Training (NTFRS):**

New NTFRS firefighters undertake a **20-week recruit training course** in Darwin . This includes a structured 12-month probationary development period (8 months on-shift consolidation after the 20-week academy). Key points:

- The initial 20-week training is delivered in Darwin at the NTPFES College. Recruits from outside Darwin typically relocate for this period.
- The course covers structural firefighting, bushfire fighting (the NT has significant bushfire seasons in the Top End and savannah regions), road crash rescue (NTFRS handles rescue in many areas), hazardous materials, basic emergency medical care, and territory-specific challenges (like cyclone response and navigating remote terrain). There is significant focus on driving 4WD and heavy appliances long distances – recruits must get their HR licence by course's end if not already obtained .
- After the academy, recruits are assigned to a station (Darwin's stations, or Alice/Katherine/Tennant Creek as needed) as probationary firefighters. They continue on-the-job training for the remainder of the 12-month probation, then are confirmed as firefighters.
- **Salary and Conditions (NT):** The NTFRS offers a good compensation package, considering the remote and challenging environment:
- A Recruit Firefighter (during training) earns around **\$55–60k**. Once graduating, a First Year firefighter's salary jumps to approximately **\$68k–75k**. (While NT specific figures are not published in the excerpt, anecdotal data suggests NT pays slightly higher to attract interstate candidates – often comparable to QLD/WA rates given allowances.)
- NT firefighters work the typical 4-on/4-off 10/14 roster in Darwin and Alice. In smaller centers like Katherine or Tennant Creek, they may use a day shift system with on-call overnight response (augmented by auxiliaries).
- Unique benefits: Firefighters in NT get **9 weeks of annual leave** per year (to allow for respite, given extreme conditions) . They also have an extra week's leave every few years as a remote locality benefit. Housing assistance may be available when posted to very remote localities. And given the integrated nature of NTPFES, there are opportunities to cross-train with other emergency services or partake in joint operations (for example, combined fire-police response teams for certain rescues).
- **Auxiliary Firefighters (NT):** In some locations like Tennant Creek or Nhulunbuy, NTFRS employs auxiliary (paid on-call) firefighters to supplement the small full-time crews. Auxiliaries are paid per call and for training. Their recruitment is local and requires meeting fitness standards and a basic training course. This can be a pathway for locals who cannot be full-time due to other jobs.

## **Bushfires NT – Volunteer Bushfire Brigades**

The NT also has **volunteer bushfire brigades** managed by Bushfires NT (a separate unit under the Dept. of Environment). These volunteers combat bushfires in the rural/remote areas that NTFRS doesn't cover (the NTFRS focuses on towns and immediate surrounds).

- The NT is divided into Fire Control Regions where Bushfires NT works with local volunteer brigades (often made up of pastoralists, Indigenous rangers, and locals).
- Volunteers here engage in controlled burns during the dry season and fight wildfires often in very remote locations.
- Training for these volunteers is focused on bushfire behavior, using 4WD slip-on units, and aerial incendiary operations (since large fires may be fought with aerial ignition tactics in NT).
- This is a distinct stream from NTFRS, but during catastrophic fire events they coordinate (NTFRS might defend a community while Bushfires NT handles the bushfire's flanks in bushland).

## Summary (NT):

The Northern Territory offers a firefighting career unlike any other – you might fight a house fire in Darwin one week and a bushfire threatening a remote community the next. NTFRS firefighters go through a **20-week training** and must be adaptable, with starting salaries roughly in the high-\$60k and generous leave (9 weeks) reflecting the demanding environment. The recruitment criteria emphasize life experience and the ability to work in tough conditions. For those not looking to go full-time, auxiliary firefighter positions in smaller NT towns or volunteering with a Bushfires NT brigade provide avenues to contribute to protecting the Territory. (*Reference: NTFRS recruitment booklet and NT “Become a Firefighter” page for detailed requirements.*)

## Australian Capital Territory: ACT Fire & Rescue (ACTF&R)

The ACT Fire & Rescue Service (ACTF&R) is the urban fire and rescue service for Australia's capital city, Canberra. Being a city-territory, the scale is smaller but highly professional. ACT Fire & Rescue handles all firefighting and rescue operations in the metropolitan Canberra area, while the **ACT Rural Fire Service (ACT RFS)** (volunteers) covers bushfire response in the rural parks and fringes of the ACT. If you're considering a **firefighter job in Canberra (ACT)**, ACT Fire & Rescue is the service to join. Volunteer opportunities exist in the ACT RFS for bushfire roles.

**About ACT Fire & Rescue:** ACTF&R operates out of 9 fire stations across Canberra, staffed by approximately 350 career firefighters. They attend structure fires, bushfires on Canberra's urban edge (in conjunction with ACT RFS), road crashes (the ACTF&R is the primary rescue agency in the Territory), medical first responder calls, and HAZMAT incidents (protection of many national buildings). ACTF&R is part of the ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA), which also includes the ACT Rural Fire Service, ACT State Emergency Service, and ACT Ambulance. This multi-service structure means ACT firefighters frequently collaborate with paramedics and volunteer rural crews.

## Minimum Requirements (ACTF&R):

The ACT's requirements echo those of larger states:

- **Age/Residency:** Must be 18+. Must be an Australian or NZ citizen or permanent resident.

- **Education: Year 12 (High School Certificate)** or equivalent is required. ACTF&R explicitly asks for this in their recruitment literature . Equivalents can include a trade certificate or higher tertiary study.
- **Licence: ACT (or equivalent) Class C driver's licence with no restrictions (full licence)** . You also need to provide evidence of having completed a **heavy vehicle knowledge assessment or holding a Medium Rigid (MR) licence** prior to appointment. Essentially, ACTF&R expects you to at least pass the heavy vehicle theory test (in the ACT this is called the Heavy Vehicle Knowledge Assessment) or already possess an MR/HR licence, as a condition before starting recruit training.
- **First Aid:** A current first aid certificate (Provide First Aid) is mandatory .
- **Working with Vulnerable People (WWVP) Card:** Because ACT firefighters frequently do community education (and may enter schools, etc.), ACT requires firefighters to hold a **Working With Vulnerable People Check** (background screening), to be obtained by the time of appointment .
- **Fitness:** Must pass the ACTF&R physical aptitude test and medical. ACT's Physical Aptitude Test is demanding but achievable with training – they even provide a guide and video on how to prepare. It's similar to other PATs (dummy drags, ladders, confined space crawl, etc.). The beep test standard is **9.6** as well .
- **Character:** Passing an ACT Policing criminal background check is required. ACTF&R also values a **diverse work/life background** – they look favorably on candidates who bring various life experiences and can contribute to a diverse workforce .

### Recruitment Process (ACTF&R):

ACT Fire & Rescue recruitment is handled by a contracted recruitment agency and follows a multi-stage process :

- **Application Stage:** Applications are submitted via the ACT Government jobs portal during an advertised recruitment. Applicants respond to selection criteria and provide necessary documents (residency proof, licence, first aid, etc.). Given ACT's smaller size, often all candidates meeting basic eligibility will advance to initial testing (ACTF&R tends not to pre-cut too heavily at application stage).
- **Aptitude Testing:** Qualified applicants undergo an **online aptitude test** covering verbal, numerical, abstract, and spatial reasoning . This is typically supervised online. After testing, candidates may also be asked to write a short response to a question related to firefighting (to assess written communication).
- **Beep Test:** Those who pass aptitude move to the physical screening. ACTF&R runs a **beep test**, requiring **level 9.6** (pass/fail) . This is usually held at a gym or academy facility in ACT. You must meet 9.6 to proceed – the ACT does not score higher levels, it's just pass or not.
- **Assessment Centre:** ACTF&R often conducts an assessment centre after the beep test. This can include **team exercises** (group problem-solving tasks to observe teamwork and communication) and an **initial interview** or “speed interview” . They want to see how you interact in a team and your interpersonal skills.
- **Physical Aptitude Test (PAT):** Next, candidates attempt the full **ACTF&R Physical Aptitude Test** . The ACT PAT is very similar to the Fire & Rescue NSW one (since ACTF&R historically mirrored some FRNSW standards). It involves a sequence of tasks in

full gear: dragging hoses, stair climbs with weighted packs, forcible entry simulation, casualty drag, ladder raise, and crawl, all completed consecutively within set time limits. ACTF&R provides a video demonstration of the PAT tasks, and candidates often prepare via personal fitness regimes. This is pass/fail.

- **Panel Interview and Reference Checks:** Candidates who pass the PAT undergo a comprehensive panel interview (usually with ACTF&R officers, ESA HR, etc.). This formal interview digs into your understanding of the role, commitment to the job (e.g., willingness to work shifts, handle traumatic incidents), and explores your past experiences through behavioral questions. After interviews, references are checked and a merit list is prepared.
- **Medical and Psych Assessment:** The top candidates are sent for medical examinations and possibly psychological assessments. Because ACTF&R firefighters engage in potentially traumatic events (like the 2019 Monaro bus crash or 2020 Ororral Valley fire affecting Canberra), resilience and mental fitness are important – sometimes a psych interview or questionnaire is done.
- **Offer of Employment:** Finally, job offers are made to fill the recruit class (ACTF&R tends to recruit around 16-20 recruits in a class). Any remaining successful candidates may be placed in a pool for future classes (especially if multiple classes are planned from one campaign).

## Recruit Training (ACTF&R):

New ACT firefighters undergo **20 weeks of training** at the ACT Emergency Services Agency Training Centre in Hume. The training program is very comprehensive:

- Recruits learn all facets of firefighting (structural, bushfire, rescue, hazmat) and must also become familiar with ACT-specific protocols and legislation (being the national capital, they cover unique facilities like Parliament House, airports in liaison with Airservices, etc.).
- A notable aspect: ACTF&R emphasises obtaining a **Heavy Rigid licence by the end of probation**. Recruits must pass the HR driving test by the end of training or during their probation year (the agency provides training support for this).
- The training includes theoretical classes, live fire simulations, rescue scenarios, and a lot of practical drills. Being smaller, ACTF&R sometimes sends recruits to interstate fire academies (in the past, ACT recruits trained at NSW or VIC facilities) or invites interstate instructors to Canberra.
- After the academy, recruits graduate as firefighters and are assigned to one of the ACT fire stations, then enter a 12-month probationary period. During probation, they complete a logbook of on-station competencies and further study (similar to other states). On completing probation and obtaining their HR licence, they are confirmed as full firefighters.

## Salary and Roster (ACT):

ACT Fire & Rescue firefighters are ACT Government employees under the ACT Public Sector EA for firefighters. Typical figures:

- **Recruit (Trainee) Firefighter salary:** around **\$65,000** during training (estimated).
- **Firefighter (after graduation):** approximately **\$75,000–\$80,000** base starting, rising with each year of experience. (The ACT salaries are usually close to NSW rates; by 4th year firefighters earn around \$90k+).

- They receive additional allowances for participating in the composite ESA ambulance/fire first responder program (ACT firefighters are all trained in advanced first aid and often co-respond to medical emergencies as “first responders”).
- **Roster:** ACTF&R uses the 4-platoon 24-hour shift system (1 day on, 1 day off, 1 day on, 5 days off) in most stations. This is slightly different from the 10/14 – it’s a **24-hour shift** model, which ACT adopted: firefighters do 2 consecutive 24-hr shifts separated by 24 hrs, then have 5 days off. This provides long breaks and is popular in ACT.
- **Leave:** They get around 6 weeks annual leave (which often can be taken in blocks to combine with the off-roster for even longer breaks).
- ACTF&R being small means firefighters might become Station Officers or Commanders perhaps faster than in larger services (opportunities come as the service grows with Canberra’s expanding suburbs).

## ACT Rural Fire Service – Volunteer Bushfire Fighters

The ACT Rural Fire Service (ACT RFS) is the volunteer arm handling wildfire prevention and response in the ACT’s parks and rural lands (like Namadji National Park, Tidbinbilla, and rural outskirts). Key points:

- ACT RFS has several volunteer brigades (e.g., Guises Creek, Tidbinbilla, Rivers, Southern, Hall brigades). They train to fight bushfires, conduct hazard reduction burns, and sometimes assist interstate during large fire campaigns.
- Joining ACT RFS is similar to other states’ volunteer process: contact the brigade or ESA, undergo basic training (Bushfire Fighter course), and commit to training and response availability especially in summer.
- ACT RFS volunteers often work in mixed teams with ACTF&R and NSW RFS during major incidents (since fires around ACT can quickly cross the NSW border).
- Notably, ACT RFS volunteers do not engage in structural firefighting – that remains ACTF&R’s domain. But they are crucial for wildfires threatening Canberra’s fringes (like the 2003 Canberra fires).

## Summary (ACT):

The ACT’s compact size means as an ACT Fire & Rescue firefighter you will know your colleagues well and serve a community of about 450,000 people in a metro area. The hiring process is competitive and multi-staged – focusing on fitness (beep test 9.6, tough PAT) and aptitude, and requiring things like an MR licence knowledge test and first aid cert. After successfully completing around **20 weeks of training** in Canberra, firefighters join station crews on a 24-hour shift roster and enjoy a supportive, modern work environment. Starting pay is around **\$75k** and rises with experience, and being part of the ACT Emergency Services Agency offers integrated training opportunities with paramedics and SES. For those more inclined to volunteer, the **ACT Rural Fire Service** welcomes members to help protect the Territory’s bushland – an important role given the ACT’s bushfire history. (*See **References** for ACT Fire & Rescue recruitment info and ACT RFS volunteer information.*)

Now that we’ve detailed each region’s specifics, let’s pull it all together with a quick comparison and then discuss some broader aspects of firefighting careers in Australia.

## Comparison of Firefighter Training, Salaries, and Recruitment Processes Across Australia

To highlight the differences and similarities between states, below is a comparison of key aspects for career firefighter recruitment in each Australian state/territory:

| State/Territory | Starting Salary (Recruit → Firefighter)   | Key Recruitment Stages  |
|-----------------|---|---|
| NSW (FRNSW)     | ~\$72k/yr during training, ~\$84k/yr after graduation   | Application (with criteria Q’s); aptitude & psych tests; video/assessment center ; beep test 9.6 ([Joining ACTF&R   |
| QLD (QFES)      | ~\$72k/yr recruit, ~\$97k/yr once qualified firefighter ([Recruit Firefighter   | Queensland Fire Department]([ <a href="https://www.fire.qld.gov.au/join-our-team/queensland-fire-and-rescue/recruit-">https://www.fire.qld.gov.au/join-our-team/queensland-fire-and-rescue/recruit-</a> |
| VIC (FRV)       | Fire Rescue Victoria - Recruitment]([ <a href="https://firefighter.vic.gov.au/firefighter-role/what-you-will-get-in-return/#:~:text=Career%20progression))">https://firefighter.vic.gov.au/firefighter-role/what-you-will-get-in-return/#:~:text=Career%20progression))</a> ) | ~\$57k during 20-week training, then ~\$80k/yr on station ([What you will get in return   |



| Recruitment Statistics/Errors/Length of Service/Starting Salary (Recruit → Firefighter)  | Key Recruitment Stages   |
|--|--|
| <p>an<br/>e<br/>or<br/>To<br/>wn<br/>svi<br/>lle)</p> <p>~1<br/>6<br/>we<br/>eks<br/>(A<br/>ngl<br/>e<br/>Par<br/>k)<br/>([S<br/>ele<br/>cti<br/>(M<br/>FS)<br/>Pr<br/>oc<br/>ess<br/>an<br/>d<br/>Re<br/>cru<br/>it<br/>Tr<br/>ain<br/>ing<br/>21<br/>we<br/>eks<br/>(D<br/>FE<br/>S<br/>WA<br/>(DF<br/>ES)<br/>Ac<br/>ad<br/>em<br/>y)<br/>([<br/>W<br/>A<br/>Go</p> | <p><a href="#">firefighter#:~:text=As%20at%20July%202024%3A))</a> ([Recruit Firefighter</p> <p>~\$60k during training; ~\$91k/yr as 1st Class Firefighter ([Selection Process and Recruit Training</p> <p>Firefighter](<a href="#">https://search.jobs.wa.gov.au/page.php?pageID=160&amp;windowUID=0&amp;AdvertID=266395#:~:text=1,driving%20and%20workplace%20communication%20skills</a>)) ([WA Government Jobs</p> |

| Recruitment Statute/Territory | Starting Salary (Recruit → Firefighter)   | Key Recruitment Stages   |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| NT Firefighters (TF S)        | 20 weeks (Daring Firefighting) NT Police, Fire & Emergency Services ( <a href="https://pfes.nt.gov.au/become-a-firefighter#:~:text=Career%20Firefighter">https://pfes.nt.gov.au/become-a-firefighter#:~:text=Career%20Firefighter</a> )                                     | Application addressing criteria (; shuttle run 9.6 ; cognitive & psych tests; physical abilities test (hose drag, ladder, crawl, etc.) ; interview; medical. MR licence during recruit training (provided by TFS). |
| ACT Fire & Rescue (A CT F&R)  | 20 weeks (ESA Hum CT F&R) ACT Emergency Services Agency ( <a href="http://esa.act.gov.au/join-us-careers/fire-rescue/joining-actfr#:~:text=New%20Recruit%20Training">http://esa.act.gov.au/join-us-careers/fire-rescue/joining-actfr#:~:text=New%20Recruit%20Training</a> ) | ~\$60k/yr recruit; ~\$70k+ on completion (9 wks leave/yr) ([Careers in Firefighting])<br><br>~\$65–70k/yr recruit; ~\$75–80k/yr after (approx.)  |

**Notes:** All services require Australian/New Zealand residency and a clean police record. Physical tests are broadly similar – expect a **beep test to level 9.6** and a circuit of job-related tasks in every state. Recruit course lengths vary (13 to 21 weeks), but all graduates earn nationally recognized firefighting qualifications. Salaries listed are base gross figures – actual earnings can be higher with overtime/shift penalties. Career progression (to senior firefighter, officer ranks) typically requires further exams and years of experience.

This comparison shows that while details differ (e.g., QLD demands prior work experience, WA and ACT demand heavy vehicle knowledge early, etc.), the core qualities sought are the same: physical fitness, problem-solving ability, teamwork, and a genuine commitment to serving the community as a firefighter.

## Volunteer Firefighting Opportunities Across Australia

Volunteers form the backbone of Australia's bushfire fighting capability. Every state and territory has avenues for community members to **become a firefighter on a volunteer basis**, protecting their local area without pursuing it as a full-time job. Here's an overview:

- **Rural Fire Brigades:** In rural and regional areas, volunteer brigades (CFA in Victoria, RFS in NSW, Bush Fire Brigades in WA/QLD, CFS in SA, RFS in ACT, Bushfires NT in NT, TFS volunteer brigades in Tas) provide bushfire protection and often respond to other incidents like grass fires, storms, and car accidents. Training is provided free and includes basic wildfire fighting, safety, radio communications, and often first aid ([Volunteering opportunities with other emergency organisations](#)). Anyone aged 16 or 18 (depending on jurisdiction) can join, subject to a background check and a reasonable level of fitness.
- **Volunteer Fire & Rescue Brigades:** Many states have volunteer brigades that also handle structure fires and rescues in towns not covered by career services (e.g., NSW has some in RFS "village" brigades, WA has the VFRS, Queensland has some in its Rural Fire Service with "urban" roles). These volunteers train in breathing apparatus, road crash rescue, and Hazmat, working closely with or under the guidance of state fire services ([How you can help - CFS](#)).
- **Commitment:** Volunteering is flexible – there is **no obligation to attend every call**, but active members typically attend regular training (often one weeknight a week or fortnight) and respond to emergencies when available. During peak fire season, volunteers may be called upon for extended deployments (e.g., fighting large fires for several days). Employers often support volunteer firefighters by allowing time off during major emergencies (and some states have legislation protecting volunteer firefighters' jobs during call-outs).
- **Rewards:** While volunteer firefighters are **unpaid**, they receive other benefits: free training (many gain nationally recognized qualifications), uniforms and protective gear, a strong sense of camaraderie, and the pride of serving their community. Some costs like fuel or meals during incidents are covered. Governments also provide certain incentives – e.g., in WA volunteers get a fuel card, in NSW and SA there are awards and recognition programs.
- **Pathways to Careers:** Many career firefighters began as volunteers. Though not mandatory, volunteer experience can provide a valuable foundation of skills and mindset. Services encourage volunteers to apply for career roles if interested (some have bridging programs, like NSW's retained-to-permanent pathway).

- **Diversity in Volunteering:** Volunteer brigades are increasingly diverse – there are all-women firefighting teams emerging, and programs encouraging Indigenous Australians, students, and retirees to volunteer. For example, the CFA and NSW RFS have junior cadet programs to involve teenagers. It's never too late or early (within age limits) to join.

Volunteering is an excellent way to **get involved in firefighting** without making it your full-time job. Whether it's a farmer joining a local bush brigade in Western Australia, a teacher volunteering with the NSW RFS on weekends, or a public servant in Canberra helping the ACT RFS during summer, volunteers provide critical surge capacity. In catastrophic bushfire seasons (like Black Summer 2019–20), tens of thousands of volunteers from across Australia and even overseas mobilized – a testament to the power of Australia's volunteer ethos.

If you are interested in volunteering: reach out to your state's rural fire service or local brigade. They will gladly welcome new members and guide you through the process. (See **References** for volunteer sign-up information for CFA, RFS, CFS, DFES, TFS, etc.)

## Specialized Units and Roles in Firefighting

Firefighting in Australia isn't just one job – there are specialized roles and units firefighters can pursue as their careers develop, and parallel agencies that work closely with fire services. Here are some key specialisations:

- **Bushfire Specialization:** Given Australia's bushfire-prone environment, many firefighters (career and volunteer) become bushfire experts. Within urban fire services, there are **Wildfire Response Teams** – for instance, FRNSW and CFA have specialty crews with 4WD tankers for bush/grass fires. Firefighters might undertake courses in advanced wildfire behavior, incendiary operations, or incident management. Some join inter-agency **"Hotshot"** teams or remote area firefighting crews that are helicopter-inserted into rugged terrain to combat fires (NSW RFS has Remote Area Firefighting Teams – RAFTs – often including volunteer experts). Bushfire specialists often coordinate with meteorologists and use sophisticated tools like fire prediction software.
- **Urban Search and Rescue (USAR):** These are elite teams trained to rescue people from collapsed buildings and major disasters. Firefighters in Sydney, Melbourne, etc., can join USAR Task Forces (e.g., FRNSW's Task Force has responded to earthquakes overseas). USAR techs learn shoring, cutting through concrete, listening devices to locate victims, and canine search handling. This specialization is often multi-agency (fire, police, engineers together). All major city fire services have USAR units.
- **Technical Rescue:** This covers a range – **Road Crash Rescue** (using hydraulic tools, stabilizing crashed vehicles – many country firefighters volunteer or career do this daily), **High Angle Rope Rescue** (saving people from cliffs, towers – usually at fire stations designated as Rescue units), **Confined Space Rescue**, **Trench Rescue**, and **Swiftwater Rescue** (flood and river incidents). Fire services run specialist courses in each. For instance, Queensland's swiftwater technicians responded to floods, and Fire Rescue Victoria has rope rescue operators in their ladder companies. Firefighters can become instructors in these disciplines, responding state-wide to complex rescues.
- **Hazardous Materials (HAZMAT):** All firefighters handle hazmat incidents at awareness level, but each service has dedicated HAZMAT units with advanced training and equipment (chemical detection instruments, containment tools, suits, etc.). These specialists deal with chemical spills, gas leaks, radiological incidents and bio-hazards. They work closely with scientific advisors. For example, Fire and Rescue NSW's Greenacre station is a HAZMAT

specialty station. Firefighters can take courses in chemistry of hazardous materials and become Hazmat technicians or advisors.

- **Fire Investigation:** Many services have Fire Investigators – experienced firefighters trained to determine fire origin and cause. They work with police arson squads. Some are engineers or have studied fire dynamics deeply. It's a later-career specialization often requiring additional courses (and sometimes qualifications in investigation).
- **Communications (FireCom):** Some firefighters move into emergency communications centers (taking 000 calls and dispatching crews). For example, the VIC and QLD fire services have uniformed FireComm operators. These roles require calm under pressure and technical skill with dispatch systems.
- **Aviation Firefighting:** Two aspects here:
  - *Aerial firefighting (wildfires):* Australia has a fleet of water-bombing aircraft (like the “Elvis” Skycrane helicopters and large Air Tankers). While pilots and aircraft are contracted, **Air Attack Supervisors** and **Ground Liaison Officers** are often senior firefighters or officers who coordinate drops and guide aircraft from the ground or air. Firefighters can train for these roles through NAFC (National Aerial Firefighting Centre) programs.
  - *Airport Firefighters (ARFF):* Separate from state services, Airservices Australia employs Aviation Rescue Firefighters at major airports (Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, etc.). This is a distinct career – ARFF firefighters specialize in aircraft emergencies (crash rescues, fuel fires) and operate on airport property. They undergo a 15-week training in Melbourne ([Fire Services Recruiting Now – ARFF Firefighter Recruitment 2022](#)). While ARFF is not run by state fire services, it's a related career path (with similar fitness and aptitude requirements). Some firefighters transition between ARFF and state services.
- **Emergency Medical Response:** Some fire services, particularly ACTF&R and FRNSW, have firefighters trained as Emergency Medical Technicians to assist ambulance crews on critical medical calls (e.g., cardiac arrests). In Victoria, certain fire stations co-respond to medical emergencies with paramedics. Special training (including use of defibrillators, advanced first aid) is provided. This role is expanding as fire services seek to add value in medical first response.
- **Leadership and Incident Management:** Beyond frontline roles, experienced firefighters can become Incident Controllers, operating in incident management teams during big bushfires or disasters. They might take courses through AFAC to become Level 3 Incident Managers (able to run large campaign fires). They coordinate multi-agency efforts – a high-responsibility specialization often at the district or state level.

Many firefighters pursue multiple specializations over a career. For instance, one might be a hazmat technician and USAR rescue specialist, and later become a fire investigator. These specialties keep the career **challenging and engaging**, and provide critical capabilities for the community. Fire services support this with ongoing training – one of the great aspects of the job is continuous learning (new technology, new techniques).

# The Future of Firefighter Jobs in Australia

What does the future hold for firefighting in Australia? Several trends and challenges are shaping the profession:

- **Increasing Bushfire Intensity:** Climate change is contributing to longer, more intense fire seasons. Australia is seeing record-breaking heat and drought, leading to mega-fires (like the 2019–20 Black Summer). As a result, demand for skilled firefighters (both career and volunteer) is likely to **increase** to handle these emergencies. Fire services are investing in better predictive tools and resources, but ultimately boots on the ground are needed. There's growing support for hiring more full-time firefighters and funding volunteer brigades to ensure adequate coverage as fire risk grows.
- **Technology in Firefighting:** The next generation of firefighters will work with advanced tech. **Drones** are now routinely used for fire reconnaissance, mapping fire spread and locating hotspots without risking crews. Trials are underway for drone-mounted fire suppression (swarm drones that could fight fires in initial stages). **Artificial intelligence** and machine learning are being applied to predict fire behavior and optimise resource deployment. Fire trucks ("tankers of the future") are being designed with smarter safety systems – e.g., external spray systems to protect crews if overrun by fire, and remote control monitors so firefighters can operate hoses from inside the cabin or even from a distance. There's even research into **robotic firefighting vehicles** that could penetrate high-risk environments (CSIRO is developing ground robots to scout ahead of crews in bushfires). Current and future firefighters will increasingly train with these tools, requiring tech-savvy skills alongside traditional ones.
- **Urban Development & Infrastructure:** As cities grow upwards and outwards, firefighters must contend with **new hazards**. More high-rise buildings mean more complex high-altitude rescues and firefighting. Fire services are enhancing high-rise firefighting procedures and equipment (like powerful positive pressure fans, high-rise packs of hoses/nozzles). In rural areas, urban sprawl leads to more homes in bushfire-prone zones (the **wildland-urban interface**). The future firefighter must be adept at **asset protection** – defending homes while a bushfire front passes. Services are developing better **fire-resistant building codes** and firefighters play a role in advising and enforcing these (some firefighters become building safety auditors).
- **Health and Safety:** Firefighters' health is a major focus. We expect to see improved **protective gear** (lighter, more breathable yet just as protective) and better **decontamination** procedures to reduce exposure to carcinogens (firefighter cancer rates have prompted this). Mental health support is also expanding – many services now have peer support programs, psychologists on staff, and resilience training to help firefighters cope with trauma. The culture is shifting to encourage seeking help, which will hopefully reduce PTSD and other issues. This makes the job more sustainable as a long-term career.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** The firefighter workforce is changing. Whereas historically it was almost entirely male, initiatives are in place to recruit more women and people from varied cultural backgrounds. For example, Fire Rescue Victoria's latest recruit classes have been around 20% female, and NSW Fire and Rescue has publicly aimed for 50% female recruitment intakes in coming years. These efforts include outreach programs, preparatory courses for women (to build confidence in the physical tests), and ensuring recruitment processes are free of bias. The result is a more inclusive fire service that better represents the community. The future firefighter could just as likely be a woman or from a minority group – and this diversity can improve team problem-solving and community connection.

- **Inter-Agency Collaboration:** Disasters like major bushfires, floods, and even pandemics have highlighted the need for emergency services to work seamlessly together. We're seeing more **multi-agency training** – firefighters training alongside SES volunteers for storm response, or with police for joint rescues, etc. The future may bring more “**all hazards**” **firefighters**, especially in smaller states – personnel cross-trained to handle not just fire and rescue but also aspects of medical and disaster response, acting as a versatile emergency responder.
- **Community Engagement:** Fire services increasingly emphasize fire prevention and community resilience. Firefighters of the future spend more time in the community when not on response – educating the public, conducting home fire safety checks (like smoke alarm installation for elderly residents), and helping develop local emergency plans. This proactive approach can save lives and property by preventing emergencies or ensuring people know how to respond. It means firefighter roles expand beyond just reacting to emergencies; they are educators and risk-reducers in peacetime.
- **Environmental & Sustainability Focus:** Interestingly, even fire services are going green. Expect to see more **electric vehicles** in fire fleets (for non-emergency transport first, maybe one day electric fire engines as technology advances). Fire stations are installing solar panels, harvesting rainwater, and becoming community resilience hubs during climate-induced extreme weather. Firefighters might be involved in broader environmental protection initiatives too (like flood response which they already do, or assisting in ecological burns that prevent worse wildfires).

In summary, while the core mission – protecting people, property, and the environment from fire and hazards – remains constant, the **tools, techniques, and context** of firefighting are evolving. Firefighter jobs in the future will increasingly blend high-tech solutions with traditional skills, require continuous learning, and remain as crucial as ever in keeping Australians safe as our climate and society change.

## Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives in Fire Services

Historically, firefighting in Australia (as in most of the world) was a male-dominated field with relatively homogeneous ranks. Today, all Australian fire services recognize the value of a diverse workforce and have active **diversity and inclusion initiatives**. These efforts aim to ensure anyone with the ability and desire to be a firefighter has a fair opportunity to join and thrive, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or background. Key initiatives include:

- **Recruiting More Women:** Women currently make up roughly 5% to 8% of career firefighters nationally, but that number is steadily rising due to targeted recruitment. Fire services have set goals – for example, Fire and Rescue NSW stated aims to have women comprise achieving 50:50 gender representation in recruits. In 2021, for the first time, an FRNSW recruit class graduated with equal numbers of men and women ([Women make up 50 per cent of Fire and Rescue NSW graduating ...](#)). To reach such milestones, services have:
  - **Removed Barriers:** Physical tests are now job-related and validated to ensure they're fair to all. Arbitrary requirements (e.g., height minimums) are long gone. Training is provided to help all applicants reach fitness benchmarks (many services publish workout guides and run “try out” days for women to practice the physical tests in a supportive setting). As a result, more women are not only applying but excelling – women often top merit lists once given equal opportunity.

- **Targeted Recruitment Campaigns:** Fire services actively encourage women to apply through women's information sessions, highlighting female firefighter role models in media campaigns. For example, Queensland's fire service featured stories of female firefighters in regional towns to normalize women in the role ([Female firefighters are nothing new yet '50:50 between men and ...](#)). The Metropolitan Fire Service in SA created a "Women and Firefighting" forum to bust myths and answer questions for prospective female candidates.
- **Mentoring and Support:** Many jurisdictions have mentorship programs where current female firefighters mentor new recruits or those in training. This helps navigation of what was traditionally a male-heavy environment. Also, fire stations are adapting facilities (ensuring proper amenities and uniforms for women, for instance).
- **Cultural Change:** There's a top-down commitment to a respectful, inclusive workplace. Harassment or exclusionary behavior is not tolerated. Brigades now emphasize teamwork and respect – values that benefit everyone. Male firefighters have become champions of diversity too; many openly support these initiatives, recognizing that a diverse crew is a stronger crew. As a sign of cultural shift, FRV's CEO and FRNSW's Commissioner have publicly committed to diversity as a strategic priority.
- **Indigenous and Multicultural Inclusion:** Fire agencies are working to recruit more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander firefighters and those from multicultural backgrounds. There are targeted entry programs like Queensland's Indigenous Firefighters Program which provided additional training and support to Indigenous applicants. The aim is not only to provide employment opportunities but also improve services' ability to connect with and serve Indigenous and multicultural communities. Some brigades in Northern Australia have majority-Indigenous crews (for example, many Bushfires NT volunteer brigades are led by Indigenous rangers who blend traditional fire knowledge with modern practice).
- **Flexible Work Options:** To retain a diverse workforce, services are exploring more flexible rostering. Part-time arrangements, for instance, have been trialed so that firefighters with young families (often women returning from maternity leave, but also men wanting to share caregiving) can balance work and home. While 24/7 coverage makes this challenging, progress is being made. Generous paid parental leave and support for parental responsibilities are now common in firefighter awards.
- **Cadet and Junior Programs:** Nearly all states have junior firefighter or cadet programs to engage school-aged youth (both boys and girls) in firefighting activities (learning basic drills, team building, etc.) ([Volunteering opportunities with other emergency organisations](#)). This early inclusion helps break stereotypes – girls in these programs grow up seeing firefighting as a viable path. It also fosters a new generation of volunteers and career firefighters who are diverse and skilled.
- **Diverse Role Models:** Services actively promote stories of firefighters from diverse backgrounds – whether it's a female Station Officer leading a busy city station, or a refugee who became a firefighter and now serves the community that welcomed him. These stories are highlighted on social media, showing that modern firefighters can be **mothers, fathers, people of any ethnic background or walk of life**, united by their commitment to protect others.

The push for diversity is showing results: every year, the percentage of female firefighters and firefighters from non-Anglo backgrounds inches upward. The culture in fire stations is also evolving to be more inclusive – for example, crew cooks at the station now accommodate cultural dietary needs, prayer breaks, etc., when needed. This not only makes the service more equitable but also



improves operational performance: a workforce that reflects the community can engage that community more effectively during emergencies and safety campaigns.

In conclusion, Australian fire services are striving to ensure that the title “firefighter” is open to **anyone** with the passion and capability to do the job, not just the stereotypical image of the past. This commitment to diversity and inclusion will strengthen firefighting teams and help ensure the safety of all segments of society.

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From understanding the rigorous training and application processes, to recognizing the valuable contributions of volunteers and the changes on the horizon, it’s clear that **firefighting in Australia is a dynamic, evolving field**. It remains a highly sought-after career – one that is physically demanding, mentally stimulating, and immensely rewarding. Firefighters hold a cherished place in Australian communities as trusted protectors.

If you’re inspired to join their ranks, now is a great time to start preparing: get fit, consider volunteering for experience, and research the specific requirements of your state’s fire service. With dedication, you could soon be among those brave men and women pulling on the uniform, manning the pump at 3am, running a hose line through the smoke – a respected member of the firefighting family, serving Australia with courage and pride.

## References (Recruitment and Volunteer Information by Service)

- **Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV)** – *Firefighter Recruitment*: Eligibility, salary details, and recruitment requirements. <https://www.frv.vic.gov.au/become-firefighter>
- **Country Fire Authority (VIC)** – *Volunteering Info*: How to join CFA and available volunteer roles. <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/volunteers-careers/volunteering-with-cfa>
- **Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW)** – *Permanent Firefighter Careers*: Requirements, pay, and candidate info packs. <https://www.fire.nsw.gov.au/page.php?id=3>
- **NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS)** – *Volunteer Membership*: Steps to join the NSW RFS and contact local brigades. <https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/volunteer/join-the-nsw-rfs>
- **Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES)** – *Firefighter Recruitment*: Year 12 requirements, beep test, and candidate info packs. <https://www.qfes.qld.gov.au/careers/current-vacancies/firefighter-recruitment>
- **QFES Rural Fire Service (QLD)** – *Volunteer Info*: How to become a volunteer with RFSQ. <https://www.qld.gov.au/emergency/safety/rural-fire-service-volunteers>
- **South Australian MFS** – *Careers and Recruitment FAQ*: Physical test requirements and salary details. <https://www.mfs.sa.gov.au/index.php/careers/recruit-firefighters>
- **SA Country Fire Service (CFS)** – *Volunteering*: Registering interest and FAQs via SAFECOM. <https://www.cfs.sa.gov.au/volunteers/becoming-a-volunteer/>
- **WA Department of Fire & Emergency Services (DFES)** – *Firefighter Info Pack*: Selection stages and required qualifications. <https://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/careers/Pages/Firefighter.aspx>
- **DFES Volunteering (WA)** – *General Info*: Opportunities across bushfire brigades, VFRS, SES, etc. <https://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/volunteers/Pages/default.aspx>
- **Tasmania Fire Service (TFS)** – *Recruitment “Join Us” page*: Stage-by-stage career or volunteer application details. <https://www.fire.tas.gov.au/volunteering>
- **Northern Territory Fire & Rescue (NTFRS)** – *PFES Careers in Firefighting*: Education, licence, and recruit process. <https://pfes.nt.gov.au/join-us/firefighter>

- **NT Fire Volunteers (Bushfires NT)** – *Become a Fire Volunteer*: Info on rural NT brigade volunteering. <https://pfes.nt.gov.au/join-us/volunteer>
- **ACT Fire & Rescue (ACTF&R)** – *ESA Recruitment Information*: Qualifications and fitness test expectations. <https://esa.act.gov.au/careers/fire-recruitment>
- **ACT Rural Fire Service** – *ESA “Become a Fire Volunteer”*: Info on bushfire volunteer roles in ACT. <https://esa.act.gov.au/volunteering/become-volunteer>



## Author’s Note on AI Collaboration

This eBook was developed through a unique collaboration between the author and an advanced AI writing assistant. Drawing upon 40 years of hands-on firefighting experience in Australia — including career and volunteer service — the author curated the direction, themes, and final review of all material.

AI was used to assist with research collation, formatting, and drafting support, helping structure information from official government resources, recruitment portals, and published data. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy and clarity.

By combining real-world expertise with modern AI technology, this publication aims to provide a practical, up-to-date, and easy-to-understand guide for aspiring firefighters across Australia.

*Thank you for reading — and for considering a future in serving your community.*

– **Ken Ashford**



## Legal Disclaimer

The content in this publication is provided for general informational purposes only and is not intended as legal, financial, or official recruitment advice.

All effort has been made to ensure accuracy based on publicly available sources from Australian government agencies and fire services as of the time of writing. However, requirements, salaries, and recruitment processes may change without notice. Readers are strongly advised to consult the official websites of each fire service or government department for the most current information.

The author, Ken Ashford, accepts no liability for any loss, damage, or action taken based on the contents of this eBook. This publication reflects the author’s interpretation of public information and does not represent the views of any official agency or department.

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