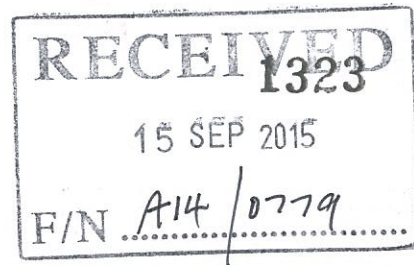




# NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE



AIGS ST  
Ind Dir

Mr S Turner  
Acting General Secretary  
Public Service Association of NSW  
GPO Box 3365  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Your reference: DH:ijm:A14/0779  
Our reference: NUM/0934  
HQ 15/1315

11 September 2015

Dear Mr Turner

## Operational Officer Mobility Program

The Commissioner has requested I reply to the Public Service Association's (PSA) letter dated 18<sup>th</sup> August 2015, in reference to questions on the Operational Officer Mobility Program (OpO).

The Operational Officer Mobility Program and the progression of policies and procedures to support it have been at varying stages of development now since 2013. During its development the PSA has been consulted at the local level and has by way of more formal consultation through the Workplace Advisory Committee (WAC) and the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) had access and input into the Operational Officer Mobility Program.

In addition to this being a regular agenda item on both the WAC and JCC, a special meeting was held with the PSA on 30 March 2015 at Carter Street, Lidcombe. This meeting provided a detailed presentation of the development of the Program to date, it also allowed the RFS to respond to matters raised by the PSA and provided clarity around what the policy was to achieve.

Turning now to your recent letter and for ease of reference and in order to address the specific matters raised in your correspondence the answers are provided in the same sequence as your letter.

1. The NSW RFS has drafted Policy P3.2.9 NSW RFS Operational Officer (OpO) Mobility Program and Conditions and accompanying NSW RFS Operational Officer (OpO) Handbook. This draft policy has contained within it a reference to the detailed handbook that provides the relevant information in relation to the OpO program, its objectives and its operations. Responsibility for the program, its implementation and its overall management rests with the Executive Director Operations.
2. The NSW RFS has had a very large interest from internal and external applicants totalling 375 applications that date back to the first intake of the District Officer program in November 2013 which was the predecessor to the current OpO program. NSW RFS records show that 98 candidates have completed the NSW RFS OpO induction program, and of these 61 have been placed into OpO roles and the majority of the remainder were subject to Talent Pool provisions.
3. The following table provides a break down by Operational Officer level as requested and includes details of where these have been assigned to locations within the NSW RFS:

### Postal address

NSW Rural Fire Service  
Locked Bag 17  
GRANVILLE NSW 2142

### Street address

NSW Rural Fire Service  
15 Carter Street  
LIDCOMBE NSW 2141

T (02) 8741 5555  
F (02) 8741 5550  
[www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au)

OpO Level	RFS Level	Location	OpO Level	RFS Level	Location
OpO1	4/5	Namoi Gwydir	OpO1	4/5	Blue Mountains
OpO1	4/5	Lower Hunter Zone	OpO1	4/5	Lower Hunter Zone
OpO1	4/5	Lower Hunter Zone	OpO1	4/5	Response & Coordination
OpO1	4/5	Shoalhaven			
OpO1	4/5	Clarence Valley			
OpO1	4/5	Namoi Gwydir			
OpO1	4/5	Lower Hunter Zone			
OpO1	4/5	Far South Coast			
OpO1	4/5	Chifley Zone			
OpO1	4/5	Chifley Zone			
OpO1	4/5	Far West Team			
OpO1	4/5	Macarthur			
OpO1	4/5	MIA Zone			
OpO1	4/5	Shoalhaven			
OpO1	4/5	Riverina			
OpO1	4/5	Shoalhaven			
OpO1	4/5	Far South Coast (Bega)			
OpO2	6/7	Riverina Highlands			
OpO2	6/7	MIA Zone			
OpO2	6/7	Chifley Lithgow			
OpO2	6/7	Southern Highlands			
OpO2	6/7	Illawarra			
OpO2	6/7	Orana			
OpO2	6/7	Clarence Valley			
OpO2	6/7	Namoi Gwydir			
OpO2	6/7	Mid Coast			
OpO2	6/7	Bland Temora			
OpO1	4/5	Cumberland			
OpO1	4/5	Macarthur			
OpO1	4/5	Mid Coast			
OpO1	4/5	Mid Coast			
OpO1	4/5	Hawkesbury			
OpO1	4/5	Blue Mountains			
OpO1	4/5	Lower North Coast			
OpO1	4/5	Southern Tablelands			
OpO1	4/5	Lake George			
OpO1	4/5	OMSS			
OpO1	4/5	OMSS			
OpO1	4/5	OMSS			
OpO1	4/5	Gloucester/Great Lakes			
OpO1	4/5	Castlereagh			
OpO2	6/7	Hawkesbury			
OpO1	4/5	South West Slopes			

4. It is the RFS's intention to convert future eligible roles that currently exist to the OpO program as and when roles become vacant and it is deemed that those roles are suitable to become part of the OpO program. There will however be situations where it is not deemed appropriate to convert certain roles to become part of the OpO program.
5. The RFS will continue to recruit to the OpO program in accordance with normal NSW RFS recruitment processes. However, there will be incentives and opportunities for existing staff that are not part of the OpO Program to be competitive for these roles. These include access to training and organisational knowledge and resources. A prerequisite for the OpO Program is for the applicant to be able to demonstrate through the induction and assessment program that they qualify for consideration. Only those applicants who qualify will be eligible to be considered for an offer of appointment to an OpO role.

These incentives and opportunities have resulted in a number of existing employees being successful for vacant OpO roles. For example, 16 existing employees at RFS Level 4/5 were successful in their applications and have been offered and accepted an OpO role. Also 9 existing employees at RFS Level 6/7 were successful in their applications and have been offered and accepted an OpO role. This equates to 40% of new OpO appointments from existing staff.

6. The RFS will as far as practicable provide assistance to Operational Officers at the time of assignment to find and secure accommodation by providing them timely and adequate access to District Managers and staff who have local knowledge and may be able to assist with the above and any other related issues.
7. The attached draft policy does not provide for ongoing assistance to Operational Officers in locations where accommodation and/or associated services are overly expensive. Whilst the scope of the assistance that can be provided is outlined in the attached draft policy (refer to 3.3.4), genuine cases of financial hardship will be considered on a case by case basis for all OpO employees.
8. Where Operational Officers are undertaking training and orientation it will be the responsibility of the District or Regional Manager to assess the impact on workload and where required provide a submission to the Executive Director Operations for any assistance that may be required to offset any associated workload issues. Such requests will be considered on a case by case basis whilst awaiting OpO placement or during any period of ongoing training. This is currently the case in a number of districts, where temporary staff have been engaged to assist.

It should be noted that the investment by the RFS in training and orientation will in the longer term lead to less impact on workloads and a more highly skilled and responsive workforce through the OpO Program.

9. There are existing incentives offered to Operational Officers to take up assignments in certain locations where roles may be difficult to fill. These incentives are consistent with existing Government Strategies to promote rural and regional relocation to which a number of OpO candidates have already benefited from.

Examples include the Regional Relocation Grant and Skilled Regional Relocation Incentive, offered by the NSW Government from time to time. Information on these programs is available from the Office of State Revenue at [www.osr.nsw.gov.au](http://www.osr.nsw.gov.au)

10. Operational Officers will not be required to do a full rotation of category area locations for each level. Please refer to Section 3.8 of the attached draft policy which states ...*"An OpO over the course of their career should undertake OpO roles within each of these categories as they may be available"* ... The aim of the program is to provide the opportunity for OpO staff to be able to demonstrate a sound understanding of the differing operating environments of the NSW RFS as they progress up to the level of District Manager. To illustrate this point I provide the following examples:-

Example 1:

*John is a Volunteer in the Riverina area for the past 8 years, has gained his NSW RFS qualifications to a level sufficient to be eligible for an OpO 1 position. John applied and was successful in the recruitment, induction and assessment stages of OpO and had his initial assignment to Mid North Coast. John is now up for his first rotation, and chooses as a preference Cudgegong. John is approved and rotates to Cudgegong.*

In this example John could elect to have his volunteer time in the Riverina (Category 3 area) counted towards mobility, this would eliminate the need for a rotation in this category area. John would upon completing his first initial assignment to Mid North Coast (Category 1 area), only have Category 2 and 4 areas to go before completing the program.

Example 2:

*Susan is a Volunteer in the Chifley Zone and has been since 1998, in 2007 Susan was employed by the NSW RFS in the Regional Office. In 2015 she was successful in an OpO placement with Susan's initial location preference and assignment to Canobolas. Following the conclusion of an assignment tenure Susan elected preference and was approved for her first rotation to Cumberland.*

In this example Susan could elect to have both her volunteer and pre-OpO staff employment counted towards mobility (i.e. Category 2 and 4). Having an initial assignment to a Category 3 area Susan was able to preference and rotates into her final category area for her first rotation. Susan will be eligible to cease OpO mobility at the conclusion of her first rotation. (i.e. Cumberland).

Example 3:

*Robert is a Volunteer on the South Coast and has been since 1994, in late 2013 applied and was successful as an OpO 1 with an initial assignment to Tumut. In mid 2015, Robert applied and was successful in gaining an OpO 2 position at Canobolas. In late 2017 Robert applied for and was approved to undertake an EOI in Operational Mitigation and Support Services (OMSS) for a period of up to 6 months.*

In this example Robert could elect to have his volunteer time in the Far South Coast (category 1 area) counted towards mobility. John has then subsequently accounted for category 2 and 3 areas through promotion from OpO 1 to OpO 2. At the conclusion of the EOI period Robert could decide to apply to the mobility review panel for recognition of a category 4 placements and if approved, cease mobility.

In relation to your concerns about the attached draft policy in any way seeking to exclude transfers under the OpO program from the operation of the *Crown Employees (Transferred Employees Compensation) Award 2009 (TECA)* I can confirm that this is not the case and that any employee on the OpO program can make an application under the TECA Award. Therefore being on the OpO program does not exclude access to TECA.

Where a staff member has elected to apply for and receive financial assistance under the attached draft policy they will not be able to also then make application for TECA for the same reasons for compensation. The decision to access TECA provisions for compensation or the financial provisions in the attached draft policy rests with the staff member. I trust this clarifies any misunderstanding.

The RFS looks forward to your feedback in relation to the draft policy P3.2.9 NSW RFS Operational Officer (OpO) Mobility Program and Conditions and NSW RFS Operational Officer (OpO) Handbook by the closing date for consultation 30 October 2015.

Should you have any enquiries in the meantime please contact the Director Membership Services, Daniel Moroney, on 8741-5558.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'R' followed by a horizontal line that extends to the right.

Rob Rogers AFSM  
**Deputy Commissioner**