

# Why volunteering with the NSW SES works for me

## Tracy Provest

Volunteering in retirement is something most of us consider. I have found that in the NSW SES I can contribute as little or as much as I have time for. It is a good fit for me. I can travel, help with family, have down time and be available to assist the community when needed – if it suits. NSW SES has many forms of volunteering so there is probably something that would suit you too.

### 'Spontaneous volunteers'

Spontaneous Volunteers pre-register online and help only when an emergency event occurs (an SMS is sent to activate Spontaneous Volunteers or a call goes out on social media). Spontaneous Volunteers indicate what they would like to do to help. Some examples include assisting with catering, computer data entry, taking photos, filling sandbags, door knocking, assisting with logistics, organising gear and equipment to be picked up or delivered and assisting with planning. There are so many of your pre-existing skills that the service could use in an emergency! You do only what you are comfortable with and only when you can.

### Thinking of doing something more active?

For those with a little more time on their hands who want to combine learning with their volunteering, why not become an active volunteer? Everything is based on teamwork so your skills will be immediately valued. You can attend training on a weekly basis when you are available and feel no guilt when you are not. You can learn new skills by contributing to the Incident Management Team, or use your organisational skills in planning or intelligence, or contribute to public information using your media and communication skills. It also helps if you keep your First Aid and CPR up to date.

If you want to work in the field why not learn new skills or apply current skills in new settings? You can get involved in General Rescue, Roof Repair or Ground Crew. Want to specialise further? Try chainsaw, large animal rescue, land search, map reading, urban rescue, flood boat or water rescue. All require a level of fitness and AQF training but involve lots of hands-on practical experiences as well. There is an amazing array of learnings available. You then choose what you can give – how much and how often. Each time a call goes out for help you decide if you are available or not, fit or not, what kind of team you are able to join, and how long you are available. Volunteering with SES is amazingly flexible.

Despite the occasional early morning call, helping the community can be really rewarding. Some days are long, while others are over and done with quickly. NSW SES leads emergency responses in times of floods, storms and tsunamis. Members also assist the RFS with Fire Logistics, assist the Police with searches, and assist NSW Fire and Rescue in a variety of circumstances (especially in rural areas). We have the opportunity to travel all expenses paid to other areas and help when a larger response is required – like the floods in Western NSW last year, storms in Northern Sydney just before Christmas and the fires in Northern NSW. Some units also do Road Crash and Cliff Rescue. So much to offer!

Ready to put your hand up? Go to [Volunteering NSW SES](#) and follow the path that best suits you. See you in orange (the colour of our SES uniform) sometime soon!

### Contributor details



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Tracy was Principal of Ulladulla High School from 2003-2013. Since retiring from the Department she has been involved in a variety of activities including developing a wellbeing student diary, NSW SES leadership and travel off the beaten track. Tracy is a Life Member of the NSWSPC and continues her interest in learning.