



ACT
Government



Recruits College Passing Out Speech

Good morning

I would also like to acknowledge the Ngunnawal people and their elders past and present who are the first inhabitants and traditional custodians of the land we gather on.

I acknowledge the contribution they make to the life of this city. As we celebrate the passing out of this recruit college, it is very important that we acknowledge these traditional custodians.

I also welcome any other Aboriginal and Torres and Strait Islander people here today.

Other dignitaries, colleagues and families of the recruits to the graduation of the next generation of ACT Fire and Rescue. Importantly, you are part of the shared future of the ESA as well as ACT Fire and Rescue.

Thank you for sharing this special day with us.

Graduates, the job you have accepted will change throughout your career and I encourage you to embrace changes positively, and try to shape them with your professional knowledge.

Instructors, I would like to congratulate you all for your tireless efforts throughout the recruit college.

The quality of your work is evident in the people I see standing before me ready to embark on an exciting career in ACT Fire and Rescue and your skills in passing on your experience is welcomed and in the best traditions of the Fire and Rescue Service.

College 37, in saluting your achievements in your early careers, I wish to state that you collectively represent the way forward for this agency.

I say that because you embody the principles of diversity and inclusion that is central to our intent of reflecting the community that we care for and protect.

The more we reflect and represent the members of the community we serve, the better we will understand and relate to them.

We will be ever more responsive to community needs and respectful of their concerns.

You represent the best recruitment result to date for the representation of women for ACT Fire and Rescue and we will continue to build on the foundation you and those that have before have laid.

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You have all demonstrated the merit and value of our desire to reflect the community we serve.

You are doubtless aware that you have joined the ESA in a time of change and renewal. This is an exciting time, full of opportunities for those who choose to contribute and seize them.

I say to you the same as I say to all of our staff - This is the time to engage and shape the future.

It is important to remember that this is your organisation looking forward. You will be here long after many of us more experienced staff have left. That is why I ask you to contribute to the future - it belongs to people like you.

You only have to look to graduates of previous colleges, Conrad Barr graduate of college 15, and Joe Murphy of college, 19 have both made significant contributions to ACT fire and rescue and have now gone on to fulfil senior executive roles with the ESA and the ACT government.

So I say to you as graduates here today that you have the same opportunities to progress your careers if you wish to so, by exercising the same discipline, diligence, strength and teamwork that has got you a position on this college and helped you overcome the training challenges of the last several months. You recruits will have a future that will allow you to progress to make an even greater contribution to the delivery of public safety.

For many in our organisation, the current changes are a difficult time because traditional organisations like ours hold very dear their histories and achievements. Tradition is important, but only as long as it does not cause us to miss opportunities to improve. We should always be proud of our achievements, but we need to be conscious of our shortcomings and always willing to adapt to maintain our status and reputation as an organisation of excellence.

We can, and should, learn from history but we can only change and improve in the present and future. The future is where the ESA is looking and focussing its' considerable talents.

I urge everyone to consider change in the same manner that you would consider an emergency incident.

Both are dynamic events with the potential to test and challenge us individually and as an organisation. We all need to be objective and professional in the evaluation of the facts and constructive in our input and efforts at emergencies and as we continue to change, to improve the delivery of our services.

At the same time, change, like an emergency incident, has the potential to cause harm if we ignore what is going on around us and simply let it happen to us. That is why I encourage you to engage in good faith and in the pursuit of excellence.

Your ideas, observations and feedback are valuable to the progress of our evolution.

It is because you are new to our organisation that your observations are so important. Everything is new to you and you have the capacity to view things in their true light.

It is not "normal" or "the way it has always been done" for you. You can see with absolute clarity, things that those of us who have been here a long time may not appreciate or that we just accept.

Currently, the ACT is the safest area in Australia to live, work and raise a family. We are a growing community you can contribute to actively positioning ourselves for the future. Our current

reforms are all about improvement - We are seeking to ensure we are the best now and into the future. You are a key part of that vision and reality.

Every day of your working lives, you will see that we take our commitments seriously - in our improvements to the state of the art technology available to you and in the most modern fire fleet in Australia. You will work on stations that are very modern and are designed to accommodate an inclusive and diverse workforce and you will see ongoing efforts to adapt and reform our systems and structures to meet the emerging challenges of a growing city, a changing climate and a community with high expectations of its emergency services.

It is important to reflect on the trust that the community places in all of us as emergency staff and volunteers. You will find that the community relies upon you and trusts you when every other preventative measure has failed. At that time the community are not interested in what uniform you are wearing, they just want to be safe.

That is why we are striving for cohesive operations, which is a better co-ordinated, multi-service approach to emergency management. It is also why we must be respectful and collaborative with all ESA staff and volunteers. The outcome is what we are focussed on. Like any team sport or endeavour, it is our collective efforts which will win the day.

Your normal work day will now be filled with challenges and triumphs that exceed the experience of many members of the community. Your role will be to make a positive difference on the worst day of someone's life. For that you will be afforded respect by the community.

On occasions such as these, the overwhelming emotion present is pride - I know that your loved ones will be as proud of you as I am and I commend you to be proud of your uniform and your important role in keeping the public safe. I am proud of the performance of all of our services and the work they do to care for and protect our community.

Whilst you have joined our Fire and Rescue Service, you are part of larger Agency which has a fantastic reputation.

Our firefighters have a growing role to play in making communities safe - not just in responding to emergency calls but in educating the community and assisting with prevention and protection strategies. At your most successful, you will prevent an emergency happening through education, regulation, planning and technical expertise.

For many of you, today is the realisation of a dream. You have succeeded in getting your dream job. At the core of that dream is the ideal of service and community spirit. You now form part of the shield that defends the community along with the Paramedics, rural firefighters, SES volunteers and support staff that make up the ESA.

I challenge you to remember this day and the reasons you have sought to serve throughout your career. I encourage you to remember that this is a special job with special challenges and benefits that all flow from your decision to serve the community.

You will enjoy an exciting career with an interesting and rewarding range of opportunities.

As you progress, you will find that opportunities outside of Fire and Rescue do exist. I commend this broader perspective to all of you. The future of each of the services within the ESA lies in a

broader and more collegial relationship and understanding that will benefit everyone's skills and experience.

Your instructors have done an excellent job in preparing you for the first stage of your career and I thank them for their professionalism and commitment. You have excelled by being selected from a wide and competitive field, successfully completing your initial training is further evidence of your commitment and desire for excellence.

I am proud of your achievements in passing your recruit training. Your real work starts very soon, out on the stations. I am positive you will make all of us proud as you protect and care for the community, without prejudice, without hesitation and without favour.

Congratulations to you all and I wish you a safe journey in your new career.