

NSW Rural Fire Service
The Award of the Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM)
Honours and Awards Queen's Birthday 2008

George Alexander

Superintendent Alexander commenced working with the Rural Fire Service in 1973 by looking after the radios for the then Hume Shire. In 1993 he was appointed as the Deputy Fire Control Officer for Hume Shire and in 1995, he was also appointed as Deputy Fire Control Officer for the Albury Council. In 1998 he was appointed as the Fire Control Officer for Albury, Culcairn and Hume Councils and in 2003, he was appointed as the Fire Control Officer for Holbrook Shire.

In 2005 he became the first Rural Fire Service Zone Manager for the Greater Hume Zone which encompassed the old Shires of Albury, Hume, Culcairn and Holbrook. He was instrumental in the establishment of the Zone through his tireless efforts and hard work. He worked closely with staff, volunteers and councils to critically analyse each aspect of Zoning and how it would benefit service delivery across the Zone. His dedication, hard work and leadership achieved the pulling together of volunteers across the Zone into an efficient and cohesive unit.

In 2007 he was also instrumental in setting up what is now the Southern Border Team which is made up of the Greater Hume and Corowa/Berrigan Zones. Once again, his ability to bring together the personnel of these areas into a single cohesive unit is a testament to his drive and leadership. During numerous meetings with volunteer members of the Service, Council Staffs and Rural Fire Service Staff he was able to convince all concerned on the merits to the organisation of forming the Team. Whilst this process was often long and difficult, he continually worked long and excessive hours to see the project through to fruition.

He has also provided valued support to other Managers throughout the Southern region and in particular, he has assisted some of the new Managers with developing their business plans and budgets. He continues to lead by example and his dedication to the Rural Fire Service is second to none. He also continues to make himself available for deployment during the fire season and is frequently use in the role of Incident Controller at bush fire emergencies. He has also represented the Service with the Singapore Emergency Services.

Through his dedication, commitment and achievements, he has continually promoted the Rural Fire Service as a professional and well organised emergency service. He is held in high esteem not only by his peers but buy the volunteers of the Service, Council Staff and other Emergency Service organisations within the area. His achievements and service can only be classified as many and distinguished and he is a most worthy candidate for the award of the Australian Fire Service Medal.

Steven George Yorke

Chief Superintendent Steve Yorke joined the Evans Shire Headquarters Rural Fire Brigade on 1 October 1972 as a volunteer and held various positions including that of Captain between 1977 and 1981. He moved to Pittwater in 1981 and joined the Scotland Island Rural Fire Brigade as a volunteer, achieving the rank of Senior Deputy Captain. In November 1999 he was successful in obtaining a full time position with the Rural Fire Service as Deputy Fire Control Officer, Training and development, being responsible for the initial and ongoing training of the 1200 volunteer members of the Warringah Pittwater Rural Fire District. Initially in late 1998, he was approached, whilst he was a volunteer, to assist in the recruitment and training of Volunteer Fire Fighters to be part of the Olympic Volunteers in security. This request was embraced openly and soon he was heavily involved in this project. Being responsible for the Olympic Training of some 400-500 Rural Fire Service volunteers from up and down the coast of the State, he worked long and hard to ensure that all was on track for the Games. Given his volunteer tenure this was a significant commitment and a testament to his dedication to the Service and the community. Following his successful appointment to a full time position he continued in this role up until the Games.

His ability to coordinate and communicate was recognised when he was appointed as the Rural Fire Service Liaison Officer to the Police Security Command centre for the Olympic and Paralympics period. Sometimes commencing work at 4.00 am, this in itself was a feat as he was living on Scotland Island and public transport is not really outside the door. He worked practically every day during the Games to ensure that the 550 Rural Fire Service volunteers working at the venues were performing their tasks to expectation and sorting out the logistical requirements that this operation presented.

In 2001 he became the Chairman of the Central east Salaried Officers Committee of the Rural Fire Service and within 12 months was elected to the State Executive Council of the Rural Fire Service Association and became President between 2002 and 2005. He became President at a time of great change in the Association's affairs. Having started on a shoestring, the Association became well financed and with that came a requirement for significant change in its operations and management. Superintendent Yorke provided the steadying hand and resolute leadership required at the time and set the Association on a steady growth path. Under his leadership the Association continued to flourish. He was recognised for his contributions at the 2007 Annual Conference by being granted Life Membership of the Association.

At the end of his constitutional period of Presidency, he continued to serve as the Association's Salaried Vice President from 2005 until 2007. His influence and leadership during this time greatly assisted the Service in establishing a long term professional and cooperative relationship with the Association that has allowed a range of significant issues to be resolved in a manner that has always resulted in an outcome beneficial to the Service, Association and the Community. In early 2006 he became co-founder of the Coffe4Kids Foundation, a charitable organisation established to support the health, safety and well being of children particularly in the areas of oncology, mental health, protection, intensive care and homelessness. He currently holds the rank of Chief Superintendent and the position of Manager Region East and he continues to make a substantial contribution to the aims and objectives of the Service in a manner that far exceeds the expectations of his supervisors and colleagues and thus he is a most worthy candidate for the award of the Australian Fire Service Medal.

Statements of Nomination

Rural Fire Service Nominations for the Award of the Australian Fire Service Medal
Queen's Birthday 2008

Mark Andrew Swayn

Group Captain Mark Swayn has been a member of the NSW Rural Fire Service for 42 years since following in his father's footsteps and joining the West Pennant Hills (Cherrybrook) Rural Fire Brigade in 1966 and attending his first fire at the age of 15. He was elected as a deputy at West Pennant Hills in 1977 and held this position before being voted as Senior Deputy in 1985. He was later elected Captain in 1990 and in the same year, was appointed as a Deputy Group Captain for the Hornsby Shire.

In 1994 he relinquished his Captaincy to take on the role of Vice President, and was recognised as a Life Member of the Cherrybrook Brigade. In 1999 he became a Group Captain and in 2001 he received his 25 years Long Service Award and National Medal. He has been elected as the leading Group Officer for the past three elections, indicating the level of confidence, trust and respect volunteers in his District have for him. His honesty, integrity, leadership skills, calming influence, strategic thinking and mediation and conflict resolution abilities are particularly valued.

He has held a primary role in the development and coordination of a significant number of fire fighting strategies within major incidents over the past 25 years. His extensive local knowledge and commitment to the progress and potential of the Rural Fire Service has seen him also guide his District in the development of innovative new approaches to improve the way things are managed.

In 1996 he became a member of the Steering Committee that drafted the new constitution for the Fire Control Officer's Association, which brought the NSW Rural Fire Service Association Inc (RFSA) into being. He participated as a member of the "Interim RFSA Executive" as a Volunteer Member and worked diligently to develop and promote the RFSA around the State. In 1998, he became the RFSA Volunteer Vice President, and in 1999 was instrumental in preparing the RFSA submission to the Upper House Inquiry into the NSW Rural Fire Service, also appearing before the Committee.

In 2000, he resigned from the RFSA as the Volunteer Vice President to take up a full time position within the Service. He was the intellectual driving force behind the RFSA for its first four years and for some time since his resignation. His drive, dedication and clear thinking contributed immensely to the development of the RFSA. He currently holds the role of Manager, Corporate Planning and Performance and has been recognised with two Commissioner's Commendations for Service; as an individual in 2000 and as the Manager of his Team in 2003. His passion, motivation and commitment to the Rural Fire Service continue to grow. He has been the driving force behind a number of change management initiatives that have brought the Rural Fire Service into the 21st Century, including the development of the Service Delivery Model, Strategic/Corporate/Business Planning and the development of the Service Audit Framework as well as playing a major part in the transfer of the District Staff to State employment.

His dedication, passion and leadership across the Service over many years make him a most worthy candidate for the award of the Australian Fire Service Medal.

Edward William Davies

Mr Davies joined the Wilcannia and District Rural Fire Brigade as a full time member in 1970. Following extensive rains in 1974 a large number of grass and bush fire occurred in the summer of 1974-75. During this period Mr Davies was elected a Brigade Captain and directed fire fighting operations throughout the Wilcannia District.

In 1976 similar circumstances occurred and Mr Davies was nominated as a Section 17 Emergency Bush Fire Controller for the Wilcannia District. He was subsequently appointed to the position on several occasions over that summer and effectively managed fire fighting operations from a strategic level in a time where communications, equipment and external support was very limited.

In 1980, Mr Davies was elected as a Group Captain within the Central Darling Shire Rural Fire District a position he held until his retirement. 1984 again saw substantial fires in the Wilcannia area with further Section 17 appointments accredited to Mr Davies. These appointments were in addition to his responsibility as a local Group Captain managing a variety of smaller incidents.

Whilst his brigade activities have been beyond compare over the years it has been his promotion of the aims and values of the Rural Fire Service that has distinguished his service from that of others. He has contributed a lifetime of experience to the Service at many levels. In 1985 he was appointed as a member of the NSW Bushfire Council holding this position for a period of ten years and he was also elected Chairman of the Council's Technical Committee and he held this position between 1985 and 1990. On a local level he continued to support all of the brigades within the Central Darling District, through his guidance and leadership they continued to flourish in far western New South Wales, often in difficult circumstances and facing many obstacles along the way. In later years he has been a very active and supportive member of the local Rural Fire Service Senior Management Committee and Central Darling Bush Fire Management Committee and in these environments he has always been willing to consider options for improvement of the local response to emergencies of all types. His willingness to accept change and yet remain true to his own beliefs has provided the leadership to the Wilcannia and District Brigade which has enable them to move forward and grow through adversity.

Mr Davies is a true example of what it means to be a volunteer in the remote areas of the State, willing to travel many hundreds of kilometres to attend meetings, always willing to support the Service by providing support and guidance in areas as diverse as fire trail planning and inspections, equipment resourcing, management and maintenance and brigade training activities. He is an excellent mentor for younger officers who have now taken over his mantle in the brigade. He has recently retired his positions within the Wilcannia and District Brigade and still he remains a staunch member with a reputation amongst local fire fighters that is second to none. He also continues to be an avid supporter of the brigade, his community and the Rural Fire Service all of which makes him a worthy candidate for the award of the Australian Fire Service Medal.

Ronald Jollow

Senior Deputy Captain Jollow joined the Wendoree Park Rural Fire Brigade in June 1967 at the brigade's formation. He was one of ten original members and he immediately played an active role in the combating of bush fires in the surrounding river communities. At the time of the formation of the brigade, there was no road access to the Wendoree area and members used their own boats to attend remote locations in fire fighting.

In 1969 road access was provided to Wendoree Park via Mount White with the provision of a 4WD only fire trail. A Road Committee was formed and in conjunction with this committee, Senior Deputy Captain Jollow set about the improvement of access for the community. A ten year period of sustained effort culminated in the sealing of the steep grades from the ridge country to the river side. During this same period, he held most of the Wendoree Park Brigade's Executive positions along with positions on the local Progress Association and in his private capacity he provided sustained assistance to the local community in many community projects. He was appointed to Senior Deputy Captain in June 1971.

In 1976 he donated a one and one half ton utility vehicle to the Wendoree Park Rural Fire Brigade, giving the brigade its first vehicle and he equipped the vehicle with a 50 gallon water tank. In 1977 he was elected and appointed as Captain of the Brigade, a position he held for 29 years. Over the following decade he was actively involved with the Brigade and in command positions in the conduct of numerous bush fire operations in the Mount White area.

In 1992 he successfully lobbied Gosford City Council securing the Brigade's first official Brigade Station which was completed later in the year.

In 1994, a disastrous bush fire impacted in the Gosford area and due to its location, the Wendoree Park Rural Fire Brigade was isolated for three days. Senior Deputy Captain Jollow took command and he planned and controlled the Brigades activities on the western front of the fire over this period. As a result of the success of the Brigades operations in the 1994 fires, he again successfully lobbied Gosford City Council and secured a second tanker for the Brigade and the community.

Since 1989, he has also manned the Gosford Equipment Store for three days per week and was actively involved in providing much needed support to other Fire Services in the area. He was also a member of the Local Protection Committee and was for a number of years, the Committee Chairman. Throughout his service, he has remained an active member of the Wendoree Park Rural Fire Brigade and was appointed Senior Deputy Captain in June 2006. Since 1967, he has been tireless in his efforts to improve the Rural Fire Service in the local area and has wholeheartedly devoted his personal efforts, time and finances to his community. He has been selfless in his service to his community and he is an inspiration to the members of the Service in his area and this makes him a worthy candidate for the award of the Australian Fire Service Medal.

Dennis James Saunders

Group Officer Saunders has provided thirty-five years of complete and selfless commitment to the Rural Fire Service and also to its volunteers and to the community. He is a self employed grazier who has never declined a call out and has attended numerous incidents as a volunteer fire fighter, Brigade Captain and Group Captain. He has led strike teams and task forces on out of area deployments and has also worked tirelessly as a trainer and has also assisted in community education efforts in the New England Zone. He has also been involved in the building of bush fire tankers and catering and communications units and has established and trained the operators of these units.

In addition, to his duties as a Group Officer, he has also worked as a temporary Fire Control Officer and has also mentored many other up and coming Group Officers. He has also represented on many committees established in the New England Zone providing advice to Councils and to Brigades. He has always maintained a passion for his duties within the Rural Fire Service and has always promoted the aims of the Service in a positive fashion particularly in respect of the changes that have taken place over the past five years.

His skills and abilities as both a Sector and Divisional Commander at major incidents have been invaluable and he has earned the respect of both his peers and of the community he serves. He is a worthy candidate for recognition through the award of the Australian Fire Service Medal.

William Frederick **Dunn**

Group Captain William Dunn has been actively involved in the Rural Fire Service since joining the Talmalmo Rural Fire Brigade in the Holbrook District in 1950. Whilst with the brigade he held the position of Deputy Captain for ten years, Senior Deputy Captain for twenty years and was Captain of the brigade for three years.

He left the Talmalmo Brigade in 1985 and joined the Wagra Rural Fire brigade, a brigade in which he was instrumental in forming. He held the positions of President and Senior Deputy Captain until his relocation to the Wingecarribee District.

He joined the Avoca Rural Fire Brigade in 1988 and was elected a Deputy Captain the following year. In 1992 he was elected Senior Deputy Captain. He was appointed a Group Captain in 1995 and has since provided outstanding support to the volunteers and district staff. He offers continuing assistance to the district staff in the form of operational support during major incidents in the areas of operations and incident control. He has been appointed as deputy Incident Controller for a number of major bush fires that have threatened the Southern Highlands. These fires include the Nattai Complex, Joadja and in particular the Willow Vale Fire. The latter bush fire quickly impacted a significant number of houses and his contribution in Incident Management was instrumental in the reduction of property loss. He also offers his assistance with the issue and distribution of stores and equipment and the day to day maintenance and upkeep of the Wingecarribee District fleet in support of the Group Mechanic.

In his capacity as a Group Captain, he continually supports the other volunteer members within the district by providing daily assistance in dealing with brigade inquiries and the resolution of contentious issues at the brigade and group levels.

Group Captain Dunn is a member of the Senior Management team and the volunteer delegate on the District Liaison Committee. He has been actively involved with the Rural Fire Service Association and was a delegate of the Wingecarribee Branch of this Association.

He has been tireless in his dedication to the Rural Fire Service for over 57 years and he continues to give an outstanding commitment to the Service, to other volunteers and to the community. His many years of distinguished service make him a most worthy candidate for the award of the Australian Fire Service Medal.
