

COMMISSIONER'S INTERNAL BRAVERY & SERVICE AWARDS CEREMONY 2010



NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE



The NSW Rural Fire Service Internal Bravery and Service Awards

The Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service, in recognition of acts of bravery and outstanding service, has established an internal awards system. The Awards were instituted on 1 February 1999. The establishment of an internal awards system is authorised under the Rural Fires Act 1997 and accompanying Regulations. Eligibility for these Awards is extended to all members of the Service as defined within the Act and Regulations.

Nominations for awards must be lodged in accordance with the guidelines and on the prescribed nomination form. The Guidelines and Nomination Form are available on the NSW RFS Intranet and Public Websites and on MyRFS. Copies are also available from Region, Zone, Team and District Offices. Nominations for Internal Bravery and Service Awards close annually on 1 October for presentation on St Florian's Day, 4 May in the following year.

Nominations are sent to the Awards Committee. The Committee consists of representatives from the volunteers and salaried staff of the Service appointed by the Commissioner and is required to fully examine each nomination for eligibility. Once a nomination has been assessed and deemed to be eligible, the Committee then makes a formal recommendation to the Commissioner. If a nominee accepts the nomination, the full details of the member being recognised are then officially listed in the NSW RFS Awards Register. Individuals may be nominated for the Medal for Valour, the Commissioner's Commendations for Bravery and for Service or the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Individual and/or Units). Brigades or formally comprised units may also be nominated for the Unit Citation for either Bravery or Service.

The functions of the Awards Committee notwithstanding, the Commissioner may award an Internal Bravery or Service Award to any person at any time and for any reason.

The nomination sequence encompasses all levels of management or command. For example, in the case of a nomination being generated by a brigade, the captain of the brigade must endorse the nomination form. The nomination must be forwarded to the next level of command, being the District/Team/Zone Manager who must also endorse the nomination and then forward it to the Region Manager. This final endorsement of the Region Manager allows the form to be sent to the NSW Rural Fire Service Awards Committee for evaluation and recommendation to the Commissioner.

All nominations are held in strict confidence. Nominees are advised in writing once a nomination has been approved by the Commissioner, though at no time is the nominee advised of the origin of nomination. The Awards Committee will also acknowledge to the nominator the receipt of the nomination for an award by the Awards Committee but otherwise maintain the confidentiality of the system and will not provide information regarding awards.

At the Awards Ceremony on 4 May 2010, 11 individual and 6 group recipients are to be acknowledged by the Commissioner. Drawn from the Service's Regions and Headquarters these recipients are presented with Awards in recognition of outstanding bravery or service. The fourth of May is chosen each year for the Awards Ceremony as it is the Feast Day of St Florian, Patron Saint of Firefighters and International Firefighter's Day.

The Order of Proceedings

National Anthem

NSW RFS Pipes & Drums & State Protocol Squad

Welcome to Guests

Russell Taylor AFSM, Master of Ceremonies

Prayer

Senior Chaplain, Major Ron Anderson, AFSM

Address

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons, AFSM

Address

The Hon. Steve Whan MP
Minister for Emergency Services

Presentation of Awards

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons, AFSM

Photographs

All recipients will be photographed during and following the conclusion of proceedings outside on the staircase. A complimentary group and individual photograph will be posted to each recipient.

Lunch

Recipients and their guests are invited to join the Commissioner for lunch in the marquee & outdoor terrace area

We wish to thank the NSW RFS Pipes & Drums and State Protocol Squad for their assistance during today's festivities.

The Commissioner's Commendation for Bravery

The Commissioner's Commendation for Bravery is awarded to recognise an act of courage under hazardous circumstances where the risk to life has not been as significant as to warrant the Commissioner's Medal for Valour but is highly commendable and worthy of recognition.

Group Officer Brett Turner

Macarthur Zone, Region East

At approximately 1510 hours on 28 February 2007 the Macarthur Fire Control Centre received numerous calls to Menangle Road in the vicinity of the Broughton Anglican School to reports of "water over the road". The Menangle Park Rural Fire Brigade was activated to assist. Within minutes, additional information was received that severe flooding was occurring and cars were being washed from the roadway. As part of the response, Group Officer Turner was dispatched to the scene and was inbound to the incident at approximately 1530 hours, he reported numerous cars washed into a culvert with many parents and students in the water.

As more assistance was dispatched to the location, Group Officer Turner entered the water and started to search the vehicles for possible victims that were being sucked into the culvert. This involved getting into the water and entering each of the vehicles most of which were already partially submerged. In so doing, he displayed courage beyond his normal firefighting role and his actions were in the best traditions of the NSW Rural Fire Service and are worthy of recognition.

Firefighter Alexander White

Firefighter Peter Hamori

Austral Rural Fire Brigade, Macarthur Zone, Region East

At approximately 0530 hours on 5 February 2008 volunteer Firefighters Alexander White and Peter Hamori who were the crew of vehicle Austral 1 were responded to 29 Gregory Avenue, Leppington to a report of a man trapped in a tree in a creek swollen by flood water. Upon arrival at the scene, a man could be heard calling for help from a tree. Firefighters White and Hamori secured themselves with ropes and then entered the water. Both members struggled against the deepening and fast flowing water making their way to the stricken man. On reaching the man and having established that he was not injured, they then conveyed him to safety.

Immediately following this incident, Austral 1 was then dispatched to Anthony Road to assist the crew of Casula 1 who were trapped by flood waters that had washed their tanker off a causeway into the middle of a creek and had submerged. The crew were standing on the rear of their vehicle. Firefighters White and Hamori immediately tied themselves off and again entered the water to assist. The actions of both Firefighters at these incidents in entering fast flowing flood waters of unknown depth and hazards to rescue a trapped man and attempting to rescue their colleagues, displayed great courage and were in the best traditions of the NSW Rural Fire Service and are worthy of recognition.

Captain Andrew Macdonald

Catherine Field RFB, Macarthur Zone, Region East

Firefighter David Collins

Casula RFB, Macarthur District, Region East

At approximately 0630 hours on 5 February 2008, tanker Casula 1 with a crew of four volunteer fire fighters was washed off a causeway on Anthony Road, Leppington. Captain Macdonald and Firefighter Collins were on the scene soon after the crew of Austral 1 and after seeing the efforts of that crew, they investigated an alternative access to the stricken tanker and its crew. Following the downstream side of the road they were able to get closer to the submerged tanker. Both entered the fast flowing waters and made attempts to reach the submerged tanker; the water level was up to the shoulders of these firefighters and the fast flowing waters forced them into the mainstream of the creek. At this time they were working without safety equipment and were attempting to pass a steel cable to the crew of Casula 1 to ensure that the tanker was not washed further downstream.

Both Captain Macdonald and Firefighter Collins risked their lives in entering the fast flowing waters of unknown depth and hazards. In attempting to rescue their fellow firefighters they displayed courage which was in the best traditions of the NSW Rural Fire Service and is worthy of recognition.

The Commissioner's Commendation for Service (Individual)

Awarded for service of a meritorious nature or outstanding actions in relation to fire service duties, administrative leadership, or exemplary performance of a specific difficult project or task, not involving bravery.

Firefighter Archie Fletcher

Moona-Winterbourne RFB, New England Zone, Region North

Firefighter Fletcher is a member of the Moona-Winterbourne Rural Fire Brigade and resides in a house on a property where another house was destroyed by fire resulting in the death of the occupant. In 2008 while waiting for his brigade to respond and arrive at the scene of the fire, Firefighter Fletcher heard screaming from the burning building and he entered the building to try and rescue the occupant but was forced out by heat. He again re-entered the burning building to make a second attempt to rescue the occupant but was again forced back by heat and smoke. He was unable to rescue the occupant who unfortunately died in the burning structure. Firefighter Fletcher's attempts at rescue in dangerous circumstances showed outstanding actions on his part and were in line with the best traditions of the NSW Rural Fire Service and deserving of recognition.

Father Peter McGrath, Volunteer Chaplain

Warringah / Pittwater District, Membership Services Directorate

Father Peter McGrath has been a Volunteer Chaplain since 1972. Since that time he has displayed exemplary service above and beyond the call of duty, providing inspiration, spiritual and moral support to families and Service members afflicted by tragedies. Father Peter has attracted many commendations from appreciative community members' world wide, and has brought a great deal of credit to himself and to the NSW Rural Fire Service. He is well known throughout the NSW Rural Fire Service family and is a deeply spiritual person. He never fails to lift a member's flagging spirits. He has demonstrated continuing commitment and service to the NSW Rural Fire Service and continues to be a vital member of the Chaplaincy Leadership Team and the members and families of the Warringah-Pittwater District. Without his assistance and forward thinking, the Chaplaincy Service would not enjoy the connection it has today with Service members and their families. Father Peter McGrath is thoroughly deserving of recognition by the NSW Rural Fire Service.

Bronwyn Waters, Acting Fire Mitigation Officer

Dumaresq RFB, New England Zone, Region North

Acting Fire Mitigation Officer Bronwyn Waters is a member of the Dumaresq Rural Fire Brigade. On 11 August 2008 she was returning to the Fire Control Centre on the New England Highway when she came upon an horrific motor vehicle accident that had just happened. Four persons were badly injured and one male had been thrown out through the rear window of one vehicle and had landed some 150 metres away from the scene and down a steep embankment. Bronwyn organised some by-standers at the scene, responded emergency services via the triple zero system and then proceeded to the male thrown from the vehicle to render first aid and assistance. The male was severely injured and Bronwyn performed CPR and other first aid measures for approximately twenty minutes until an ambulance arrived and their crew took over attending to the male. Unfortunately the male died at the scene. Acting Fire Mitigation Officer Water's actions were outstanding and in line with the best traditions of the NSW Rural Fire Service and are worthy of recognition.

David Curry, Temporary Operations Support Officer

Bland Creek RFB, Bland/Temora District, Region West

At approximately 1700 hours on 18 April 2008, Temporary Operations Support Officer David Curry was on duty and returning to his office. He was travelling to West Wyalong from Temora in a Service Operational Vehicle. About 12 kilometres north of Temora he stopped by a man who advised them that the male occupant of a car he was travelling in, and parked half way in the south bound lane, was having a heart attack. David parked his vehicle with lights flashing to protect those concerned from traffic and went to the other vehicle. As he approached the vehicle, a Mr John Lewis from West Wyalong was performing CPR on a male and a nurse, name unknown, was performing EAR. David checked the patient for a pulse, noting that there was none and took over CPR from Mr Lewis who was becoming tired. He continued to perform CPR for some 15-20 minutes until an ambulance arrived at the scene. The ambulance officers applied a defibrillator to the patient and transported him to Temora Hospital where he passed away. David's actions at the scene were consistent with the best traditions of the NSW Rural Fire Service and are deserving of recognition.

The Commissioner's Unit Citation for Service

Awarded to crews, brigades, groups or organised units to recognise outstanding service of a meritorious nature, such as group actions in relation to fire service duties, group work performance, or other outstanding or meritorious service not involving bravery.

Bulahdelah Rural Fire Brigade

Manning Team, Region East

Deputy Captain Trevor Hoare

Deputy Captain Ronald Pile

Firefighter Laurence Sumner

Firefighter Andrew Gilbert

Firefighter Joel Smith

On Thursday 11 June 2009 at 1202 hours, the Bulahdelah Rural Fire Brigade was responded to a truck fire with the vehicle carrying 30,000 litres of diesel fuel about 5 kilometres south of Bulahdelah on the Pacific Highway. At 1210 hours, the Brigade's Cat 1 appliance responded with a crew of four with the officer in charge being Deputy Captain Trevor Hoare. The Brigade arrived on the scene at 1217 hours to find the prime mover well alight and flames and smoke being pushed over the fuel trailer. They were unable to see the hazardous chemical code to confirm the contents and the driver and manifest were nowhere to be seen. The Brigade commenced cooling the fuel trailer and extinguishing the attached burning prime mover. It was at this time that the contents of the vehicle was identified as "unleaded petrol" with an ignition point of around -46.3 degree and not diesel as originally advised. The police had now placed a one kilometre exclusion zone around the scene stopping all traffic in both directions. Without hesitation the crew continued to extinguish the fire whilst placing a higher importance on cooling the contents of the trailer with its volatile load of petrol. The fire was brought under control at 12.22 hours.

The selfless efforts of the crew of the Bulahdelah Rural Fire Brigade are deserving of recognition and commendation by the NSW Rural Fire Service.

The Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Individual)

Awarded to recognise service or outstanding actions in relation to fire service duties, administrative leadership, or exemplary performance of a specific project or task. The Certificate of Commendation may be awarded to an individual or unit for service beyond the scope of responsibility normally expected of that person or unit in their assigned duties and is therefore worthy of acknowledgement and commendation.

Group Officer Patrick Bradley

Dumaresq RFB, New England Zone, Region North

Group Officer Patrick Bradley is highly regarded within the New England Zone for his skills as a Strike Team Leader as demonstrated by his performance in the 2008 Carrai and Goat Hole Creek Section 44 bush fires and most recently in Victoria. His sound fire fighting knowledge, comprehension of fire behaviour and sound decisions combined with his calm and open demeanour inspires confidence with any crew allocated to his control. Within the New England Zone Training Team he is a course coordinator and senior instructor. He is highly involved as an instructor and assessor on all crew leader courses and he annually conducts a bush fire fighter course training new firefighters. Many crew leaders and firefighters have benefited from his mentoring and training. Over many years he has demonstrated a meritorious commitment to the NSW Rural Fire Service by his involvement in a wide range of activities which makes him a fine role model for others and worthy of recognition.

Group Officer Rex Kemp

Wardell RFB, Far North Coast Team, Region North

Group Officer Rex Kemp joined the Wardell Rural Fire Brigade in 1990 and immediately demonstrated a commitment to assist his fellow volunteers in any way possible. He attained the rank of Deputy Captain in 1992 and was appointed Senior Deputy Captain in 1993. Over this period, Group Officer Kemp demonstrated his instructional ability within his brigade area ensuring that his brigade members maintained their firefighting skills. In 1997 he was appointed a Group Officer. He has led numerous Strike Teams in "out of area" deployments, including the Sydney Storms, the Northern Tablelands Storms and the Canberra Bush Fires. He maintains an active role in his brigade and is a leading Instructor in the Far North Coast Team. He willingly assists with training in neighbouring teams. He is a most worthy candidate for recognition by way of this award.

The Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Unit)

Awarded to recognise service or outstanding actions in relation to fire service duties, administrative leadership, or exemplary performance of a specific project or task. The Certificate of Commendation may be awarded to an individual or unit for service beyond the scope of responsibility normally expected of that person or Unit in their assigned duties and is therefore worthy of acknowledgement and commendation.

Austral Rural Fire Brigade Casula Rural Fire Brigade Macarthur Zone, Region East

On the morning of 5 February 2008 the Austral and Casula Rural Fire Brigades were requested to attend the Scalabrini Retirement Centre in the Village of Austral. Upon arrival the Brigades reported that the Retirement Centre was currently inundated with flood water to approximately eighty (80) percent of the Centre's buildings. In the early stages it could not be determined if the water was still rising and if the entire Centre would become engulfed.

The four crew of the Austral Brigade and the six crew of the Casula Brigade assisting the Centre Staff set about wading and relocating the 50 aged residents to a high point within the Centre. Due to the rising waters not only within the Centre but in the surrounding area outside, it was appreciated that help would not be forthcoming in the short term. During this incident the efforts and teamwork of the members of both the Austral and Casula Brigades are to be commended with all members working well outside their normal scope of operations under duress and stressful conditions. The members of both Brigades are worthy of recognition and citation.

Southern Border Team

The Volunteers of the Albury Staging Area Group

The Staff of the Albury and Corowa Offices

Southern Border Team, Region South

The Southern Border team of volunteers managed a Staging Area at North Albury as part of the NSW Emergency Services deployment to the Victorian Bush Fires in February 2009. The Staging Area provided logistical support to all resources deployed to and from Victoria from the NSW Emergency Services. It was operational from 0700 hours on Monday 16 February until 1800 hours on Thursday 5 March 2009. During that period there were 1433 personnel and 463 vehicles processed through the Staging Area. It provided fuel, food, and repair facilities at a location some 3 to 4 hours from the usual Victorian CFA/DSE Staging Areas and also provided a reference point for all agencies going to and from Victoria during that time.

The Albury Fire Control Centre was manned by staff and opened on 7 February and arranged responses from Woomargama, Central and Mullengandra Rural Fire Brigades to various fires. The CFA in Victoria requested ten (10) Strike Teams to respond to a fire in the Kilmore area in Victoria. Strike Team (RFS 1 Alpha) from Albury was subsequently deployed at 2030 hours to Beechworth and a replacement Strike Team (RFS 1 Bravo) was arranged out of Corowa for 8 February. The Southern Border Team continually provided day and night shift Strike Teams to the Beechworth fires through until 11 February. The involvement from the Southern Border team included a total of 196 personnel from 31 Brigades, 32 appliances and 6 support vehicles, resulting in 4945 man hours and 824 tanker hours. The enthusiastic and exemplary manner in which the Southern Border Team staff and volunteers responded and assisted to the bush fire emergency in Victoria, while still maintaining core business, is worthy of recognition and commendation by the NSW Rural Fire Service.

Lynwood Park Rural Fire Brigade

Varroville Rural Fire Brigade

Macarthur Zone, Region East

At approximately 1510 hours on 28 February 2007 the Macarthur Fire Control Centre received numerous calls to Menangle Road in the vicinity of Broughton Anglican School to reports of "water over the road".

Due to the time of day, being a school day and the potential significant traffic issues, Rural Fire Brigades were activated to assist. Within minutes, additional information was received that severe flooding was occurring and cars were being washed from the roadway and parents and children were trapped in the School.

The Lynwood Park and Varroville Rural Fire Brigades were two of the first units to arrive and were immediately put to work with assisting the checking of vehicles in the water and securing the site. A pump relay with the tankers was put in place to relieve the pressure of water through a culvert that was drawing cars into it. The members of these two Brigades displayed creativeness and a willingness to commit to roles above and beyond their normal duties and are worthy recipients of formal recognition by the NSW Rural Fire Service.

Media Services Unit

Executive Services

Following on from the Interim Report of the Royal Commission into the Victorian Bush Fires, the Headquarters Media Services Unit undertook work associated with the preparation of the 2009 "Prepare, Act, Survive" Public Awareness campaign and completed this excellent work in what would normally be considered an unreasonable timeframe of three weeks during September. This comprehensive public awareness campaign which has and continues to appear on Television, Radio and in print media informs the community about changes to Fire Danger Ratings and important associated bush fire awareness messages agreed to recently at national level. The high quality of the work by the Media Services Unit and the credit they achieved for the Service is commendable and worthy of formal recognition by the NSW Rural Fire Service.

St Florian's Feast Day, the Fourth of May

Firefighters in most European countries celebrate 4 May as St Florian's Feast Day as well as International Firefighters Day. This has been a tradition in central Europe for more than 150 years.

Born about 250AD in Cetium (now in Austria), Florian joined the Roman army and angered the Emperor Diocletian when he refused to persecute Christians in the area. Florian gave himself up to the soldiers of Aquilinus, the governor, when they were rounding up the Christians. He was twice scourged, half-flayed alive and sentenced to be burnt alive. While being set on fire he challenged the Roman soldiers to light the fire, saying "If you do, I will climb to heaven on the flames". As the soldiers were apprehensive, they took another path and threw Florian into the river Enns with a stone around his neck.

About 600 years later, in approximately 900-950AD a monastery was built near Florian's tomb, and subsequently the village of St Florian grew around it. St Florian was adopted as the Patron Saint of Poland, following an incident when a person was saved from a fire by invoking St Florian's name. Since then, St Florian has been invoked against fire and has been generally regarded in most countries as the Patron Saint of Firefighters.

Florian is associated with brewer's because of a legendary incident in which he miraculously stopped a fire with a single pitcher of water. He is often depicted holding a pitcher of water.

Many miracles of healing are attributed to his intercession and he is invoked as a powerful protector in danger from fire.



St Florian's Day

4 May 2010

NSW Rural Fire Service

15 Carter Street, Lidcombe