

NSW Rural Fire Service
The Award of the Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM)
Queen's Birthday Honours and Awards 2006

NOMINATION STATEMENTS

Bruce Allan Smith

Mr Smith has been a member of the Rural Fire Service for forty three years having joined the Moruya Rural Fire Brigade in the early 1960s. He remains an active member of the brigade and is currently the Deputy Group Officer, Central and Captain of the Moruya Rural Fire Brigade. Mr Smith was highly active in the major fires in the Eurobodalla Shire in 1968, 1972, 1988, 1994, 1997 and in 2001/2002 and 2002/2003. He was also a member of the Canberra Strike Team during the recent disastrous fires there.

He has a long history of commitment to the Rural fire Service as has his family. He was also involved in the catering brigade when he was not actively involved in the suppression of fires. He is widely known as an exceptional officer who has the confidence of the volunteer and salaried members of the Service. His ability to manage and preserve the safety and well being of those members of the Service under his control during fires and other emergency incidents is above reproach. Due to his ability as a front line manager, and his extensive local knowledge, he was continuously tasked as a fire controller, often in highly volatile and dangerous situations, where his performance was nothing less than outstanding throughout protracted campaign fires.

Mr Smith was responsible for and instigated the recruitment and training of junior members of the Service, many of whom have continued on to become efficient and effective active fire fighters throughout the Service.

His contribution to the local community and to the Rural Fire Service far exceeds that which is normally expected from a volunteer member of the Service and he is a most worthy candidate for the award of the Australian Fire Service Medal.

Alan Gillespie

Mr Gillespie joined the NSW Rural Fire Service in July 1997 having previously served seven years with the Queensland Rural Fire Service as a District Officer. Late in 1997, Mr Gillespie attended a Service Senior Managers Conference and heard a presentation on "Zoning". The proposal called for the combination of two or more districts to achieve greater efficiencies and increased service delivery. Mr Gillespie was very interested in the new concept and became part of a working party to look at the further development of the concept into a working model and the development of strategies to support the model. Beyond development and acceptance, Mr Gillespie was given responsibility for project managing zoning in the Hunter Region. Over the following two years, Mr Gillespie worked closely with staff, volunteers and councils to critically examine each aspect of zoning and how it would benefit service delivery in the Hunter Region. In so doing he demonstrated exceptional leadership skills as he dealt rationally and sympathetically with all of the local concerns and built upon the trust he had developed to demonstrate the value of zoning and its benefits.

During 2000/2001, the Rural Fire Service underwent significant change following a major restructure of the Service. Mr Gillespie continued with his zone working parties and under his guidance, zones were established in the Lower Hunter, Liverpool Ranges and McArthur areas. His work also paved the way for the transitional arrangements of teaming in the Upper Hunter, Lake Macquarie/Wyong and Hunter areas.

Following his appointment to the position of Zone Manager, Lower Hunter Zone in May 2003 Mr Gillespie has been able to implement many of the improvements he identified during the earlier facilitation process. His skills as a manager and negotiator have resulted in substantial benefits to the zone, including the implementation of an effective Group structure and the adoption of an operations doctrine that provides for the exercise of control by Captains and Group Officers at fire operations, a sixty percent increase in volunteer access to training and a substantial improvement in information flow to volunteers.

Mr Gillespie has a passionate belief in the Rural Fire Service and its volunteers. He has embraced change enthusiastically and is a staunch advocate for zoning. In his work in this area, he has displayed the very finest qualities of leadership and commitment in his facilitation and implementation of the zoning concept.

Allan Edward Brett

Mr Brett joined the Long Reef Sur Club in approximately 1963 and remains a member today. He obtained his bronze medallion, was an instructor and Vice President and Vice Captain of the Club. On 30 March 1971, he joined the Rural Fire Service as an active fire fighter in the Warringah Headquarters Rural Fire Brigades. He is also an Honorary Ranger with Warringah Council.

He also spent almost nine years as an Honorary Ambulance Bearer and was involved in the Granville rail disaster, assisting evacuees in the Darwin cyclone disaster and with the petroleum ship fire at Gore Bay. He is an Honorary Fire Patrol Officer for the State and a life member of the Warringah Headquarters Brigade.

He is a hard working member of the Rural Fire Service giving thorough attention to his duties and has always acted in the best interest of the Rural Fire Service. He is qualified in all bush fire courses. He has held Service positions of Deputy Captain, Captain and Deputy Group Captain and has been awarded Rural Fire Service 15 and 25 Year Long Service Awards. He has also been awarded the 2001 Centenary Medal for Service to the Rural Fire Service and Community and the 1998 Rotary Pride of Workmanship Award. He is also a recipient of the Commissioner's Commendation for Service for his outstanding contribution to the growth and development of the Rural Fire Service locally.

In 2001, Mr Brett transferred to the Cottage Point Rural Fire Brigade where he has held the positions of Senior Deputy Group Captain and Deputy Group Captain.

Mr Brett has always strived for excellence in everything he has been involved in. He has attended all of the fire emergencies in the Warringah/Pittwater area and many others in New South Wales and in Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory. Throughout his long period of distinguished service with the Rural Fire Service, Mr Brett has aptly demonstrated his leadership, commitment, application and dedication to the Service and is a most worthy candidate for nomination for the award of the Australian Fire Service Medal.

William Rodger

Mr Rodger moved from Hornsby to Wilberforce in late 1950 and in early 1960, after a series of bush fires in the area, Mr Rodger collaborated with other concerned residents in the area and established a bush fire brigade in Wilberforce. From the beginning, Mr Rodger was the driving force behind the brigade and its establishment can be directly attributed to his dedication and perseverance with Council and the local Fire Control Officer. The establishment of the Wilberforce Rural Fire Brigade was a major achievement for Mr Rodger as well as for the residents of Wilberforce.

As an inaugural member of the brigade, Mr Rodger played an important role in the subsequent and ongoing development of the brigade and was appointed Deputy Captain in 1964, Senior Deputy Captain in 1967 and Captain in 1969. He served in the latter appointment for eight years before being appointed as the Fire Control Officer for Colo Shire Council and served in this appointment for the next twenty three years before retiring from office.

As the Fire Control Officer for Colo and later Hawkesbury Shire Council, Mr Rodger played an integral role in steering the Hawkesbury Rural Fire Brigades into a well equipped, well trained and highly effective and efficient fire fighting organisation that is respected and highly regarded by the Hawkesbury and neighbouring communities today. Mr Rodger remains an active member of the Wilberforce Rural Fire Brigade.

Throughout his career with the Rural Fire Service, Mr Rodger has attended and managed a number of major fires in the Lithgow, Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury areas as well as managing the employment of a number of interstate brigades attending these fires. He has clearly demonstrated his distinguished service for a continuous period exceeding forty years and this service continues. His dedication, leadership, commitment to the Service and promotion of the Service has been outstanding and exemplary. Mr Rodger is a thoroughly deserving and worthy candidate for the award of the Australian Fire Service Medal.

David Ian Messenger

Mr Messenger joined the Rural Fire Service as a member of the Avoca Rural Fire Brigade in December 1994 after attending the devastating bush fires in New South Wales while serving with the Royal Australian Navy.

Within six months of joining the Avoca Brigade he became the Brigade Training Officer, spending countless hours instructing his brigade members on all facets of fire fighting. He was able to call upon his considerable experience in the Navy demonstrating pronounced leadership qualities, team building skills and demonstrated fire fighting skills.

Over the period with the Avoca Brigade until 2001, Mr Messenger held the positions of Deputy Captain, Senior Deputy Captain, Training Officer, Vice President and Breathing Apparatus Officer and spent many hours in the delivery of training.

He joined the Copacabana Rural Fire Brigade in August 2001 and once again proved his dedication and commitment to the brigade and to the Service holding the positions of ordinary member, Deputy Captain and Senior Deputy Captain. His skills and experience were highly regarded by the brigade members and he was called upon regularly for advice, guidance and support, all of which was provided without hesitation.

In 2003 he joined the Forbes Central Rural Fire Brigade and is currently the Training Coordinator for the Forbes District. This role requires him to arrange and coordinate courses in accordance with the current training schedule. Since his appointment, training has greatly increased within the district and several different brigades now look to him for training using his considerable skills and experience.

His years of dedication and commitment to training in a number of brigades and positions within the Rural Fire Service demonstrate his distinguished service and he is a thoroughly deserving candidate for the award of the Australian Fire Service Medal.

Gordon Ryrie Hill

Chief Superintendent Gordon Hill joined the Urbenville Rural Fire Brigade in May 1972 and from 1972 to 1988, he held at various times the positions of Deputy Captain, Senior Deputy Captain, Secretary and Treasurer as well as Captain of the Brigade from 1984 to 1988. As a Councillor of the Tenterfield Shire he was also Council's representative on the Clarence Bush Fire Prevention Association from 1982 to 1988 and on the NSW/Queensland Border Liaison Committee from 1985 to 1988.

In 1988 he was appointed Regional Officer, Western Region for the then Department of Bush Fire Services and was based at Cobar. In 1994 this position became the Regional Coordinator and in 2001, Gordon was appointed as the Operations Officer following a restructure of all Regions.

He has been an influential figure in establishing the NSW Rural Fire Service in western New South Wales. He has also been instrumental in establishing Brigades in remote areas, the implementation of structure training programs, developing prevention and mitigation programs and coordinating fire and emergency operations.

In his administrative role as Regional Coordinator, Gordon encouraged and oversaw a significant expansion of funding to western New South Wales to enable the appointment of full-time Fire Control Officers and major capital works programs involving the replacement of an aging tanker fleet, construction of Brigade Stations and the introduction of the Service radio network.

As Operations Officer for Region West, he has led the implementation of major improvements to training, incident pre-planning, response and support operations to ensure all operations are conducted in the safest and most efficient manner possible.

Gordon was also actively involved in the Olympics Volunteers in policing in 2000. He has received two Commissioner's Commendations for Service for his roles in Critical Incident Support Services and for his coordination role in providing fire fighting resources to the east coast Kosciusko Fires in 2003/2004.

He has made a life-long commitment to bush fire fighting services in New South Wales through his roles as a volunteer, a local government representative and as a staff member of the NSW Rural Fire Service and is a most worthy Service candidate for the award of the Australian Fire Service Medal.
