

MEDIA RELEASE



NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

RFS member awarded for innovative use of social media

16 September 2013

Facebook is helping the NSW Rural Fire Service overcome the 'tyranny of distance' thanks to the work of Inspector Robyn Favelle and the Barrier Range Brigade.

Inspector Favelle was awarded the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Council (AFAC) Motorola Knowledge Innovation award for her work using the social network to gather and share important fire information in the far west of NSW.

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons congratulated Inspector Favelle on her award.

"Robyn recognised the potential of Facebook for connecting landowners, volunteer firefighters and incident management teams via the internet, and created a 'closed group' system that improved our knowledge of and response to fires.

"Thanks to her initiative in working with the Barrier Range Brigade, we now have a system that enables remote brigades to gather and share important fire information quickly and accurately.

"Landowners and community members in these more remote parts of NSW will benefit from the service being better informed and connected about fires, and the service will be better placed to inform them of local fires," Commissioner Fitzsimmons said.

As a result of her innovative work in this area, Inspector Favelle has been approached by the University of Wollongong School of Information Systems to assist with their study of the potential of social media in responding to emergencies.

Watch more on the Far West Region's use of Facebook here: http://youtu.be/d_MWN8PF-fA

Dr Simon Heemstra also accepted the award for Excellence in Utilisation of Bushfire CRC Research on behalf of NSW RFS for improved operational tools in fire behaviour modelling, grassland curing and smoke plume modelling.

"These tools have widespread benefits for communities around NSW including increased forecast accuracy in Grassland Fire Danger Ratings and an improved ability to predict the impact of fires" Commissioner Fitzsimmons said.

For more information contact the State Duty Media Officer on phone 9898 1855 or email media@rfs.nsw.gov.au.