



# Michael Gallacher MLC

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council  
Minister for Police and Emergency Services  
Minister for the Hunter

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## MEDIA RELEASE

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Wednesday 15 May 2013

### **BUSINESSES PRAISED FOR EXCEPTIONAL VOLUNTEER SUPPORT**

Twelve businesses supporting NSW Rural Fire Service volunteers were today singled out for praise by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services Michael Gallacher and Deputy Commissioner Rob Rogers. Each business has been awarded a Special Commendation in recognition of their support.

“Despite often difficult economic conditions, these businesses have been extraordinarily supportive of their employees volunteering commitments,” Minister Gallacher said.

“This support is a hidden, but essential part of the volunteering effort. Without question these employers are contributing to their community and helping make it a better, safer place.

Deputy Commissioner Rob Rogers highlighted the importance of this support in a difficult fire season.

“This season we had around 6,000 fires burn some 1.4 million hectares in some of the worst conditions we have ever seen in NSW.

“While we lost many homes, livestock and other property, it is clear those losses would have been much greater if these employers had not allowed their staff to join the firefighting effort,” Deputy Commissioner Rogers said.

The businesses honoured range from self-employed volunteers, through small and medium enterprises, to large corporations. The twelve were chosen after the Minister called for nominations at the beginning of March.

The Supportive Employer Program was launched earlier this year by Minister Gallacher to recognise the essential contribution employers make to the volunteering effort.

“While the time and effort that volunteers put in is clearly visible, this couldn’t happen without supportive employers behind the scenes,” Minister Gallacher said.

This announcement coincides with National Volunteer Week, a time to celebrate the contribution of all volunteers and their supporters. Volunteers perform a range of roles that are all of equal importance to the firefighting effort, including radio operators, catering, logistics, planning and aviation support.

**Media: Clint McGilvray 0413 285 186 (Gallacher) and NSW RFS State Duty Media Officer – (02) 9898 1855**

***Details of the businesses receiving Special Commendations***

**The Armidale School** - Staff at the Armidale School, an independent boarding and day school in northern NSW, have the flexibility to attend incidents with their brigades during work hours when circumstances permit. They also assist delivery of bush fire training to around 20 students per year through a youth development partnership program with the New England Zone. Last year the school granted leave for a staff member to represent the NSW RFS in Botswana.

**BHP / Illawarra Coal** - Dane Coulter of Thirlmere Brigade nominated his employer Illawarra Coal for their generous and flexible paid volunteer leave policy and the Matched Giving Program, which provides a \$10 matched donation for every hour employees spend volunteering. Illawarra Coal operates in the Illawarra and Wollondilly regions of NSW.

**Braidwood & Bungendore Community Bank** - Scott Hart of Braidwood Rural Fire Brigade nominated this Community Bank for its generous support of local brigades, active encouragement of volunteering and for allowing him to attend incidents whenever possible.

**Brunswick Byron Pest Control** - Mark and Leah Ross are self-employed volunteers who also employ one of their children in the family business. All three are active members of the Mullumbimby Rural Fire Brigade and give a lot of their time to the brigade, managing their business around fire calls and other NSW RFS activities.

**Chesterfield Australia PL** - Chesterfield Australia is a family owned company supplying rural industries farming machinery & equipment. The Warren branch was nominated by Trades Assistant Shaun Doughty for promoting volunteering in the workplace and supporting employees to take time off to attend NSW RFS incidents and training exercises.

**Gow-Gates Insurance Brokers PL**- Nominator Bert Clarke of Valley Heights Brigade states that in the 20 years he has been a member of the NSW RFS the company has fully supported his volunteering activities and have promoted his RFS achievements in the company newsletter. The company advises Bert's clients of his commitments, particularly during fire season, and of their support.

**Impact One** - Christopher Muscat is a self-employed musician who is an active member of the Huskisson Brigade. He manages his volunteering activities around his paid work as singer and keyboardist for venues and private functions around the NSW South Coast.

**Junction City Transport** - Roger Ley has been nominated by the Captain of the Burren Junction Brigade as a self-employed volunteer. Roger owns Junction City Transport and is also a very dedicated member of the brigade. Roger is always willing to attend incidents event if it means putting his work on hold, as well assisting with his tools, equipment and expertise to do minor maintenance jobs for the brigade.

**Schweppes** - Andrew Henderson of Londonderry Brigade has worked for Schweppes Australia for six years and during that time they have supported him by releasing him

to attend emergency incidents on full pay, even if that meant paying a contractor to cover Andrew's position. Schweppes has a generous Emergency Services Leave Policy.

**Telstra Corporation** - All Telstra employees can take general volunteer leave to participate in either a non-profit organisation of their choice or team volunteering through one of Telstra's charity partners. In addition they provide Emergency Response Leave for Telstra employees who are members of recognised emergency organisations such as the RFS.

**Wentworthville Leagues Club** - Adam Streichler is a volunteer with Westleigh Brigade who was deployed to Coonabarabran in January 2013 and had to leave work at short notice. Due to Adam's situation the Board of Directors has implemented a generous and flexible Emergency Services Leave Policy for Club employees who volunteer.

**Zoetis Australia** – Zoetis, Australia's largest animal health company was nominated by two employees in recognition of the company's active support for volunteers engaged in community services by providing paid Volunteering Leave of at least 4 days per year. Emergency service volunteers are entitled to additional paid leave.