

NSW Rural Fire Service
The Award of the Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM)
Australia Day Honours and Awards 2007

NOMINATION STATEMENTS

Kam Daryl Baker

Superintendent Kam Baker has been a member of the NSW Rural Fire Service since 1980. He is currently a salaried serving officer in the position of Team Manager Manning District.

He joined the Patonga Beach Rural Fire Brigade in the Gosford District and learned his fire fighting skills in that brigade. He was elected as a Deputy Captain of the brigade at 18 years of age. He was then promoted to take ownership of the first Fire Boat of Gosford District and was used to protect the communities on the Hawkesbury River. In 1985, he transferred to the Pearl Beach Rural Fire Brigade and immediately became heavily involved in that brigade and worked his way up to become Brigade Captain in 1989. He was instrumental in remodelling the brigade and improving service to the remote community of Pearl Beach. He guided the brigade showing leadership well beyond his years and successfully established the incident response performance of the brigade in being able to man two fire fighting appliances 24 hours a day for weeks on end. During 1990, he also project managed the construction of a new fire station for the brigade. He was awarded Life Membership of the Pearl Beach Rural Fire Brigade in 1991.

In 1991 he was again promoted to Group Officer and in this capacity he took on the responsibilities for numerous brigades in the Gosford District. In 1993, he was successful in obtaining a permanent salaried position in the Rural Fire Service as the Fire Control Officer for the Gloucester District. Here he was responsible for 23 brigades that were equipped mainly with tanker trailers and with very little equipment and training. Through his personal and sustained efforts, the District today has 15 well equipped and trained Rural Fire Brigades.

Superintendent Baker is considered by brigade members to be an inspirational leader and his guidance and inputs into the Senior Management Team in the Gloucester District has been invaluable. He has also been heavily involved as a specialist in air operations and is today recognised as the most experienced Air Operations Manager in the State. He holds specialist qualifications in Air Attack, Air Observation, Aircraft Officer and Air Operations Manager. He assisted in the writing of the Airbase Operations Course and is highly regarded as an Instructor in Air Operations. Together with his extensive operational experience, including that as a Section 44 Incident Controller, Superintendent Baker has steered and moulded the Gloucester District of the Rural Fire Service into a smooth running and functional district that provides a very high level of service to the community. His efforts and results make him a worthy candidate for the award of the Australian Fire Service Medal.

Michael Beltran

Chief Superintendent Michael (Mick) Beltran began his service with the Rural Fire Service with the Waterfall Rural Fire Brigade as a volunteer in mid 1970. In early 1980, he was successful in gaining appointment as a salaried Fire Control Officer, Campbelltown Council and held this position for a number of years. In April 1986, he was appointed as the Regional Officer, Albury by the Bush Fire Council.

In August 1994, he was appointed Regional Coordinator, Albury Region of the Rural Fire Service and in February 2003 was appointed as Regional Operations Officer Region East and he is currently the acting Region Manager, Region East with the rank of Chief Superintendent.

During his time in his appointments in the Albury Region, he consistently demonstrated his dedication and commitment to the Rural Fire Service through the promotion of training as well as providing positive leadership to his fellow salaried officers and volunteers in that region. He piloted a number of training and leadership courses for volunteers prior to the Service developing its own state based training courses. He was then and still is passionate about volunteerism and the need to encourage and mentor volunteers into the Service as full-time employees. He was also involved in ensuring the continued recognition of the humble beginnings of the Rural Fire Service some 100 years ago through the erection of a monument in Berrigan where the first Rural Fire Brigade was formed.

Since his appointment to Region East in 2003, he has provided leadership and support of a very high quality to the District Operations Staff and is recognised for his dedication and commitment to the Service in all operational matters. He has participated with considerable skill in an operational management capacity during some of the worst fire seasons in the history of the State of New South Wales and he continues to foster and promote the culture of the Rural Fire Service through his enthusiasm, dedication and total commitment to all members of the Rural Fire Service. The performance in his duties in the Service brings great credit upon himself and the Service and this makes him a most worthy candidate for the award of the Australian Fire Service Medal.

Trevor James Anderson

Mr Anderson's dedication and commitment to the NSW Rural Fire Service commenced when he was appointed to the position of Secretary to the Bush Fire Council in 1979. Since his appointment in 1979 and in his many appointments within the Service since that time, he has been instrumental in many changes to the organisation and its ever expanding role in fire and emergency management. Accordingly, his position, responsibility and influence increased over the years in line with the organisational transformation.

He is renowned for his dedication, commitment and professionalism in overseeing the delivery of critical services to the volunteers, including programmes such as annual budgets and allocations, workers compensation, insurance provisions and legal representation. Many of the services afforded volunteers today are in large part the result of decades of commitment from Mr Anderson.

His many years of experience and dedication have been underpinned with his passion for serving the broader community and the many thousands of volunteer men and women that give so much of their time in support of others.

His commitment to the NSW Rural Fire Service has been nothing short of exemplary and he is a worthy candidate for the award of the Australian Fire Service Medal.

Donald Luscombe

Mr Donald Luscombe joined the Winmalee Rural Fire Brigade in December 1976 as a volunteer member. He was elected Secretary of that Brigade in June 1978 and held that position until June 1980. He was elected Deputy Captain of the Brigade in June 1981 and held that position until June 1986. He was elected Captain of the Brigade in June 1986 and held that position until June 1993. He was elected Deputy Group Officer in June 1993 and was elected Group Captain in June 1998 and maintained this position until he stood down in May 2006. He was elected the volunteer representative on the Blue Mountains Bush Fire Management Committee in 1991 and he currently remains in that position.

Mr Luscombe was a founding member of the NSW Rural Fire Service Association upon its establishment in 1996 and was initially elected as the first Vice President (Volunteer) of that organisation and as President in June 1998. He served as President of the Association until June 2002 and was responsible for the establishment of many of the projects currently in place with the Association, including the establishment of the Volunteer Fire Fighters Benevolent Fund. While serving as President, he was also heavily involved in the change over of salaried officers from Local Government to State Government employment and he represented both volunteer and salaried officers during this tumultuous period. He served again as Vice President from June 2002 until June 2003 and as Secretary/Treasurer from June 2003 until June 2004.

He was also an inaugural member of the Corporate Executive Group of the Rural Fire Service upon its establishment in 1997 and continued to represent the Association as a member until June 2003. He was also an inaugural member of the Fire Services Joint Standing Committee upon its establishment in 1998 and he continued to represent the Association and served on this Committee until June 2006. The Fire Services Joint Standing Committee is a legislative committee established for the principal purpose of implementing strategies to minimise duplication and maximise compatibility between the services of the NSW Fire Brigades and NSW Rural Fire Service. His distinguished service and significant contributions to the deliberations of both of these bodies was formally recognised by way of formal notation within the respective Minutes of Meetings.

Mr Luscombe also excelled in fire fighting activities in the ten major bush fire emergencies in the Blue Mountains between 1976 and 2002. He has also attended major bush fire emergencies at Mittagong, Sutherland, Gosford, Campbelltown, Bucketty and Taree. He also played a key role in the major disasters of the storms in the Blue Mountains in 1980 and on the North Shore in 1989.

Mr Luscombe has given 30 years of outstanding, committed, dedicated and distinguished service to the NSW Rural Fire Service and the Rural Fire Service Association in addition to his significant contributions to the deliberations of the Blue Mountains Bush Fire Management Committee, the Rural Fire Service Corporate Executive Group and to the State Fire Services Joint Standing Committee. His service is such that he is a most worthy candidate for the award of the Australian Fire Service Medal.

Leslie Graham Stewart

Mr Stewart is a foundation member and life member of the Bucketty Rural Fire Brigade having joined the brigade in December 1979. He rose quickly through the ranks of fire fighters becoming the Deputy Captain in 1980 and Senior Deputy Captain in 1982. He was promoted to Captain in 1986 and remained in this position until 1991 and was appointed Deputy Group Captain in 1992 for the Western Sector.

He has been part of the Senior Management Team of the District since 1991 and he has been active in the needs for brigades and personnel not only within the Western Sector but also across the District.

He has always been a strong advocate of training in all forms throughout the district and he served as a member of the Local Training Committee.

During the 1994 bush fire emergency, he proved to be a wealth of local knowledge on both the landscape and local fire behaviour and was successful in keeping morale high in local brigades and sharing this with visiting CFA Crews from Victoria who were assisting the local brigades.

He achieved Bush Fire Instructor Level 1 in 1995 and has been instrumental in the instruction and development of newer members of local brigades. He is a champion of the volunteers and their cause and is well respected in Bucketty and in the Western Sector for his work in the Rural Fire Service and in the local communities.

Ronald (John) Ashton

Mr John Ashton joined the Tabourie Rural Fire Brigade in 1982 and was elected as Captain in 1992. He remained as Captain until 1995 when he took up the position of Group Captain in 1995, a position he still holds to this day. He has served with distinction in the positions of Fire Fighter, Brigade Captain and as a Group Captain. He has been involved in bush fires in the Shoalhaven District and also out of area around the State as well as in Victoria for over 24 years. He held the position of Divisional Commander during many Section 41F and Section 44 bush fire emergencies within the Shoalhaven District, including the 2003 Booderee/Jervis Bay Section 44 bush fires. He has also fulfilled the role of Incident Controller on night shifts during many of these emergencies.

He currently represents all of the volunteers within the Shoalhaven area on the Shoalhaven District Liaison Committee.

Mr Ashton is also a former Australian Defence Force member having served with distinction in the Royal Australian Navy.

He assisted in the establishment and setting up of the Shoalhaven Catering Brigade and is an avid supporter of this brigade, which comes under his control as the Group 5 Captain.

Mr Ashton has a proven and demonstrated record of resourcefulness, leadership and professionalism and is highly respected by his peers and superiors in the Service.

His commitment to the Rural Fire Service and his service within the Shoalhaven District is distinguished in all its facets and his professionalism throughout his 24 years of continuous service has brought great credit upon himself and to the Rural Fire Service and this makes him a worthy candidate for the award of the Australian Fire Service Medal.

John Edwin Harvey

Mr Harvey first joined the NSW Rural Fire Service in 1954 as a member of the Ashby Rural Fire Brigade. This brigade was the first to be formed in the Maclean Shire in 1952. During his many years of active service, he has held a number of senior field positions which include Deputy Captain, Senior Deputy Captain, Captain and he is currently a Group Captain. He is also the Chairman of the Clarence Valley Zone Advisory Committee and within his role on this committee; he has always strongly promoted the Rural Fire Service.

Mr Harvey has been involved in fighting many types of fires and has gained the respect and friendship of many members of the Service across the State during his appointments as Task Force Commander on several out of area Section 44 bush fire emergencies. These include fires at Kosciusko, Tenterfield, Glen Innes and the Richmond Valley areas in 2001 and 2003.

He has helped lobby for many improvements to equipment and facilities for the Service members of the former Maclean Shire Council where he spent 20 years serving as a member of Council and 13 of these years, as Mayor. In particular, his efforts saw many significant improvements to vehicle fleet and Brigade Stations. He spent many hours fund raising and organising the building of the new two-bay Brigade Station at Ashby. He also helped secure funding for the local Maclean Shire Emergency Headquarters which was a joint venture between Council and the State Emergency Service. He has also served on the Executive of the NSW Shires Association and served for three years as Chairman on the State Roads Committee.

He has also been a member of the State Emergency Service in Maclean for 20 years.

With his heavy commitments and service to the community within the Maclean Shire, Mr Harvey has always placed the highest priority with the Rural Fire Service and has never missed attending a fire when he has called out to do so. He has remained an active and exemplary member of the Rural Fire Service for fifty years and is a most worthy candidate for recognition by way of the Australian Fire Service Medal.
