

**NSW Rural Fire Service**  
**The Award of the Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM)**  
**Australia Day Honours and Awards 2006**

**NOMINATION STATEMENTS**

**Leslie Bowden**

Mr Bowden joined the Salt Ash Rural Fire Brigade in January 1980. His first year of fire fighting in a very bad fire season sparked a 20 year campaign by Mr Bowden to promote the virtues of training and thereby improve the safety and welfare of the volunteer fire fighters within the Port Stephens area.

In 1980 he was elected to the position of Deputy Captain of the brigade and he immediately commenced to conduct regular training sessions and equipment maintenance days and despite resistance to these measures, he gradually galvanised the brigade members and radically improved the brigade's fire management skills and coordination leading to better fire management overall. In addition, over the following years he led numerous delegations to the Shire in an attempt to modernise the brigade fire fighting fleet. In 1988 with the brigade training program now firmly in place, he was promoted to the newly created position of Group Captain and he immediately began an expansion of his local training program to other brigades within the Port Stephens area and facilitated the implementation of training programs and vastly improved inter-brigade relationships and brigade coordination. In 1994, the Port Stephens area was devastated by bush fires with a long and protracted bush fire season. Mr Bowden played a pivotal role in fire ground management for number of fires on the Tilligerry Peninsula, demonstrating outstanding leadership and courage under extremely adverse conditions. Further, his training initiatives with the local brigades were demonstrated time and again by his trained brigades out performing other brigades involved in the fire fighting efforts. In 1996, Mr Bowden retired from the work force and devoted his time to delivering training to volunteer fire fighters in Cabonne Shire while still maintaining his active role as Group Captain in Port Stephens. Since 2000, he has become actively involved in Rural Fire Service management, particularly in Risk Management and Community Education.

Mr Bowden's 24 years of exemplary service have contributed significantly to the Rural Fire Service and his unswerving belief in the value of the training he has delivered along with his efforts towards improving the lot of volunteer fire fighters being an inspiration to other members of the Service in the Port Stephens area.

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## **Brian Lindsay Favelle**

Mr Favelle joined the Kentlyn Brigade of the Rural Fire Service in the Campbelltown area in 1950. He travelled from his residence in Balmain to the brigade every Friday night to attend training and bush fire activities returning to his residence on Sunday evenings. In 1961 Mr Favelle resigned from the Kentlyn Brigade and was appointed as a volunteer fire fighter to the NSW Fire Brigades Campbelltown Brigade and retired as Captain of that Brigade on 8 July 1995. He moved to the Taree area in late 1995 where he rejoined the Rural Fire Service Hannanvale Rural Fire Brigade on 1 January 1996. He remains an active member of the Hannanvale Brigade.

Throughout his fifty five years of dedicated and distinguished service to both the NSW Fire Brigades and the Rural Fire Service, Mr Favelle developed an extensive and invaluable knowledge of the Australian bush and the reactions of fire in the bush. He has worked in numerous capacities with the brigades of both Fire Services and through his pronounced leadership traits and abilities as a recognised expert on fighting bush fires; he was promoted into appointments of command within both Services. He was self employed over the majority of the period of his service and often chose to assist the community by continuing the diligent performance of his duties with the Fire Services and responding to the communities' needs by turning out to fires to the detriment of his own business.

Over the long period of his service, he was instrumental in the implementation of many changes to existing work and safety practices in both Services that enhanced the performance of those brigades for which he was responsible.

As a current serving member of the Rural Fire Service and a past officer of the NSW Fire Brigades, Mr Favelle is highly respected for his knowledge, professionalism, experience and leadership skills and his many years of loyal and dedicated services to fire fighting in New South Wales, particularly in the Campbelltown area, makes him a most worthy and commendable candidate for nomination for the Australian Fire Service Medal.

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**Alan Robinson**

Mr Robinson joined the Glenbrook Rural Fire Brigade in 1967. He carried out the duties of a volunteer fire fighter with distinction until 1984 when he joined the communications unit. Since that time he has numerous positions within the brigade, namely Communications Captain, Vice President and Training Assessor. During Section 44 emergency situations, he undertakes the duties of Staging Officer and District Safety Officer.

Mr Robinson's major achievement throughout his 38 years with the Glenbrook Rural Fire Brigade has been in the design and construction of a purpose built fully fitted out mobile communications vehicle for the communications support of fire fighting operations in difficult terrain. This project has been so successful that brigades from many other areas of the State have now developed similar vehicles base upon Mr Robinson's initial work on the communications vehicle project.

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## **Grant Anderson**

Mr Anderson joined the Lanitza Rural Fire Brigade in 1982 and served with that brigade as a volunteer fire fighter until 1995 rising to the rank of Captain of the brigade as well as serving as the District Training Officer.

Since 1995, he has served as the Deputy Fire Control Officer of the Nymboida/Pristine Waters/Clarence Valley Zone. In his staff capacity, he has mentored training of fire fighters through the Region and had a major input into current training programs. He regularly assists in district training and is a keen a proactive member of the Regional Training Group as a Presenter and Trainer for numerous Regional Training Courses.

Over the period of his 22 years of service, he has remained active on fire fighting operations as a sector commander/leader for internal and out of area tasks. In addition, he has been the Task Force Commander for several Regional Task Forces committed to fire and storm operations.

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## **John Tolhurst**

Mr Tolhurst joined the Megalong Valley Rural Fire Brigade in 1953 and in 1956 was elected as Senior Deputy Captain, a position he held until 1968 when he took on the role of Deputy Group Captain (West Leader 2). In 1986 he was promoted to Group Leader, the highest ranking volunteer in the Blue Mountains. In 1988, he was appointed to the staff position of Deputy Fire Control Officer (Operations) Blue Mountains and he remains in this position today.

Mr Tolhurst participated with distinction in significant fire fighting operations in command positions over the years 1968 -2001 in his capacities as a volunteer fire fighter, Deputy Group Captain and Incident Controller. In addition, he has been instrumental in implementing Occupational Health and Safety into the brigades within the Blue Mountains and in getting the first Rural Fire Service Fire Investigation Unit established.

He has worked tirelessly as a Deputy Fire Control Officer to ensure the safety of all residents, visitors to the Blue Mountains and to the fire fighters within the district through his commitment to the construction and maintenance of the fire trails within the district. He has also been the driving force behind the hazard reduction process and has ensured that hazard reduction has regularly taken place in the best interest of protecting the community. He has given 51 years in voluntary, permanent and valuable service to the community and to the NSW Rural Fire Service.

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## **James Drinnan**

Mr Drinnan commenced service with the Camden West Rural Fire Brigade on 1 March 1965 as a founding member of the then Ellis Lane Rural Fire Brigade. He worked tirelessly to help develop the brigade into an effective fire fighting unit and was instrumental in recruiting and motivating members, ensuring the continued protection needed in that area. He played a leading role in the community involvement of the Camden West Brigade. He has held the leadership appointments of Deputy Captain, Senior Deputy Captain and Captain since joining the brigade and his motivational leadership has seen the local community well involved with the brigade and the brigade heavily involved with the local community. He has been a mentor for less experienced officers in the brigade and has afforded these officers the opportunity to progress with the sound benefit of his experience to guide them.

Mr Drinnan's contributions to the Camden west Rural Fire Brigade are well above an average commitment. As a local business owner, he encouraged his employees to join the brigade and was prepared to suspend work operations to allow these employees to attend emergency incidents and lead his crew on many of these responses. He unselfishly accepted the lost productivity and viewed this as a duty in order to protect the local community. In addition, he is also a qualified pilot and frequently used this position to fly from the local airport to facilitate the rapid and accurate reporting of fires in the Camden and surrounding districts.

Mr Drinnan's commitments to providing an outstanding level of service to his community, to his brigade and to the Rural Fire Service over 40 years have been outstanding.

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## **John Jaffray**

Mr Jaffray joined the Oak Flats Rural Fire Brigade on 12 November 1974. The Oak Flats Brigade was very active in the Shellharbour area and attended all types of incidents and its operations were not restricted to fighting bush fires. Over his period of service with the brigade, he developed a high level of expertise in many facets of fire service operations and management and these skills have stood him in good stead throughout his career. His skills were frequently called upon to assist in the development of personnel throughout his early years as a fire fighter and he was heavily involved in the training and mentoring of newer fire fighters. He was promoted to the position of Group Captain for the Shellharbour District in 1981 and whilst in this position, he contributed greatly to the ongoing development of the fire fighters in that area playing an integral role in making the Rural Fire Service a cohesive and effective force. He was made a life member of the Oak Flats Brigade in 1999.

Throughout his service, Mr Jaffray has demonstrated advanced and dedicated leadership to the brigades and to the Rural Fire Service. He continues to lead by example and actively promotes personal development and teamwork in his charges. He has become a leading example to the volunteers of the Service through his commitment to maintaining the highest level of availability for operational response and training. He has attended many significant incidents including fires at Shellharbour/Kiama, Wollongong, Grafton, Cessnock, Hawkesbury, Dorrigo, Campbelltown, Wollondilly, Wingecarribee, Morton National Park and the Royal National Park. His emergency management and leadership skills have not been limited to fire activity and he has also led crews in other emergency operations, including floods.

More recently, Mr Jaffray played a significant and leading role in the delivery of the Rural Fire Service operational commitments to the Sydney Olympics, most notably to the International Shooting Centre and International Equestrian Centre. He has also made an absolute commitment to the development and support of the NSW Rural Fire Service Association. Mr Jaffray's commitments to providing the highest possible level of service to the Rural Fire Service, Rural Fire Service Association and to the wider community of New South Wales in excess of thirty (30) years makes him a most worthy nominee for receipt of the Australian Fire Service Medal.

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