



NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

MEDIA RELEASE

Firefighters honoured on St Florian's Day

4 May 2020

Police and Emergency Services Minister David Elliott and NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) Commissioner Rob Rogers today honoured four individual members and five units as part the Services annual awards for exceptional service and bravery.

Held on the fourth of May each year, the awards coincide with the Feast Day of St Florian, Patron Saint of Firefighters and International Firefighters' Day.

This year, while members could not gather to acknowledge the worthy recipients in person, Commissioner Rogers has written to each member with a formal ceremony to be held at a later date.

Minister Elliott said that today we take this opportunity to thank our NSW RFS volunteers for their ongoing hard work and professionalism especially after such an incredibly difficult fire season.

"We pay tribute to those brave members whose dedication continues to protect lives and property of this great state," Minister Elliott said.

Commissioner Rogers paid special tribute to Captain William (Jock) Ross and Senior Deputy Captain (SDC) Alison Wade, who were awarded a Commissioner's Commendation for Bravery.

Captain Ross and SDC Wade responded to a house fire in the small township of Spencer on the Central Coast in early April last year. With the resident still inside the home and back up still responding, the firefighters forced their way into the building.

Crouching below the thick smoke, Captain Ross and SDC Wade were able to locate the resident and his pet dog and lead them both outside to safety.

Commissioner Rogers also recognised the commitment of members of the Goodooga Rural Fire Brigade, receiving the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Unit).

Captain William Pokarier, Deputy Captain Thomas Stanton and firefighter Stephen Forrester were called to a motor vehicle accident on the Goodooga – Brewarrina Rd approximately one hour north of Lightning Ridge in the early hours of 5 August 2019.

On arrival the crew found the driver impaled within the vehicle. The members worked with a local nurse to provide first aid to the patient, who was known to them, while waiting for Ambulance and rescue services to arrive.

Despite the best efforts of the crew, the driver died at the scene shortly before 4am.

"The past twelve months has been an incredibly difficult and testing time for many of our members. Working through drought, the fire season and the now the COVID outbreak," Commissioner Rogers said.

"It's important that we stop to recognise the extraordinary efforts and sacrifices our volunteers make each and every day to serve their communities."



For more information contact the State Duty Media Officer on 9898 1855
For current incidents or major fire updates visit www.rfs.nsw.gov.au

NSW RFS Internal Bravery and Service Awards 2020:

Commissioner's Commendation for Bravery (Individual)

- Captain William Ross, Spencer Brigade, Central Coast, Area Hunter
- Senior Deputy Captain Alison Wade, Spencer Brigade, Central Coast, Area Hunter

Commissioner's Commendation for Service (individual)

- Captain Gregory Speed OAM, Orchard Hills, Cumberland Zone, Area Greater Sydney
- Retired Group Captain Warwick Teasdale, Killcare/Wagstaff, Central Coast, Area Hunter

Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (unit)

- Captain William Pokarier, Deputy Captain Thomas Stanton and Firefighter Stephen Forrester, Goodooga, Far West Team, Area Western
- Crescent Head Brigade, Lower North Coast Zone, Area North Eastern
- Far North Coast Senior Management Team, Area North Eastern
- Southern Tablelands Zone Strike Team Echo 1, Area South Eastern
- South West Slopes Zone Senior Management Team, Area Western



Commissioner's Commendation for Bravery (Individual)

Captain William Ross

Spencer, Central Coast, Area Hunter

On 1 April 2019 at 0710 hours, the Spencer Brigade was activated to an incident within the Spencer township. The incident was initially reported as a pile burn and then subsequently updated to a structure fire as further information became available to 000 call takers.

When Captain William Ross arrived on scene the corner of the structure was well alight with flames extending internally to the roof and toxic smoke building up inside the structure. Deputy Captain Alison Wade had already isolated the power to the building and reported she had seen the resident inside the house near the window and also heard a dog barking inside. The house was locked and attempts to alert the resident, who appeared to have impaired cognitive ability, were unsuccessful. After their initial scene assessment, they concurred there was a need to gain access and undertake a primary search within the structure.

With the next closest backup at least 15 minutes away and the risk that the fire would engulf the building, a forced entry was made through a door at the rear of the building. Spencer Brigade is not an accredited CABA brigade, so without the use of breathing apparatus both Deputy Captain Wade and Captain Ross entered the building to search for the resident. Crouching below the thick smoke, they were able to locate the resident and his pet dog and lead them both outside to safety.

After completing the rescue, Deputy Captain Wade and Captain Ross assisted crews in suppressing the structure fire to minimise further damage to the home.

The actions of Captain Ross and Deputy Captain Wade were both selfless and brave. They risked their own lives to save the life of a fellow community member.

Captain William Ross is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Commendation for Bravery (Individual)



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Commissioner's Commendation for Bravery (Individual)

Senior Deputy Captain Alison Wade

Spencer, Central Coast, Area Hunter

On 1 April 2019 at 0710 hours, the Spencer Brigade was activated to an incident within the Spencer township. The incident was initially reported as a pile burn and then subsequently updated to a structure fire as further information became available to 000 call takers.

On arrival, a scene assessment confirmed a fire burning in an under-house storage location had spread to the structure of the home with flames extending to the roof. Whilst crews established hose lines, Deputy Captain Alison Wade isolated the power and commenced a primary search. She saw the resident inside the house near the window and could also hear a dog barking inside. The house was locked and attempts to alert the resident, who appeared to have impaired cognitive ability, were unsuccessful. At this time, Captain William Ross arrived on scene and assisted with the initial scene assessment and concurred there was a need to gain access and undertake a primary search within the structure.

With the next closest backup at least 15 minutes away and the risk that the fire would engulf the building, a forced entry was made through a door at the rear of the building. Spencer Brigade is not an accredited CABA brigade, so without the use of breathing apparatus both Deputy Captain Wade and Captain Ross entered the building to search for the resident. Crouching below the thick smoke, they were able to locate the resident and his pet dog and lead them both outside to safety.

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The actions of Captain Ross and Deputy Captain Wade were both selfless and brave. They risked their own lives to save the life of a fellow community member.

Senior Deputy Captain Alison Wade is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Commendation for Bravery (Individual)



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Commissioner's Commendation for Service (Individual)

Captain Gregory Speed OAM

Orchard Hills, Cumberland Zone, Area Greater Sydney

Captain Gregory Speed OAM became a member of Orchard Hills Rural Fire Brigade in January 1994 and continues his service to the present day. For more than 25 years he has demonstrated exemplary service to the community of NSW and Orchard Hills Rural Fire Brigade. During his volunteer career, Captain Speed has held the brigade management positions of Brigade Captain, Senior Deputy Captain and Deputy Captain.

Captain Speed's leadership abilities are demonstrated on a day to day basis not only through operational firefighting but in all areas of day to day management of the brigade. His determination to ensure the operational growth of brigade members for succession planning operational response, community engagement and hazard management of the Orchard Hills area is well demonstrated with over 50 brigade members.

Captain Speed's communication skills, leadership, mentoring and providing clear direction as Captain has allowed the Brigade to progress. In consultation with brigade members and with the approval of Cumberland Zone management, the Brigade reconfigured the Orchard Hills brigade station meeting room with infrastructure for a future divisional command location. The grounds at the rear of the Station are now clearly identified as a level three staging area for emergency operations for the Zone, if required.

Since 1998, Captain Speed has been a member of the Cumberland Zone Training Coordination team. As a trainer, assessor, training coordinator and mentor he has assisted in maintaining a high standard of training and assessment with consistency and ensuring all training and assessment events are conducted using the core values of the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS).

Orchard Hills Brigade is very proactive in the areas of Community Engagement under Captain Speed's direction. The Brigade attends public relations exercises at least once a month and the annual Get Ready Weekend is well planned and executed with professionalism.

Captain Speed attends local emergency incidents and has represented the Brigade and Cumberland Zone as an operational firefighter at campaign fires since 1994. He has also assisted the community at flood and tempest events and has been on numerous interstate deployments to Victoria, Canberra and South Australia.

Captain Gregory Speed is a dedicated and a respected member of the NSW RFS and Orchard Hills Brigade providing diligent service to the community of NSW and to the members of his Brigade and Cumberland Zone.

Captain Gregory Speed OAM is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Commendation for Service (Individual).



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Commissioner's Commendation for Service (Individual)

Retired Group Captain Warwick Teasdale

Killcare/Wagstaff, Central Coast, Area Hunter

Retired Group Captain Warwick Teasdale joined the Killcare/Wagstaff Brigade in 1976 and has held the positions of Permit Officer, Secretary, Deputy Captain (current) and Captain within the Brigade until he was elected as a Group Captain in the Gosford District in 1999. He was awarded Life Membership of the Killcare/Wagstaff Brigade in 1998.

During his time with the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS), Retired Group Captain Teasdale has attended the majority of significant fires in the Gosford area as well as attending larger fire, flood and storm damage incidents and hazard reductions in surrounding Districts. He travelled to Nyngan to assist with the flood recovery effort in 1990, and was involved with the efforts to control the outbreak of Newcastle Disease in the poultry industry on the Central Coast in 1999.

Retired Group Captain Teasdale has been a very active member of the Gosford Training Committee, delivering a range of courses including Basic Firefighter, Advanced Firefighter, Crew Leader and Chain Saw Operator. He has been the Chair of the Gosford Safety Officers' Group and currently assists as an Event Marshal at the biennial Australian Fire Cadet Championships.

In recognition of Retired Group Captain Teasdale's abilities, commitment and dedication to the NSW RFS, he travelled regularly to Botswana to provide firefighting and incident management training to the Department of Forest and Range Resource Officers and National Park Rangers as part of the Botswana Fire Management Program, an AUSAID funded program. He also wrote, compiled and assisted with delivering the complete Bush Fire Training and the Train the Trainer package that was provided to the Government of Botswana to assist with their capacity building within the Bush Fire Management Program.

Retired Group Captain Teasdale's skills as an effective instructor have been recognised by the NSW RFS Head Office as he is often called upon to deliver high level Incident Management training programs to delegations from Korean Forest Service and the National Disaster Management Authority of India. He regularly delivers Bush Fire Awareness training to other NSW Government officers from Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) and Sydney Water.

Retired Group Captain Warwick Teasdale is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Commendation for Service.



Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Unit)

Captain William Pokarier, Deputy Captain Thomas Stanton and Firefighter Stephen Forrester

Goodooga, Far West Team, Area Western

On 5 August 2019 at 0042 hours, Goodooga Brigade were paged to a motor vehicle accident on the Goodooga - Brewarrina Road.

Goodooga Brigade members attending the incident were Brigade Captain William Pokarier, Deputy Captain Thomas Stanton and Firefighter Stephen Forrester.

On arrival they found a motor vehicle had hit a bridge and the railing had impaled the driver. The crew worked on the trapped driver until other emergency services arrived on scene. This took some time as services had to respond from Lightning Ridge which is one hour from Goodooga. Ambulance NSW arrived on scene at 0119 hours with the rescue arriving at 0151 hours. In this time, the Goodooga crew worked with the nurse and staff from the Goodooga Medical Centre. The trapped person was known to all crew members from a young age. Crews continued to assist with the extraction of the victim until early in the morning. Unfortunately, the victim died at the scene at 0349 hours.

All crews worked above and beyond to assist with this incident.

Captain William Pokarier, Deputy Captain Thomas Stanton and Firefighter Stephen Forrester are worthy recipients of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Unit).



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Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Unit) **Crescent Head Brigade**

Lower North Coast Zone, Area North Eastern

On 27 May 2019 at 1430 hours, Crescent Head and Gladstone Brigades arrived on scene to a reported bush fire on Seale Road east of Kempsey with Gladstone Brigade having been re-deployed from another fire in nearby South Kempsey. Group Captain Paul Bourne and a number of other brigades were also responding to the incident.

Crescent Head 2 consisted of Brigade Captain Greg Kings, driver Firefighter Mary Rogers, Firefighters Kym Trickett and Cameron Dann. Gladstone 7 consisted of Senior Deputy Captain Brian Beilby and driver Deputy Captain Richard (Tiny) Swan.

At the Seale Road Fire, Senior Deputy Captain Brian Beilby reported he wasn't feeling well and swapped trucks with Captain Greg Kings to help redistribute the work load. Captain Kings went with Deputy Captain Swan in Gladstone 7 to investigate the active fire front with Senior Deputy Captain Beilby remaining behind with Crescent Head to contain the running fire in that area.

Senior Deputy Captain Beilby rested in the truck for a short period of time, before Firefighter Rogers noticed his deteriorating condition to the point of losing consciousness, his breathing had stopped and there was a loss of pulse. Firefighter Rogers quickly called Captain Kings for assistance who returned immediately alone as Deputy Captain Swan was now with Group Captain Bourne.

At 1607 hours, a priority call came over the radio requesting an ambulance and advising that Senior Deputy Captain Brian Beilby had collapsed on the fireground and was non-responsive.

Captain Kings quickly grabbed Senior Deputy Captain Beilby out of the truck. Captain Kings and Firefighter Dann immediately commenced CPR, assisted by Firefighters Rogers and Trickett.

At 1611 hours a subsequent call over the radio confirming CPR had been successful and Senior Deputy Captain Beilby was now conscious and breathing. These four brigade members successfully re-established Senior Deputy Captain Beilby's breathing and pulse, as well as maintaining general support until such time as the ambulance arrived on scene.

Group Captain Bourne and Deputy Captain Swan returned to assist, putting out the running fire which was quickly encroaching on the first aid area.

Senior Deputy Captain Beilby was transported to Kempsey Hospital in a stable condition, before being transferred to Port Macquarie Base Hospital, then subsequently Royal North Shore where he received treatment for his condition.

Crescent Head Brigade are worthy recipients of the Commissioner's Certification of Commendation (Unit).



Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Unit)
Far North Coast Senior Management Team

Area North Eastern

The commitment as a member of the Senior Management Committee (SMT) is significant as it represents members of brigades, manages membership issues, and provides a link to and from District staff, all while maintaining a commitment to local fire and emergency incidents.

Despite these demands, the Far North Coast (FNC) SMT continually exceed their assigned duties and responsibilities in regards to administrative leadership and fire service duties to the FNC and its members.

The FNC SMT consists of Deputy Group Captain Raymond Collyer, Group Captains Michael Cooper, Robert Graham, Franco Zambelli and Kenneth (Mark) Eglington. They frequently attend relevant emergency management meetings in addition to the regular brigade meetings, and manage the movement of equipment and vehicles on behalf of the District where required.

Their commitment to administrative responsibilities is matched equally by their enthusiasm and dedication to local operations. They continuously turn out for local response, at all hours and regardless of personal commitments, to assist brigades where necessary. They have also provided out-of-area assistance as Strike Team Leaders, or assisting in the planning and implementation of the annual Region North Exercise.

The harmonious operation of the FNC SMT cannot be undervalued with members supporting each other in times of need; covering duties where necessary, and operating efficiently and independently without direct supervision from District staff.

These members have contributed a noteworthy 55 years to the FNC SMT and a combined 170 years of service to the NSW RFS. This level of dedication to a leadership role in the NSW RFS is well above the scope of responsibility one would normally expect of a volunteer RFS Unit.

The Far North Coast Senior Management Team are worthy recipients of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Unit).



Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Unit)
Southern Tablelands Zone Strike Team Echo 1

Area South Eastern

On 10 March 2019 Strike Team Echo 1 left the Southern Tablelands Zone for Dargo, Victoria, to assist colleagues with the fires in their state. This strike team was made up of crews and combined crews that had for the most part never worked significantly or at all, with any of the other crew members. About half an hour south of Cooma the strike team came upon a single vehicle motor vehicle accident on the Monaro Highway that had only just occurred.

The vehicle was far from safe, precariously placed on its side in a dry creek bed/culvert with the bleeding and trapped elderly male driver still belted in at the upper aspect of the wreck. A number of firefighters stabilised the vehicle by hand. Others made the electrical system safe and provided external protection, traffic management, called for assistance, and a range of other tasks.

Qualified paramedic, Firefighter Richard Forshaw entered the vehicle from above to assist the patient. There was noticeable smoke emanating from the dashboard airbag area which continued to worsen after the electrical system was disconnected. One of the firefighters retrieved and discharged an AFFF extinguisher to eliminate the ongoing threat of fire.

The driver suffered a serious fracture to the leg, facial injuries and most importantly, was being crushed by his own weight against the seatbelt from which he was being suspended. The firefighting team, led superbly by Deputy Group Captain Neil Shepherd, rallied to assist by retrieving lengths of 38mm hose to wrap around the patient, to spread the load of his weight, which was causing immense pain to his left side chest area.

The weight was taken by more of the firefighters outside the vehicle. With a plan to lower the patient gently onto a spine board, the team held the weight until the patient was observed to be slipping, the team then lowered the patient onto the left side windows of the vehicle. Unfortunately, by this stage further rescue services had not arrived so the spine board was unable to be placed.

With the arrival of rescue services, the vehicle was stabilised and the 78-year-old patient was subsequently extricated from the vehicle and carried up the hill using an "all hands approach" before being transported to hospital.

The crews continued on their way south, ultimately arriving about 2330 hours that night, before commencing operations with our Victorian colleagues the following morning.

Southern Tablelands Zone Strike Team Echo 1 are worthy recipients of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Unit).



Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Unit)
South West Slopes Zone Senior Management Team

Area Western

The South West Slopes Zone (SWSZ) Senior Management Team (SMT) have demonstrated outstanding leadership and decision making as they advocate for volunteers within the SWSZ. The SWSZ SMT developed a Charter with clear expectations to be followed by all members of the SMT. This Charter focuses on four workgroups, consisting of a number of SMT members, functioning alongside the SMT to investigate and make decisions and or recommendations for consideration and adoption.

These workgroups consist of Business Management, Operations, Community Risk Management and Membership. Each Workgroup has a standing agenda and welcomes ideas and approaches to improve service delivery. This structure has provided a platform for SMT members to investigate opportunities for improvement, understand financial positions, allocate resources and explore new approaches.

Since the adoption of the SWSZ SMT Charter SMT meetings are well attended with progress made at each meeting due to the efforts of each workgroup leading up to SMT meetings.

The Workgroups have provided enhanced opportunities for staff and senior volunteers to work together on specific projects to benefit all members in the SWSZ.

The utilisation of four workgroups within the Charter has provided SMT members with a greater opportunity to engage with brigade field officers on a wider variety of topics. This has provided a greater understanding, amongst brigades, of the direction of the NSW Rural Fire Service including capital improvement priorities and advances in operational procedure.

Their commitment and achievement is beyond what is normally expected by SMT members.

The South West Slopes Zone Senior Management Team are worthy recipients of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Unit).

