



Firefighters honoured on St Florian's Day

4 May 2013

Twenty five men and women from the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) have been honoured today on St Florian's day (the Patron Saint of firefighters) for their outstanding achievements and dedication.

Minister for Police and Emergency Services Michael Gallacher paid tribute to all serving firefighters and volunteers who continue to follow in the footsteps of St Florian.

"Today we not only pay tribute to St Florian, but we also give thanks for the selfless dedication and bravery our firefighters show every day, upholding the same commitment to protecting lives and property," Minister Gallacher said.

During the awards ceremony NSW RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons paid tribute to the NSW RFS members and units who had gone above and beyond the call of duty.

"Awards given today recognise the very best of the NSW RFS. While every day we have people who serve their community, today we honour those who have exceeded even our own high expectations.

"I am proud to award commendations to men and women who have helped prevent a suicide, assisted NSW Police in the search and arrest of Australia's most wanted man, Malcolm Naden, and walked the Kokoda Track with the children and grandchildren of injured or fallen firefighters.

"Other actions which have been formally commended today include the foundation members of an innovative new remote firefighting unit in Macarthur, and others who helped drive the process from conception to reality.

"A number of units and staff are also being recognised for their outstanding work in providing assistance to the NSW SES during devastating floods that hit the State in the past two years.

"Volunteers and staff from a variety of backgrounds and from right across NSW have been recognised today, showing that outstanding service is not limited to any one person, rank, location, or brigade.

"It is clear that the NSW RFS is in good hands, with people such as these stepping up to help protect, educate and help their communities.

"Today I would personally like to thank both the award recipients for their dedication to the Service and to the community, and the families that support these outstanding RFS members," Commissioner Fitzsimmons said.

For full citations, please visit the RFS website www.rfs.nsw.gov.au

COMMISSIONER'S COMMENDATION FOR SERVICE

Group Captain Craig Bardney and Group Captain Colin Smeeth - Myall Park Rural Fire Brigade and Wyangan Rural Fire Brigade, MIA Zone, Region South

For work on devastating floods of 7 March 2012, coordinating the massive cleanup of Yenda Township.

Firefighter Vernon Dunning - Cooma Rural Fire Brigade, Monaro, Region South

Vernon was pivotal in the delivery of the NSW RFS Secondary Schools Cadet Program to the Monaro area, instrumental in the training of more than 200 Cadets.

Group Captain Leslie Fowler - Central Warren Rural Fire Brigade, North West Zone, Region West

Coordinated response to major cotton fire in the storage area at the Queensland Cotton Facility on the outskirts of Warren in September 2012, only person named in the debrief for his cool, calm and positive leadership which saw all the emergency services working cooperatively.

Deputy Captain Raymond Hehir - Murrumbateman Rural Fire Brigade, Southern Tablelands Zone, Region South

Ray efforts and time in the building of the extension to the fire station. The facility is now at a stage where it can house all of the Brigade's trucks and equipment.

Captain Leslie Irvin - Barellan Rural Fire Brigade, MIA Zone, Region South

On Saturday 3 March 2012 significant flooding occurred across South West NSW Leslie, with the assistance of the local Police Officer, took charge and initiated the evacuation of residents given the amount of flood water, the isolation of the township and the loss of essential services.

Firefighter Judith Moore - Eurobodalla Fire Control Support, Far South Coast, Region South

Judith has assisted with the coordination of district events and numerous brigade support services throughout the Shire.

Senior Deputy Captain Helen Riedl - Malua Bay Rural Fire Brigade, Far South Coast, Region South

Helen is the driving force behind Community Engagement within the Far South Coast Team.

Deputy Commissioner Rob Rogers AFSM - Director, Operational Services

During the Royal Commission into the 2009 Black Saturday Bush Fires in Victoria, Rob represented NSW in two royal commission hearings and continues to represent NSW at the highest levels, and establish improved public warning systems.

Captain Brian Schloeffel - Burrabadine Rural Fire Brigade, Orana, Region West

Brian is tireless in attending callouts, his expertise and diligence has resulted in his crews maintaining an exemplary safety record and he was instrumental in the fundraising and construction of the Burrabadine Brigade Station.

Rebel Talbert - Group Manager, Operational and Mitigation Support Services

Rebel was instrumental in the development of the 'Prepare.Act.Survive' Program as a replacement for 'stay and defend' and the Federal Bush Fire Warnings Task Force which updated the Fire Danger Rating scale and established warning arrangements. She has assisted in establishment of the Rapid Aerial Response Teams as well as the enhancement of Remote Area Fire Fighting Teams.

Dominic Lane ASFM - (Former) Director, Regional and Infrastructure Services

A member of the RFS for nearly 30 years, Dominic has contributed as both a volunteer and staff member. He conducted the recent rank review, one of the most comprehensive and exhaustive consultative and open reviews undertaken by the RFS.

Firefighter Malcolm Weir - Gerringong Rural Fire Brigade, Illawarra, Region East

Malcolm is the longest serving Captain of his Brigade and remains active, attending many call outs. The Brigade still looks to Malcolm for advice on many Brigade decisions.

COMMISSIONER'S CERTIFICATION OF COMMENDATION (INDIVIDUAL)

Sharon Saunders - Coordinator, Audit, Inquiries and Legal, NSW RFS Headquarters

Volunteers, staff and the legal team representing the State have all expressed their gratitude for Sharon's tireless work to support them throughout the large and complex legal proceedings following the 2001 fires.

COMMISSIONER'S UNIT CITATION FOR SERVICE

Eurobodalla Training Centre Support Group - Far South Coast, Region South

This group dedicates their time to grooming and maintaining the Training Centre to be the place of excellence it is today, ensuring that RFS volunteers can be trained and supported to a high standard.

Moree Rural Fire Brigade & Narrabri Headquarters Rural Fire Brigade - Namoi Gwydir, Region North

Tireless work following extensive flooding in Northern NSW that affected many parts of the community.

COMMISSIONER'S CERTIFICATION OF COMMENDATION (UNIT)

Bland Temora Zone Volunteers and Staff - Region West

During the 2012 flooding that inundated much of NSW, Bland Temora Zone volunteers and staff provided emergency flood assistance to seven out-of-area communities at the same time as the Bland Temora Zone was experiencing significant flooding across their own communities.

Gloucester/Great Lakes Team Volunteers and Staff - Region East

The team played a critical role in support of the NSW Police Force operation, Strike Force Dirkin, in their search, apprehension and arrest of fugitive Malcolm Naden (Australia's then most wanted person).

Hazelbrook Rural Fire Brigade - Blue Mountains, Region East

For preventing a suicide attempt in Kedumba National Park.

Lake Albert Bush Fire Brigade - Wagga Wagga, Riverina Zone, Region South

An extraordinary rain event that led to flash and riverine flooding throughout the Murrumbidgee floodplain, saw the Lake Albert Bush Fire Brigade dedicate many hundreds if not thousands of hours to both the response and recovery phases of the event.

Macarthur Remote Area Firefighting Team (RAFT) Brigade - Macarthur Zone, Region East

Following the establishment of the concept of new small teams to undertake Remote Area Firefighting (RAFT), these volunteers undertook an intensive regime of training, testing and medicals becoming qualified in a very short period to meet the challenge of deploying to their first Remote Area Firefighting Team job in October 2011, at Cliff Drive Blue Mountains.

NSW RFS Courage Under Fire, RFSA Kokoda Trek Initiative

Initiative to take a small group of adults, children and grandchildren between the ages of 16 and 25 of fallen or seriously injured Firefighters on a journey to trek Kokoda - a potentially life changing experience of courage, endurance, mateship and sacrifice – the values and qualities of those Australian Soldiers who fought along the Kokoda Track almost 70 years earlier.

MIA Zone Volunteers and Staff, Region South

Tireless work following extensive rains in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area (MIA) resulting in major flooding that affected many parts of the community.

Riverina Zone Volunteers and Staff - Region South

Tireless work following extensive rains in the Riverina Zone, resulting in major flooding that affected many parts of the community

Media Contact: State Duty Media Officer 9898 1855.