

NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE  
INTERNAL BRAVERY AND  
SERVICE AWARDS  
CEREMONY 2011



**St Florian's Day**  
4 May 2011  
NSW Rural Fire Service  
15 Carter Street, Lidcombe



NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE



## The NSW Rural Fire Service Internal Bravery and Service Awards

The Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service, in recognition of acts of bravery and outstanding service, has established an internal awards system. The Awards were instituted on 1 February 1999. The establishment of an internal awards system is authorised under the *Rural Fires Act 1997* and accompanying Regulations. Eligibility for these Awards is extended to all members of the Service as defined within the Act and Regulations.

Nominations for awards must be lodged in accordance with the guidelines and on the prescribed nomination form. The guidelines and nomination form are available on the NSW RFS Intranet, Internet and on MyRFS. Copies are also available from Region, Zone, Team and District Offices. Nominations for Internal Bravery and Service Awards close annually on 1 October for presentation on St Florian's Day, 4 May in the following year.

Nominations are sent to the Awards Committee. The Committee consists of representatives from the volunteers and salaried staff of the Service appointed by the Commissioner and is required to fully examine each nomination for eligibility. Once a nomination has been assessed and deemed to be eligible, the Committee then makes a formal recommendation to the Commissioner. If a nominee accepts the nomination, the full details of the member being recognised are then officially listed in the NSW RFS Awards Register. Individuals may be nominated for the Medal for Valour, the Commissioner's Commendations for Bravery and for Service or the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Individual and/or Units). Brigades or formally comprised units may also be nominated for the Unit Citation for either Bravery or Service.

The functions of the Awards Committee notwithstanding, the Commissioner may award an Internal Bravery or Service Award to any person at any time and for any reason.

The nomination sequence encompasses all levels of management or command. For example, in the case of a nomination being generated by a brigade, the captain of the brigade must endorse the nomination form. The nomination must be forwarded to the next level of command, being the District/Team/Zone Manager who must also endorse the nomination and then forward it to the Region Manager. This final endorsement of the Region Manager allows the form to be sent to the Awards Committee for evaluation and recommendation to the Commissioner.

All nominations are held in strict confidence. Nominees are advised in writing once a nomination has been approved by the Commissioner, though at no time is the nominee advised of the origin of nomination. The Awards Committee will also acknowledge to the nominator the receipt of the nomination for an award by the Awards Committee but otherwise maintain the confidentiality of the system and will not provide information regarding awards.

At the Awards Ceremony on 4 May 2011, 11 individual and six group recipients are to be acknowledged by the Commissioner. Drawn from the Service's Regions and Headquarters these recipients are presented with Awards in recognition of outstanding bravery or service. The fourth of May is chosen each year for the Awards Ceremony as it is the Feast Day of St Florian, Patron Saint of Firefighters and International Firefighter's Day.

## The Order of Proceedings

### National Anthem

NSW RFS Pipes and Drums and State Protocol Squad

### Welcome to Guests

**Russell Taylor, AFSM**, Master of Ceremonies

### Prayer

Assistant Senior Chaplain, Major Ian Spall

### Address

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons, AFSM

### Address

**The Hon. Michael Gallacher MLC**  
Minister for Police and Emergency Services

### Presentation of Awards

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons, AFSM

### Photographs

All recipients will be photographed during and following the conclusion of proceedings outside on the staircase. A complimentary CD of group and individual photographs will be posted to each recipient.

### Lunch

Recipients and their guests are invited to join the Commissioner for lunch in the marquee and outdoor terrace area

*We wish to thank the NSW RFS Pipes and Drums and State Protocol Squad for their assistance during today's festivities.*

## The Commissioner's Commendation for Bravery

*The Commissioner's Commendation for Bravery is awarded to recognise an act of courage under hazardous circumstances where the risk to life has not been as significant as to warrant the Commissioner's Medal for Valour but is highly commendable and worthy of recognition.*

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### Group Captain Mark Hoskinson

Bland Temora Zone, Region West

Late in the afternoon of 21 December 2007, following heavy rain in the area, Mr Hoskinson was advised that a mother and her three young children were stranded in their car on a causeway. Mr Hoskinson drove to a neighbour's property in failing light and torrential rain where he swapped his utility for a tractor.

The floodwaters intensified to the extent that water was penetrating the cabin and the tractor was being pushed sideways. Mr Hoskinson persisted with the search in these dangerous conditions and eventually found the vehicle with the family still inside with water lapping the windows and seeping under the doors. Aligning the tractor with the car, he got everyone out through the windows and into the cabin of the tractor and drove them to safety.

Mr Hoskinson then received advice that two men were also stranded in their utility. He drove the tractor to the area and found the men trapped with water up to the windows of the vehicle. He placed a winch cable on their stranded vehicle and pulled them to safety.

Mr Hoskinson's actions in rescuing six people stranded in floodwater under dangerous conditions were in line with the best traditions of the NSW Rural Fire Service.

*Mr Hoskinson is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Commendation for Bravery.*

## The Commissioner's Commendation for Service (Individual)

*Awarded for service of a meritorious nature or outstanding actions in relation to fire service duties, administrative leadership, or exemplary performance of a specific difficult project or task, not involving bravery.*

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### Firefighter Christopher Smith

### Firefighter Colin Irwin

The Lakes Team, Region East

On the 7 August 2010, two off-duty volunteer firefighters from the Seahampton Brigade, Mr Chris Smith and probationary member Mr Colin Irwin, while travelling home from work noticed smoke emanating from a house. As no emergency services were on scene, they stopped to assist.

The two men were told that there may be children in the building. Both men attempted to enter the building by forcing open the door but could not get into the building due to the smoke and heat. As they were not on duty, they were not wearing personal protective clothing. The NSW Fire Brigade arrived and extinguished the fire and retrieved an unconscious man from the house. Although revived at the scene, the man later died in hospital.

The actions of firefighter's Smith and Irwin in attempting a rescue in dangerous circumstances were in line with the best traditions of the NSW Rural Fire Service.

*Christopher Smith and Colin Irwin are worthy recipients of the Commissioner's Commendation for Service.*

## Group Officer Phillip William Baer

### South West Slopes, Region West

Mr Baer has demonstrated his leadership and professionalism in developing two training programs.

The first training program is a NSW Rural Fire Service Crew Leader upgrade that recognises existing skills of experienced field officers and provides them with relevant field command knowledge and qualifications.

The second training program is an online Bush firefighter training and assessment system that allows members to complete theory components of the Bush firefighter course using a web based system. This course has been approved by the RFS Learning and Development Systems for piloting in the South West Slopes Zone.

The online training system has significant advantages not only for the NSW RFS but other agencies. Any agency endeavouring to establish an online learning system for volunteers will be able to source qualitative and quantitative information from the NSW RFS, to assist in establishing a similar system.

Mr Baer has contributed significantly to the Region Training Assistance Group by influencing change in training and assessment processes to better suit rural and remote brigades. He regularly presents and shares new training concepts with other staff and volunteers at Regional meetings.

Mr Baer's service goes well beyond normal expectations and is demonstrated by the time spent adapting processes to suit the needs of local volunteers and his willingness and ability to assist other staff and volunteers from across the Region and State.

*Mr Baer is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Commendation for Service.*

## The Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Individual)

*Awarded to recognise service or outstanding actions in relation to fire service duties, administrative leadership, or exemplary performance of a specific project or task. The Certificate of Commendation may be awarded to an individual or unit for service beyond the scope of responsibility normally expected of that person or unit in their assigned duties and is therefore worthy of acknowledgement and commendation.*

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### Bernie Brompton

Headquarters, Region East

Ms Brompton was given primary carriage of the delivery of the Bush Fire Risk Management Planning Process for Region East in late August 2009. At that time 19 plans were yet to be completed. Her role covered the provision of technical advice, facilitation of working parties, BFMC meetings, the review of plans and the ongoing monitoring process. This involved working with a range of stakeholders with diverse views and priorities whilst facilitating outcomes in line with the policy of the Bush Fire Coordinating Committee.

Ms Brompton was the driving force in ensuring that all mainland Risk Management Plans within Region East were completed on time. She proposed technical solutions, motivated and effectively drove a large number of working parties, while facilitating the involvement of stakeholders representing the NSW RFS and volunteers, private landholders, Councils, Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water, Forests NSW and the Nature Conservation Council.

As a direct result of Ms Brompton's dedication and hard work, all of the plans under her control were completed and submitted. Given the complexity of her task, and the range of stakeholders involved, this is an achievement well beyond the normal expectations of her position.

*Ms Brompton is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation.*

## Velma Walker

### Shoalhaven District, Region South

Ms Walker regularly attends the Shoalhaven District Office and assists with a range of administrative functions including telephone queries, radio communications, reception duties and preparing Brigade correspondence. She is always efficient, cheerful, and most helpful. Her attitude is a great example for others around her and has proved to be an invaluable asset to brigades and staff in the Shoalhaven District over many years.

For a number of years, Ms Walker has been a great supporter of the Region South Incident Management Exercise and Incident Management Workshop that is held annually at various locations throughout the Region. Through the experience gained at these events, she has become a reliable and competent Logistics Officer, and has been called on regularly to assist with these duties within the Shoalhaven District and beyond.

She is also a member of the Shoalhaven Headquarters Rural Fire Brigade and has held positions of Treasurer, Community Education Officer and Deputy Communications Officer. Her untiring efforts within the Brigade have culminated in her being presented with Life Membership.

*Ms Walker is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation.*

## Muriel Stevens

## Grace Fletcher

### Tarana RFB, Lithgow, Region East

These sisters began their association with the Volunteer Bushfire Brigade in March 1938 and have served and supported the Tarana branch of the Volunteer Bushfire Brigade since its formation in November 1939.

After terrible fires in 1944 special mention was made of Muriel Stevens and Grace Fletcher for their tremendous efforts in providing food to the firefighters for the duration of the emergency.

At all fundraisers, community events, training days, working bees, hazard reduction burns and fires, Grace and Muriel have helped with catering, from setup, serving and cleanup. Muriel Stevens has been heard saying on more than one occasion “we cannot do the work but we can feed you”. This shows their dedication to the Brigade and their willingness to be involved and assist in whatever way possible. They support fundraising efforts, boost moral and give their time freely to assist the Brigade.

Remarkably, despite their advancing years, they still remain active members and have been valuable members of their local Brigade for over 71 years.

*Muriel Stevens and Grace Fletcher are worthy recipients of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation.*

## Deputy Group Captain John Oliver

### Goolmangar RFB, Northern Rivers Team, Region North

Mr Oliver joined the Tuncester Brigade in 1989. He soon proved his value to the Brigade by taking responsibility for the tanker trailer and pump. He also took on organising the Brigade's responses to call-outs, obtaining his crew leader qualifications in 1992.

The Blakebrook and Tuncester Brigades joined to become the Blakebrook Bush Fire Brigade and Mr Oliver was elected the Senior Deputy Captain of the new Brigade. In the Captain's absence he led the Blakebrook Brigade through the busy fire season of December 1993 and January 1994.

In 1994 he was elected as Captain of the Blakebrook Brigade and continued to serve in that capacity until he transferred to the Goolmangar Brigade in 1999. Since then he has held the positions of Senior Deputy Captain, Captain and Group Captain. He was elected Deputy Group Captain, for the Lismore Council area, an appointment he still holds today. Mr Oliver has always been ready to respond when called upon as an Officer, Instructor, or as a firefighter.

He has served as an instructor and assessor on many courses since 1994 and his contribution to the Northern Rivers Team in the past years has been highly regarded by his superiors, peers and students.

*Mr Oliver is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation.*

## Deputy Group Captain Adrian De Hoon

### Woodburn RFB, Northern Rivers Team, Region North

Mr De Hoon became involved with the NSW Rural Fire Service when he moved to Northern Rivers District in 1990, where he joined the Bungawalbyn Bush Fire Brigade.

After achieving his crew leader qualifications he was elected as Brigade Captain in 1992 and remained in that appointment until 2002. He was also elected Deputy Group Captain for the Richmond Valley Council area in 1996, an appointment he still holds today.

Mr De Hoon is a dedicated instructor-assessor for the Service and instructs on courses that the Northern Rivers Team conducts and in doing so has donated many of his weekends to the Service. He is also acknowledged as the specialist instructor on chainsaw operation and he coordinates chainsaw courses in the Northern Rivers Team area. He is also an instructor for the annual regional training weekends and has worked tirelessly to ensure his students are fully equipped for the tasks they may encounter.

Mr De Hoon and his wife donated land to the Service, ensuring that a shed could be erected to provide a real home for the Bungawalbyn Brigade. In 2004 he also joined the Woodburn Brigade and is still a member that Brigade today.

*Mr De Hoon is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation.*

## Group Captain Alan Bier

### North West Zone and Bogan District, Region North

The major flood event that occurred in Queensland in February and March 2010 impacted on the Lightning Ridge area in mid March 2010. The State Emergency Service made plans to prepare for major flooding, which was predicted to isolate several towns and villages for an extended period. The SES established an airbase at Lightning Ridge to enable the airlift of food and other stores to isolated communities, as well as a forward operating centre at the Lightning Ridge SES Base.

On 22 March 2010 the SES requested assistance from local NSW RFS brigades and Out of Area Crews. Mr Bier was tasked to take on a coordination role for the NSW RFS at Lightning Ridge. He carried out many tasks including coordinating work crews, briefing and tasking of crews, staging area coordination, looking after the welfare of crews, attending briefings and briefing the Regional Operations Officer. He performed these duties for periods of five days a week, over three weeks as well as maintaining his own business.

His performance over this period was excellent. He acted with utmost professionalism, which was noted by other emergency agencies and out of area crews. It brought credit on himself, the North West Zone, the Bogan District, Region West and the NSW Rural Fire Service.

*Mr Bier is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation.*

## The Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Unit)

*Awarded to recognise service or outstanding actions in relation to fire service duties, administrative leadership, or exemplary performance of a specific project or task. The Certificate of Commendation may be awarded to an individual or unit for service beyond the scope of responsibility normally expected of that person or Unit in their assigned duties and is therefore worthy of acknowledgement and commendation.*

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### Woodburn Rural Fire Brigade

Northern Rivers, Region North

The Woodburn Rural Fire Brigade has a history of outstanding performance over a prolonged period of time, often under very trying circumstances.

Since record keeping began the Brigade has attended more than 571 incidents. These include call outs to fires, motor vehicle accidents or assisting the co-located State Emergency Service in storm and flood incidents. Due to the Brigade's location it is frequently called to traffic accidents on the Pacific Highway. These accidents often involve B-doubles and other forms of heavy transport and frequently involve the loss of life.

The leadership of the Brigade is of the highest standards and it has resulted in high morale among its members and an excellent rapport with the community. In the 2009 calendar year the 26 most active members of the Brigade have totalled 574 attendances at more than 88 incidents, an excellent record by any standard. The Brigade has been performing community service of the highest standard now for many years. It is known for its willingness to respond and for its high quality of work when responding to community needs.

*The Woodburn Rural Fire Brigade is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation.*

## Gilgandra Rural Fire Brigade

### Castlereagh Zone, Region North

On Saturday 11 July 2009 at approximately 2215hrs, fire was discovered within shops in Miller Street, the main street in Gilgandra. On arrival the NSW Fire Brigade found that fire had spread to the adjoining chemist shop and Bendigo Bank. The Captain immediately called for further resources to assist in containing the blaze. The RFS duty officer for Castlereagh Zone was advised and paged Gilgandra Brigade to assist at 2237 hrs.

Gilgandra 7 and Gilgandra 1 responded and on arrival found two shops fully involved in fire with fire extending into the common roof space of three other adjoining shops.

The NSWFB Officer in Charge directed the NSW RFS crews to the rear of the shops to attack the fire. The crews forced entry to the rear of the chemist shop to stop the fire spreading into the sixth shop. Despite the limited availability of adequate water supply and restricted access, the advance of the fire was successfully held at the sixth shop until further NSWFB resources arrived from Dubbo and Coonamble. Three other NSW RFS appliances were dispatched by the duty officer to assist with the supply of water to the incident. A total of 5 NSWFB and 5 NSW RFS appliances were used to contain the blaze.

All NSW RFS crews were aware of the importance to their community of the buildings involved and showed a high work rate for a sustained period of time. The NSW RFS crews continued to work along side NSWFB crews until 0330hrs. The Captain of the NSWFB commended the Brigade on their performance and their professionalism throughout the entire incident.

*The Gilgandra Rural Fire Brigade is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation.*

## The Hornsby/Ku-Ring-Gai District Training Team Region East

The Hornsby/Ku-Ring-Gai District Training Team has had a positive impact on training within the District area. The Training Team has been able to increase the number of training nominations being received by offering a variety of courses. As well as the increase in nominations being received, there has been an increase in the percentage of members who successfully complete their course and associated assessment.

The District Training Team has been flexible in meeting the large volume of training needs of individuals within the District. They have also worked hard to ensure all new courses are brought 'on-line' and are available to all members of the District in a timely manner. Apart from dedicating time to conducting training, many members of the District Training Team have assisted with the maintenance and upgrade of the District Training Centre.

*The Hornsby/Ku-Ring-Gai District Training Team is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation.*

## Organising Committee, Annual Region North Exercise Region North

The Region North Exercise has now been running for 10 years. The first ambitious exercise was held in Grafton over two days in 2001. It involved 22 appliances and 240 volunteers participating in 13 realistic training scenarios. The exercise has continued to evolve over the past 10 years with the 2010 exercise attracting more than 52 appliances and 432 volunteers over three days.

In 2003 the Exercise was moved to the Glen Innes Showground which provided excellent facilities and established a more central location within the Region. The Organising Committee members have been the driving force in this remarkable achievement by addressing current training and Occupational Health and Safety needs for the volunteers.

Over the 10 years in which the exercise has been held, there have been 42 different scenarios developed with a total of 476 appliances with 3,668 volunteers taking part.

*The Organising Committee for the Annual Region North Exercise is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation.*

## Lightning Ridge Headquarters Brigade

### North West Zone and Bogan District, Region North

The major flood event that occurred in Queensland in February and March 2010 impacted on the Lightning Ridge area in mid March 2010. The State Emergency Service made plans to prepare for major flooding which was predicted to isolate several towns and villages for an extended period.

The SES established an airbase at Lightning Ridge to enable the airlift of food and other stores to isolated communities.

The Lightning Ridge Headquarters Brigade was requested to supply fire suppression crews to the airbase during periods of "hot refuelling". The Brigade supplied suppression crews over the period of 22 March 2010 through to 9 April 2010. They also supplied crews to load the aircraft providing food and other items to the isolated community of Goodooga.

During this period the Brigade also maintained its normal response capability within its area of operations. The level of commitment shown by the Brigade over an extended period of time in dealing with various tasks required, brought credit upon the Brigade, the North West Zone, the Bogan District, Region West and the NSW Rural Fire Service.

*The Lightning Ridge Headquarters Brigade is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation.*

## Southampton Rural Fire Brigade Crew

### Clarence Valley District, Region North

On 30 April 2010 at 17:16hrs Southampton Brigade received a pager message to assist ambulance crews at a property on Riverstone Rd, Seelands.

Southampton 1 responded with a crew of four, and Southampton 7 responded with a crew of two to the incident. On route they were advised that an explosion had occurred and that no further information on the incident was available at that time.

On arrival they were confronted with ambulance officers treating a person with multiple serious injuries caused by the explosion of an unknown substance. Due to the nature of the incident Hazmat was called, the crew continued to monitor the house and the room where the explosion had occurred until a Hazmat unit arrived.

On arrival Hazmat deemed the house unsafe due to the quantity of the substance identified in the room. A 20 metre exclusion zone was established around the house and the bomb squad was requested to attend.

The Southampton crew demonstrated total professionalism in dealing with a complex and hazardous situation which brought credit upon the Brigade, the Clarence Valley District, Region North and the NSW Rural Fire Service.

*Southampton Rural Fire Brigade is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation.*

## St Florian's Feast Day, the Fourth of May

Firefighters in most European countries celebrate 4 May as St Florian's Feast Day as well as International Firefighters Day. This has been a tradition in central Europe for more than 150 years.

Born about 250 AD in Cetium (now in Austria), Florian joined the Roman army and angered the Emperor Diocletian when he refused to persecute Christians in the area. Florian gave himself up to the soldiers of Aquilinus, the governor, when they were rounding up the Christians. He was twice scourged, half-flayed alive and sentenced to be burnt alive. While being set on fire he challenged the Roman soldiers to light the fire, saying "If you do, I will climb to heaven on the flames". As the soldiers were apprehensive, they took another path and threw Florian into the River Enns with a stone around his neck.

About 600 years later, in approximately 900-950 AD a monastery was built near Florian's tomb, and subsequently the village of St Florian grew around it. St Florian was adopted as the Patron Saint of Poland, following an incident when a person was saved from a fire by invoking St Florian's name. Since then, St Florian has been invoked against fire and has been generally regarded in most countries as the Patron Saint of Firefighters.

Florian is associated with brewer's because of a legendary incident in which he miraculously stopped a fire with a single pitcher of water. He is often depicted holding a pitcher of water.

Many miracles of healing are attributed to his intercession and he is invoked as a powerful protector in danger from fire.