



NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

MEDIA RELEASE

Firefighters honoured on St Florian's Day

4 May 2019

Police and Emergency Services Minister David Elliott joined NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons today to honour NSW RFS members, including 21 individuals and 11 teams as part of the Services annual awards for exceptional service and bravery.

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

"Today we take this opportunity to thank our NSW RFS volunteers for their ongoing hard work and professionalism," Commissioner Fitzsimmons said.

"These men and women serve our communities and selflessly respond to all manner of fire and emergencies.

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

Commissioner Fitzsimmons paid special tribute to former Commissioner Philip Koperberg, who was awarded a Commissioner's Commendation for Service.

"From joining the North Springwood Brigade in 1967, Mr Koperberg has had a long and distinguished career, from Blue Mountains Fire Control Officer, to being appointed the first NSW RFS Commissioner and following his resignation in 2007, appointed Recovery Coordinator for the 2013 Blue Mountains fires.

Commissioner Fitzsimmons also recognized the commitment of the Ridgeway and Queanbeyan City Rural Fire Brigades, receiving the Commissioner's Unit Citation for Service.

"Members from these brigades were involved in firefighting operations during the Kingiman fire, near Ulladulla in August last year," Commissioner Fitzsimmons said.

"Tragically, one of the waterbombing helicopters supporting ground crews crashed and the pilot was killed.

"Positioned close by to the crash site, crew members were immediately on scene to render assistance and after assessing the situation, initiated fire suppression and secured the site for further investigations.

"In what was a very distressing situation, these brigade members displayed great dignity and professionalism.

A Commissioner's certificate of Commendation was also presented to the Bega Valley Brigades in the state's Far South Coast following the Reedy Swamp fire that impacted the area including Tathra on Sunday 18 March 2018.

"Displaying courage and support to the community, these members played a significant role in the protection of lives and property," Commissioner Fitzsimmons said.

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 2019:

Commissioner's Commendation for Service (individual)

- Firefighter Brian Baker, Bulli Brigade, Illawarra, Region East
- Group Captain Paul Bourne, Yarrahapinni/Stuarts Point, Lower North Coast, Region North
- Superintendent Victoria Campbell, Central Coast, Region East
- Captain Sharon Hedley, Hunter Valley Support, Hunter Valley, Region East
- Group Captain Clinton Jessop-Smith, Cumberland, Region East
- Mr Philip Christian Koperberg, Former Commissioner NSW RFS
- Senior Assistant Commissioner Bruce McDonald, Infrastructure Services, NSW RFS Headquarters
- Assistant Commissioner Peter McKecknie, Director Regional Services South West, Operations
- Mr Aidan Moore, Infrastructure Services, NSW RFS Headquarters
- District Officer Albert Pipan, Lower Hunter, Region East
- Retired Group Captain Rodney Purcell, Brungle Brigade, Riverina Highlands, Region South
- Inspector Benjamin Shepherd, Corporate Communications, NSW RFS Headquarters

Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (individual)

- Mr Richard Angel, Infrastructure Services, NSW RFS Headquarters
- Captain Danielle Brice, Eurobodalla Volunteer Operational Support Brigade & Tuross Head Brigades, Far South Coast, Region South
- Firefighter Ryan Hutchinson, Benwerrin Brigade, Lower Hunter, Region East
- Firefighter Veronica Jones, Benwerrin Brigade, Lower Hunter, Region East
- Firefighter Daryl Meppem, Davidson Brigade, Northern Beaches, Region East
- Firefighter Stuart Mitchell, Ebenezer Brigade, Hawkesbury, Region East
- District Officer Matthew Reeves, Illawarra, Region East
- Captain Catering Adam Rutter, Hawkesbury Catering and Oakville Brigades, Hawkesbury, Region East
- Mr Matthew White, Infrastructure Services, NSW RFS Headquarters

Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (unit)

- Bega Valley Brigades, Far South Coast, Region South
- Botswana Fire Management Program
- Central Coast Communications Brigade, Central Coast, Region East
- Ellerston Brigade, Liverpool Range, Region North
- HQ Relocation Teams (Building Services, Communication Systems, Information Communications Technology, Corporate Communications), NSW RFS Headquarters
- Illawarra Communications After Hours Team, Illawarra Communication, Illawarra, Region East
- Ingleside 1A and Ingleside 1B, Northern Beaches, Region East
- Kenthurst RFB Hazard Reduction Crew, The Hills, Region East
- Road Crash Rescue Program, remote Area Firefighting and Specialised Operations, Operations
- Your Health Matters (YHM) Working Group, NSW RFS Headquarters

Commissioner's Unit Citation for Service

- Ridgeway and Queanbeyan City Rural Fire Brigades, Lake George, Region South

