



INTERNAL
BRAVERY & SERVICE
AWARDS CEREMONY
2019



THE NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE INTERNAL BRAVERY AND SERVICE AWARDS

The Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS), 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 Service Standards 9.1.1 and on the prescribed nomination form. The Service Standards and nomination form are available on the NSW RFS Intranet 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 Award 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.



At the Awards Ceremony on 4 May 2019, twenty one individual and eleven 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 Firefighters' Day.

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL ANTHEM

*Australians all let us rejoice,
For we are young and free;
We've golden soil and wealth for toil;
Our home is girt by sea;
Our land abounds in nature's gifts
Of beauty rich and rare;
In history's page, let every stage
Advance Australia Fair.
In joyful strains then let us sing,
Advance Australia Fair.*

*Beneath our radiant Southern Cross
We'll toil with hearts and hands;
To make this Commonwealth of ours
Renowned of all the lands;
For those who've come across the seas
We've boundless plains to share;
With courage let us all combine
To Advance Australia Fair.
In joyful strains then let us sing,
Advance Australia Fair.*



THE ORDER OF PROCEEDINGS

National Anthem

NSW Rural Fire Service Pipes and Drums Brigade and State Protocol Squad

Welcome to Guests

Executive Director Membership and Strategic Services, Trina Schmidt

Prayer

Senior Chaplain Major Ian Spall

Address

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons AFSM

Address

The Hon. David Elliott MP
Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Presentation of Awards

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons AFSM

Photography

All recipients will be photographed during and following the conclusion of proceedings. 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 a light lunch following the ceremony.

We wish to thank the NSW Rural Fire Service Pipes and Drums Brigade and State Protocol Squad for their assistance.



COMMISSIONER'S COMMENDATION FOR SERVICE (INDIVIDUAL)

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

Firefighter Brian Baker

Bulli Brigade, Illawarra, Region East

Firefighter Brian Baker joined the Bulli Bush Fire Brigade in November 1968. Over the years, he has held the positions of Senior Deputy Captain and Deputy Captain and attended countless incidents throughout NSW and Victoria, including the large bush fires of 1994, 2001, the Canberra Fires of 2003 and numerous flood and storm events.

Firefighter Baker is a founding member of the Illawarra Community Safety Brigade where he was heavily involved in community engagement activities especially the pre-school programs. Additionally, he was the Deputy Coordinator of the Illawarra Cadet Brigade.

What sets Firefighter Baker apart is his unwavering determination to promote to students the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) values and how the NSW RFS benefits the community, therefore resulting in opportunities for enthusiastic students graduating the Secondary School Cadet Program to join their local brigade or to become a staff member. The impact of the program is evident by the excellent feedback received from students. Additionally, there are also far reaching outcomes for the wider community as the program is an outstanding community engagement tool spread through numerous sources such as word of mouth and excellent ongoing local media exposure.

As the Illawarra Volunteer Coordinator, Firefighter Baker has delivered the Secondary School Cadet Program to over 14 different High Schools in the District to over 400 graduating students. As a mentor and leader Firefighter Baker has been guiding and training many RFS members who assist in the delivery of this program. The impact he has made on school executives, school committees, teachers, students and observing parents, cannot be underestimated.

Firefighter Baker remains a very active member of the Bulli Brigade with a long and distinguished career with the NSW Rural Fire Service. In recognition of his service he was awarded the National Medal 35 year Clasp in 2008 and the Long Service Medal and clasps for 40 years' service in 2012.

Firefighter Brian Baker is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Commendation for Service.

COMMISSIONER'S COMMENDATION FOR SERVICE (INDIVIDUAL)

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

Group Captain Paul Bourne

Yarrahapinni/Stuarts Point, Lower North Coast, Region North

Group Captain Paul Bourne has been an active member of the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) since joining the Yarrahapinni/Stuarts Point Brigade in 1985. Since 1994 he has been a Group Captain and member of the Lower North Coast Senior Management Team. Group Captain Bourne is also an active member of the NSW RFS Critical Incident Support Services (CISS) Team. His operational experience, respect from his peers and commitment to the NSW RFS is second to none.

During the 2016/17 fire season, Kempsey experienced two major wildfire events. The first Section 44 declaration occurred on Saturday 5 November 2016 in response to two large fires encroaching on the Kempsey township. The first fire started around mid-afternoon in the Yarravel area west of Kempsey and was burning directly towards many properties including the Booroongen Djugun Aged Care Facility. Group Captain Bourne coordinated the joint NSW RFS/Fire & Rescue NSW operation, assisted by the NSW Police Service and other emergency services to help contain the fire that was burning well into the evening under very severe conditions.

More significantly the second Section 44 was declared on Sunday 12th February 2017 when Kempsey experienced one of its worst fire weather days on record, resulting in a fire south-west of Kempsey in the Dondingalong area. Not only did Group Captain Bourne oversee control of over 40 fire appliances, numerous aircraft and heavy plant during the early stages of this incident, by being one of the first on scene at approximately 1530 hrs at Spring Hill Road, he also came across a local resident who had just lost her house to the fire. The resident, also a member of the local brigade, had lost everything other than the clothes on her back and had just crawled out from her dam when Group Captain Bourne drove past. Whilst not missing a beat with the fire, Group Captain Bourne grabbed the resident and put her in the passenger seat of his Group vehicle until such time as she could be re-located.

Group Captain Bourne runs his own barber shop business in Kempsey and is a great ambassador for the Service. He never hesitates to drop whatever he is doing to support his local community, .

Group Captain Paul Bourne is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Commendation for Service.



COMMISSIONER'S COMMENDATION FOR SERVICE (INDIVIDUAL)

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

Superintendent Victoria Campbell

Central Coast, Region East

Superintendent Victoria Campbell has been a volunteer member of the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) for 29 years and a staff member for five years.

Superintendent Campbell joined the Warringah Headquarters Brigade in 1990 before transferring to the Cottage Point Brigade in 1992 where she remained until she joined the Brooklyn-Hornsby Brigade in 1996. As a volunteer, Superintendent Campbell has held the roles of Captain, Senior Deputy Captain, Deputy Captain, Secretary, First Aid Officer and Callout Officer.

In July 2009, Superintendent Campbell commenced in a salaried role as the Learning and Development Officer at Hornsby until 2011. After a period of four years away from the NSW RFS with NSW Ambulance, in 2015 Superintendent Campbell was appointed to the Operational Doctrine and Standards Officer role. In 2015 she was appointed to the Supervisor Operational Doctrine and Standards. In 2017 she was appointed Manager Operational Business and Procurement and is currently the District Manager for the Central Coast Team since her appointment in January 2019.

The NSW RFS Operational Business and Procurement Unit within the larger Response and Coordination Group are responsible for the receipt, validation and payment of aviation contacts and invoices. The NSW RFS are invoiced for aviation services performed under a National Aerial Firefighting Centre contract arrangement or a NSW Call When Needed Supply Agreement.

Prior to payment, all invoices are subject to contract compliance checks and validation against Flight Operations Returns, Daily Fuel Returns, or Tracking and Event Data. This process is dutifully undertaken under the management of Superintendent Victoria Campbell.

The Operational Business and Procurement Unit diligently provides contact management services through enforcement and education of aviation operators to reduce ongoing inappropriate charging and invoicing. These actions regularly involve the display of courage and effective negotiation, and mediation skills with what is regularly a difficult and confronting environment.

Since the inception of the Operational Business and Procurement Unit in 2016, through the actions of staff within, this unit has realised savings to the NSW Rural Fire Service and broader NSW Government in excess of half million dollars.

Superintendent Victoria Campbell is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Commendation for Service.



COMMISSIONER'S COMMENDATION FOR SERVICE (INDIVIDUAL)

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

Captain Sharon Hedley

Hunter Valley Support, Hunter Valley, Region East

Captain Sharon Hedley joined the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) in 1992 and has been an active member for over 26 years.

Captain Hedley began her service with the Bulga Rural Fire Brigade and has held a number of positions within the Bulga, Whittingham and Hunter Valley Communications Brigades that include Treasurer, Secretary, Deputy Captain and since 2016 she has been the Captain of the Hunter Valley Support Brigade.

Captain Hedley's dedication extends beyond the brigade level, acting as a scribe for group officers and major incident controllers and more notably, supporting Incident Management Teams. During the Hungerford fire in 2013/14, Captain Hedley's assistance to the logistics team and the Incident Controller as a fill In Management Support Officer was invaluable.

Aside from managing a very active Support Brigade, Captain Hedley continues to provide ongoing support to the Hunter Valley Team by volunteering as an administrative officer each week, providing assistance to the staff and volunteers across all functional areas.

The tasks and priorities allocated to Captain Hedley are constantly changing but no matter how big or how small the job, she gives her all to assist. Captain Hedley continues to support Incident Management Teams during each operation and is always there to help anyone that needs assistance.

Captain Sharon Hedley is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Commendation for Service.



COMMISSIONER'S COMMENDATION FOR SERVICE (INDIVIDUAL)

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

Group Captain Clinton Jessop-Smith AFSM

Cumberland, Region East

Group Captain Clinton Jessop-Smith AFSM joined the Berkshire Park Rural Fire Brigade in 1973. In 1983 he was elected to the role of Captain, a position he held until 1994. In 1990, he was elected to the role of Deputy Group Captain and Group Captain in 1996.

Group Captain Jessop-Smith has been directly involved with the mobilisation and organisation of volunteer firefighters combating many local campaigns. His proven ability as a leading fire commander is second to none which he has demonstrated on many occasions during major local and out of area wildfire campaigns and his interstate deployments to Victoria and South Australia.

An example of Group Captain Jessop-Smith's firefighting and operational leadership was during the 2001 Christmas Day fires which consisted of some of the worst fire behaviour witnessed in the western Sydney area of Penrith. Due to his quick thinking, tactical ability and task prioritisation, many properties were saved from the onset of fire.

In 2001, Group Captain Jessop-Smith demonstrated exemplary leadership during the zoning of the three local government areas of Blacktown, Fairfield and Penrith. Although there were some major barriers to overcome, Group Captain Jessop-Smith demonstrated superior qualities leading approximately 1,000 volunteers, including other Group Captains and Captains through the process. His enthusiasm and ability to motivate was vital in moving the brigades forward into what is now known as the Cumberland Zone.

Group Captain Jessop-Smith is the Chair of the Cumberland Bush Fire Management Committee, which actively drives hazard reduction and related business of the committee across all agencies. He regularly works with the District Manager to enhance the capabilities of the Zone through the discussion, support and implementation of a range of strategic and operational initiatives whilst maintaining strong representation for the wider Cumberland Membership and their interests.

Group Captain Jessop-Smith is the most senior Group Captain in the Cumberland Zone who has given 45 years of distinguished and dedicated service. Group Captain Jessop-Smith is well-respected and held in high regard by the District Manager, staff, other Group Officers and the wider Cumberland membership.

Group Captain Clinton Jessop-Smith AFSM is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Commendation for Service.

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

Mr Philip Christian Koperberg AO, AFSM, BEM

Former Commissioner NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS)

Mr Phil Koperberg AO, AFSM, BEM joined the North Springwood Bush Fire Brigade in the Blue Mountains in 1967.

In 1970, having progressed through the brigade ranks, Mr Koperberg was appointed full time Fire Control Officer for the Blue Mountains, a position he held until 1982. During this time, he also held the position of Executive Officer to the Blue Mountains Bush Fire Prevention Association. In 1972 he was elected Chairman of the Fire Control Officers' Association of New South Wales holding that position until 1982. In 1980 through until 1982 he was appointed Member of the Bush Fire Council of New South Wales representing Fire Control Officers.

In 1982, he was appointed Emergency Services Policy Analyst to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. In 1985 he was appointed Chairman of the Bush Fire Council of NSW and Executive Officer of the then Bush Fires Branch of the Office of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. In 1989, he was appointed Director-General, Department of Bush Fire Services. In 1993, he was appointed Commissioner of Bush Fire Services.

Over the many years of involvement with the NSW RFS, Mr Koperberg has chaired the NSW Rural Fire Service Advisory Council Bush Fire Coordinating Committee; and State Rescue Board.

In January 1994, he was appointed overall Emergency Controller for major bush fires burning across vast areas of eastern New South Wales. On September 1 1997, following the proclamation of the Rural Fires Act 1997, he was appointed Commissioner/Chief Executive Officer of the NSW Rural Fire Service.

In 1999, he was appointed Emergency Response Controller during the hail storms in the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney. In 2001, he was awarded the Honorary Doctorate of Letters from the University of Western Sydney.

In April 2007, he resigned from the position of Commissioner NSW Rural Fire Service, to enable entry into state politics.

Following the disastrous bush fires in the Blue Mountains in October 2013, Mr Koperberg was appointed Recovery Coordinator by the then Minister for Emergency Services. This was a role he undertook for many months assisting the affected community.

Mr Koperberg's leadership and dedicated service for the people of NSW over so many years makes him a very worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Commendation for Service.



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Senior Assistant Commissioner Bruce McDonald AFSM

Infrastructure Services, NSW RFS Headquarters

Senior Assistant Commissioner Bruce McDonald AFSM has led the successful relocation of the NSW Rural Fire Service State(NSW RFS) State Headquarters, and is worthy of recognition through a Commendation for Service.

Senior Assistant Commissioner McDonald has a long and distinguished career as a volunteer commencing in 1980 when he joined the Beacon Hill Rural Fire Brigade. Through the period to 1999, Senior Assistant Commissioner McDonald held numerous volunteer roles including Training Officer, Equipment Officer, Deputy Captain, Senior Deputy Captain, Captain, Deputy Group Captain and ultimately Group Captain for three years. In 1999, he joined the NSW RFS as Deputy Fire Control Officer in the Warringah Pittwater District.

Senior Assistant Commissioner McDonald has held a number of roles in the NSW RFS since that time including Operations Officer Coordination, Manager Operational Communications, Manager Infrastructure Projects, Group Manager Mobile Assets and Infrastructure and Director Infrastructure Services before commencing his current role of Executive Director Infrastructure Services in 2014.

Senior Assistant Commissioner McDonald was awarded the Australian Fire Service Medal in 2011.

Commencing in early 2015, Senior Assistant Commissioner McDonald has driven the relocation of the NSW RFS State Headquarters through complex Government approval processes, engagement with Property NSW, NSW Treasury, the Office of Emergency Management, the Minister for Emergency Services and ultimately a raft of specialist firms and designers culminating in the GPT Group as the successful proponent and Lendlease as the builder and provider of the integrated fitout.

Internally, Senior Assistant Commissioner McDonald has also been responsible for the design and delivery of both the building management and information technology solutions.

Given the complexity of the NSW RFS operations including 24/7 emergency response operations, redundancy, security and expanding reliance on information and communications technology, this has been a mammoth undertaking.

Senior Assistant Commissioner McDonald has demonstrated outstanding negotiation and project management skills and a level of resilience that is to be applauded.

Senior Assistant Commissioner Bruce McDonald AFSM is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Commendation for Service.

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Assistant Commissioner Peter McKechnie

Director Regional Services South West, Operations

Assistant Commissioner Peter McKechnie commenced as the Manager State Operations on the 5 September 2011 after having demonstrated a considerable amount of dedication and service in both Regional and District based roles including that of District Manager for the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai District.

Since his appointment to the Manager State Operations role, Assistant Commissioner McKechnie has served with diligence and dedication. Of considerable note are his exemplary actions over the 2016/17 and 2017/18 fire seasons. During this period Assistant Commissioner McKechnie demonstrated courage and diligence to service, with his leadership and management of such events as the largest overseas deployment of Australian Fire Fighters to Canada and the United States, undertaking important roles both within Australia and in-country.

Assistant Commissioner McKechnie's attention to detail and coordination of the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) response to the Tathra Bush bush fire, and subsequent independent review, was unwavering, with many weeks of incident analysis and issues management. His dedication and hard work was in no small part testament to demonstrating the professionalism and dedication of our members within the independent review.

Not only demonstrating leadership qualities within the NSW RFS, Assistant Commissioner McKechnie was seconded to the NSW State Emergency Service (NSW SES) as Director Emergency Management to assist the NSW SES at a time when senior volunteer operational management was needed.

Assistant Commissioner McKechnie was recently appointed to the role of Director Regional Services South/West and is highly regarded by his own peers and State Operations members for his leadership, compassion and management ability.

Chief Superintendent Peter McKechnie is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Commendation for Service.



COMMISSIONER'S COMMENDATION FOR SERVICE (INDIVIDUAL)

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Mr Aidan Moore

Infrastructure Services, NSW RFS Headquarters

In late 2015, the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) commenced the process of planning and implementing the relocation of its Headquarters to Murray Rose Avenue, Sydney Olympic Park. Over the ensuing period, an intensive process was undertaken to search for a new site, to negotiate with various NSW government and external providers whilst while concurrently developing plans and specifications for the building and fit out that were approved for construction. Construction commenced in April 2017, with the main move into our new HQ occurring on Monday 12 November 2018.

Mr Aidan Moore was appointed Program Manager, NSW RFS New Headquarters in February 2016. During this period, Mr Moore demonstrated outstanding administrative leadership working tirelessly coordinating many groups and individuals over prolonged periods of time and often under extremely challenging circumstances to ensure the culmination of our new HQ.

Mr Moore displayed superior stakeholder management, resourcefulness and a propensity for decisive action whilst his personal commitment inspired others in the program with a passion for quality outputs. Mr Moore's integrity, attention to detail and ability to recall matters of fact and commitment to the program underpinned his ability to undertake this role.

Mr Moore was responsible to coordinate and oversee the original site identification, location analysis, tender processes leading to the site selection, an agreement for lease, building specifications informing design, fitout requirements and the engagement of appropriate contractors such as project management guidance and change management. Mr Moore's ability to understand and effectively communicate complex issues, both upwards downwards, is a key reason behind the success of this project.

Mr Moore's contributions to the NSW RFS include other high value and transformative projects, such as the Radio Communications Systems Upgrade Programme from 2011 to 2015. His work has been invaluable in ensuring the successful outcome of these projects.

Mr Aidan Moore is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Commendation for Service.

COMMISSIONER'S COMMENDATION FOR SERVICE (INDIVIDUAL)

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

District Officer Albert Pipan

Lower Hunter, Region East

District Officer Albert (Bert) Pipan has been a volunteer member of the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) for over 25 years and a staff member since 2011.

District Officer Pipan joined the Bowthorne/Hinton Rural Fire Brigade in 1993 and has held a number of roles, including Group Captain, Deputy Group Captain, Captain, Deputy Captain, President and Brigade Training Officer.

District Officer Pipan's role in the Lower Hunter Zone is primarily Learning and Development responsible for course delivery, maintaining systems and new brigade projects.

District Officer Pipan has many years of construction project management experience from his previous employment and in the past few years has also assisted in facilitating many NSW RFS construction projects within the Lower Hunter Zone. These projects include new stations, additions to stations and the building of the training ground.

Since 2016 District Officer Pipan has facilitated and coordinated 47 construction related projects for the Lower Hunter Zone. This includes assisting in the sourcing and justification of funding from the Rural Fire Fighting Fund, Deductible Gift Recipient Trust and the Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) based funding. The 47 projects include: 36 solar projects; two new RFB station projects; and nine toilets/meeting room additions.

In the 2017/2018 financial year the Lower Hunter Zone secured funding for the new Fingal Bay Station and 15 other small construction projects. This funding was a mid-year allocation that required these projects to be completed before 30 June 2018. District Officer Pipan was able to deliver on all 16 projects in just over three months.

Over the past two years District Officer Pipan has demonstrated his dedication in the delivery of projects to support our volunteers and the Lower Hunter Zone with a high degree of leadership, passion and professionalism.

District Officer Albert Pipan is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Commendation for Service.



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Retired Group Captain Rodney Purcell

Brungle Brigade, Riverina Highlands, Region South

Retired Group Captain Rodney Purcell joined the Brungle Brigade in 1970 and has held the positions of Deputy Captain and Senior Deputy Captain with the Brungle Brigade before being elected Group Captain for the then Tumut District and now Snowy Valley District in the Riverina Highlands.

During his time as Group Captain, he has been involved in the 2003 Brindabella Ranges Complex (Canberra), the Billo Road (2006), Minjary and Sturgess (2014) S44 Fires, fulfilling Divisional Commander and Sector Leader roles. Retired Group Captain Purcell is also very active in assisting the Incident Management Team during medium to large scale fires within the Zone.

Retired Group Captain Rodney Purcell has shown extraordinary dedication to the Riverina Highlands in his 48 years of service with the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS). He spent many years as a leader, quietly sharing his time, knowledge and experience. Retired Group Captain Purcell has delivered Crew Leader and Wild Fire Behaviour training for many years, where he has passed on his considerable experience to newer members. He inspires and motivates members in their roles within the NSW RFS.

Retired Group Captain Rodney Purcell has also been an active member and Chairman of the Riverina Highlands Bush Fire Management Committee, where he chaired this Committee until mid-2016. He was also active with the Tumut District Bushfire Management prior to the Zoning in 2004. The Riverina Highlands has a major State Forest and National Park presence, where much of the local industry revolves around pine plantations and tourism, which makes his role and leadership of this Committee particularly important.

Retired Group Captain Rodney Purcell assists Riverina Highlands Zone volunteers and staff as an advocate for change with recent examples being centralised dispatch, firefighter qualifications and training, wearing of appropriate personal protective equipment on the fire ground and fire ground communications. He has also been an active Riverina Highlands Zone volunteer representative on the Liaison Committee for many years.

Retired Group Captain Rodney Purcell has recently stepped down from his role as Group Captain, for family health reasons. However, he wishes to remain in a “retired” Group Captain capacity, mentoring the newer Group Captains whenever he can.

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

COMMISSIONER'S COMMENDATION FOR SERVICE (INDIVIDUAL)

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Inspector Benjamin Shepherd

Corporate Communications, NSW RFS Headquarters

Inspector Benjamin Shepherd has been a volunteer member of the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) for over 24 years and a staff member since 2006.

Inspector Benjamin Shepherd joined the NSW RFS after experiencing the impact of bush fires on his local area in 1994. For more than 24 years, Inspector Shepherd has held a number of roles within the Terrey Hills Rural Fire Brigade, including Captain, Senior Deputy Captain, Deputy Captain and President. He remains an active member of the Brigade.

In 2006, Inspector Shepherd commenced in a salaried role in the State Operations area and in 2008 he commenced with the Media Services section in a temporary capacity.

Since then, he has been a valued member of the team including as a Media Officer and most recently as Acting Manager of the Media Services section.

Inspector Shepherd regularly performs the role of State Public Liaison Officer during major fire events, liaising with Public Liaison Officers in the field, and assisting with the delivery of information and warnings to fire affected communities.

Inspector Shepherd has also provided on-the-ground assistance to media outlets and members at major incidents, as a Media Liaison Officer.

In October 2013, Inspector Shepherd was on the ground in the Blue Mountains during the fires which destroyed more than 200 homes in a single day, liaising with media, and at times reassuring residents who had been impacted by the fires.

In March 2018, Inspector Shepherd was deployed to the Bega Valley bush fires which impacted the community of Tathra on the far south coast of NSW. Here, he managed the significant level of media interest which descended on the small community, and assisted with the management of visits by dignitaries, including the NSW Premier and Prime Minister of Australia. Inspector Shepherd acted in a professional way, under challenging and demanding circumstances. Inspector Shepherd has acted as a spokesperson for the NSW RFS, providing clear and concise information to the community through various media platforms.

Inspector Benjamin Shepherd is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Commendation for Service.



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.

Mr Richard Angel

Infrastructure Services, NSW RFS Headquarters

In late 2015, the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) commenced the process of planning and implementing the relocation of its Headquarters to Murray Rose Avenue, Sydney Olympic Park. Over the next 12 months, an intensive process was undertaken to develop plans and specifications for the base building and fit out that were able to be approved for construction. Construction commenced in April 2017, with the main move into the new HQ occurring on Monday 12 November 2018.

As part of the overall program, Building Services is a crucial component of a contemporary building in particular when integrated into a critical piece of NSW emergency management infrastructure such as the NSW RFS new HQ. To ensure an appropriate focus, design oversight and management of the building more generally Mr Richard Angel was tasked with leading this component of planning and implementation through a team of talented staff.

For over 12 months Mr Angel demonstrated outstanding administrative leadership identifying requirements, consulting with and fulfilling the needs of the NSW RFS more generally.

This work occurred during a period of realignment to the Building Services section where management of the section changed on several occasions. Mr Angel also acted in the role prior to a permanent Manager being appointed. Mr Angel provided a constant and even keel required for such a successful outcome that involved planning of not only the new HQ to operate seamlessly from the first day of occupation, but more importantly the seamless transition and the ongoing continuity of the NSW RFS State Operations.

As with many aspects of general administration, many go unnoticed, Mr Angel's experience in facilities management, planning and execution was evident from the moment people walked into the new HQ. All matters had been considered, from parking, cleaning, courier services, air conditioning and catering all requiring contract negotiations, down to the finer points of consumables, were all planned and implemented.

Following the successful occupation of the new HQ, Mr Angel's focus then returned to the Carter Street building, to ensure it was appropriately decommissioned to a standard suitable for handing back to the building owners.

Mr Richard Angel is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation.

COMMISSIONER'S CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION (INDIVIDUAL)

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Captain Danielle Brice

Eurobodalla Volunteer Operational Support and Tuross Head Brigades,
Far South Coast, Region South

In 2008 and 2011 Captain Danielle Brice and her husband Nick tragically lost both their sons in separate accidents. Her son Nicholas was a NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) volunteer brigade member and after Nicholas' death, Captain Brice joined the Tuross Heads Rural Fire Brigade in 2012 to carry on her son's legacy. Also as a result of her son Chris's death, Captain Brice became a Eurobodalla Shire Councillor and has been a passionate road safety campaigner, successfully leading a campaign for a shared pathway on South Head Road at Moruya.

As a Councillor, Captain Brice was a strong Council representative on the Eurobodalla Bush Fire Management Committee. She was instrumental in encouraging and supporting the Council in applying for Bush Fire grants and providing input into the development of the Bush Fire Risk Management Plan. She was also the Eurobodalla Council's representative on the Liaison Committee and a strong advocate for the construction and improvement to stations and facilities for the volunteers.

Captain Brice joined the Eurobodalla Volunteer Operational Support Brigade (EVOS) in 2013 and is the current Captain and Training Officer. She has previously held the role Deputy Captain for three years from 2015 to 2018. She had also held the position of Community Engagement Officer since 2014 and is actively involved in promoting the NSW RFS and passionate about protecting the community.

As Captain of the Eurobodalla Volunteer Operational Support Brigade, Captain Brice freely gives up her time to assist the Far South Coast Team in both the Eurobodalla and the Bega Valley Fire Control Centres with communications and administrative duties during busy operational periods.

Captain Brice has been the driving force behind the Eurobodalla Joint Emergency Services Training Day since its inception, where NSW RFS and other emergency service agencies meet and train together, testing their skills over a vast array of scenarios at the NSW RFS Mogo facility.

Captain Brice is the call out officer for the Far South Coast Aviation Group ensuring that both the Moruya and Merimbula Airbases are manned when needed. She has assisted as an Air Radio Operator at numerous Section 44 Fires across NSW.

Captain Brice's commitment to the Far South Coast Team, the local community and the NSW RFS is commendable.

Captain Danielle Brice is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation.

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.

Firefighter Ryan Hutchinson

Benwerrin Brigade, Lower Hunter, Region East

Firefighter Ryan Hutchinson joined the Benwerrin Brigade of the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) in 2015. Prior to this he was a member for more than five years with the Karangi Brigade from 1999 to 2005.

On 30 October 2018 the Lower Hunter Zone Office received a triple zero call for a structure alight on Blackhill Road, Blackhill. Numerous NSW RFS brigades (RFB) and Fire & Rescue NSW fire appliances were dispatched. The incident was located in the Benwerrin RFB area. Benwerrin 1 crew members, Firefighters Ryan Hutchinson and Veronica Jones had just finished a maintenance run, and were the crew members at the station. At the time of the call Benwerrin 1 was the closest unit and was dispatched to the incident.

Upon arrival the crew confirmed a structure alight and passed the necessary information to the Fire Control Centre (FCC) that assistance was required. The crew were not trained in the use of breathing apparatus and realising the importance of intervention, immediately went to work completing a 360 assessment, deploying hose to protect exposures, isolating power to the house, and passing the necessary situation reports to the FCC. This was all undertaken within 10 minutes of arriving on scene.

While undertaking these duties, there were also members of the public on scene. Initial reports did not indicate any persons trapped, however a member of the public reported there was a resident inside. Firefighters Hutchinson and Jones realising that they could not enter, immediately reported this information and started to attack the fire from the outside in attempt to slow the fire spreading to another section of the house. As they undertook this action, the resident exited the rear of the house and Firefighter Jones was alerted by a member of the public. Firefighter Jones moved to the rear of the house and found a distressed and injured male who was attempting to re-enter the building. Firefighter Jones prevented the male from re-entering the house and commenced first aid. While this was occurring Firefighter Hutchinson maintained his position and continued to provide the necessary protection to his fellow crew member by continuing to deliver water to the developing fire.

Firefighters Hutchinson's and Jones' team work, quick decision making and appreciation of the situation prevented further injury to the trapped resident.

Firefighter Ryan Hutchinson is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation.

COMMISSIONER'S CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION (INDIVIDUAL)

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Firefighter Veronica Jones

Benwerrin Brigade, Lower Hunter, Region East

Firefighter Veronica Jones joined the Killingworth Brigade in 2013 and became a dual member in the Benwerrin Brigade in 2014.

On 30 October 2018 the Lower Hunter Zone Office received a triple zero call for a structure alight on Blackhill Road, Blackhill. Numerous NSW RFS brigades (RFB) and Fire & Rescue NSW fire appliances were dispatched. The incident was located in the Benwerrin RFB area. Benwerrin 1 crew members, Firefighters Veronica Jones and Ryan Hutchinson had just finished a maintenance run, and were the crew members at the station. At the time of the call Benwerrin 1 was the closest unit and was dispatched to the incident.

Upon arrival the crew confirmed a structure alight and passed the necessary information to the Fire Control Centre (FCC) that assistance was required. The crew were not trained in the use of breathing apparatus and realising the importance of intervention, immediately went to work completing a 360 assessment, deploying hose to protect exposures, isolating power to the house, and passing the necessary situation reports to the FCC. This was all undertaken within 10 minutes of arriving on scene.

While undertaking these duties, there were also members of the public on scene. Initial reports did not indicate any persons trapped, however a member of the public reported there was a resident inside. Firefighters Jones and Hutchinson realising that they could not enter, immediately reported this information and started to attack the fire from the outside in attempt to slow the fire spreading to another section of the house. As they undertook this action, the resident exited the rear of the house and Firefighter Jones was alerted by a member of the public. Firefighter Jones moved to the rear of the house and found a distressed and injured male who was attempting to re-enter the building. Firefighter Jones prevented the male from re-entering the house and commenced first aid. While this was occurring Firefighter Hutchinson maintained his position and continued to provide the necessary protection to his fellow crew member by continuing to deliver water to the developing fire.

Firefighters Jones' and Hutchinson's team work, quick decision making and appreciation of the situation prevented further injury to the trapped resident.

Firefighter Veronica Jones is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation.



COMMISSIONER'S CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION (INDIVIDUAL)

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Firefighter Daryl Meppem

Davidson Brigade, Northern Beaches, Region East

Firefighter Daryl Meppem has been a member of the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) for eight years since he joined the Davidson Brigade in 2011.

In late August 2018, Firefighter Meppem was driving his private vehicle on Mona Vale Road Terrey Hills, when he became aware that the driver of the vehicle ahead of him was in distress. The driver stopped her car in the roadway at which point Firefighter Meppem pulled his vehicle in behind her and went to see if he could lend assistance.

It became quickly apparent that the driver's three year old daughter was choking, turning blue and struggling to breathe. Firefighter Meppem gave the driver his phone and requested she call an ambulance. He removed the choking child from the car and using the Heimlich manoeuvre, was able to dislodge a bottle top from the child's airways. The child was then able to breathe again for herself.

While the ambulance was no longer required, the child was taken by her mother to Mona Vale Hospital to be medically assessed. The child's mother was told that intervention by Firefighter Meppem saved the child's life.

Firefighter Meppem's swift and selfless actions bring credit to both himself and the NSW RFS.

Firefighter Daryl Meppem is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation.

COMMISSIONER'S CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION (INDIVIDUAL)

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Firefighter Stuart Mitchell

Ebenezer Brigade, Hawkesbury, Region East

On the morning of 14 November 2017 Firefighter Stuart Mitchell was travelling to work along King Road, Wilberforce where he came upon a serious two vehicle accident.

A small work truck travelling in the opposite direction had been hit from behind by a bogie tipper truck and veered across the path of the semi-trailer impacting directly with a concrete power pole crushing the driver's cabin.

Prior to Firefighter Mitchell's arrival to the incident, another NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) member Captain Adam Rutter was on scene and was in control of the incident. Captain Rutter had ensured the area was safe, rendered first aid to the patients by applying a tourniquet to the upper thigh of the injured driver stemming the flow of blood and was monitoring the driver of the second vehicle who was going into shock.

Firefighter Mitchell was asked by Captain Rutter to locate the personal effects of the driver to pass onto police when they arrived. As the blood pressure was returning to the injured driver his consciousness was improving and the driver tried to exit the vehicle. Captain Rutter and Firefighter Mitchell talked with the driver telling him to stay still as he had sustained a serious injury.

The time between Captain Rutter's initial care and the hand over to ambulance paramedics was approximately 15-20 minutes. Due to the severity of the injuries and time taken for the ambulance to arrive, Captain Rutter's and Firefighter Mitchell's actions extended the life of the injured driver until medical treatment by paramedics could be administered.

Firefighter Stuart Mitchell is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation.



COMMISSIONER'S CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION (INDIVIDUAL)

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District Officer Matthew Reeves

Illawarra, Region East

As member of the Learning and Development section of Headquarters for over 11 years, District Officer Matthew Reeves initiated and worked on a number significant projects advocating for improved training and facilities for members across the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS).

The development of the NSW RFS Advanced Structural Firefighting Workshop, the formation of a State Training Team and the States Compartment Fire Behaviour Training, structural firefighting program was initiated and coordinated by District Officer Reeves over a six year period and is recognised as a pivotal piece of the NSW RFS structural firefighter training matrix. District Officer Reeves developed a strategy to fund the design and delivery of two mobile structural fire training props that would be of benefit to members in regional and country areas. These props would reduce volunteer travel time, by taking training facilities to districts and ensure the safe, effective and timely roll out of training to areas acquiring breathing apparatus. The cost benefit of the mobile props would also allow for more funds to be directed at training delivery rather than associated travel and accommodation costs.

In February 2018 District Officer Reeves transferred to the Illawarra Zone, however he elected to continue to work on this project above and beyond his normal duties.

District Officer Reeves regularly consulted with engineers, developed the prop transport strategy, finalised the 2019 training prop placement program to service eight regional areas, developed a mobile training prop induction program, continued with the development of training activities associated with the mobile props and continues to coordinate the ongoing training and development of the State training group in addition to coordinating State training assistance with districts across the NSW RFS.

In December 2018 the two mobile training props were delivered, launched and tested. Inductions have commenced and they will be used to assist a number of districts with the initial roll out of Breathing Apparatus and Structural Fire training.

District Officer Reeves has exemplified the commitment and dedication of a NSW RFS member. He has worked beyond what is expected of his role and his work has made a fundamental and lasting difference to the members of the NSW RFS.

District Officer Matthew Reeves is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation.

COMMISSIONER'S CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION (INDIVIDUAL)

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Captain Adam Rutter

Hawkesbury Catering and Oakville Brigades, Hawkesbury, Region East

On the morning of 14 November 2017 Captain Adam Rutter was travelling along King Road, Wilberforce en-route to work where he came upon the scene of a serious two vehicle accident.

A small work truck travelling in the opposite direction had been hit from behind by a bogie tipper truck and veered across the path of the semi-trailer impacting directly with a concrete power pole crushing the driver's cabin.

After parking his vehicle in a safe location Captain Rutter promptly offered assistance. He immediately assessed the incident scene checking the integrity of the power pole and looking for any fuel leaks or other hazards.

Once Captain Rutter deemed the vehicle safe to approach he observed there was one male driver who was breathing but unresponsive and had sustained a serious life threatening injury to his lower right leg. The driver had a partial amputated leg with a shattered tibia and fibula and an arterial bleed and losing a significant amount of blood. At this time the driver of the other vehicle approached and advised he was on the phone with triple zero. Captain Rutter advised him to stay on the phone and to update them of the injured driver's condition while he applied a tourniquet to the upper thigh of the injured driver to stem the flow of blood. Captain Rutter then observed the driver of the second vehicle was going into shock and advised him to stay close to him so he could monitor him.

Shortly after another NSW RFS member Firefighter Stuart Mitchell who was also driving to work stopped to offer assistance. As the blood pressure was returning to the injured driver his consciousness was improving and the driver tried to exit the vehicle. Captain Rutter and Firefighter Mitchell talked with the driver telling him to stay still as he had sustained a serious injury.

The time between Captain Rutter's initial care and the hand over to ambulance paramedics was approximately 15-20 minutes. Due to the severity of the injuries and time taken for the ambulance to arrive, Captain Rutter's and Firefighter Mitchell's actions extended the life of the injured driver until medical treatment by paramedics could be administered.

Captain Catering Adam Rutter is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation.

COMMISSIONER'S CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION (INDIVIDUAL)

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Mr Matthew White

Infrastructure Services, NSW RFS Headquarters

In late 2015, the NSW RFS commenced the process of planning and implementing the relocation of its Headquarters to Murray Rose Avenue, Sydney Olympic Park. This necessitated a rigorous process towards plans and specifications to enable the numerous and diverse Information and Communications Technology (ICT) systems and technology to transition, to deliver on improvements based on lessons learned over the past years as well as to enable full operational functionality in both the new and old buildings whilst the move was underway. Construction commenced in April 2017, with the main move into the new HQ occurring on Monday 12 November 2018.

To ensure an appropriate focus on this critical component, design oversight and management of the ICT and radio networks, Mr Matthew White was tasked with leading this technical piece of planning and implementation, while continuing to manage other key strategic agency ICT programmes.

During this period, Mr White demonstrated outstanding administrative leadership, identifying and documenting requirements, negotiating and consulting with architects, builders, numerous and diverse external technology and systems vendors and telecommunications providers, all to ensure the requirements were fully addressed. Additionally, the various external support agencies have specific connectivity requirements, enabling direct ICT access into their agency systems and to deliver appropriate redundancies for all, interconnections with five Telco providers to two data centres was required.

The development of a mirrored capability for call dispatch, radio communications, telephony, ICT, the State Operations Centre and the business in general involved detailed technical interaction as well as precise integrated multi-vendor, multi-agency logistical planning and coordination, not only to operate seamlessly from the first day of occupation, but more importantly to ensure the ongoing continuity of the NSW RFS operations to the State of NSW, all while the fire season was approaching.

Mr White's diligent commitment to the various programmes, going above and beyond what would be expected, making himself available whenever necessary to ensure the optimum outcome for the NSW RFS was exemplary. His planning and leadership throughout this process was clear and decisive allowing for a seamless transition from the old HQ to our new HQ in Sydney Olympic Park can only be claimed a success.

Mr Matthew White is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation.

COMMISSIONER'S UNIT CITATION FOR SERVICE

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

Ridgeway and Queanbeyan City Rural Fire Brigades

Lake George, Region South

On 17 August 2018 crews from Ridgeway 1A and Queanbeyan City 1 were involved in firefighting and property protection in the Kyeema sector of the Kingiman Section 44 Fire, located to the west of Ulladulla.

At approximately 1406 hrs, one of the firebombing helicopters that was supporting nearby ground crews was involved in a crash, during which the pilot was killed. The accident occurred less than 150 metres from where the Brigade vehicles were parked.

Crew members were immediately on scene to offer first aid support to the pilot, who was unfortunately deceased and initiated fire suppression measures in less than one minute.

The crews then secured the site, with only essential personnel within the perimeter to ensure that the scene remained intact for the NSW Police and the Australian Transport Safety Bureau to conduct investigations.

At all times, these crew members displayed great dignity and professionalism, managing the scene, during what was a very distressing situation.

The crews from Ridgeway 1A and Queanbeyan City 1 are commended for the high level of professionalism displayed and for representing the Rural Fire Service in the most positive way.

Ridgeway and Queanbeyan City Brigades are worthy recipients of the Commissioner's Unit Citation for Service.

COMMISSIONER'S CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION (UNIT)

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Bega Valley Brigades

Far South Coast, Region South

On Sunday 18 March 2018 the Bega Valley District faced a significant bushfire event on a day that was predicted to see very high to severe fire dangers across the Bega Valley. The weather event and associated very strong winds resulted in numerous calls to fires across the Bega Valley, with the most significant of these fires eventually impacting the community of Tathra.

At 1228hrs the first triple zero call was received of a reported fire at Reedy Swamp, and crews were responded. Due to the topography of the area and the fire conditions, crews could do little to extinguish the fire, which continued to burn toward properties on the western side of the Bega River.

From 1300hrs weather conditions deteriorated and further serious incidents occurred at Kerrisons Lane where a Watch and Act was put in place at Coopers Gully, Frogs Hollow, Wyndham Lane and Tura Beach. Firefighters faced fast-moving fires that were placing lives in danger and property at risk. Firefighters put their own safety on the line in order to protect what they could, while working in a dangerous and volatile environment.

The Reedy Swamp fire took a dramatic run toward Tathra when it jumped the Bega River and threatened properties on Thompson Drive, cutting off residents to the north, on the one way in/one way out road. All available resources were re-located to Tathra for property protection of the village, which at this time, was receiving significant ember attack. In addition to this the District still had resources dealing with fires at Kerrisons Lane, Frogs Hollow, Coopers Gully and Wyndham Lane.

An all-agency response which included National Parks, Fire Rescue NSW, Forestry Corporation, NSW State Emergency Service, NSW Police Force, NSW Ambulance and Bega Council worked tirelessly under extreme fire weather conditions. The day ended up seeing some of the highest fire dangers ever recorded in the Bega Valley.

These fires burnt a total of 1,396.74 hectares, 65 homes, 35 other buildings and 41 out-buildings.

Despite the horrendous conditions, the Bega Valley Brigade members played a significant role in order to protect lives and property. All crew members demonstrated extraordinary levels of courage and support to the community. Under these conditions it was a credit to all involved that there were no lives lost or firefighter injuries.

The Bega Valley Brigades are worthy recipients of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Unit).

COMMISSIONER'S CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION (UNIT)

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Botswana Fire Management Program

In 2008 the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) was approached by a delegation from Botswana seeking technical assistance on the management of forest fires. This followed a series of widespread and destructive bush fires throughout Botswana that resulted in over 12 million hectares being ravaged by fire as well as the loss of twelve lives.

The Botswana Fire Management Program (BFMP) was subsequently developed to address the short fall in fire management capacity. Since its inception in 2009 this training and assistance program has seen more than 4,000 Botswana being trained in various courses including Basic Firefighter, Crew Leader, Prescribed Burning, Incident Control Systems, Fire Investigation and Train the Trainer. As part of the BFMP more than 100 NSW RFS members have travelled to Botswana to conduct this training. The NSW RFS has also donated to Botswana more than \$65,000 of protective clothing and six Category 7 fire tankers.

At the Botswana National Fire Management Conference in May 2017 it was reported that since the commencement of the BFMP in 2009 there has been a 47% reduction in uncontrolled wildfires within the country.

In September 2017 the NSW RFS was awarded the Presidential Order of Meritorious Service by the President of the Republic of Botswana, His Excellency Lt. General Dr Seretse Khama Ian Khama. This award recognises exceptional and devoted service to Botswana and is one of the highest accolades bestowed on the NSW RFS by a foreign country. The success of the Botswana Fire Management Program has brought enormous credit and international regard to the NSW RFS.

The Botswana Fire Management Program is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Unit).



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Central Coast Communications Brigade

Central Coast, Region East

On 19 September 2018 the Central Coast Communications Brigade gathered at the Fire Control Centre at Charmhaven for their monthly meeting.

Prior to the start of the meeting volunteer member Peter Mills suffered what is believed to have been a heart attack. Members of the Communications Brigade quickly established an air way, deployed the defibrillator, commenced CPR and rotated through compressions until ambulance paramedics arrived.

In spite of this valiant effort Peter Mills was unable to be revived.

The professionalism displayed by Central Coast Communications Brigade members during this tragic event, the compassion and empathy shown on that evening and the subsequent days and months after Peter Mill's passing is something that encompasses the very spirit of the NSW Rural Fire Service.

The swift and sustained actions of Deputy Captains Nathan Goodbun and Robert Way and Firefighters Kevin Griffiths, Megan Goddard, Peter Burfitt and Larry Ting, working as part of a team are applauded and acknowledged.

The Central Coast Communications Brigade is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Unit).

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Ellerston Brigade

Liverpool Range, Region North

The Ellerston Brigade is located on the western side of the Barrington and Gloucester Tops. The area is located outside the 60 minute response time from Murrurundi with the local roads generally becoming unpassable in winter with snow or after heavy rainfall.

A review by the State Rescue Board identified the Ellerston Brigade area as requiring a Road Crash Rescue capability. The Ellerston Brigade were approached in relation to the Road Crash Rescue requirement over three years ago.

Supported by the Remote Area Firefighting and Specialised Operations section and the Liverpool Range Zone, the Ellerston Brigade have since identified and trained 24 members capable of delivering Road Crash Rescue to an extremely high standard.

They have also identified a number of additional members of adjoining NSW RFS Brigades that wish to train in Road Crash Rescue in order to support the Ellerston Brigade.

The Ellerston Brigade is the first agency in NSW to achieve accreditation for Road Crash Rescue under the new accreditation process as defined by the State Rescue Board.

The determination, commitment and professionalism of the Ellerston Brigade in achieving their Road Crash Rescue accreditation is commendable.

The Ellerston Brigade is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Unit).

COMMISSIONER'S CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION (UNIT)

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HQ Relocation Teams

Building Services, Communication Systems, Information Communications Technology and Corporate Communications Teams, NSW RFS Headquarters

In late 2015, the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) received advice that the lease on 15 Carter St Lidcombe, would not be renewed. The NSW RFS was faced with a very challenging situation to identify a suitable location of either an already built facility or to secure land to build a facility suitable for the NSW RFS bespoke operations within a relatively short timeframe.

The decision was made to secure land at 4 Murray Rose Avenue, Sydney Olympic Park and over the next twelve months an intensive process was undertaken to develop plans and specifications for the base building and fitout that were able to be approved for construction. Construction commenced in April 2017, with the main move into the new HQ occurring on Monday 12 November 2018.

For over 12 months prior to the move, the HQ relocation teams consisting of members from Building Services, Communications Systems, Information Communications Technology (ICT) and Corporate Communications were working with absolute commitment to the program, planning and identifying the requirements to fulfil the needs of the NSW RFS.

The work undertaken by the Building Services team was evident from the moment people walked into the new facility. All matters had been considered, from parking, cleaning, courier services, air conditioning through to the consumables were all planned and implemented. They also were involved in the successful decommissioning of the old HQ to hand back to the building owners.

The Communications and ICT teams worked together to ensure the seamless operation of the new HQ from the first day of occupation. Some of the work required the implementation of integrated planning allowing the crucial operations of the NSW RFS Call Centre. They were able to establish a mirror capability in the new HQ consisting of the call dispatch, radio communications, telephony, and Information Communications Technology that supported this.

The Corporate Communications team were involved in the oversight and development of the Change Management Plan through to the design of our new HQ corporate image with signage, images, and designs as well as the detailed communications planning and communiqués that evolved from this. Staff were well informed throughout the process.

The HQ relocation Relocation teams Teams demonstrated exemplary performance beyond the scope of responsibility normally expected.

The HQ Relocation Teams are worthy recipients of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Unit).

COMMISSIONER'S CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION (UNIT)

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Illawarra Communications After Hours Team

Illawarra Communications, Illawarra, Region East

The role of an after-hours communications officer is often a demanding one. It requires the operator to be home 24 hours a day when rostered on and to take emergency phone calls at any time, calls which were initially conveyed via the triple zero call system, and then to determine the most appropriate initial response and district actions.

Across the Illawarra, this role is pivotal to the timely and accurate response of NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) brigades to emergencies by providing accurate recording of emergency information, processing of incident intelligence and the timely advice of such information to the after-hours District Duty Officer, combining to ensure that our legislative and community expectations are met or exceeded.

The Illawarra Communications After Hours Team comprising of Captain Norelle Pullen, Senior Deputy Captain Narelle Rainey, Deputy Captains Tony Hurry and Raymond Parsons and Firefighter David Kirkwood have demonstrated a high degree of professionalism in this role for over a combined 93 years in total.

These members undertake the after-hours communications officer role in addition to their regular rostered shifts with the Illawarra Communications Brigade and volunteer regularly on business days when the Illawarra Zone has experienced a high volume of operational incidents or heightened bush fire danger conditions.

There is no doubt that these committed members of the NSW RFS have contributed above and beyond what may be seen as a regular volunteer commitment.

The Illawarra Communications After Hours Team are worthy recipients of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Unit).



COMMISSIONER'S CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION (UNIT)

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Ingleside 1A and Ingleside 1B

Northern Beaches, Region East

Just before noon on Saturday 13 October 2018, the crew of Ingleside 1A and Ingleside 1B were travelling on McCarrs Creek Road, Terrey Hills when they came across a cyclist having a medical episode on the roadway and was being assisted by passing members of the public.

Both Ingleside appliances stopped to render assistance. Crew Leader, Firefighter Nicholas Nolan, who is also an off-duty Ambulance NSW (ANSW) Intensive Care Paramedic, immediately assessed the situation and utilising some of the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) crew members, took over CPR efforts which had already been commenced by passers-by. The remaining crew established traffic control at the scene, and cleared the roadway ahead of ANSW arrival.

NSW RFS members continued CPR under Firefighter Nolan's guidance for some time, prior to deploying four shocks from a NSW RFS Automatic External Defibrillator. As a result of their actions the cyclist returned to a normal heart rhythm prior to arrival of ANSW Paramedics who took over treatment, rushing the cyclist to Royal North Shore Hospital shortly after.

The crew members of Ingleside 1A and 1B that attended were Senior Deputy Captain Gary Sambridge, Firefighters Nicholas Nolan, Christopher Clark, Ronald Holla, Scott Norris, Ross Argent and Sara McDonald.

Ingleside 1A and Ingleside 1B are worthy recipients of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Unit).

COMMISSIONER'S CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION (UNIT)

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Kenthurst RFB Hazard Reduction Crew

The Hills, Region East

On Saturday 10 March 2018, a group of Kenthurst Rural Brigade Service members were undertaking preparation for a hazard reduction.

Whilst undertaking this work, Firefighter Charles Denes advised he was feeling unwell. He was taken to the fire appliance by another member where he sat in the vehicle with the air conditioning running and two members assisting with oxygen therapy. He progressively felt worse and the supporting member suspected that he might be having a heart attack. He requested another member ring triple zero to request an ambulance and advise of a suspected heart attack.

The automated external defibrillator (AED) was retrieved from the vehicle and attached to the member to monitor and observe. Firefighter Denes pulse was erratic from very fast to very slow.

The AED advised to commence CPR, although the member was still conscious at that time. Before the ambulance arrived, the member lapsed into unconsciousness and CPR was commenced until the ambulance officers were on scene and took control.

Without early intervention by first aid trained members, their quick response to call an ambulance and to commence CPR until the ambulance arrived, the outcome would have been vastly different.

Those assisting with the life-saving efforts were Captain Andrew Callaghan, Deputy Captains Christopher Talbert, Garry Lau, Kieran Clark and Firefighter Diane Bown.

The Kenthurst RFB Hazard Reduction Crew are worthy recipients of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Unit).

COMMISSIONER'S CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION (UNIT)

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Road Crash Rescue Program

Remote Area Firefighting and Specialised Operations, Operations

In 2016/17 the State Rescue Board conducted a review of land rescue arrangements across NSW. This involved the review of motor vehicle accident data and how long it would take existing rescue services to reach identified locations. This review resulted in identifying a number of areas where it can take in excess of one hour for existing rescue services to reach these locations.

The NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) was invited to participate in the State Rescue Board's Capability Matrix Working Group, along with agencies who provide land rescue services. The Working Group conducted an extensive review of road crash data and the response times currently provided by rescue services across the State. In some areas, other emergency services provide rescue service coverage, while in other areas there are NSW RFS brigades which may be better positioned to provide rescue services for their local community's.

The NSW RFS is working with brigades in these areas to determine the level of interest in providing road crash rescue services and gain Road Crash Rescue approval and accreditation. Where a brigade in one of these areas is in a position to take on this rescue service, training, equipment and a specialist vehicle is provided.

The Remote Area Firefighting and Specialised Operations (RAFSO) team under the leadership of Superintendent Christopher Ryder and Inspector Brett Hagan have demonstrated a high standard of technical ability within the NSW RFS through to the ongoing development of the organisations rescue capability.

The RAFSO team have assisted in developing the NSW RFS' capability by taking ownership at all levels from State Level down to the level of individuals, providing mentoring and training to members from identified rescue brigades.

The RAFSO team consistently take the extra time to develop these brigades even though at times these brigade members often seem overwhelmed with their new capability. During the course delivery high standards are set by the team on a personal and professional level that the members aspire to.

As a result, volunteers within these brigades are equipped and trained to the highest standard, allowing them to deal with any incidents that they may face in to the future.

The Road Crash Rescue Program is a worthy recipient of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Unit).

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.

Your Health Matters (YHM) Working Group

NSW RFS Headquarters

The release of the Auditor General Report on the Fitness of Firefighters in April 2014 highlighted a need for a Health and Wellbeing program to support all members of the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS). This has resulted in the creation of a five year plan initially titled the "Health and Fitness Initiative Plan 2016 - 2021", now the "Your Health Matters Plan", led by Mr David Heslop, Manager Health, Safety and Welfare and his team.

The goal of the Your Health Matters (YHM) program is to support NSW RFS members in achieving and maintaining optimal health and fitness for their roles so they are able to provide world standard community-based fire and emergency services.

The program has seen the successful introduction of a range of health and wellbeing initiatives across the NSW RFS, such as the Get Healthy at Work Program and the availability of health checks for all members.

The program has produced a number of quality YHM information packs, released quarterly across brigades and NSW RFS offices, to promote important health, nutrition and injury prevention information. The program has implemented positive and proactive initiatives such as the 15 minute stand and stretch "Recharge" program and the Biggest Shredder Challenge.

In recognition of the importance of mental health and wellbeing of NSW RFS members, a Mental Health Plan 2018-2023 has also been developed as part of the YHM plan. The Mental Health Plan strives for an integrated approach to Mental Health by focusing on three key areas of protection, Promotion and Prevention.

As the program heads into its third year of implementation, it will continue its focus on health and well-being including improved communication, fitness facility procurement, nutrition and catering brigades, fit for duty guidelines, IMSAFER, Mental Health Strategy Plan, and YHM survey and analysis.

The achievements and positive impacts of the YHM program across the NSW RFS has, and will continue to promote, encourage and support members to strive for optimal health, fitness and wellbeing.

The YHM Working Group, led by Mr Heslop and the Health, Safety and Welfare team are worthy recipients of the Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Unit).



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 brewers 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.



St Florian's Day

4 May 2019

NSW Rural Fire Service

4 Murray Rose Avenue,
Sydney Olympic Park, NSW 2127