

NSW Rural Fire Service
The Award of the Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM)
Honours and Awards Australia Day 2009

Dennis Joiner

Fire Fighter Dennis Joiner has been a member of the NSW Rural Fire Service for 47 years. He first joined the Terrey Hills Rural Fire Brigade in 1961. His commitment to the local community has led to being a founding member of the Duffy's Forest Rural Fire Brigade which was established on 22 April 1964. He has held the positions of President, Vice President, Deputy Captain, Senior Deputy Captain and has spent 10 years as Captain. He was made a Life Member of the Duffy's Forest Rural Fire Brigade in March 2002.

He is a very active fire fighter having been heavily involved in major incidents within Warringah Pittwater in 1979, 1984 and 1994. He was also involved in the Canberra 2002 fires as well as storm damage and flood relief operations across the State.

He is dedicated to promoting the Service to the community being active in district community education initiatives. He has always been committed to educating the local Duffy's Forest community and officially became the Brigade Community Safety Officer when the position was created. The Brigade and the local residents association have a close relationship largely due to Fire Fighter Joiner's commitment and dedication to the Service and to the community.

His is very involved with the planning of local hazard reduction activities at brigade level and also with hazard reduction programming at district level.

He has instructed and assessed on Bush Fire Fighter, Advanced Fire Fighter, Crew Leader and Group Leader courses of instruction. Recently he has taken on a mentoring role while assisting with leadership training. He has taken part in many Incident Management Teams and will be coordinating the new conduct briefings and debriefing courses within the district. His strengths in training have also led him to work at the Headquarters on several occasions as a corporate trainer.

He is a dedicated member of the Rural Fire Service having been an active fire fighter and officer of the Duffy's Forest Rural Fire Brigade for over 30 years. He continues to promote the Service in the Warringah Pittwater District whilst providing commendable service to the community. His long and distinguished service makes him a most worthy candidate for the award of the Australian Fire Service Medal.

Bryan John Daly

Superintendent Bryan Daly joined the NSW Rural Fire Service in 1981 as a volunteer member of the Mallanganee Rural Fire Brigade. In 1995 he was appointed to the position of Fire Control Officer, Kyogle District and continued to rise through the ranks to his current position of Regional Operations Officer.

Throughout his service he has given distinguished services and made a significant contribution to the Rural Fire Service through his leadership and mentoring qualities and commitment to volunteer training and operational preparedness, none more so that his eight year commitment to the Region North Exercise. He was a founding member of the Region North exercise and has been the Committee Chairman for the past eight years. The exercise is now an annual event on the Region North calendar which volunteers members and staff talk about all year as they wonder what new and exciting challenges and skills will be tested next. Approximately 3000 members have attended these exercises over the eight year period.

The Region North Exercise aims to:

- Conduct an operational evaluation to the out of area capabilities of Districts/Zones and Teams within Region North.
- Introduce crews to specialist responsibilities of other agencies and provide an understanding of working with those agencies.
- Practice and teach through all levels the principles of ICS including Crew Leader, Strike Team Leader and Divisional Commander and the four functional areas of the Incident Management Team.
- Refresh and evaluate the training levels of fire fighters in handling day to day incidents and scenarios associated with fire fighting operations and reinforce experience gained during recent fire fighting operations.

The Exercise has also presented an opportunity for the Rural Fire Service to trial new equipment, procedures and processes such as Base Camps which are now available for deployment across the State.

Superintendent Daly has also been involved in State responses, most recently as the Service's Coordinator to assist the South Australian counterparts with the Kangaroo Island bush fire emergency. He has also played a pivotal role in the development and implementation of major incident management systems and policy that assists with such deployments.

His skills have gone a long way to making the volunteers and staff in Region North a much more highly trained, professionally skilled and prepared emergency service. He has demonstrated leadership, dedication, commitment, achievement and promotion of the Rural Fire Service. He is highly respected by his peers which makes him a most worthy candidate to be awarded the prestigious Australian Fire Service Medal.

Alfred (John) Sendall

Group Captain John Sendall of the Southern Tablelands Zone, Goulburn Mulwaree Headquarters Group joined the Rural Fire Service in 1963 with the Parkesboume Rural Fire Brigade and has been actively involved as a Fire Fighter, Group Officer, S44 Incident Controller and administrator ever since.

Initially, he was active as both Secretary and Fire Fighter at Parkesboume Brigade and subsequently became the Honorary Deputy Fire Control Officer for the Mulwaree Shire. He subsequently became the Fire Control Centre Manager until 2005 when Zoning occurred.

His involvement as a Fire Fighter, Group Officer, Divisional Commander and Incident Controller has seen him at all major fires in the Mulwaree District, such as the Tirrannaville, Pooks Hill and Breadalbane fires. During most summer periods, he has personally kept a tireless watch on the local fire danger situation and often opened the Fire Control Centre in preparation for what might occur during the day at weekends. He instituted a close knit team of volunteers ready to operate as an Incident Management Team at immediate notice, should the situation demand it. In addition, he has serviced as Task Force Leaders, Deputy Incident Controller and Incident Controller at many “out of area” fires, including the Lock Marie fire in 2000, the Touga fire in 2002 and the McIntyre’s Hut and Childowlah fires in 2003.

Group Captain Sendall has also been heavily involved in training in the Mulwaree District for many years, concentrating on Crew and Group Leader levels but also attending and encouraging participants at many other Brigade and District Training events.

As a keen, interested and enthusiastic member of the Mulwaree District and subsequently the Southern Tablelands Zone Senior Management Team, he represents both the District and volunteers on the Bush Fire Management Committee and the Zone Liaison Committee. His input to these bodies is welcomed and very much respected. He has also been a successful mediator and has achieved positive outcomes for dispute resolution when called upon to do so.

Group Captain Sendall is a selfless and dedicated person who has and continues to work tirelessly, for both volunteers and the Rural Fire Service alike. His dedication and outstanding service makes him a very worthy candidate for the award of the Australian Fire Service Medal.

James Drane

Group Captain James Drane joined the Theresa Park Rural Fire Brigade in 1984 and over the period from then until 2000 has held the positions of Secretary, Vice President, President, Training Officer and Deputy Captain of the Brigade. A most significant achievement over the period of his leadership was the establishment and building of the Brigade's new Station. He was made a Life Member of the Theresa Park Rural Fire Brigade in 2005.

In 1995, he was appointed a Group Officer in the Wollondilly Northern Sector and during the major bush fires in 1997, 1998, 2001, 2002 and 2003 he acted as the Air Attack Officer responsible for the coordination the use of aircraft used for fire suppression operations.

He is currently the Senior Group Officer in Wollondilly and has also served in similar positions in other areas of the State during times of emergency. In his current position he mentors Group Officers, Brigade Captains and other Brigade Officers, ably supporting them as future leaders within the Wollondilly District. He is also an avid supporter of the Rural Fire Service initiatives by serving on various Headquarters Committees, such as the Technical Committee and the recently established Organisational Values Committee.

Group Captain Drane is also the Wollondilly District President of the Rural Fire Service Association Inc and in this position he has fostered the growth of the Association in the area to the point where, outside of the Blue Mountains area, it has the highest number of registered members across the State. He has actively encouraged support for the Association and assisted Brigades to augment their station equipment from Grants provided by the Association.

Group Captain Drane is a recipient of the National Medal and the Commissioner's Commendation for Service. He has constantly demonstrated leadership, commitment and dedication, traits that have inspired others to continue to develop the Rural Fire Service to maintain its recognition and credibility as a Fire Service, second to none. He has always sought to promote the Rural Fire Service at every opportunity and his achievements reflect that behaviour. He is a worthy candidate for the award of the Australian Fire Service Medal.

Christopher John Smith

Group Captain Christopher Smith has been an exemplary volunteer member of the Rural Fire Service since 1969 when he joined the Merimbula Rural Fire Brigade. His leadership was evident to the brigade members and the community as he became Deputy Captain within a year of joining. In 1971 he became Captain of the Merimbula Brigade, a position he held for 33 years until 2004. He was also appointed Group Captain in 1974 a position he continues to hold today. In addition to his duties, he has also been an active member of the Bega Valley Bush Fire Management Committee since 1996 advocating the requirements of volunteers on this forum.

He has demonstrated leadership at brigade, district, team and regional levels across a full range of activities of the Rural Fire Service including but not limited to operations, training, hazard management and service management. He has managed the full range of emergencies and incidents that have involved the Service over the last 39 years. At every incident that he has held responsibilities, his duties have been conducted at the highest levels of safety, while maintaining effective and efficient outcomes for the benefit of the fire fighters under his command along with the best possible outcomes for the community effected.

He has also demonstrated his commitment to training for Service members. He has committed many thousands of hours of instruction to other members across the range of qualification from Basic Fire Fighter to Group Leader and specialised training such as Chainsaw, Driver and Village Fire Fighter. He is a qualified assessor and undertakes an active role in the planning, promotion and facilitation of training.

As an active participant on the Bega Valley Bush Fire Management Committee he has contributed to all the function of risk and operational planning and has promoted mitigation plans of the highest calibre to improve the outcomes for brigades and communities. He continues to be an active member of the Senior Management team and he is committed to continual improvement of the Service across the Far South Coast in all areas including vehicles, stations, hazard management, training and strategic planning.

His nomination for the award of the Australian Fire Service Medal is an example of distinguished, long standing and dedicated service provided by him to the community of New South Wales and to the members of the Rural Fire Service in his area and beyond.

Frederick Albert Apthorpe

Superintendent Apthorpe commenced with the Rural Fire Service in 1973 as a volunteer in Cessnock where due to his dedication and commitment he achieved the rank of Group Captain and Honorary Fire Control Officer.

In 1984, he was appointed to the full-time position of Fire Control Officer for the Muswellbrook Council local government area in the Upper Hunter and he held this position for the following ten years.

Following a staffing expansion to the Regions in 1995, he was appointed to the position of Deputy Regional Coordinator for the Western region, located in Cobar. He held this position until 2004 and over the period undertook a strong role, negotiating with Senior Council Officers and elected representatives in successfully filling positions for Fire Control Officers across the Region.

A major reorganisation of the Rural Fire Service took place in 2001, with staff, previously employed by Local Government becoming State Government employees. Superintendent Apthorpe spent many weeks at the Headquarters during this time working to formulate policies and procedures to enable this new structure to be successfully implemented. With the restructure of Regions, he applied for and was successful in obtaining the position of Regional Learning and Development Officer. His rapport with volunteers at all levels of the organisation allowed him to perform an essential role in facilitating training reform and quickly implemented a great variety of important training programmes to volunteer brigades.

In 2004 he was appointed to the position of Zone Manager Lower Western Zone, incorporating the Wentworth and Balranald Local Government Areas having previously been appointed as the District Manager for both areas. Since taking up his position he has continued to work with brigade volunteers, putting into place many improvements to the Service infrastructure across the Zone.

As a staff representative on the State Occupational Health and Safety Committee and a delegate of the Public service Association, he is constantly striving to ensure the improvement of the safety measures of the Service regarding all Rural Fire Service personnel and also ensuring fair working conditions are made available to all staff.

As part of a professional development programme, he has acquired a number of investigative skills which have been put to use within the Service where he has been called upon to conduct a number of critical investigations into incidents. He has also demonstrated his commitment to the Service by making himself available on many occasions for deployment by the Service during the fire seasons and has frequently been appointed to Incident Management Teams.

Through his dedication, achievements and long serving commitment, he constantly promotes the Rural Fire Service as a professional and well organised emergency service. He is held in high regard, not only by his work colleagues but also by the volunteers of the Service, Local Government staff and other emergency services personnel within the Zone. He is a worthy candidate for the award of the Australian Fire Service Medal.

Joseph Robert Hamilton (Joe) Knox

Superintendent Joe Knox has been both a volunteer and staff member of the Rural Fire Service having joined the Urana Rural Fire Brigade in 1979 and served with that brigade until 1990. He held a number of appointments within the brigade including Captain and Deputy Captain.

He was also employed by the Urana Shire Council as a Fire Control Officer and Noxious Plants Inspector in 1979 and then as a full-time Deputy Fire Control Officer in 1983 and Fire Control Officer in 1987. In 1990, he was successful in gaining the full-time position of Fire Control Officer with Wagga Wagga City Council and in 2001 was transferred from the employ of the Local Government to the State Government as part of a major service reorganisation. In 2003 he was appointed to his current position of Superintendent, Zone Manager, Riverina Zone which covers the Local Government areas of Wagga Wagga, Coolamon, Junee, Lockhart and Urana.

Throughout his service as both a volunteer and staff member, he has demonstrated exceptional leadership, commitment and achievement in many areas. Examples include his role as a founding member and executive member of the Fire Control Officer's Association, an original member of the Service's Technical Committee and the first Manager of the Riverina Zone. In these roles he has taken on responsibility for the setting up of structures and systems and has been a leader in bring others in to these establishments through positive negotiation and resolution of issues. In the Riverina Zone setting up, he played an integral part and has been largely responsible for the Zone's excellent performance in a variety of functions.

In fire suppression, he has taken on the role of Incident Controller and other senior positions at many fires with and outside of the Riverina Zone. He has extensive experience in grasslands fire fighting and at all times has shown a mature attitude in emergency situations, whether it be in the way of leadership or effecting liaison between Group Captains, Brigade Captains, Fire Fighters, other agencies and/or other elements of the Rural Fire Service.

Over many years he has clearly demonstrated his leadership and management skills and has given distinguished service. He has pioneered some initiatives that have evolved into very successful outcomes and he continues to initiate and embrace positive ventures for the Service within the Riverina Zone and beyond.

Superintendent Knox is a worthy candidate for the award of the Australian Fire Service Medal.
