

# Australian Emergency Medal Proposal

Up-Dated Version Two Prepared By Stuart Greenfield

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Stuart Greenfield  
PO Box 109  
Manly NSW 1655  
6/21 Harrison Street  
Cremorne NSW 2089  
0414 639 253  
[stuartag@tpg.com.au](mailto:stuartag@tpg.com.au)

## Forward

This second version of the Australian Emergency Medal proposal contains answers to objections received over the preceding months.

The proposal reiterates the need for the Australian Emergency Medal and highlights shortfalls in the current **National** suite of medals available to Emergency Service Officers. As a result this version recommends other medals that should be instituted to fill those gaps and bring all Emergency Service agencies in line with each other and closer to the Defence model with recommendations such as a Long Service Medal.

It should be noted that the design of the medal itself, not the ribbon, qualifying criteria, eligibility and awarding of the Australian Emergency Medal have been adapted from those used for the Australian Defence Medal (ADM).

## Introduction

I am a citizen with an interest in medals and a firm belief that the men and women of your organisations deserve more **national** recognition for what they do both those in fulltime positions and those who volunteer. Being part of any Emergency Service organisation is not a 9 to 5 job, it is a lifestyle choice that also affects the rest of the family.

You and the people you represent don't do the job for medals and accolades; my understanding is that you all do it out of a deep seated feeling of wanting to help your fellow man at what are the worst moments of their lives. We only ever call you in an emergency usually when our lives are in peril. It is precisely because you are so quiet and humble in your attitudes towards recognition that there is a huge gaping hole in our **national** medallic system to recognise what you do and for the nation to show our appreciation. I'm not shy, quiet and humble in my belief that you and the people you represent should be recognised in this way, and I will work with you to make that happen on their behalf.

It's not just these medals that are important to show appreciation and recognition. I'd like to find out the practicalities of volunteer gardeners finessing the grounds around station houses. The grounds at my local Ambulance Station are dreadful it looks like an abandoned derelict building. How discouraging it must be for the officers arriving for their shifts day after day to something that looks that dreadful. Sure you have amazing equipment, but appreciation can be shown in many ways, and I think that a clean and tidy workplace is one of them.

There should be an Emergency Services Day, run along similar lines to ANZAC Day, (an idea that I understand has been floated many times) but not a march of commemoration and thanksgiving, a parade of celebration and appreciation.

An annual Emergency Services Gala Concert and/or Tattoo held in each state capital. The concerts would also assist in raising money for PTSD facilities for officers of all agencies. Most of us only ever see the Police, Fire and Ambo bands on ANZAC Day why not a fun concert to give these amazing people the opportunity to show off their musical talent. It's also an opportunity to put on your best uniform for a celebration, not the commemoration of a lost officer.

Finally we need a National Museum with a Memorial and Research Centre in Canberra, our national capital, the very heart of our nation. Yes every nation on the planet has Emergency Service agencies, but ours are different, ours are the best and thousands of them are volunteers something that is unheard of in other countries. These brave amazing people deal with far more uniquely Australian problems, catastrophic weather events such as floods and fires happen all year every year for a start, if it's not one it's the other, and we can have both at the same time at opposite ends of the country. But those discussions are for another time let's firstly work together to make the Australian Emergency Medal a reality.

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# 1. Australian Emergency Medal Proposal Recap

The Australian Emergency Medal recognises current and former Australian Emergency Service Officers who have rendered efficient service over a period of five (5) years.

The Australian Emergency Medal recognises the service and dedication of Australia's Emergency Service Officers in the same way the Australian Defence Medal recognises the service of members of the Australian Defence Force.

Officers of Australia's Emergency Service agencies come to the aid of the sick, injured and vulnerable in our community. These are men and women who dedicate their lives to dealing with death, disaster and destruction in all its forms. Those who fight fires, attend terrible accidents or crime scenes, people who rescue those from drowning on our nation's beaches or brave treacherous seas to rescue those in danger on the ocean.

This medal will also recognise the service of SES Officers who also come to our aid in times of fire, flood and storms, horrendous weather. SES officers assist fire, ambulance and police on a daily basis and share the same stresses of the jobs and incidents they attend.

This medal does not only recognise the service of those officers on the front line facing dangers and disasters but the auxiliary officers who also proudly wear the uniform of their agency. Examples are clearly seen in those who keep Rural and Country Fire Officers fed and watered, supplied with equipment and fuel for vehicles while fighting fires. These people are essentially the Ordinance and Logistics Corps. Those who provide first aid and medical treatment to the injured at what can only be described as the "Casualty Clearing Stations" of the fire grounds.

Those who work in the call centres and despatch centres, people whose job it is to calm those who are stressed, panicked and scared on the other end of the phone so they can gather all the information needed for the first responders heading to the incident. People who have been trained to calm people and save lives while giving clear and precise instructions over the telephone and on many occasions provide the vital assistance to deliver babies all via the telephone. These people often experience both the end and start of life in this discombobulated way. Sadly, they also experience all manner of abuse.

There are those who are asked to send back up to officers in incredibly perilous situations not knowing if it will arrive on time or not, and worry could they have done anything else.

The medal will recognise the service of those officers who coordinate operations from the control centres. Those who fly water bombing aircraft and those who come from other countries to assist in times of disaster such as bushfires.

This medal will recognise the service and commitment of these incredible people, and show them from a national perspective that they are appreciated and that their work and commitment are valued by their nation.

## 2. Qualifying Criteria for the Australian Emergency Medal

The eligibility criteria requires completion of an enlistment period of five (5) years service. The criteria also includes those who could not serve the five year qualifying period for one or more of the following reasons:

- the death of the member during service
- the discharge of the member as medically unfit due to compensable impairment
- the discharge of the member due to a prevailing discriminatory policy, as determined by the agency

### Further

- The member of the agency is required to render a minimum of five (5) years of diligent, reliable and effective service.
- The five (5) year period commences **after** training and/or probation and/or induction periods.
- For volunteer agencies this will require a minimum number of days served per year to include periods of training and education as well as actual days of rostered duty or attending emergencies.
- Service does not have to be continuous, but must add up to five (5) years of consecutive service with the same agency.
- Service broken up must be with the same agency.
- Service with two agencies served concurrently and not adding up to five (5) years with either agency does not count.
- Service must be served consecutively with the same agency.
- The medal may be awarded posthumously.
- There is no post-nominal for this medal.

### Qualifying Agencies

- Members of Australian Police Forces
- Members of Australian Ambulance Services
- Members of Australian Fire Services
- Members of Australian Country and Rural Fires services Including volunteers
- Aerial Fire fighters
- Members of Australian SES including volunteers
- Members of Australian St John Ambulance including volunteers
- Australian Coast Guards and Rescue organisations including volunteers

- Members of Surf Life Saving Australia, such as Life Guards and volunteers
- Members of Volunteer Rescue organisations
- Members of the Australian Royal Flying Doctor Service

The Australian Emergency medal also includes those who work in Emergency Management, training and education.

### **How the Australian Emergency Medal Will Be Awarded**

Just like the Australian Defence Medal the Governor General awards the Australian Emergency Medal (AEM) on the recommendation in the case of service with a state, by the Premier of that state; in the case of service with a territory, by the Chief Minister of that territory.

### **Order of Wear**

The Australian Emergency Medal will be worn to the immediate right of the Australian Defence Medal and all other national Emergency Service medals. The same as the Australian Defence Medal.

### **Back Dated to When**

The Australian Defence Medal was backdated to service after 3 September 1945, the end of the Second World War. I am sure there will be much discussion as to when this medal should be backdated to, although wherever this medal is backdated to there will be those who miss out and not be happy at all.

However as this medal will effectively be the companion medal to the Australian Defence Medal, the same timeframe may well be appropriate especially as there were few national medals to recognise the service of Emergency Service officers other than the Imperial Service Medal awarded on retirement in recognition of 25 years of public service.

### **Clasps**

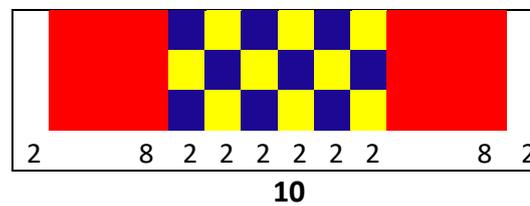
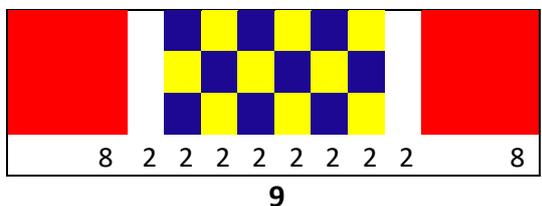
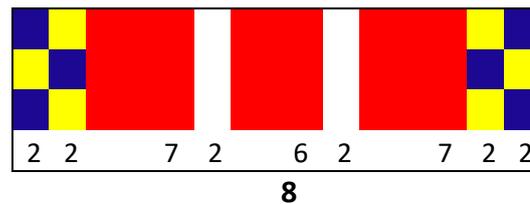
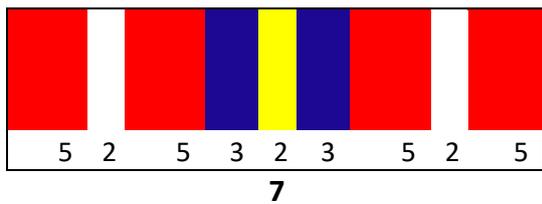
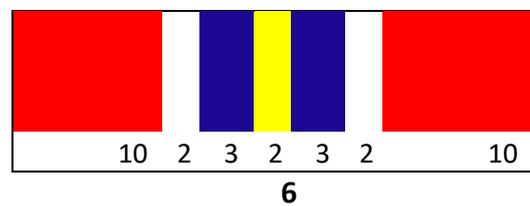
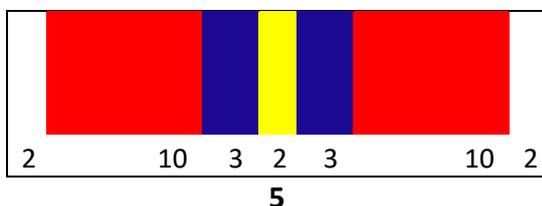
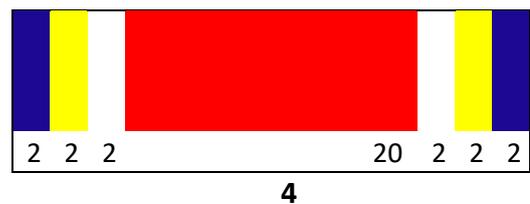
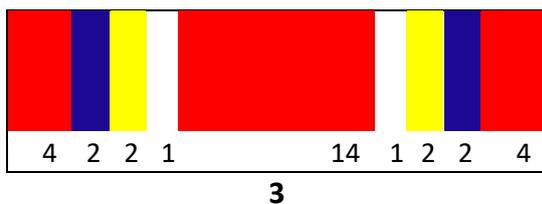
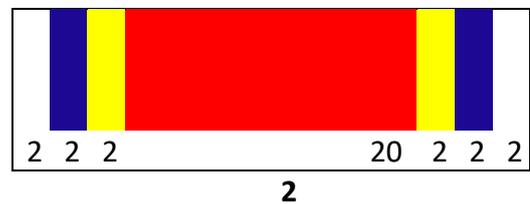
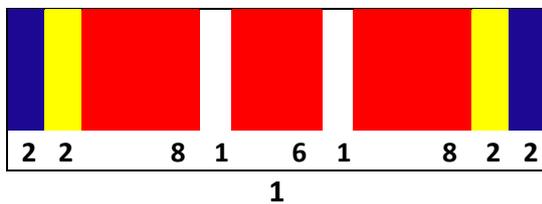
There will also be clasps to recognise each agency the officer has served with e.g. "Police", "Rural Fire", SES etc. This is important because there are many full-time officers who also volunteer with a different branch of their local Emergency Service Agency. There are also members of the Australian Defence Forces who volunteer with their local volunteer agency, or transition from full-time Defence to full-time and/or Volunteer Emergency Service.

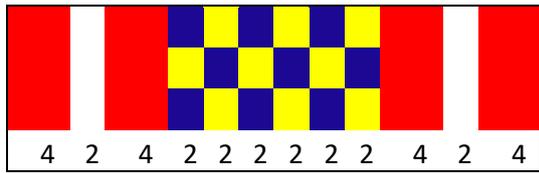
### 3. Examples of Medal and Ribbon Design

These designs are sketches and only for the purpose of discussion and feed-back and from these more can be provided. When the final designs are chosen mock ups will be made for the final submission, the Governor General has the final say on the design.

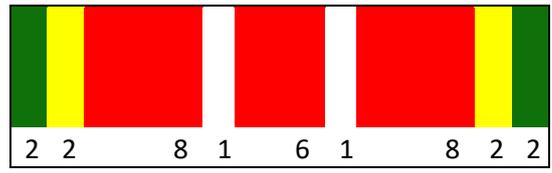
#### The Ribbon

The ribbon is 32cm across with red to signify danger and emergency, the two white strips indicate the purity of service, full time and volunteer. The Blue and gold are our heraldic colours that represent it as being a national medal. The green and gold our national colours, also indicating it as a national medal. The black strip represents those who have died in service or been discharged due to injury resulting from service. The numbers represent the width in millimetres of each strip.

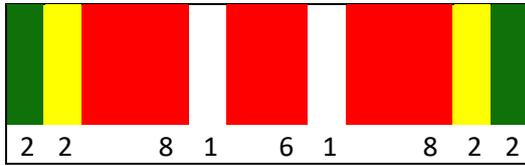




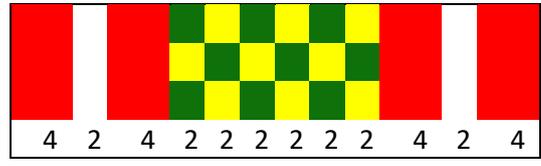
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### The Medal

This medal will be the companion or sister medal to the Australian Defence Medal so stays close to the design of that Medal.

The medal is cupro-nickel. The obverse has a stylised version of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms. This is surrounded by the inscription 'THE AUSTRALIAN EMERGENCY MEDAL' above a sprig of wattle.

The reverse has the inscription 'FOR EMERGENCY SERVICE' below the Crown of St Edward all surrounded by a wattle wreath. The use of the wreath on the ADM acknowledges the sacrifice of those who have died in service or been discharged due to injury resulting from service, a secondary qualification for the medal. This equally applies to the Australian Emergency Medal.



## 4. Current Support for the Australian Emergency Medal

Support for the medal is as follows however, many of the Commissioners have changed since the response from the agency.

**Shane Fitzsimmons AFSM**, Commissioner, NSW Rural Fire Service, Suggested I also send it to AFAC. (Response received 18/01/2019)

**Mark Smethurst DSC AM**, Commissioner SES NSW: Fully supported the proposal. (19/01/2020)

**Greg Nettleton AFSM**, Chief Officer, South Australia Country Fire Service: SACFS support the proposal but their support is on condition the proposal is endorsed by the other Fire and Emergency Service Agencies such as AFAC. (18/04/2019)

**Andrew Lea ESM**, Director, SES Tasmania: Happy to support in principle the concept. (13/03/2019)

**Dominic Lane**, Commissioner ACT Emergency Service Agency: Has forwarded the proposal to AFAC. (13/03/2019)

**Katarina Carroll APM**, Commissioner QFES: Has asked the QFES Honours and Awards Advisory Panel to consider the medal. (09/04/2019)

**Chris Dawson**, Commissioner, WA Police: Has passed the proposal onto the Assistant Commissioner. (20/03/2019)

**Graham Ashton AM**, Commissioner, Victoria Police: Has passed the proposal to their Honours and Awards Committee. (07/03/2019)

**Chris O'Neill APM**, Assistant Commissioner, Victoria Police: Passed it onto their Honours and Awards Department who support the medal if other agencies also support the proposal.

**Reece Kershaw APM**, Commissioner, NT Police: Passed it onto their Medal Eligibility Committee. (12/06/2019)

**Chris Beattie**, Chief Officer SA SES: Also suggested I send the proposal to AFAC. (29/04/2019)

**Rob Rogers AFSM**, Commissioner NSW Rural Fire Service Acknowledged receipt of the Proposal. (16/09/2020)

**NSW Police** Acknowledged receipt of the Proposal (09/09/2020)

**Georgeina Whelan AM, CSC and Bar**, Commissioner, ACT Emergency Services Agency: Appreciated the proposal but was non comital. (21/09/2020)

In the interest of balance the following agencies did not support the proposal:

**Reece P Kershaw APM**, Commissioner, AFP. (16/12/2020)

**Darren Leigh Hine AO**, Commissioner of Police Tasmania. (25/02/2019)

**Darren Klemm AFSM**, Commissioner, WA Fire and Emergency Services. (07/10/2020)

**Adam Stevenson**, Acting Deputy Commissioner, QLD Fire and Emergency Services. (17/09/2020)

**Associate Professor Tony Walker ASM**, CEO, Ambulance Victoria. (21/09/2020)

**Murray West**, Chief Superintendent, Chief of Staff, NSW Fire and Rescue. (06/10/2020)

**Len Fiori**, CEO, St John Ambulance Australia (18/03/2019)

**Alex Zimmermann**, Officer in Charge, State Community Engagement Section, South Australia Police. (01/05/2019)

**Chris O'Neill APM**, Assistant Commissioner, Chair Honours and Awards Committee, Victoria Police. (22/05/2019)

## 5. Objections Addressed

A couple of agencies have registered their objections to the Australian Emergency Medal proposal. These objections are listed and addressed below.

### **Agencies have their own honours and awards systems/The current range of internal and external awards is sufficient**

A couple of agencies mentioned they already have their own honours and awards systems that they are rightly very proud of. The Australian Emergency Medal is the addition of a **national** medal to recognise their efforts. The existing national suite of medals for Emergency Service officers is inadequate.

### **Proposal missed out Auxiliary Personnel**

The initial medal proposal gave the impression of being only for frontline officers and seemed to miss out auxiliary officers; this was a mistake on my part. The medal was always intended for auxiliary officers as well. This however does not include civilian office staff, just as Defence APS civilian office staff are not eligible for the Australian Defence Medal, ADM.

### **The medal is not realisable as emergency service agencies are separate organisations where the ADF is a single organisation.**

The ADF is a single organisation, but each branch is independent of the other, just as Emergency Service Agencies are. In some states and territories all the emergency service agencies come under one Commissioner. At many emergency situations two, three or even four different agencies work together, in what could be described as joint operations. There are also three (3) precedents for this type of medal:

1. National Medal
2. Emergency Service Medal
3. National Emergency Medal

All of which are awarded to officers of all the Emergency Service agencies.

### **Conduct of the member should be taken into consideration rather than just length of service**

Certainly, reliable and effective turnout for duty and training should be a prerequisite for this and other medals in this proposal.

Personnel who have been dismissed from an agency will not be eligible for this medal or any of the others mentioned in this proposal.

### **The name is too close to the Emergency Service Medal**

Yes the name is similar, but so are many others such as the National Emergency Medal and the Emergency Service Medal, National Police Service Medal and the Australian Police Medal. It may sound similar, but is not the same and looks completely different.

### **Undermines the meaning and significance of the awards already in existence**

The Australian Defence Medal ADM does not undermine in any way the meaning or significance of any of the other Defence medals. That medal is worn proudly by all who have earned it. The ADM certainly doesn't take away or diminish the significance of any of the medals worn by Sir Peter Cosgrave or Governor General David Hurley for example. It certainly won't take away from the significance of Emergency Service agency medals, particularly as there are so few of them anyway.

### **Five (5) years is too short a period of time**

Five years is one year longer than the 4 year requirement for the ADM. This time period does not recognise just the previous 5 years but also the 5 or so years to come. Just as the basic qualifying period for the Afghanistan Medal is only 30 days, it does not just recognise 30 days of service in Afghanistan because defence personnel are there for so much longer, just as Emergency Service officers serve longer. This also means that a person who spends more than 5 years but less than 15 will still receive recognition for their time with that agency. I would suggest that any person spending 5 summers of their life at the gates of hell fighting bushfires, fighting crime or attending to the mangled bodies at car accidents and other emergencies should certainly be entitled to a medal.

The previous qualification period included, "initial enlistment period" which may mean probation, induction and or training. So eligibility should be taken from the date the member qualifies for the agency, after probation, induction and initial training.

## 6. Other Medals To Be Considered

The Australian Emergency Medal is not the only gap in the Emergency Service suite of medals there are others that will be made clear in this section.

### **Current Medals**

There are currently three (3) national non-agency specific medals available to Australian Emergency Service personnel.

1. National Medal
2. Emergency Service Medal
3. National Emergency Medal

There are three (3) national agency specific Police Service Medals

1. Australian Police Medal
2. National Police Service Medal
3. Police Overseas Service Medal

There is only one (1) national agency specific medal for the Ambulance Service

1. Ambulance Service Medal

There is only one (1) national agency specific medal for the Fire Services

1. Australian Fire Service Medal

There are **NO** national agency specific medals for the:

- SES
- SLS Australia
- Volunteer Coastal Patrol/Coast Guard agencies
- Other Volunteer Rescue agencies

Even within the Emergency Service agencies there are inconsistencies, as the police have two other medals available to them, with no equivalent medals within the other agencies.

### **Other New Medals to Consider**

#### ***Overseas Service Medal***

There is a Police Overseas Service Medal, so there should be an equivalent medal for the officers of other agencies who serve overseas:-

- Fire Overseas Service Medal
- Ambulance Overseas Service Medal
- SES Overseas Service Medal
- Maritime Overseas Service Medal
- Surf Life Saving Overseas Service Medal

### ***National Police Medal***

Officers qualify for the National Police Medal after 15 years service, there should also be an equivalent medal for officers within the other agencies:-

- National Fire Service Medal
- National Ambulance Service Medal
- National SES Service Medal
- National Maritime Service Medal
- National Surf Life Saving Medal

### ***Emergency Long Service Medal***

The National Medal is often considered a Long Service medal, however not all officers qualify for one reason or another and even have to apply for the medal moreover the qualifying criteria mean it is not available to auxiliary officers. *“The National Medal recognises long and diligent service by members of recognised government and voluntary organisations that risk their lives or safety to protect or assist the community in enforcement of the law or in times of emergency or natural disaster.”*

<https://www.pmc.gov.au/government/its-honour/national-medal>

This proves there should also be a Long Service Medal available to Auxiliary Officers who also wear the uniform proudly and do much of the same training as the front line officers. Many of these officers have also worked on the road before commencing work in an auxiliary capacity. In the case of Ambulance call takers, they often save lives with their cool, calm demeanour when giving instructions over the phone while waiting for the paramedics to arrive at the scene. They often assist in the safe delivery of babies through the same cool clear directions and instructions given only over the phone. These officers should also be recognised for their skill and professionalism under what can only be described as extremely traumatic situations, situations where they cannot see what is going on but must control through clear understanding and directions given over the phone to unseen, untrained members of the public.

Then there is the distress of hearing the anguish in the voices of colleagues calling for backup in life threatening situations knowing they can't do anything at all, except call for that backup or assistance knowing that it may well not get there in time as situations on the ground can and do change so quickly. These people also need to be recognised for the value and the vital importance of the work they do.

To rectify this situation there should also be the automatic issue of Long Service medals to ALL Emergency Service officers after 15 years of service with clasps issued for periods of additional 10 years served.

The precedent for both an Emergency Service Long Service Medal and this medal the Australian Emergency Medal can be found in the Defence suite of medals with many personnel only ever qualifying for the equivalent two medals; the Defence Long Service Medal and the Australian Defence Medal. These may well be the only medals that many Emergency Service officers ever qualify for also.

There is however one other major issue with the National Medal; it should not need to be applied for, it should be issued automatically on qualifying. No serving officer of any Emergency Service agency should ever be required to apply for any medal entitlement, at any time, it is unacceptable there simply is no need for it. When an officer becomes eligible through length of service for example, the medal should automatically be awarded, none of this applying through your Chief Officer nonsense.

Emergency Service Officers don't carry out their work for medals and many would find it difficult or even embarrassing to ask for one. They should be awarded the medal by their Chief Officer as they become eligible. Many others can be struggling mentally and applying for a medal can be just too much. The general public I'm sure would also find this situation unacceptable, I know I do. Serving Defence personnel don't have to apply for their medals, so why should Emergency Service Officers?

### **Medal Anomalies within the Emergency Service Suite of Medals and recommendations**

Meritorious Service Vs Conspicuous Service Vs Distinguished Service

The Australian Police Medal, Australian Fire Service Medal, Ambulance Service Medal and Emergency Services Medal are characterised on the PMC website as Meritorious Service medals, yet each of these medals state it is for Distinguished Service. So which is it, Meritorious or Distinguished?

### **Distinguished Service Decorations**

This brings us to another issue; there are no Distinguished Service Decorations available to Emergency Service officers such as a Distinguished Service Cross or Distinguished Service Medal that can be awarded to recognise outstanding service and devotion to duty during time of extreme disasters such as the recent bushfires. Considering the type of work you and these people carry out and the frequency of such events, especially fire events in our country, it's quite amazing that these decorations don't exist.

Let me illustrate why they should exist by using the example of former Commissioner of the RFS Shane Fitzsimmons. This man distinguished himself magnificently with his handling of the NSW fire emergency of summer 2019/20. However, there is no medal available that recognises his outstanding and extraordinary commitment and service in the protection of his people in such

dangerous conditions, while still balancing the danger with doing their job; saving homes and infrastructure, not to mention lives. To oversee so much fire danger on such a vastly unprecedented scale and being in command of so many people and agencies to combat that disaster and to do all that while having to deal with all the politics involved, is a truly monumental, herculean effort. There should definitely be a Distinguished Service Cross and he should certainly receive it. The man showed incredible skill and extreme dignity in his handling of an unprecedented fire emergency. He has already been awarded the Australian Fire Service Medal and National Medal; disappointingly, there is no other medal to award him. There is no Distinguished Service Cross or even a Conspicuous Service Cross, there is nothing. The Order of Australia does not cover this kind of service however and he should have one of those anyway in recognition of his over thirty years of service in the RFS not just as it's Commissioner. This also needs to be rectified, by the addition of an Emergency Service Distinguished Service Cross and an Emergency Service Distinguished Service Medal. No he did not do it alone, and the men and women who worked so tirelessly along-side him should also be recognised.

We also need to add national Meritorious Unit Citations and Unit Bravery Citations for the various units, brigades and stations.

**The New Suite of medals will look like this:**

**Distinguished Service Medals NEW**

- Emergency Service Distinguished Service Cross **NEW**
- Emergency Service Distinguished Service Medal **NEW**

**Meritorious/Distinguished Service Medals**

- Australian Police Medal
- Ambulance Service Medal
- Australian Fire Service Medal
- Emergency Service Medal
- Australian SES Medal **NEW**
- Australian SLS Medal **NEW**
- Australian Maritime Rescue Medal **NEW**

**Civilian Service Medals**

- National Police Service Medal
- National Ambulance Service Medal **NEW**
- National Fire Service Medal **NEW**
- National SES Medal **NEW**
- National SLS Medal **NEW**
- National Marine Rescue Medal **NEW**

### **Overseas Service Medal**

- Police Overseas Service Medal
- Ambulance Overseas Medal **NEW**
- Fire Overseas Service Medal **NEW**
- SES Overseas Service Medal **NEW**
- Overseas Marine Rescue Medal **NEW**
- Surf Life Saving Overseas Service Medal **NEW**

### **Long Service Medals**

- National Medal becomes Automatic Long Service Medal for Frontline Officers **CHANGE**
- Emergency Service Long Service Medal for Auxiliary Officers **NEW**

### **Other Emergency Service Medals NEW**

- Australian Emergency Medal **NEW (Current Proposal)**

### **National Bravery and Distinguished Service Citations for each agency NEW**

There should also be a medal awarded to Emergency Service personnel from overseas who come here to assist us during times of disaster.

## 7. Conclusion

There will be Emergency Service Personnel who won't qualify for long service recognition or any of these other medals for any number of reasons; leaving the service through injuries received on the job, both physical and mental, or family pressures, but their service is still worthy of recognition, and should be recognised at a **national** level, the Australian Emergency Medal will do that.

This medal is vitally important because it will recognise the service and sacrifice of people who dedicate their lives to the service of their fellow Australians at the moment of their greatest need and often while placing themselves in danger. These are people who are called to attend traumatic situations every day of their working life, who go to work with the express purpose of helping others, helping us the members of their communities at our greatest time of need.

This medal will also recognise the service, sacrifice and dedication of those who put their own safety on the line in service of their community on a volunteer basis, those who don't get paid for putting themselves in harm's way to help others. These people who train and study and work every bit as hard as their full time counterparts to become qualified in their chosen field of Emergency Service. Spending their own recreational time training and serving their communities, serving us.

There is another thing. These people see violence and horrors so extreme, we the general public just can't imagine, just as you have too and it must have an effect on these amazing people. We cannot possibly praise these heroes enough. But it's not just the horror, it's the way these people so coolly and calmly deal with so many dangerous situations while dealing with those affected by drugs and alcohol, how truly compassionate and patient they are with older Australian's they come into contact with, not to mention children and babies, along with those with intellectual disability and others suffering complete mental breakdown. The work you and your people do is simply, magnificent. It may sound flowery, but it is true.

I believe it is time for a **national medal** to show them how much they are appreciated by their country, how much they are valued by their nation, a medal awarded on behalf of all Australian's in appreciation of what you do for us.