

Shane Fitzsimmons AO AFSM

Former NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) Commissioner

Shane Fitzsimmons joined the NSW RFS in 1985, in the footsteps of his father George, a firefighter who was killed on duty in 2000.

In 2007, Shane became the organisation's commissioner — a role he held for 12 years. During the 2019-20 devastating bushfires, millions of Australians looked to Shane for leadership and guidance. He has been praised for his high level of empathy, solemnity and calmness in an extremely difficult time. He faced one of the most damaging fire seasons in recent memory with a 74,000-strong crew of mostly volunteers. Throughout the disaster that claimed 26 lives, razed 2,448 homes and 5.5 million hectares, Shane informed the public with daily press conferences, liaised with government leaders, and comforted colleagues and the family of firefighters who lost their lives.

He is currently the chair of the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC), the State Recovery Committee (SRC), Board of Commissioners (BOC) and the National Emergency Medal Committee (NEMC).

This appointment followed a distinguished career with the NSW Rural Fire Service of over 35 years, serving as both a volunteer and salaried member.

In 1998 he was appointed an Assistant Commissioner with the RFS and has held portfolio responsibilities for Operations, Strategic Development and Regional Management. In 2004, he was appointed the inaugural Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC) Visiting Fellow to the Australian Institute of Police Management (AIPM) for a period of 12-months, developing and delivering programs in management and leadership.

During the period of September 2007 - April 2020 he was the Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service and was also the Chair of the NSW RFS Bushfire Coordinating Committee and the Rural Fire Service Advisory Council. He was also a member of the NSW State Emergency Management Committee and the NSW State Rescue Board (SRB) and was Chair of SRB from 2008 to November 2015. In July 2012, he was appointed a Board Member of the NSW Government Telecommunications Authority.

He was appointed a Director of the National Aerial Firefighting Centre (NAFC) in March 2008 and was the Chair of the NAFC Board from 2009 to 2013. He was a Director on the Bushfire Co-



operative Research Centre from 2009 to 2014.

He was a member of the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authority Council from 2007 and was a member of its Board from November 2016 to November 2019 and held the position of Deputy President upon retirement from the Board. In January 2016 he was appointed as a Councillor of the Royal Humane Society of NSW Inc. Additionally, he is a patron of two charities - Kids Xpress and Coffee 4 Kids.

Shane has been awarded the Rural Fire Service Long-Service Medal for more than 30 years, the National Medal in recognition of more than 35 years, and the Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM). He has also been acknowledged with a Paul Harris Fellow and a Paul Harris Fellow Sapphire through Rotary Clubs of Berowra and Sydney. He was announced as the 2021 NSW Australian of the Year, and the Australian Father of the Year 2020 through The Shepherd Centre.

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