

**CFA Honours and Awards**

# **Nominator's Guide**

**This guide complements the  
*CFA Honours and Awards Manual***





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CFA Headquarters, 8 Lakeside Drive, Burwood East, Victoria 3151.

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For any matters relating to this publication, contact: Manager Volunteerism,  
CFA Headquarters, 8 Lakeside Drive, Burwood East, Victoria 3151.



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## Introduction

Honours and awards help define, encourage and reinforce aspirations, ideals and standards, by identifying and recognising role models.

CFA recommends and gives honours and awards to recognise, celebrate and say thank you to those members who have given their time in the service of others and whose contributions stand out as being 'above the norm' and who have made a significant contribution to CFA and to the community.

Honours and awards fall into two broad categories:

- those that form part of the Australian System of Honours and Awards or their predecessors (the Imperial Honours system)
- those issued by organisations or other countries.

The purpose of this guide is to provide information and guidance about how to determine the most appropriate award, the importance of aligning the written nomination of a person to the criteria for the selected award, and finally, some guidance about the content of your nomination.

Nominations may be submitted at any time. However, some awards are only announced at specific times.

For information in regards to the nomination process and how to submit the nomination, please refer to the *CFA Honours and Awards Manual*.

**Please note the following disclaimer:**

*The nomination examples are for guidance and/or reference only. Use of any part of the documents is no guarantee of an honour award nomination being approved or supported.*



## Honours, Awards and Special Recognition

We give honours to recognise, celebrate and say thank you to those who make a difference, those who are recognised for achieving their best amongst their peer group and those who serve others.

A lot of members of CFA are familiar with the system of CFA Service Awards which are presented to members at brigade or Group functions. There are several alternate awards that have been created to acknowledge those people who have done something that exceeds what could be considered as meeting the usual expectations of a member, going above and beyond.

The purposes and the qualifying criteria for each of these awards are explained in the *CFA Honours and Awards Manual*. Even with these explanations, it can be challenging to select the most appropriate form of recognition for a particular individual.

This guide has been prepared to help you identify the most appropriate award and then to help you prepare the nomination, so that the nominee has the best opportunity to be considered for special recognition.

### How do I Work Out Which is the Appropriate Award?

In broad terms, the available awards provide a means of recognising service that you and supportive referees are convinced can be described as above the normal expectations of a member. It might be a special or outstanding contribution to your brigade or Group. It could be to recognise their leadership demonstrated during a particular emergency event or campaign. Maybe they invented or developed some new piece of equipment or software system.

Maybe their influence extended far beyond the local scene because of their regular involvement in Incident Management Teams during major fires, or because they have championed the cause of community safety. Perhaps it was their advocacy on behalf of volunteers. All members' contributions will have an impact, whether it be at an individual, brigade, Group, district, region, state or sector level, and can be recognised informally or through formal honours and awards.

CFA awards have been established to acknowledge those cases where members have performed noteworthy and special service to the benefit of CFA and the community, and are arranged according to a hierarchy.



## Australian Honours

Australian honours, awards and medals are the most prestigious, and consequently, should be reserved for acknowledging truly outstanding or exceptional individuals for their excellence, achievement or meritorious service. They fall outside of CFA's internal honours and awards and with support from CFA, are considered at the national level.

### Honours and Awards: Four Broad Categories

- Bravery, courage or valor:
  - by an individual;
  - by a unit or group of individuals working as a crew.
- Outstanding or exceptional service deserving of special recognition:
  - for contributions at a local level;
  - for contributions that extend beyond local community, area or region;
  - for whole of organisation (e.g. CFA), or whole of nation.
- Campaign or event:
  - The National Emergency Medal such as the Victorian Fires 09;
  - a campaign badge, such as the *2009 Black Saturday Campaign Badge*.
- Service awards and life memberships.

Each award, having been created for a particular purpose, has a set of qualifying criteria specified. For a person to be considered eligible for an award, nominations must be able to demonstrate sufficient evidence that their service meets those criteria.



## Which Award?

Deciding that a particular person deserves recognition for their outstanding contribution is a relatively easy task. Determining what form that recognition should take requires more time and is made even more complex by the range of options available. This section is designed to help you.

Basically, there are four steps:

1. What types of service, activities, or contributions has the person made?
2. Who has benefitted from their service?
3. Would their service be considered as outstanding when compared to that of members from elsewhere, particularly previous recipients?
4. Which is the most appropriate award given the answers to the previous steps?

### **Step 1: Types of service**

- Prolonged and general contribution far in excess of expectations of a normal member.
- For how long?
- Leadership qualities that have made a significant contribution to the organisation and community.
- Operational leadership at significant or major fires and incidents.
- Noteworthy changes and innovations to procedures, practices, or equipment.
- Developments of new systems, equipment and applications of technology.
- Significant advances in community education, community safety and community resilience.
- Special contributions to training and development of people.
- Has the person also been active in the broader community?

### **Step 2: Who did their service provide benefit to?**

- Was it just the brigade or did they have influence/impact on the Group, the region, CFA as a whole, VFBV, the community, the municipality, the fire service as an industry?
- Were they active at local, regional, state, or perhaps national levels?
- Did their service benefit the whole community or only the fire service?

### **Step 3: Comparison with the service of others**

Think about how well the nominee's service would rate with that of others in similar roles or positions, or with previous recipients of awards.

- Are they known outside the local area and acknowledged for their ability?
- Are they a source of advice to others, are they mentors?
- How can this be demonstrated?



### Step 4: The most appropriate award is...

Given the hierarchy of awards referred to earlier, you must now decide how the detailed picture of service fits with the stated purposes of the possible awards.

Remember that there are strict limits on the number of Australian Fire Service Medals (AFSMs) that can be awarded in any one year. So it is understandable that these are reserved for those who can truly be shown to have given distinguished service when considered across the whole service.

If a person's service was multi-faceted and extended to their activities and leadership in a number of other community organisations then it might be more appropriate to consider nominating them for an Australian honour/award such as the Order of Australia Medal that would recognise not just their fire service but their full range of service to the community.

In such a case it would be appropriate to still nominate them for a CFA Outstanding Service Medal to acknowledge their contribution to CFA.

The decision matrix and tables set out below might help you to work through what can be a difficult and confusing task.

#### First

Locate your nominee in the cell that best describes the level and range of their service. The closer to the top right hand corner, the more likely it is that you will be able to show that their service meets the criteria for an Australian honour.

Level	CFA Awards → Australian Honours			
State				
Region				
District				
Group				
Brigade				
Service provided to	CFA	CFA and VFBV	CFA and community	CFA, VFBV and community

↑  
CFA Awards

**Note:** this is not necessarily going to take you to the award you would like to nominate them for but it will help you select the most appropriate one.



**Then**

Use the following tables to help decide which award is the most appropriate, paying particular attention to the key descriptor words and the meanings set out on page 7 and 8 of this guide.

Service Descriptor	Possible Awards
Prolonged with distinguished performance in a particular area or field*	<b>AFSM</b>
Prolonged and outstanding	<b>CFA Outstanding Service Medal</b>
	<b>Commendation for Service</b>
Diligent service in primary function of CFA (prevention and suppression) and has maintained fitness and training	<b>National Medal and Clasps</b>
More than 30 years of dedicated service and has enhanced the standing of CFA/brigade	<b>CFA Life Membership Medal</b>
	<b>CFA Honorary Life Member</b>
General	<b>CFA Service Award</b>
Not less than 30 years of service to CFA and to VFBV and its predecessors	<b>Gold Star</b> (is awarded by VFBV)
Outstanding leadership at a particular fire/incident or of a significant event	<b>Commendation for Service</b>
	+ <b>AFSM</b> (see above base requirement)
Outstanding diligence and performance in administrative or welfare roles	<b>CFA Outstanding Service Medal</b>
	<b>Commendation for Service</b>
Innovation/improvement of procedures and/or practices	<b>CFA Outstanding Service Medal</b>
	<b>Commendation for Service</b>
	+ <b>AFSM</b> (see above base requirement)
New technology/equipment/software/etc.	<b>CFA Outstanding Service Medal</b>
	<b>Commendation for Service</b>
	+ <b>AFSM</b> (see above base requirement)
Training and development of others, particularly youth	<b>CFA Outstanding Service Medal</b>
	<b>Commendation for Service</b>
	+ <b>AFSM</b> (see above base requirement)
Community safety (prevention/preparedness/resilience)	<b>CFA Outstanding Service Medal</b>
	<b>Commendation for Service</b>
	+ <b>AFSM</b> (see above base requirement)

\*AFSM nominations must meet the service descriptor along with one or more of the criteria outlined on page 2 of the CFA Honours and Awards Manual.



## What do the Key Descriptor Words Mean?

In deciding which is the most appropriate award, you need to make a judgement as to whether the nominee's service meets or exceeds the levels of service described by the words used in the purpose of the award and then the criteria. Each of the following words can be found in the various qualifying criteria and are outlined below:

- **Dedicated** – committed to the objectives and goals of the organisation, able to be relied on, prepared to make themselves available to deliver services despite the impact on personal activities.
- **Diligent** – service that has been of good standard and conscientious and where the person has shown good conduct as a member.
- **Distinguished service** – is service above and beyond the normal zealous and faithful service given by a dedicated member. The service is easily identified as different and superior to the usual. It suggests service that has generated outcomes and recognisable benefits to CFA, the fire services generally, or the community.
- **Exceptional** – means something that very few others would compare with. It would be sensible to consider that an exceptional person would be someone who would stand out even amongst a group of other outstanding individuals.
- **Exemplary** – means able to be held up as an example to others, and that other members would seek to model themselves on or seek to achieve similar outcomes.
- **Outstanding** – can be applied differently depending on circumstance. A person who might be considered as outstanding in a small group (a brigade), might not be so when considered as part of a larger group – say a region. This is an important consideration when determining which award you may nominate them for. It emphasises the need to look closely at the award's qualifying criteria and the context in which the qualifying service is described.
- **Prolonged** – is not specifically defined but it would be expected that the nominee's service record would show a significant number of years of dedicated service that would help to distinguish their service from that of other members. As a guide, Nominators should bear in mind the requirement for at least 30 years of service to be eligible for CFA Life Membership Awards and the Gold Star.



## The Words 'Outstanding' and 'Exceptional'

These are critical to deciding which award you should seek as recognition.

Consider the long-serving, meticulous, and much-valued secretary of a brigade. The one credited with keeping the brigade on an even and well-organised keel. The one that has made sure the fundraising and expenditure over the years relating to the brigade-owned vehicles has always been managed properly.

Their service may have been outstanding from a brigade perspective, but it is unlikely to be exceptional because there are many other brigades that could make a similar claim about their secretary.

On the other hand, the member that has established themselves as one of the few trusted and respected operational leaders, who is the role model for aspiring leaders, who has been a key part of Incident Management Teams, both locally and across the state, or even interstate, would probably be described as an exceptional member, because few others can measure up to their years of experience, or possess the knowledge and expertise they have.



## Recognising Courage and Bravery

From time to time the actions of a person or a group of persons deserve special recognition because they have put themselves at greater risk than would normally be expected of a member. There are special awards and medals available for this purpose.

Which special features should be present to warrant recognition of bravery, courage and valor?

For those awards recognising bravery, courage or valor, it is necessary to be able to determine the significance of the act that you consider deserves recognition. The following definitions may assist. They are based on descriptions of the qualifying criteria in the *CFA Honours and Awards Manual*.

- **Bravery** – being ready or prepared to confront danger, particularly in hazardous circumstances that are beyond or outside the generally accepted envelope of risk/threat faced by emergency services personnel.
- **Courage** – is conspicuous bravery displayed in circumstances of great peril where actions are taken after conscious and calculated assessment of the risk in order to achieve a required outcome. It also implies that the person displayed a high degree of self-discipline in order to overcome fear.
- **Valor** – is bravery of a conspicuous nature where a member has made a deliberate choice to go from a place of relative safety to a place of danger where there is a clear and significant risk to life or to remain in such a position in order to save or attempt to save a human life.

Was their service of local, regional, organisational or national significance?

Finally, awards granted within the Royal Humane Society and Australian Honours Systems also provide pathways for recognising courageous actions.

### *Awards for Bravery, Courage and Valor*

Service Descriptor	Possible Awards
Deliberate choice to risk own life to attempt to save another	<b>Valor Medal</b>
Service in demanding conditions requiring a high degree of self-discipline For brave actions that do not meet the criteria for the Valor Medal	<b>Chief Officer's Commendation for Courage</b>
For collective acts of bravery/action in dangerous conditions	<b>Chief Officer's Unit Citation for Courage</b>



## Other Special Awards

**Special Recognition Award** – May be awarded to a brigade for outstanding community service. (refer to page 11 of CFA Honours and Awards Manual)

**Unit Citation for Service** – May be awarded to a brigade or work location and to the members specified in the citation for their outstanding collective actions in relation to a special event, project or task, or for a prolonged period. (refer to page 16 of CFA Honours and Awards Manual)

## How do You Document the Justification?

The key to a well-written nomination is providing clear evidence and concrete information that illustrates:

- how an individual's or group's achievements demonstrate leadership
- leading practice and achievement towards the mission and vision of CFA
- support of Emergency Management. The number of examples is not as important as ensuring that the nominee's contributions meet the award criteria (and exceed what might be expected of any active, loyal and dedicated member).

As the nominator, the success of your nomination will depend on how well you present the evidence that you consider justifies special recognition for your nominee.

The following suggestions about writing the nomination may be of assistance.

- Start by gathering and listing any examples and supporting information. You may choose to involve others in this process. Revise your list by categorising like information into clusters. This should help you to decide which award would best recognise the listed service.
- Refine your list so that it aligns to the qualifying criteria for the award you have selected. Then write your statements to best show how the nominee's service meets those criteria.
- It is important to remember that those who will consider your nomination probably do not know the nominee. As such, your nomination must tell the story accurately and with sufficient details and examples, so that the readers get a clear picture of the service provided by the nominee.
- Feel confident to express in full exactly how the nominee has become worthy to meet the award criteria, providing evidence and justification to support the nomination. Honours exist specifically to recognise achievements that are well beyond the norm expected.
- Take care always to support any assertions with hard evidence and supporting references. It is important that the impact of the actions and contribution are clearly stated, and demonstrates the strong effects on someone or something.
- Being specific and direct is necessary, and will help the reader to understand exactly what the nominee has done and how it has made a difference, to demonstrate importance and impact.



## What is a Citation?

A citation should be thought of as a summary of the justifying service described in the nomination. It is the statement that will be recorded as the justification for making the award and it will generally be read out at the presentation of the award.

The citation should not contain information that was not more fully described in the nominating statements.

## How do I Write a Citation?

The citation should summarise the circumstances of the act or contribution of the nominee during a particular timeframe or significant event.

A strong citation should also describe as vividly and precisely as possible the impact that the contribution has made.

### For example:

How were things before the event/incident/contribution was made?

What is the lasting impact to the individual, Group, community or Victoria?

Includes specific details to support these claims. An effective nomination will demonstrate that the person (or unit/group) being nominated has:

- earned the respect of their peers and become a role model in their field
- demonstrated significant achievement against the odds/with persistence and dedication
- produced an outstanding achievement which has required moral courage, vision, the ability to make tough choices or determined application and hard work.

*"Former Wendouree Fire Brigade Captain and former Eureka Deputy Group Officer Phillip Smith has shown a very high level of commitment to the brigade and Group, making a significant contribution to improving fire safety and response in the community for more than four decades. Phillip is a true asset to CFA; his commitment to his brigade and local community during the Ballan Fires was outstanding. It was a long month with the fire threatening the town of Ballan and throughout that time his professionalism and commitment shown both to his brigade and other brigades was exceptional. He gave of himself over and above any reasonable expectations showing the true spirit of CFA."*



## Referees

Who should I nominate as referees? People who can add weight to your nomination are probably the best answer. Rather than telling the same story as your nomination you want to try and have referees who will provide additional justification to what you have already provided. They do not need to be a CFA member.

For instance, it might be a prominent member of the community who can provide a community perspective of the respect accorded to the nominee because of their service. It could be someone from a different part of the state who can demonstrate the nominee has generated benefits beyond just the local scene.

## How to Write a Referee Statement in Support of a Nomination

### Opening statement

Start with a clear, direct, and specific statement as to why the nominee deserves recognition. Include enough information for the committee to become familiar with specific challenges faced by the nominee, actions taken, and results or goals met. List the most important information in the first few sentences and then elaborate as necessary. An opening statement is intended to be concise, however it is important that the statement is not vague. Avoid sweeping generalities and make every sentence count.

*"It is with great pleasure that I provide a reference in support of the nomination for the awarding of an Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM) to Senior Station Officer Ms Monica Williams.*

*I have known Monica for her entire CFA service and watched her demonstrate significant innovation in both her volunteer and paid service. This foresight not only advanced the interests of her brigade but also CFA and Victorian Fire Services in general with consequential enhancements in firefighter safety and service excellence to the community."*

### Support statements

Support the opening statement with specific examples that address the award criteria and elaborate on why the nominee's accomplishments are worthy of the award. These examples should include outcomes, results, and/or activities 'above and beyond' the nominee's job description. Include qualities that make this person outstanding, and that are clearly relevant to the award criteria.

Consider including the following evidence to answer the 'who, what, when, where, why' in your supporting statements:

- What did the nominee do?
  - Projects and/or activities above and beyond the nominee's job description.
  - Any challenges or issues encountered and overcome.



- How did they do it?
  - Initiative and/or leadership.
  - Teamwork.
  - Creativity and/or innovation.
  - Behaviours and/or attitudes (should not dominate write-up).
- What were the results and/or impact?
  - What did the nominee's efforts accomplish?
  - Are there specific benefits that CFA derived from those efforts?

*"Garry's commitment to the safety of firefighters and the community is demonstrated through his project management of the Chief Officer's Standard Operating Procedures review after the Linton Inquiry. This complex and ground-breaking work resulted in a complete overhaul of doctrine at this level in CFA. It created new operational arrangements focusing on firefighter safety and preservation of life.*

*As part of the team inquiring into the bushfires of 2003 he showed resilience and dedication in producing a comprehensive forward-looking report, acting with concern and compassion throughout the process. His work was admired by many and he achieved the respect of those he worked with and others across the Emergency Services fraternity."*

### **Closing statement**

Describe how others regard the nominee. The concluding paragraph of your letter should contain a brief re-summary of why you are recommending the person for the award. It is important to stick to the points that you brought up in the previous paragraph and not to introduce any new information. The person reading the letter should have no doubt in their mind as to why the nominee is worthy of the award. It is also a great idea to once again state that you "highly recommend" the person, or you "recommend them without reservation".

*"During her time with CFA, Karen's contribution and commitment to organisational performance and improvement has been exceptional. She is recognised as one of the real leaders both in an operational sense and in an organisational improvement sense.*

*I have no hesitation in recommending Karen Cook for the award of an AFSM."*

### **To increase the strength of the nomination, consider responses to the following questions in your statement:**

- What is the individual or unit being nominated for? Be specific.
- Why do you believe their contribution 'stands out' from others?
- How did the individual or team achieve this?
- What measurable outcomes resulted from the nominee's achievement?
- Did you identify one or more of the award criteria that the nominee(s) exemplified? Explain how the achievement was outstanding in that regard.
- Is there supplemental information you can solicit from colleagues to strengthen the nomination?
- Make sure you proofread your statements. Grammatical errors and misspelled words detract from the quality of the nomination.



## Checklist

- SMART statements – Specific, Measurable, Achievement, Relevance, Time.
- SMEAC – Situation, Mission (Commander's intent), Execution, Administration and Logistics, Communication.
- Write short sentences that are concise and give specific detail.
- Provide a complete overview of the nominee or unit's accomplishments. It is important to tell the nominee's story as you would to a stranger.
- Use an active voice when writing.
- Make sure you are nominating the individual or team for the appropriate award.
- Identify at least one or more of the award criteria that the nominee exemplified, then explain how/why the achievement was outstanding.
- If you are unclear about the criteria, ask for clarification from the Honours and Awards team.
- If the work/project is still being developed or has not yet produced outstanding results, consider identifying major milestones completed and the impact to the overall outcome.
- If the progress is not of substantial impact, consider waiting to submit the nomination until after the results/impact can be documented and supported.
- Be sure to include unusual challenges the nominee had to overcome.
- Describe the amount of time and resources spent on the project (e.g. if the project is on time or early; at or under budget).
- The committee is relying on your words to give them a positive, factual picture of your nominee's accomplishments. Explaining detailed behaviours and providing specific examples will make it obvious why someone deserved to be recognised.
- Keep it brief. Too much information that is not relevant to the criteria can be harmful. Avoid giving work history or job descriptions unless it directly relates to the award criteria. The goal is quality, not quantity.
- Consult a thesaurus to find the best adjectives to describe your nominee's unique traits and achievements.
- Nominations should be checked carefully to verify that all information submitted is accurate.







To view the latest edition of *CFA Honours and Awards Nominator's Guide*, please visit Brigades Online.

For information regarding the criteria, how to apply and the nomination process please refer to the *CFA Honours and Awards Manual* which is available through Brigades Online.

For information regarding how to wear honours and awards, please refer to the *How to Wear Honours and Awards* booklet also available through Brigades Online.

File path: *Brigades Online > Brigade > Service History & Awards > About the Awards*

To request copies of this guide, please contact CFA Honours and Awards via email: [cfa-awards@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:cfa-awards@cfa.vic.gov.au)

or phone: 1800 232 636

or in writing to: Manager Volunteerism, CFA Headquarters, 8 Lakeside Drive, Burwood East Victoria 3151

