

STAR OF COURAGE

Senior Constable Leah Helene RUDDER, New South Wales Police

In the early morning of 10 April 2003, Senior Constable Rudder rescued an unconscious man from a burning house at Tarro, New South Wales

At around midnight, Senior Constable Rudder was driving into her driveway after work when she heard breaking glass and yelling coming from a neighbouring house. She drove to investigate and found a female using a garden hose through a window of a house that was on fire. The woman informed Senior Constable Rudder that she had called emergency services. The fire had engulfed the front section of the house. Senior Constable Rudder looked through a partially broken window to determine whether the occupant of the house was still inside. Visibility was poor, so she used a steel bucket she found at the rear of the house to break more of the window. She was still unable to see inside and the window was too high for her to gain access, so she returned to the rear of the house and tried the back door. It was locked so she kicked the wooden door repeatedly until she had made a hole to crawl through. She was unable to gain access, however, due to intense heat and smoke. She returned to her vehicle, called for assistance and grabbed a torch. Senior Constable Rudder used the torch to smash a window and look inside for any occupants. She saw a man lying on the floor, wedged between the foot of a bed and the wall. She returned to her car to advise colleagues who had now arrived, that she was going inside to rescue the man. One of her colleagues went with her and they both entered the house through the hole in the rear door. They tried to drag the man from the house but he remained wedged and they were forced to retreat when they were overcome by the intense heat and thick smoke. After getting some fresh air, they re-entered the house and, despite the fire gaining in intensity, returned to the bedroom. As they dragged the man to the door of the bedroom, the walls and ceiling began to collapse and both officers were showered with sparks and debris. The man became jammed in the doorway, and while Senior Constable Rudder tried to free him, her colleague was forced to retreat due to smoke inhalation. Senior Constable Rudder continued to pull the unconscious man by his feet down the hallway. A colleague then assisted her in removing the man from the burning house to safety.

By her actions, Senior Constable Rudder displayed conspicuous bravery.

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Mr Daryl John SMITH, 41 Jubilee Highway West, Mount Gambier SA 5290

During the night of Sunday 17 November 2002, Mr Smith rescued a man from a burning vehicle after an accident on Nelson Road, Caveton, South Australia.

Mr Smith was driving his semi-trailer towards Mount Gambier when two cars collided on the road ahead of him. He had to swerve to avoid hitting a woman who had been thrown from the car and was crawling on the road. He stopped his vehicle to go to her aid and called 000. While on the phone, a second car, a utility, some 100 metres away burst into flames. He ran to the utility and found the semi-conscious male driver trapped behind the steering wheel. Mr Smith could smell gas, but was unsure which of the damaged vehicles it was coming from. Despite this, he climbed into the cab of the utility and tried to pull the occupant out. He was forced to retreat when there was an explosion and flames shot into the cabin. However, he re-entered the vehicle and used his pocket knife to cut the driver's seatbelt. As flames shot over their heads, Mr Smith freed the man's legs and dragged him from the vehicle to a safe distance. He then ran back to his truck to get two fire extinguishers and directed some bystanders to care for the man and stop the oncoming traffic. The utility driver advised Mr Smith where the gas tank was located, so Mr Smith crawled under the utility and disconnected the gas line, thus preventing further explosions.

By his actions, Mr Smith displayed conspicuous bravery.