

STAR OF COURAGE (SC)

The late Mr Benjamin Mark AHERNE, Late of Devonport Tas 7310

On the morning of 8 October 2011 Mr Benjamin Aherne went to the assistance of a woman who had been involved in a domestic violence assault in Devonport, Tasmania.

Mr Aherne received a phone call from a friend asking him to visit her house after her ex-partner had assaulted her and she believed that he would return. Mr Aherne drove to the woman's house, and his partner arrived in her own car and remained outside.

Shortly after Mr Aherne's arrival at the house, the woman's ex-partner returned and entered the premises carrying a rifle. The offender continued to make violent threats and, despite the danger to himself, Mr Aherne confronted the offender in the hallway of the house and attempted to diffuse the situation. After a short struggle, both men exited the house.

Once outdoors, Mr Aherne ran towards his partner's vehicle. He banged on the windows, warning her to immediately leave the scene. The armed offender approached and fired two shots at the vehicle, seriously wounding Mr Aherne's partner.

As Mr Aherne ran towards his own car, the offender fired his weapon at Mr Aherne, causing him to fall to the ground. The offender approached Mr Aherne and opened fire once again, fatally wounding him. The offender then turned the weapon on himself.

By his actions, Mr Aherne displayed conspicuous courage.

Mr Andrew George COCHRAN, Medowie NSW 2318

On the afternoon of 1 October 2013 Mr Andrew Cochran was involved in the rescue of two people from a burning vehicle in Mona Vale, New South Wales.

A petrol tanker carrying 34,000 litres of fuel was travelling along Mona Vale Road when its driver lost control. The tanker travelled through a roundabout before jack-knifing, tipping onto its side and sliding across the road. It collided with several cars and burst into flames.

As the flames quickly began to engulf the damaged cars, Mr Cochran reached one of the vehicles containing four elderly people. He entered the vehicle and attempted to remove the dazed and disorientated occupants. Two of the occupants were assisted from the car and escorted to safety while he continued to try to extract the driver and another passenger who were still trapped.

At this point the rear of the vehicle caught alight. Despite the obvious danger, Mr Cochran continued to assist until the flames and heat intensified and he was forced back from the vehicle. He then went to comfort the two people who had been removed from the car. He continued to assist with the evacuation of the area and offered assistance to emergency services personnel when they arrived on scene.

Sadly, two of the vehicle's occupants perished at the scene and a further six people were taken to Royal North Shore hospital for treatment for a range of burns and other injuries.

By his actions, Mr Cochran displayed conspicuous courage.

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Dr Hugh Robert GILES, East Ballina NSW 2478

On the morning of 9 February 2015, Dr Hugh Giles was involved in the rescue of a man who had been attacked by a shark at Shelley's Beach, near Ballina in New South Wales.

Dr Giles was surfing with a number of other experienced surfers at Speeds Reef at Shelley Beach when he noticed turbulence in the water nearby. He witnessed a surfer being attacked by a large grey shark. As a number of the other surfers immediately caught a wave to the safety of the beach to raise the alarm, Dr Giles began to paddle towards the surfer who was being attacked.

Another surfer was urging the injured man to catch the next wave with him towards the reef; however the injured man was unable to do so. On reaching the reef the surfer noticed that Dr Giles had gone to assist the injured surfer.

Despite the threat of the shark still being present, he managed to grab hold of the injured surfer and began to move him towards Speeds Reef in the direction of the shore.

Upon reaching the reef, Dr Giles was joined by other surfers who had re-entered the water and they conveyed the injured surfer to the beach. First aid procedures were immediately started but, sadly, he could not be revived.

By his actions, Dr Giles displayed conspicuous courage.

Mr Hayden Toimairangi GRIFFITHS, Quakers Hill NSW 2763

On the afternoon of 1 October 2013 Mr Hayden Griffiths was involved in the rescue of two people from a burning vehicle in Mona Vale, New South Wales.

A petrol tanker carrying 34,000 litres of fuel was travelling along Mona Vale Road when its driver lost control. The tanker travelled through a roundabout before jack-knifing, tipping onto its side and sliding across the road. It collided with several cars and burst into flames.

As the flames quickly began to engulf the damaged cars, Mr Griffiths reached the vehicle containing four elderly people. He entered the vehicle and attempted to remove the dazed and disorientated occupants. Two of the occupants were assisted from the car and escorted to safety while he continued to try to extract the driver and another passenger who were trapped in the vehicle.

At this point the rear of the vehicle caught alight. Despite the obvious danger, Mr Griffiths continued to assist until the flames and heat intensified and he was pulled away from the wreck by another witness. When a third occupant managed to exit the burning vehicle, Mr Griffiths attempted to provide assistance but was again pulled back due to the immediate danger.

Sadly, two of the vehicle's occupants perished at the scene and a further six people were taken to Royal North Shore hospital for treatment for a range of burns and other injuries.

By his actions, Mr Griffiths displayed conspicuous courage.

STAR OF COURAGE (SC)

Senior Constable Karen Elizabeth LOWDEN, New South Wales Police

On the afternoon of 3 August 2011, Senior Constable (then Constable) Karen Lowden assisted a young woman during a collar bomb incident at a residence in Mosman, New South Wales.

Constable Lowden, and other New South Wales Police Officers, arrived at a residence in Mosman in response to an armed hostage situation. On entering the house a young woman was located sitting at the end of a long corridor with a gun safe style metal box chained around her neck. The young woman informed the officers that the collar was a bomb and that the offender had requested 'no police'.

This information was quickly passed on to the other officers who had arrived on scene. Members of the Rescue and Bomb Disposal Unit then arrived at the house.

Despite the unknown danger of the device, Constable Lowden remained with the woman and liaised through an open door with the woman's father and other police officers. Another police officer in a bomb mitigation suit approached and instructed Constable Lowden to leave the house and obtain a camera. She then returned and resumed her position near the victim to offer support.

After approximately three hours with the woman, Constable Lowden was relieved of her post and, following a thorough inspection of the explosive device, a decision was made to cut the wires and release her.

By her actions, Senior Constable Lowden displayed conspicuous courage.

Mr Michael James O'ROURKE, Hornsby Heights NSW 2077

On the afternoon of 1 October 2013 Mr Michael O'Rourke was involved in the rescue of two people from a burning vehicle in Mona Vale, New South Wales.

A petrol tanker carrying 34,000 litres of fuel was travelling along Mona Vale Road when its driver lost control. The tanker travelled through a roundabout before jack-knifing, tipping onto its side and sliding across the road. It collided with several cars and burst into flames.

As the flames quickly began to engulf the damaged cars, Mr O'Rourke reached a vehicle containing four elderly people. He entered the vehicle and assisted in removing one of the dazed and disorientated occupants who he then carried to safety. Meanwhile efforts continued to extract the driver and another passenger who were trapped in the vehicle.

At this point the rear of the vehicle caught alight and the flames and heat intensified. An explosion occurred and, as another rescuer went to the aid of an occupant, Mr O'Rourke immediately pulled the rescuer away as the situation became increasingly life-threatening. Mr O'Rourke then went and comforted the two occupants that had previously been removed from the burning vehicle.

Sadly, two of the vehicles occupants perished at the scene and a further six people were taken to Royal North Shore hospital for treatment for a range of burns and other injuries.

By his actions, Mr O'Rourke displayed conspicuous courage.

STAR OF COURAGE (SC)

Mr Paul Terrence POLLARD, Hornsby Heights NSW 2077

On the afternoon of 1 October 2013 Mr Paul Pollard was involved in the rescue of two people from a burning vehicle in Mona Vale, New South Wales.

A petrol tanker carrying 34,000 litres of fuel was travelling along Mona Vale Road when its driver lost control. The tanker travelled through a roundabout before jack-knifing, tipping onto its side and sliding across the road. It collided with several cars and burst into flames.

As the flames quickly began to engulf the damaged cars, Mr Pollard reached a vehicle containing four elderly people. He entered the vehicle and assisted in removing one of the dazed and disorientated occupants who was then taken to safety. He ran to the driver's side door but was unable to open it and gain access to the trapped occupant.

At this point the rear of the vehicle caught alight and the flames and heat intensified. Mr Pollard went to retrieve a fire extinguisher but the flames were rapidly increasing and uncontrollable. He then attempted, with another rescuer, to use a tow rope to pull the vehicle away from the flames. An explosion followed and the heat pushed him backwards as the car was engulfed in flames. Mr Pollard then ensured that the occupants who had been extracted from the car were moved away and assisted into an ambulance.

Sadly, two of the vehicle's occupants perished at the scene and a further six people were taken to Royal North Shore hospital for treatment for a range of burns and other injuries.

By his actions, Mr Pollard displayed conspicuous courage.

Mr Thomas Peter RAYMEN, Elanora heights NSW 2101

On the afternoon of 1 October 2013 Mr Thomas Raymen was involved in the rescue of two people from burning vehicles in Mona Vale, New South Wales.

A petrol tanker carrying 34,000 litres of fuel was travelling along Mona Vale Road when its driver lost control. The tanker travelled through a roundabout before jack-knifing, tipping onto its side and sliding across the road. It collided with several cars and burst into flames.

As the flames quickly began to engulf the damaged cars, Mr Raymen, who was about 10 metres from the inferno, immediately went to the assistance of an elderly woman whose car was on fire. He assisted the woman out of the vehicle and moved her away to safety as the vehicle exploded.

Mr Raymen then saw the windscreen of the burning tanker pop out and the truck driver trying to scramble from the vehicle. Mr Raymen ran over to him, grabbed hold of his shirt and led him to safety as surrounding vehicles burst into flames.

Sadly, two people perished at the scene and a further six people were taken to Royal North Shore hospital for treatment for a range of burns and other injuries.

By his actions, Mr Raymen displayed conspicuous courage.

STAR OF COURAGE (SC)

Mr Joel Alexander TRIST, Minnamurra NSW 2533

In the evening of 30 March 2016 Mr Joel Trist went to the assistance of his friend who was being attacked by a shark at Bombo Beach, near Kiama, New South Wales.

Mr Trist and his friend were surfing approximately 100-150 metres off the shore at Bombo Beach, when he heard his friend yelling and saw his surfboard pop up from underneath a wave. He saw that his friend was thrashing in the water and a shark attacking him.

Regardless of the presence of the shark, Mr Trist immediately paddled his board towards his friend and, upon reaching him, slid into the water and helped his friend onto his own board.

He was beginning to paddle towards the shore, keeping his friend's head above water, when they became caught in a rip. As they finally neared the shore, Mr Trist called out to his girlfriend to contact emergency services.

Mr Trist applied a tourniquet from a leg rope and, assisted by his girlfriend, dragged the injured man onto the sand and began to administer first aid until emergency services arrived on scene.

By his actions, Mr Trist displayed conspicuous courage.