

**Howe, Tony J** (from *The Forester* Sept 2004)

Tony Howe of Castle Hill, NSW was awarded the Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM) for his contribution to fire management for the community of NSW over 35 years.

Tony is currently an Assistant Commissioner with the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS), a position held since transferring from State Forests of NSW in late 1998.

Tony graduated from ANU as a forester in 1968 and has fond memories of the Yarralumla Forestry School and fire lectures by Alan McArthur and field exercises, including lighting fires on Black Mountain that stimulated an interest in forest fire management.

His formative years were spent as a junior forester at Tumut involved in the dramatic expansion of the softwood plantations there. Experience in plantation establishment burns and as a fire boss on a number of spectacular fires in and adjacent to Kosciuszko National Park over the period from 1968 to 1978 firmed up an interest in bushfire management.

Tony then spent almost seven years as District Forester at Grafton on the NSW North Coast before being transferred as District Forester, then Regional Forester at Eden on the NSW South Coast. This was an exciting period, with considerable drama and trauma during the height of the "green debate" associated with woodchip exports.

Forest fire management was a priority in the Region and since the early 1980s, the programs in place have protected the forests from serious fire damage. During his period in Eden, Tony was the Emergency Controller (s41F Appointee) for the devastating Byadbo Fire in Kosciuszko National Park to the west of Bombala in 1988.

Tony was transferred to State Forests Head Office - Sydney in 1991 and among his other duties was State Forests representative on the NSW Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee, and responsibility for State Forests fire management policy.

When the opportunity presented, Tony transferred to the NSW Rural Fire Service to pursue his interest in fire management. Responsibilities in the RFS include training and engineering technical services, and some involvement in major fires, the focus being the provision of services and support to almost 70,000 volunteers across the State.

Responsibility for firefighter safety and OH&S in general has led to a major role in coronial inquiries and other inquiries that have followed significant fires, including the Canberra and Kosciuszko coronials, and COAG's National Inquiry on Bushfire Mitigation and Management. In recent years, Tony has played a role in the establishment of the Bush Fire Co-operation Research Centre. He has undertaken international consultancy work in Indonesia, China, and PNG, and represented the RFS in Malaysia and Greece.