

# NOMINATION GUIDE

## ABOUT THE AWARDS

The WAFES Awards acknowledge the achievements of volunteers, career firefighters and DFES staff throughout Western Australia who have gone above and beyond their normal duties over the past 12 months.

In 2026 there are 17 awards in total covering Marine Rescue, State Emergency Service (SES), Volunteer Fire and Emergency Service (VFES), Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service (VFRS), career firefighters and DFES corporate and operational staff across young people, individual and team categories.

## WHAT'S NEW IN 2026

This year there are some exciting changes to the way we recognise our young volunteers and DFES staff.

For the first time we will recognise young DFES staff (including career firefighters) through the DFES Young Person of the Year Award. Similar to the volunteer young people awards, this new award will be open to young people between 18 and 28 years of age. Only individuals are eligible – a group or team of young people cannot be nominated.

In addition, a new pinnacle award, the WAFES Young Person of the Year, will further strengthen the spotlight on young people by elevating and celebrating their outstanding contributions to emergency services across Western Australia.

Winners of each of the four young people awards will go forward for consideration for the WAFES Young Person of the Year with the winner announced at the WAFES Awards gala dinner. Visit the [WAFES Awards website](#) to find out more about the young person awards.

## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

We all know outstanding volunteers and DFES staff who deserve to be recognised but putting together a nomination can be tricky.

This guide walks you through what you need to do to develop a nomination that showcases the exceptional work of your nominee and gives the judging panel all the information they need.

It also includes some examples of well written nominations that scored highly in previous years. These sample nominations demonstrate the level of detail you will need to provide for your nomination to be competitive. Please note these are to be used as a guide only.

If you need help developing or submitting your nomination or accessing the awards website your Volunteer Management Support Officer (VMSO), Marine Services District Officer, volunteer association and the DFES Events and Awards team are here to help.

## STEPS TO DEVELOPING A NOMINATION

### **Step 1: Decide who to nominate**

#### **When thinking about who to nominate ask yourself:**

- why are you nominating this person or team?
- have they gone above and beyond their normal duties?
- is there a specific incident, project or event that occurred after 31 March 2025 that you can use as an example in your nomination?

Remember you can nominate more than one individual or team!

### **Step 2: Select the right award**

Visit the [WAFES Awards website](#) and review each award including eligibility and criteria. For more information read the terms and conditions in the 'Additional information' section.

If you can't find a WAFES award that fits, email [rewards@dfes.wa.gov.au](mailto:rewards@dfes.wa.gov.au) to find out more about the DFES Honours and Awards program and other alternatives for recognising your nominee.

### **Step 3: Plan your nomination**

Don't just say your nominee is outstanding, prove it!

The key to a strong nomination is providing specific information that demonstrates how the individual or team has gone above and beyond to keep the community safe.

Start planning out your nomination by considering a few key questions.

#### **What did the nominee do?**

- Any incidents, projects or events above the nominee's regular duties, including at least one within the past 12 months (after 31 March 2025).
- Any challenges or issues encountered and overcome.
- Ask their peers, colleagues or supervisors for information that could strengthen the nomination.

#### **How did they do it?**

- Behaviours and attitudes
- Initiative and leadership
- Teamwork
- Creativity and innovation

#### **What were the results and impact?**

- What did the nominee's efforts accomplish?
- How did their teammates, DFES and/or the community benefit from those efforts?

Once you have this down, look at the criteria for the award and decide which one (or more) your nominee meets.

#### **Step 4: Write your nomination**

Now for the main event, writing the nomination.

One way to approach this is starting with a statement explaining why the nominee deserves recognition. Support this statement with examples of incidents, projects or events that occurred within the past 12 months, addressing the award criteria.

For your nomination to stand out against others, you must include evidence of what makes your nominee so exceptional. Judges can only assess the nomination based on the information you provide, so be specific.

#### **Handy tips**

- Get started early. Writing a nomination may take longer than expected.
- Nominations must be between 300 to 1000 words.
- You don't have to complete your nomination in one go. It can be saved in progress and submitted later.
- Write short sentences that are concise and give specific detail.
- Use plain English and don't over complicate it.
- Think quality not quantity and consider whether the information you provide is relevant to the award criteria.
- Provide a complete overview of the nominee's accomplishments. It is important to tell the nominee's story as you would to a stranger.
- Describe unique characteristics that are more than just that the nominee is a great or nice person. Explaining detailed behaviours and giving specific examples will increase their chances of progressing to the next stage.
- Make sure all the information you provide is accurate. If you are unsure, ask someone who can verify it.

#### **Things to avoid**

The most common mistake people make when writing nominations is describing the nominee's actions or contributions in a way that suggests they were just going about their regular duties. Instead, focus on what makes your nominee stand out from the pack and how they have gone above and beyond to make a difference.

#### **Other things to avoid include:**

- an extended CV or resume.
- a role description outlining the nominee's regular duties.
- a list of achievements or awards.

#### **Step 5: Supporting documents**

Nominations may also include supporting evidence such as a relevant referee statement from someone who knows the nominee and their work or photos and videos that help address the criteria.

There are lots of options for supporting evidence but remember to make it relevant to the nomination and ensure it provides further context for the judging panel.

### **Step 6: Select your endorser**

All nominations must include the name of a supervisor who can endorse and support the claims in the nomination.

**Remember as the nominator you cannot endorse the nomination, even if you are the supervisor.**

If you need help determining who can endorse the nomination, please visit the awards website or contact your VMSO or the DFES Events and Awards team.

### **Step 7: Submit your nomination**

- Head to the [WAFES Awards website](#).
- Click on the 'Nominate now' button under your nominee's award.
- Follow the prompts and enter all the required information including your nomination, any supporting documents and endorser details.
- Once your nomination is complete click the 'Submit entry' button.
- You will receive an email when your nomination has been successfully submitted.

Remember you can update your nomination at any time before the closing date.

## **CLOSING DATE**

Nominations for the 2026 WAFES Awards close **Wednesday 8 April at 9am**. Make sure you leave enough time to submit your nomination online before the closing date as late submissions won't be accepted.

 **QUESTIONS AND SUPPORT**

The [WAFES Awards website](#) has information on the awards criteria, eligibility, key dates and more.

If you cannot access the website or need help with an award nomination, please contact your VMSO, Marine Services District Officer, volunteer association or the DFES Events and Awards team.

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 **SAMPLE NOMINATIONS****Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services Individual Achievement Award****Criteria addressed:**

- Kindness, understanding, compassion or courage in the line of duty
- Contribution beyond normal expectations to the efficiency and growth of firefighting efforts in WA

**Nomination:**

I am writing to nominate John Citizen for the Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services award in recognition of his outstanding contributions and dedication during the recent emergency situation that occurred in the Kimberley region.

As you are aware, Tropical Low 06 Uniform of 30 December 2022 caused record-breaking floods that cut off numerous communities in the region, including Bungardi, Djarlgunya, and Loanbun. The floods were particularly severe, reaching heights of up to 15.8 meters, and posed a significant threat to the safety and well-being of the communities impacted by the disaster.

During this crisis, John stepped up and worked tirelessly to help those in need. John's efforts were nothing short of heroic, and his selflessness and dedication to the community during this crisis were truly exceptional.

John worked tirelessly manning the State Emergency Service Flood boat to rescue more than 120 people from multiple communities that were cut off by the floodwaters. His commitment to the safety and well-being of those he was rescuing was evident in his actions, and his determination was evident as he worked to ensure that everyone rescued was safe and secure. Through his significant experience and leadership John was able to provide a calming influence on other volunteers and rescued parties. This influence varied from navigating numerous under water hazards and removing windows to allow people to escape inundated houses, to personally assisting people by swimming with them through flood waters in their own houses.

Another example of his heroism and altruism was when he assisted WA Police save 7 children from the flood waters after they had broken into the Crossing Inn. Within their fear of capture and escape attempt they were caught in the river and being taken to what could have been certain death. Surrounded by this incredibly stressful situation John's ability to communicate with the children allowed them all to be rescued.

What is particularly noteworthy is that John went above and beyond his expected duties during this crisis. As part of his actions John assisted the WA Police in recovering a deceased male from the Fitzroy River after the flooding event. His actions showed a deep commitment to serving his community, and his bravery was an inspiration to all who worked with him.

John was also a key conduit of information and reassurance between the community and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) during this crisis. He provided vital updates to the community, ensuring that everyone was informed of the latest developments and had the information they needed to stay safe. John's communication skills and ability to provide reassurance during a time of crisis were critical in ensuring that everyone remained calm and focused on the task at hand. John's presence was key in allowing DFES to build momentum within the community as local people took ownership of their own recovery.

John's unwavering dedication to the safety and well-being of others is a testament to his character and commitment to his community. His bravery and selflessness during this crisis were truly exceptional, and his contributions to the volunteer firefighting and emergency services community are worthy of recognition.

In recognition of John's extraordinary contributions during this crisis, I believe that he is highly deserving of the Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services award. His actions represent the very best of the volunteer firefighting and emergency services community, and his contributions will not be forgotten.

Thank you for considering John's nomination for this prestigious award.

## **State Emergency Service Young Person of the Year**

### **Criteria addressed:**

- Dedication to duty beyond normal expectations
- Involvement in the development or implementation of a State Emergency Service awareness or prevention program
- Contribution to the efficiency, effectiveness and development of the State Emergency Service through ingenuity and innovation

### **Nomination:**

Jane Citizen is the archetypal quiet achiever. On first meeting she can seem quite reserved, but this façade hides the powerhouse that she really is. Her kindness, generosity and desire to help others combined with her enthusiasm for the SES has meant that just five years after joining the service, she is about to become the Local Manager of Springfield SES.

Jane joined the Springfield SES in 2018, and within a couple of years had, at her own request, taken on the roles of both Secretary and Treasurer. In 2022 she also became the Deputy Local Manager and in June 2023 she will take over as Local Manager from John Citizen, who has been in that position for the last 12 years. Springfield SES has between 25 and 30 members.

In 2022 Jane coordinated a recruitment campaign for the unit. Requesting that all EOIs go to her (rather than the DFES VMSO) she was able to contact all those who had enquired personally. Following the conclusion of the campaign in September 2022, she organised an open night at the unit so that anyone interested in volunteering could come along and visit Springfield SES.

In March 2023 Jane organised the family inclusive Credo Station excursion for the Springfield SES members, a weekend away of training and team building. The excursion was a result of the unit identifying a need for further land search and navigation training following two recent searches.

The excursion gave members and cadets an opportunity to refresh their navigation skills (or learn new skills) and an insight on what to expect when attending land searches i.e. heat, walking long distances through thick brush, keeping up water intake and how to address areas that were not able to be searched (such as extremely thick brush or large dams). Members had a navigation revision course on day 1 where they learnt how to use compasses and basic map reading, followed by a land search. Day 2 they put into practice their navigation skills by doing a navigation exercise through the bush. Throughout both days they were using radios to become more familiar with them as well.

The weekend was incredibly well received with new members stating they learnt how to use a compass and actually preferred it to a GPS as it was far more reliable and easier to use. Members who were unable to walk long distances were not left behind and became a meeting point as well as assisting with catering. Whilst the adult members were taking part in the exercises Jane taught their children the basics of navigating which was hugely enjoyed. At the end of the weekend the children were able to identify features on the map to those on the ground, follow a bearing and mark their paces.

The weekend was a great team bonding activity. The non traditional approach to training was well received with more members were able to attend without having to worry about childcare.

After being contacted by the organisers of the 2022 Smallville Muster, Jane organised with other SES volunteers to run the gate entry and ticket sales. The event is held 380km east of Springfield. Their contribution was so well received and appreciated that they returned in April 2023 for another successful event.

Jane was a key contributor to one of the stands at the October 2022 National Disaster Rescue Challenge (NDRC) that was developed by Springfield SES and was deemed one of the most challenging (and fiendish) of the stands that competitors were required to complete. Jane was part of the team that travelled from Springfield to Perth twice, one to test the stand and once for the event itself, and even brought with them some genuine Goldfields boulders to add authenticity to the stand.

Jane will always put her hand up to participate in forums and working groups. She is keen not only to learn, but to ensure that the needs of her region are represented. She is a member of the long running Natural Hazard RFA User Group and attends the DFES Volunteer Leaders Forum in Springfield every year.

Having spent her first two years gaining an impressive list of qualifications, in 2020, Jane became a trainer assessor and now enjoys passing on her skills and knowledge to new members of the group. Qualified as a Team Leader, Jane has led both storm and search teams and regularly attends callouts in probably the largest area looked after by a single SES unit in the state.

In April 2023 Jane was selected by the Minister for Emergency Services, to be a member of the SES Volunteer Advisory Committee. The Committee is an advisory and consultative board that provides advice to the Minister and the Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner on strategic matters relevant to the SES. Jane is one of only five SES volunteers on the Committee that were appointed directly by the Minister rather than being nominated first by the SES Volunteer Association.

Jane is an extremely dedicated SES volunteer, rarely missing a training night and keen to both absorb knowledge and pass that onto others. Described by her Local Manager as efficient and unflappable, he also comm, “if you give her a job to do, she’ll organise it.” In June DFES will acknowledge Jane’s abilities, popularity and leadership skills by appointing her the Local Manager, a very well deserved appointment. Those that have admired everything Jane has achieved in just five years, look forward to seeing what she will accomplish next and know that Springfield, the SES and WA will all benefit from her continued service.

**Marine Rescue Team Achievement Criteria addressed:**

- Outstanding rescue or activity

**Nomination:**

In the early hours of Tuesday 24 May 2022, Marine Rescue Smallville was contacted by Western Australia Water Police advising an emergency position indicating radio beacon (EPIRB) had been activated off the coast of Jurien Bay. By 0119hrs Rescue Vessel 'Odyssey', the groups nine metre Leisure Cat, was deployed with Skipper John Doe and Commander Jane Citizen as crew.

In the afternoon of Monday 23 May, the Australian national weather body, Bureau of Meteorology, had released a number of severe weather warnings for a deep low pressure system which would bring destructive wind gusts, heavy rainfall and widespread damaging wind along the Smallville coast. The system was expected to be windier than a typical cold front and was expected to produce the kind of weather that is only seen twice per year.

Due to the weather conditions John and Jane could only travel at a speed of 6 knots and arrived on scene at approximately 0200hrs. upon arrival they immediately began searching the area for a vessel in distress or people in the water. In the dark of night and large swell the search was challenging. During their search they came across a capsized yacht with one survivor clinging to it and a life raft with two survivors in it. Quickly John and Jane manoeuvred 'Odyssey' alongside the life raft and retrieved two survivors into the vessel.

Due to the conditions, they could not come close enough to the capsized yacht to retrieve the third person. Relying on her training and maritime experience, Jane threw the life ring directly to the final survivor which allowed them to be pulled towards 'Crickey'. Jane and the other two survivors worked together to pull the final person onto the vessel. With all three onboard and safe, Jane and John also managed to locate the EPIRB and deactivate it. Jane requested paramedics be onshore when they returned to the marina at approximately 0352hrs.

Jane and John displayed the upmost bravery and skill during this rescue. They ventured out in horrendous weather conditions with westerly winds near 30 knots and gusts of 40 knots, 4 metre seas and 6 metre swell. They returned safely to shore with all three survivors, no injuries, and no damage to their vessel.

Almost a year to the date (30 May 2021) the group responded to a rescue of another capsized yacht which 5 survivors were recovered from the water. This rescue was covered by Australia's leading current affairs program '60 Minutes' in which the father and daughter who were rescued spoke of the incident and gave their thanks to the volunteers involved. The group were also presented a certificate of appreciation from WA Police Force. Marine Rescue Smallville won the 2022 Marine Rescue Team Achievement Award for this rescue.