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BRAVERY AWARDS TO TWO CANBERRA MEN

Statement by the Prime Minister, Mr. John Gorton

Two Canberra men have received bravery awards for their part in rescuing an elderly woman from a fire in the Canberra suburb of Narrabundah earlier this year.

They are Mr. Arthur Joseph Parr of Toolambi Street, Narrabundah, and Mr. Patrick Neil McIlhaton, of the same address.

Her Majesty The Queen has awarded Mr. Parr the British Empire Medal for Gallantry, while the Governor-General, under his delegated authority from The Queen, has approved the award of The Queen's Commendation for Brave Conduct to Mr. McIlhaton.

Citation

At about 1 am on Friday, 13 February, Mr. Parr awakened to find the house on the opposite side of Toolambi Street on fire. He woke the other occupants of his home, one of whom was Mr. McIlhaton, and asked his wife to go to a neighbour's home to ring the fire brigade and the police.

The two men ran across to the burning house but were unable to open the front door. They then went to the back door, which was open. On hearing the weak voice of an elderly woman calling out to him, Mr. Parr went inside but was forced back by the smoke and heat. He got a garden hose and re-entered the house playing water on the seat of the fire in the lounge room.

When he was again forced to leave the house by the density of the smoke and the heat, Mr. Parr was relieved by Mr. McIlhaton who continued to fight the fire. Mr. Parr obtained a torch and went into the burning lounge room. With Mr. McIlhaton's aid, he moved the woman from the house across the road to his own home before the fire brigade, ambulance and police arrived.

The elderly woman died fifteen days later as a result of the very severe burns she had suffered.

Messrs Parr and McIlhaton, untrained fire fighters, displayed considerable courage and disregard for their own safety in rescuing the woman from her burning home.