

# About the department



## Our purpose:

To help the community to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from the impact of fire and emergency events.

## Our commitment to Queenslanders

To achieve the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services' (QFES) *Strategy 2030* and our vision for a connected and capable Queensland, we commit to helping Queenslanders before, during and after a wide range of emergency and disaster events. We will connect people with the right knowledge, practical skills and resources to strengthen their community's capability and adaptive capacity.

**QFES was established as a department on 1 November 2013 under the *Public Service Act 2008 (Public Service Departmental Arrangements Notice (No. 8) 2013*).**

QFES is the primary provider of fire and rescue and emergency management programs and services throughout Queensland. The department encompasses the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS), disaster management services, Rural Fire Service (RFS) and State Emergency Service (SES). The department protects persons, property and the environment through the provision of effective prevention, preparedness, response and recovery (PPRR) activities across a range of fire and emergency events including natural and human-induced disasters. This is supported by assisting communities to understand their local hazards and ensuring they have the right knowledge, information and resources to strengthen their capability and resilience.

FRS is responsible for ensuring the capacity of operational staff to respond in emergent situations as legislated in the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990*. Traditionally the primary response has been to fire in the built environment and landscape environments, however this has evolved over time to meet the changing needs of the community to become a multi-hazard response which includes bushfire, road crash rescue, vertical rescue and swiftwater rescue. FRS also focuses on prevention and preparedness to avert emergency incidents as well as response and recovery. These activities include regional and community education; building fire safety; hazard identification and risk assessment;

and working with communities to plan and mitigate disasters.

RFS and SES are the primary volunteer services of the department. The community-based RFS operates in rural, semi-rural and some urban fringe areas and provides firefighting, fire prevention and community education services; permits to light fires; and deployments and assistance during emergencies and disasters. SES is a community-based, not-for-profit volunteer emergency service enabled by state and local governments and sponsor partnerships. SES is the primary responder for cyclone, storm and flood events. It also provides support to other agencies such as the Queensland Police Service (QPS) by providing search and rescue, emergency traffic management and road crash rescue functions.

Corporate personnel within QFES provide a broad range of support, including specialist operational support and corporate services. These frontline enablers are also able to transition to liaison, coordination and logistical roles to provide surge capacity during large-scale events and heightened response.

Through service agreements, QFES also supports other volunteer groups that provide emergency response to Queenslanders, including:

- » Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association (AVCGA)
- » Police-Citizens Youth Club (PCYC) Emergency Services Cadets
- » Royal Life Saving Society Queensland Inc. (RLSSQ)
- » Surf Life Saving Queensland (SLSQ)
- » Volunteer Marine Rescue Association Queensland (VMRAQ).

In 2019-20, QFES administered an operating budget of \$750.4 million. This funding supports the delivery of essential emergency, safety and PPRR services to Queensland. The department's capital program of \$6.3 million provided an investment of \$5.5 million in capital purchases and \$897,000 for capital grants to rural fire brigades and SES groups to support the delivery of essential frontline public safety services for Queensland's communities. In addition, the Public Safety Business Agency (PSBA) capital budget provided an investment of \$97.7 million to fund QFES capital works, information and communications technology (ICT), vehicles and other essential equipment (refer to pages 16-20 for further information).

PSBA provides professional ICT, financial, procurement, asset management and human resource services to the public safety agencies including QFES, QPS and Office of the Inspector-General Emergency Management (Office of the IGEM). PSBA also provides ICT services to the Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) and Queensland Corrective Services and network services to a number of agencies. The provision of these services by PSBA allows frontline agencies to focus their efforts on delivering critical operational services to the community. In addition to providing corporate services, PSBA is responsible for the provision of Queensland Government air services.

PSBA is governed by a Board of Management and comprises the QFES Commissioner (Chair), QPS Commissioner and an appointed external member. The role of Chair rotates annually in September between the QFES Commissioner and QPS Commissioner.

The Board's functions include providing leadership and oversight to PSBA and coordinating the provision of support services and any relevant programs to support the public safety agencies.

## Legislation administered

In accordance with *Administrative Arrangements Order (No. 1) 2020* and *Administrative Arrangements Amendment Order (No. 1) 2020*, the QFES Commissioner administers the following Acts, and subordinate legislation, on behalf of the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships:

- » *Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990*
  - *Building Fire Safety Regulation 2008*
  - *Fire and Emergency Services Regulation 2011*
- » *Disaster Management Act 2003*
  - *Disaster Management Regulation 2014.*

## Our accountabilities

The main functions of QFES under the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990* are to:

- a) protect persons, property and the environment from fire and hazardous materials emergencies
- b) protect persons trapped in a vehicle or building or otherwise endangered, to the extent that QFES' personnel and equipment can reasonably be deployed or used for the purpose
- c) provide an advisory service, and undertake other measures, to promote—
  - i) fire prevention and fire control
  - ii) safety and other procedures if a fire or hazardous materials emergency happens
- d) cooperate with any entity that provides an emergency service
- e) perform other functions given to QFES under this Act or another Act
- f) perform functions incidental to its other functions
- g) identify and market products and services incidental to its functions.

In addition, the Act includes functions of the SES. These are to perform:

- a) rescue or similar operations in an emergency situation
- b) search operations in an emergency or similar situation
- c) other operations in an emergency situation to
  - i) help injured persons
  - ii) protect persons or property from danger or potential danger associated with the situation

- d) other activities to help communities prepare for, respond to and recover from an event or a disaster
- e) activities to raise the profile of the SES or raise funds to support the SES in the performance of its other functions.

Under the *Disaster Management Act 2003*, the chief executive of QFES has the following functions for the administration of the Act:

- a) to establish and maintain arrangements between the state and the commonwealth about matters relating to effective disaster management
- b) to ensure that disaster management and disaster operations in the state are consistent with the:
  - i) state group's strategic policy framework for disaster management for the state
  - ii) state disaster management plan
  - iii) disaster management standards
  - iv) disaster management guidelines
- c) to ensure that persons performing functions under the Act in relation to disaster operations are appropriately trained
- d) to provide advice and support to the state group and local and district groups in relation to disaster management and disaster operations.

## Queensland Government priorities

*Our Future State: Advancing Queensland's Priorities*, launched in June 2018, outlines the government's priorities for the Queensland community.



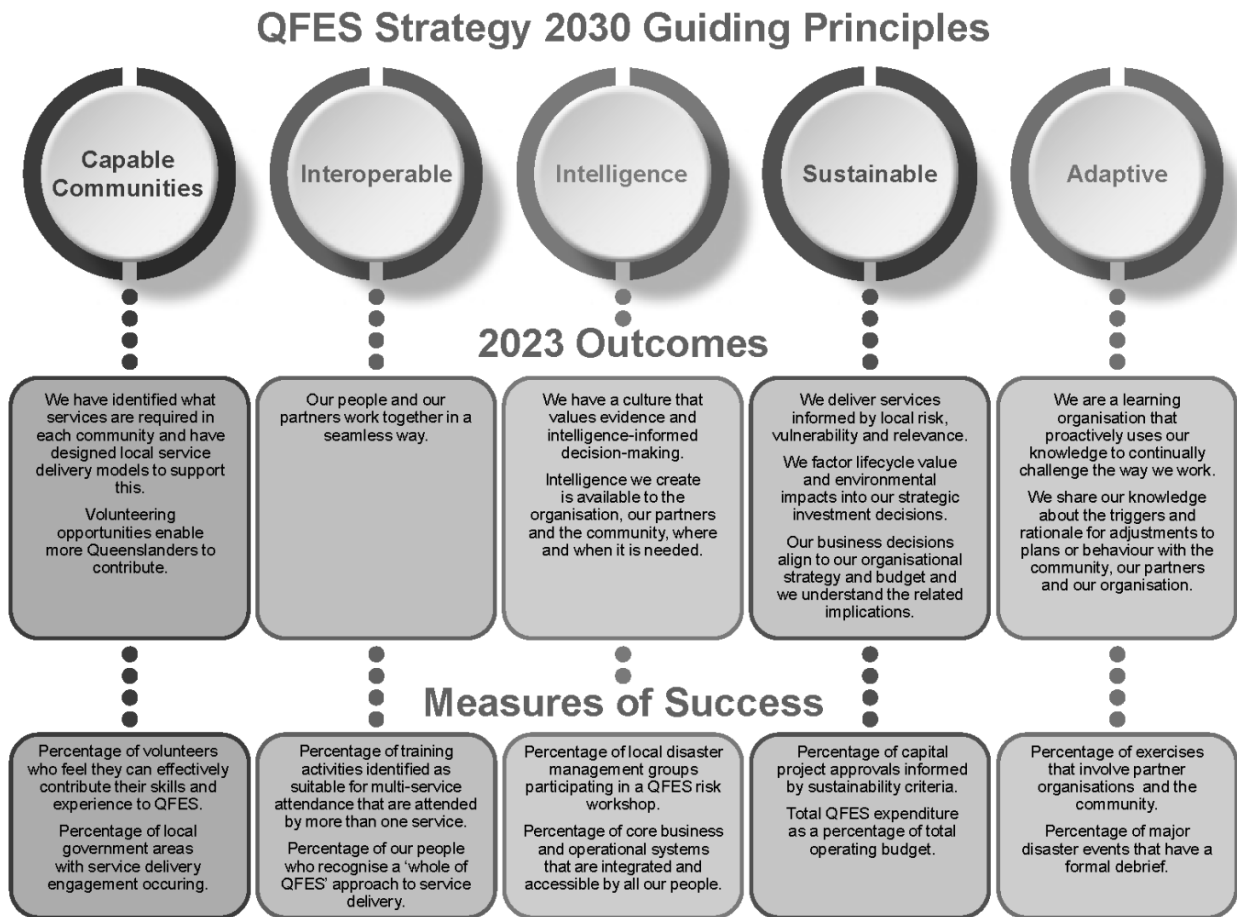
QFES contributes to the Queensland Government's priorities for the community:

- » Keep communities safe by:
  - recruiting additional frontline firefighters and fire communications officers
  - designing and delivering services according to local risk and community need
  - supporting informed decision-making with relevant and reliable knowledge products
  - leading locally trusted networks to prioritise risk reduction, preparedness and information sharing
  - supporting Queenslanders' understanding of, and ability to respond to, climate-related disaster risks
  - empowering Queenslanders to contribute and/or volunteer by providing flexible opportunities.
- » Be a responsive government by:
  - empowering our people to lead meaningful engagement with our stakeholders
  - connecting the community, our partners and our people with skills and knowledge about emergency and disaster risks
  - involving volunteers early in decision-making and lessons management processes
  - promoting inclusion and valuing the diversity of our people
  - streamlining and digitising business processes so they are accessible and intuitive.
- » Protect the Great Barrier Reef by:
  - investing in sustainable, interoperable systems, equipment and infrastructure that are integral to the delivery of our capability
  - influencing land-use planning and building standards for Queensland
  - supporting Queenslanders' understanding of, and ability to respond to, climate-related disaster risks.

## Strategy 2030

*Strategy 2030*, launched in June 2019, reflects how QFES proposes to meet future challenges and realise the opportunities that will present in Queensland through to 2030. The five guiding principles of *Strategy 2030* are embedded across governance, risk, planning and performance mechanisms to further support and ensure alignment and execution.

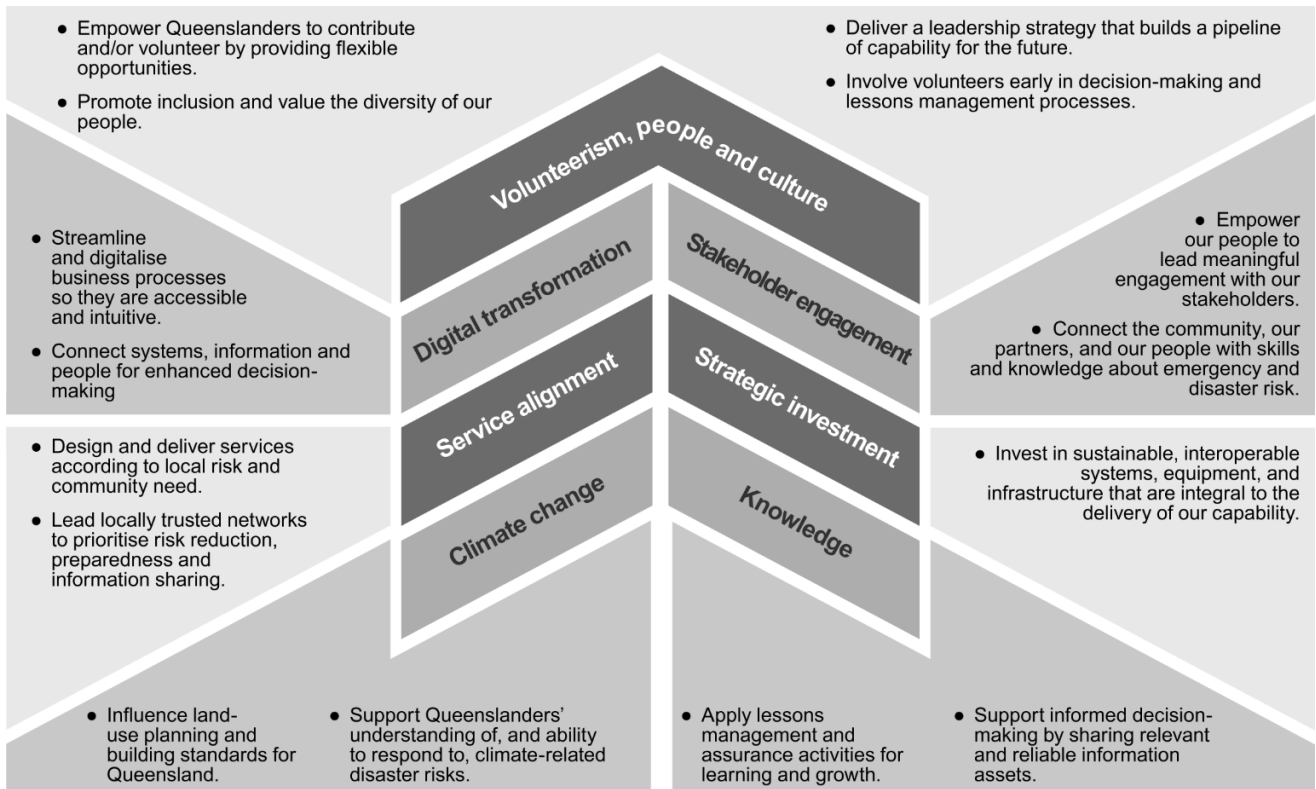
*Strategy 2030* can be accessed at [www.qfes.qld.gov.au](http://www.qfes.qld.gov.au)



Refer to Key performance measures on pages 21-25.

## 2019-2023 strategic initiatives

The department's strategic initiatives for achieving the 2023 outcomes as outlined in the 2019-2023 strategic plan are:



## Our values

Our behaviour and the way we do business are guided by our values:



QFES is equally committed to upholding the Queensland public service values of:



### Customers first

- » Know your customers
- » Deliver what matters
- » Make decisions with empathy



### Ideas into action

- » Challenge the norm and suggest solutions
- » Encourage and embrace new ideas
- » Work across boundaries



### Unleash potential

- » Expect greatness
- » Lead and set clear expectations
- » Seek, provide and act on feedback



### Be courageous

- » Own your actions, successes and mistakes
- » Take calculated risks
- » Act with transparency



### Empower people

- » Lead, empower and trust
- » Play to everyone's strengths
- » Develop yourself and those around you.

## Our environment

The environment in which QFES operates is changing. Some of the strategic environmental factors QFES is working to address include:

- » the continuing growth in Queensland's population, combined with its diversity and geographic dispersal across the state
- » a predicted increase in the severity and frequency of natural disasters
- » changing community expectations around government services
- » changes in the volunteer landscape.

QFES responds to these environmental factors through the delivery of its strategic plan. Importantly, QFES works collaboratively with public safety agencies, local governments and other non-government and community organisations such as Red Cross, Rotary Australia and The Salvation Army, to enable it to respond to these factors whilst continuing to deliver frontline fire and rescue, and emergency services.

Further information about how QFES is responding to these environmental factors can be found in Our performance (refer pages 26-52).

## Our challenges

- » **Climate change:** Increases in the frequency, severity and location of weather events caused by climate change, may lead to an increased demand on QFES services and reduce our ability to service communities.
- » **Service delivery:** Failure to adapt the QFES service delivery model caused by the increasing complexity and scope of the operating environment and changes in demographics and community needs, may result in a reduction in our ability to provide services to communities.
- » **Digital and information systems:** Damage or loss to QFES' digital and information systems, caused by unauthorised or inappropriate access, use or disclosure, may impact QFES' ability to respond to emergencies in a timely manner, putting the community at risk.
- » **Fiscal sustainability:** an increasingly volatile economic environment poses significant challenges for QFES to balance increasing costs with growth in the service needs of Queensland communities, as a result of more severe and frequent large-scale events, population and corresponding development growth and infrastructure demands.

Information about how QFES is responding to these challenges can be found in Our performance (refer pages 26-52).

## Outlook

The future focus of QFES is reflected in the strategic plan. The strategic plan provides a four-year blueprint for the department and communicates QFES' priorities to staff, stakeholders and clients.

Key priorities for the department during 2020-21 include:

- » continuing to develop a highly capable, adaptive and interoperable workforce equipped with the skills, knowledge and information to better support the community
- » incorporating technological solutions that enable effective and timely decision-making
- » integrating enhanced aerial capability into firefighting operations
- » working with PSBA to deliver capital initiatives. (Most new and ongoing capital initiatives to support QFES operational capability are delivered by PSBA. This includes fire and emergency services facilities, fire appliances and communications equipment.)

During 2020-21, key strategic challenges for the department are:

- » increasing severity and frequency of weather events with the department needing to plan to meet this increased demand
- » increasing complexity and scope of the operating environment and changes in demographics and community needs requiring QFES to respond to, and adapt, its service delivery model
- » ensuring QFES' communication and information systems are secure to minimise and prevent cyber-risks.

## Our locations

QFES delivers its services from seven regional locations throughout the state—Far Northern, Northern, Central, North Coast, Brisbane, South Eastern and South Western. They include:

- » 242 FRS stations
- » 1,399 volunteer-based rural fire brigades, including 493 with sheds/stations
- » 75 SES units consisting of 296 SES groups
- » seven fire communication centres (one located in each QFES region)
- » seven Regional Offices
- » 39 Area Offices
- » Special Operations Centre located at Cannon Hill, Brisbane
- » State Deployment Centre located at Morningside, Brisbane.

Frontline staff and volunteers are trained throughout the state in various education and training campuses including the School of Fire and Emergency Services Training (SFEST) at Whyte Island (Port of Brisbane).

The Emergency Services Complex in Brisbane's northern suburbs houses emergency services including the QFES State Operations Centre (SOC), State Disaster Coordination Centre (SDCC) and Brisbane Region Fire Communications Centre.

A list of contacts and key locations for QFES is available in the appendices of this report (refer page 121).

## Volunteers

Volunteers are critical to the successful delivery of frontline services and are essential in building community capacity and enhancing community resilience. QFES has approximately 37,000 dedicated volunteers across the state in the RFS, SES, Research and Scientific Branch Volunteer Scientific Officer network, AUS-1 Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART), and Peer Support Officers and Chaplains.

### Rural Fire Service

The RFS provides services and support to its volunteers with regional offices and area offices throughout the state ensuring operations are coordinated and managed within the region.

Volunteer rural fire brigades provide fire management services for rural and semi-rural communities and some urban fringe areas across approximately 93 per cent of the state. In addition to responding to fires in their local area and in surrounding areas in support of other brigades and emergency services, volunteer brigades undertake a range of planning and preparation activities to ensure communities are well prepared for the bushfire season. This includes community education and hazard reduction and mitigation activities to reduce the risk from fire to people and property.

The Permit to Light Fire system, which ensures the controlled use of fire across the state, is also largely implemented by volunteer fire wardens.

Volunteer brigades are often called upon to assist other emergency service agencies during disasters such as floods and storms and may be deployed to assist other states during fire disasters.

As at 30 June 2020, there are approximately 31,000 RFS volunteers.

### State Emergency Service

The SES is a community-based, not-for-profit, volunteer emergency service enabled by state and local governments and sponsor partnerships. It plays a vital part in Queensland's emergency management approach and provides assistance to Queensland communities in times of disaster or emergency.

The Queensland Government works in partnership with local governments through providing shared support and services that make a significant contribution to the ongoing effectiveness of the SES. This important partnership assists SES volunteers to provide a valuable volunteer emergency service to their local communities.

SES groups perform search and rescue, storm damage and floodboat operations, road crash rescue, emergency traffic management and vertical rescue, and protect persons and property from danger in disaster and emergency situations. They also perform

incident management and agency support. The SES maintains a high level of cooperation and support to QPS. The SES also provides bespoke support for RFS during bushfires such as airbase management capabilities.

The SES also provides valuable assistance to other emergency services and helps communities prepare for, respond to, and recover from an event or a disaster. SES is the primary response agency for cyclone, storm and flood events within Queensland and may be deployed to assist other states during disasters.

As at 30 June 2020, there are approximately 5,000 active SES volunteers. Approximately 1,000 probationary and reserve SES volunteers support active SES volunteers bringing the total number of SES volunteers to approximately 6,000.

### Research and Scientific Branch Volunteer Scientific Officer network

The Research and Scientific Branch consists of a core of permanent staff and a network of volunteers who respond to fire and hazardous materials incidents across Queensland. The volunteer network is a critical component of the branch's expert operational response and advice service. The network includes chemists and chemical engineers who provide prompt, at-the-scene responses to emergency incidents involving chemical hazards. These specialists are drawn from private industry, local governments and tertiary educational institutions across Queensland.

During 2019-20, a range of incidents were attended including chemical reactions, spillages, discoveries of suspicious substances and fires causing hazardous materials releases.

As at 30 June 2020, there are 50 research and scientific volunteers including 45 regional based Volunteer Scientific Officers and five Queensland Health Brisbane-based Scientific Support Officers.



## **AUS-1 Disaster Assistance Response Team**

The AUS-1 DART includes the Queensland Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Team. This is a multi-jurisdictional, multi-disciplinary USAR Team made up of full-time and volunteer members, including firefighters, paramedics, doctors, engineers, Hazardous Materials (HazMat) specialists, volunteer canine handlers, mechanics and communications operators who respond to natural and human-induced disasters across Queensland. The volunteer network within this team is a critical component comprising doctors, engineers and canine specialists. These specialists come from private industry, local governments and tertiary institutions across Queensland.

As at 30 June 2020, the AUS-1 DART has 25 volunteers including five doctors, six engineers and 14 canine handlers.

## **Peer Support Officers**

QFES is committed to providing a broad range of support options for QFES members and their immediate family to promote mental health and wellbeing. The Fire and Emergency Services Support Network (FESSN) is responsible for coordinating the delivery of peer support and counselling services for QFES.

The QFES Peer Support Program comprises 153 active Peer Support Officers from various roles, ranks and positions across the state. Peer Support Officers are selected and trained to support colleagues who may be experiencing work or personal difficulties. By virtue of a common working environment and shared experiences, they are equipped to provide early intervention, social support, understanding, practical assistance and links to professional services if necessary. Peer Support Officers are involved in supporting members following exposure to critical incidents, as well as informal individual support and delivering education sessions to promote mental health and wellbeing.

During 2019-20, a total of 4,070 hours was invested in peer support activities and peer support was provided to a total of 1,473 people.

## **Chaplains**

The QFES Chaplaincy Service works collaboratively with other QFES support services and local community networks to strengthen corporate and operational capability and ensure appropriate holistic support.

Across the state, the QFES Chaplaincy Service support network provides personal support services to our members and their families, both current service and retired, relating to both personal and work life. Support is also available to community members who are victims or witnesses of incidents or disasters involving a QFES response. Our volunteer Chaplains are available 24-hours a day, seven days a week through personal contact, incident response systems or referrals.

Services include pastoral care, crisis response, ceremonial involvement and community engagement.

At 30 June 2020, there are 21 Chaplains.

## Partners

QFES works closely with the public safety agencies—the Office of the IGEM, PSBA and QPS—and other government departments including the Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA).

The department also has strong relationships with its partners including national bodies and local governments who provide shared services and support to SES, and those in the community through volunteer groups including the Rural Fire Brigades Association Queensland Inc. (RFBAQ), Queensland State Emergency Service Volunteer Association Inc. (QLDSESVA), Queensland Volunteer Marine Rescue Committee and the Queensland Police-Citizens Youth Welfare Association. These partnerships are vital for QFES to enhance community safety by minimising the impact of fire and emergency incidents on the people, environment and economy of Queensland.

### National bodies

QFES contributes to national fire and emergency management policy and coordination through its membership of a range of national forums. The QFES Commissioner is one of two Queensland members on the Australia-New Zealand Emergency Management Committee (ANZEMC) and represents Queensland at the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) Commissioners and Chief Officers Strategic Committee. Other forums include the AFAC National Council and its range of technical and working groups and the Community Outcomes and Recovery and Mitigation and Risk Sub-Committees of ANZEMC.

### Local Government Association of Queensland

The Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) is the peak body for local government in Queensland. QFES collaborates with LGAQ in relation to disaster management arrangements before, during and after a disaster event, at all levels of the disaster management arrangements.

A Disaster Management Alliance Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) exists between QFES and LGAQ which establishes a strategic commitment and clear understanding of each agency's roles and responsibilities. The MoU also enables collaboration opportunities for local government to contribute to the development of disaster management policies and service delivery strategies.

### Rural Fire Brigades Association Queensland

The RFBAQ is a representative body for rural fire brigades. It provides information and advice to volunteers and consults with QFES on matters of policy, training, equipment, finance and vehicle safety through the RFS Strategic Working Groups.

### Queensland State Emergency Service Volunteer Association

The QLDSESVA is a representative body for, and advocates on behalf of, its members. The association provides information and advice to volunteers and consults with QFES on matters of policy, training, equipment, finance and vehicle safety. QLDSESVA is a member of the national SES Volunteer Association.

### Queensland Volunteer Marine Rescue Committee

The role of the Queensland Volunteer Marine Rescue Committee is to provide advice to the Queensland Government and voluntary organisations involved in marine rescue activities and to investigate and make recommendations on matters referred to the committee. The committee also ensures suitable guidelines are available for the standardisation of an integrated Queensland statutory service/volunteer marine rescue capability.

The committee is chaired by the QFES Assistant Commissioner, Emergency Management and Community Capability with membership from the following agencies:

- » AVCGA
- » Department of Transport and Main Roads (Maritime Safety Queensland)
- » QPS
- » RLSSQ
- » SLSQ
- » VMRAQ.

### Queensland Police-Citizens Youth Welfare Association

The Queensland Police-Citizens Youth Welfare Association, commonly known as PCYC, is a non-government, not-for-profit, charitable organisation that provides appropriate, affordable and accessible youth development programs and services to support young people in making positive life choices. The PCYC Emergency Services Cadets Program is delivered in partnership with PCYC and Queensland's emergency services including QFES and QPS.

For further information regarding the Emergency Services Cadets Program refer to page 28 or visit the PCYC website: [www.pcyc.org.au](http://www.pcyc.org.au)

# Structure

QFES comprises the:

- » Office of the Commissioner
- » Emergency Management, Volunteerism and Community Resilience Division
- » Readiness and Response Services Division
- » Strategy and Corporate Services Division.

The **Office of the Commissioner** provides support and advice to the Commissioner and QFES senior executive team to aid decision-making and ensure achievement of key commitments and objectives.

The **Emergency Management, Volunteerism and Community Resilience Division** is responsible for providing overall strategic leadership, direction and support to RFS, SES and other volunteer groups involved in emergency response.

The division is responsible for introducing innovative strategies to support the recruitment and retention of a sustainable, skilled volunteer workforce that meets the increasing demand from more frequent and severe disasters and emergencies. It works in partnership with local governments to develop management and volunteer capability, and through the provision of high-quality services, support and advice, ensures safer and more resilient communities across Queensland. This includes the provision of operational and volunteering support services supporting a unique mix of approximately 31,000 RFS volunteers and approximately 5,000 active SES volunteers.

The Emergency Management and Community Capability Directorate, within Emergency Management, Volunteerism and Community Resilience, provides strategic oversight for all aspects of emergency management for the department and works collaboratively with the emergency management community and stakeholders to guide, contribute to and support the resilience of local communities across the phases of PPRR. The directorate adopts a broad 'all hazard' approach to its work that is based on building and supporting community capability and capacity. Additionally, Emergency Management and Community Capability maintains QFES' state of operational readiness and operations of the SDCC and the SOC.

The **Readiness and Response Services**

**Division** is responsible for ensuring the response capacity of QFES operational staff and volunteers in emergent situations as legislated in the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990* and *Disaster Management Act 2003*.

The division provides sustainable leadership and direction through its contribution to fire and emergency service operational activities across Queensland.

The division comprises skilled fire and emergency service professionals across seven regions statewide, working in partnership with other state government departments, local governments and communities to improve resilience and enhance operational capacity during times of emergency.

An integral area of the division is the FRS Directorate which provides state policy and standards for the FRS, as well as specialist services such as Community Infrastructure including Fire Investigation and Research and Scientific, and Specialist and Technical Response including Technical Rescue, Breathing Apparatus (BA)/HazMat and State Air Operations.

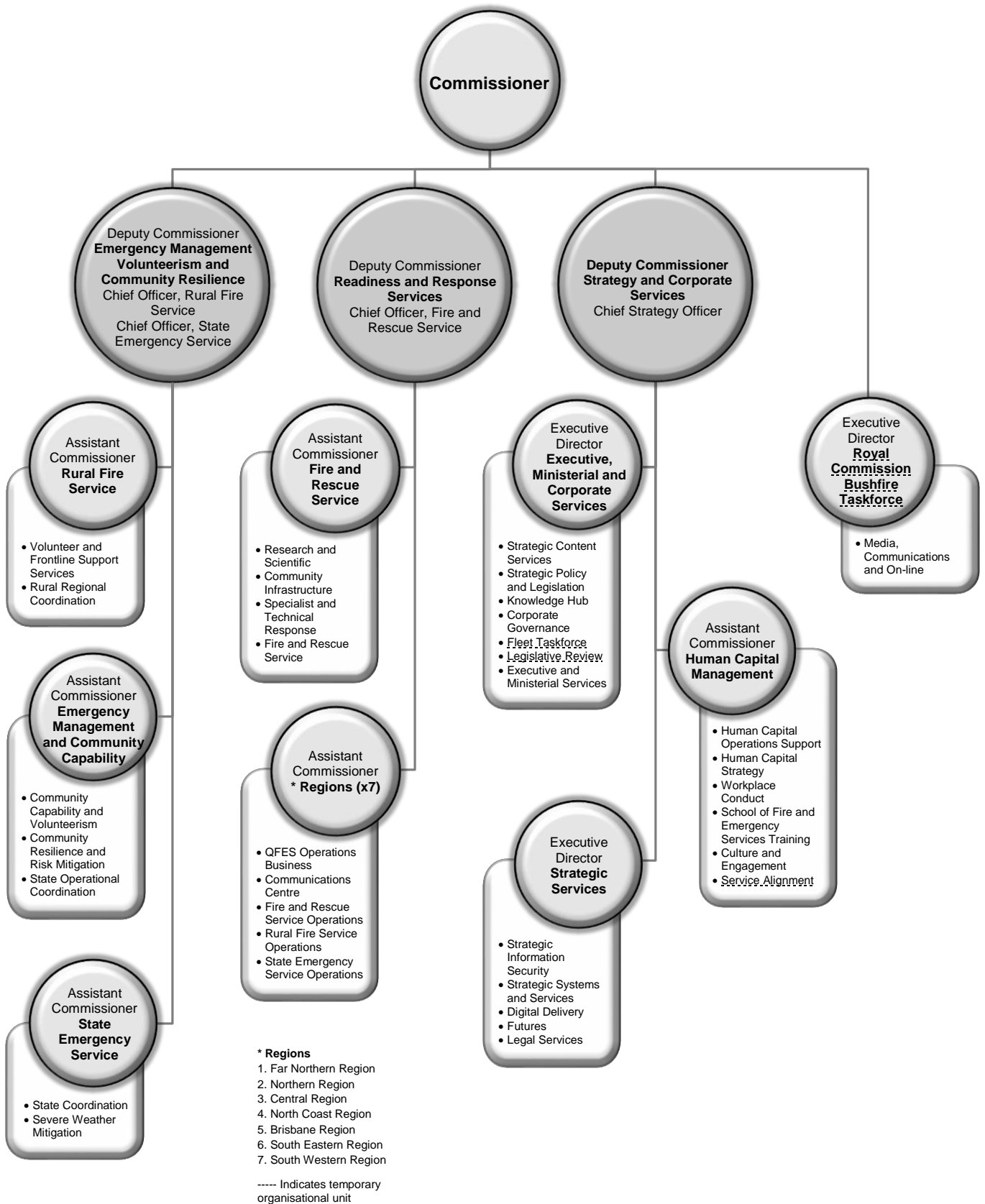
The **Strategy and Corporate Services Division** is responsible for leading the department's strategic framework and vision, driving performance and providing the tools and systems for frontline service delivery across QFES.

The division works closely with the other public safety agencies to ensure the department's planning and policy enhances the capability of its people, and services and equipment are contemporary, agile and able to meet the service delivery needs of Queensland communities.

The division comprises Executive, Ministerial and Corporate Services, Strategic Services and Human Capital Management Directorates.

# Organisational structure

As at 30 June 2020



# Regions

As at 30 June 2020



	State	Far Northern	Northern	Central	North Coast	Brisbane	South Eastern	South Western
Fire and rescue stations	242	25	20	38	46	38	35	40
SES units	75	19	16	14	7	3	5	11
SES groups	296	53	40	69	47	21	25	41
Rural fire brigades	1,399	179	180	392	202	29	81	336
Regional offices	7	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Communication centres	7	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Queensland population \* 5,129,996

\* Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics catalogue no. 3101.0 Australian Demographic Statistics (December 2019 quarter)