



VOLUNTEERISM STRATEGY

GROWING QFES TOGETHER

DEVELOPING CULTURE, COMMUNITY
CONNECTION AND CAPABILITY



Foreword

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) volunteers account for **89 per cent** of our workforce and are committed to helping the community prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from the impact of fire and emergency events.

The QFES Volunteerism Strategy sets out four strategic priorities:

1. Embrace: **Volunteers**, volunteering, and volunteerism are deeply embedded in QFES culture and ethos
2. Empower: QFES contributes to engaged, aware and resilient **communities**
3. Enhance: **QFES** provides proficient support services to our volunteers and communities, and
4. Excel: QFES leads through a philosophy of best practice and **innovation**.

As a progressive department, we recognise that our strength lies with our people, their extensive capabilities, and their networks. However, the delivery of emergency services also relies on strong local community backing and critical partnerships with all local governments, state and national key stakeholders, disaster management organisations across Queensland and state-wide industry.

This QFES Volunteerism Strategy was developed by, and belongs to, all QFES volunteers and staff. Its intent is to set our future direction and evolve from a traditional to contemporary model of operation that better meets the dynamic needs of our workforce and the communities we serve. The contribution of volunteers and staff to this document was significant and we heard you all. Thank you for investing your time, experience and efforts in forming our future direction.

“ This QFES Volunteerism Strategy recognises the many challenges facing our volunteers both now and into the future ”

This QFES Volunteerism Strategy recognises the many challenges facing our volunteers both now and into the future, and provides a broad intent to accommodate growth and expansion of a diverse range of initiatives.

I am pleased to deliver the QFES Volunteerism Strategy – Growing QFES Together, Developing Culture, Community Connection and Capability.

I encourage your continued participation in the implementation of this Strategy to ensure we all remain committed to embedding the importance of volunteers, volunteering and volunteerism into our department's culture and ethos.

The Honourable Craig Crawford MP
Minister for Fire and Emergency Services





In 2016, the QFES Volunteer Survey confirmed that it was time for a new approach to working with the volunteer emergency services workforce.

The message was clear and we listened.

Through the 29 forums facilitated around the State, volunteers from State Emergency Service, Rural Fire Service, Technical Unit, Scientific Unit, Peer Support Officers and Chaplains demonstrated an enormous level of commitment and courage in sharing their experiences, insights, and providing honest feedback, all of which formed the intent of the Volunteerism Strategy.

The quality of that feedback shaped these clear priorities which now form a solid foundation in the delivery of sustainable and robust volunteer services into the future.

The Strategy is strongly aligned to our shared

values – Respect, Integrity, Courage, Loyalty and Trust and reinforces that QFES is united in remaining committed to each other, having pride in our organisation, and remaining dedicated to keeping Queensland communities safe. Its success will depend largely on our solid working relationships, collective commitment to collaboration, and our ability to always act with integrity.

We will now focus our efforts on engaging with all areas of the department, our partners and our stakeholders to plan our next stage in transforming QFES into an adaptive and modern workforce positioned to best serve the community for many years to come .

Ongoing collaboration will support QFES evolving as a leader of innovation and best practice well into the future.

The value of our people cannot be underestimated. Across our many services, and many partners we have an enormous collective of expertise and forward-thinkers, who I ask to keep engaging with us so together we can influence the direction of the world-class organisation that we are, and shape our future.

Let's take this seriously and drive some real change.

Katarina Carroll APM
Commissioner
Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

“The Strategy is strongly aligned to our shared values – Respect, Integrity, Courage, Loyalty and Trust”



Introduction

In 2016, QFES released its Volunteer Survey to all QFES volunteers. Survey results indicated a high positive satisfaction from the volunteer experience with almost four in five (79 per cent) volunteers reported as being satisfied. However, QFES recognised that this also translated to one in five volunteers being dissatisfied. It was this recognition that drove its commitment to the development of a Volunteerism Strategy. The survey also highlighted a number of key areas for improvement such as training, communications and leadership.

The QFES Volunteerism Strategy Discussion Paper was released in May 2017 and sought feedback on a new, long-term strategy to value, protect and develop QFES' comprehensive volunteer network.

QFES undertook broad consultation with volunteers and staff by conducting 29 workshops in 20 locations across Queensland, from Cairns to Warwick, and Mount Isa to Wallumbilla. In addition, participants could consult directly with the organisation through a "Get Involved" online survey, direct email, mail and telephone contact.

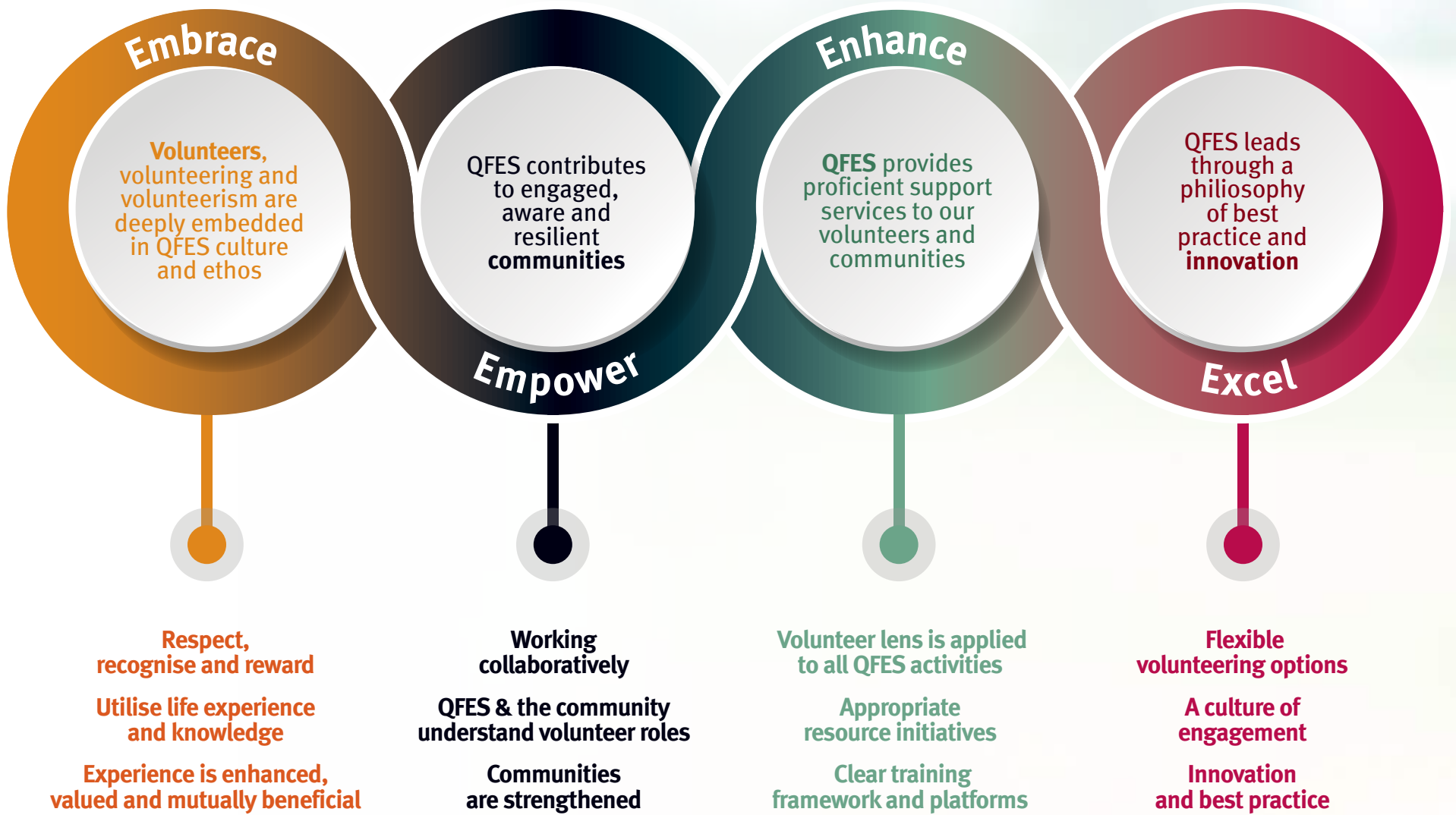
The invaluable advice and feedback provided by participants identified a number of key themes that are reflected in this QFES Volunteerism Strategy. In addition, this Strategy has been further underpinned by a number of strategic documents and learnings gathered from within and external to the department including other volunteer organisations and interstate and international experiences.

This QFES Volunteerism Strategy has four strategic priorities, each of which has three guiding principles. These priorities and associated principles are fluid and interlinked across the document. While each principle has been assigned to a strategic priority, their position may change over time and be reflected in alternative priorities. Each priority is supported by a case study reflecting real life examples of the Strategy being applied.

This Strategy establishes a framework for the application of a "volunteer lens" across all QFES activities and seeks to incorporate the value of volunteers, volunteering, and volunteerism into the future of an integrated QFES.

These priorities will guide the development of a future volunteer workforce that is sustainable and capable, more technically accomplished, more closely connected to its local community, and better able to adapt to organisational and societal challenges as they arise.

“These priorities will guide the development of a future volunteer workforce that is sustainable and capable”





Challenges facing contemporary volunteerism

For decades, Queensland has benefitted from a strong emergency services volunteerism culture resulting in volunteers who have performed invaluable roles in the community.

The QFES dedicated volunteer workforce comprises Rural Fire Service (RFS) and State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers, peer support officers, research and scientific volunteers, technical rescue volunteers, and chaplains all of who are key to both community capabilities and organisation capabilities.

Previous QFES emergency services volunteer models have been unable to keep up with community changes giving rise to challenges in maintaining a strong volunteerism culture and a contemporary volunteer community service. Historical and traditional models of volunteerism, which ignore the challenges of an ageing population, time-poor society, digital distraction and competing priorities, mean that providing an ongoing and sustainable emergency volunteer service has become increasingly difficult.

Current predictions of an increase in the occurrence of severe weather and fire events in Queensland due to the effects of climate change and increased risks from human activities, coupled with mounting community expectations for service delivery further adds to pressures on traditional volunteerism models. The notion of a community being self-reliant and responding

to its own needs has diminished, creating a disconnect between a community's capability and its risk.

These challenges highlight the need to explore and invest in more flexible strategies to ensure QFES has the systems in place to attract, retain and support its volunteers both now and into the future.

Faced with these organisational and societal challenges, QFES is committed to developing new models that address the barriers to maintaining a sustainable and strong volunteerism culture. It will also explore and invest in more flexible solutions to volunteerism in order to meet future challenges.

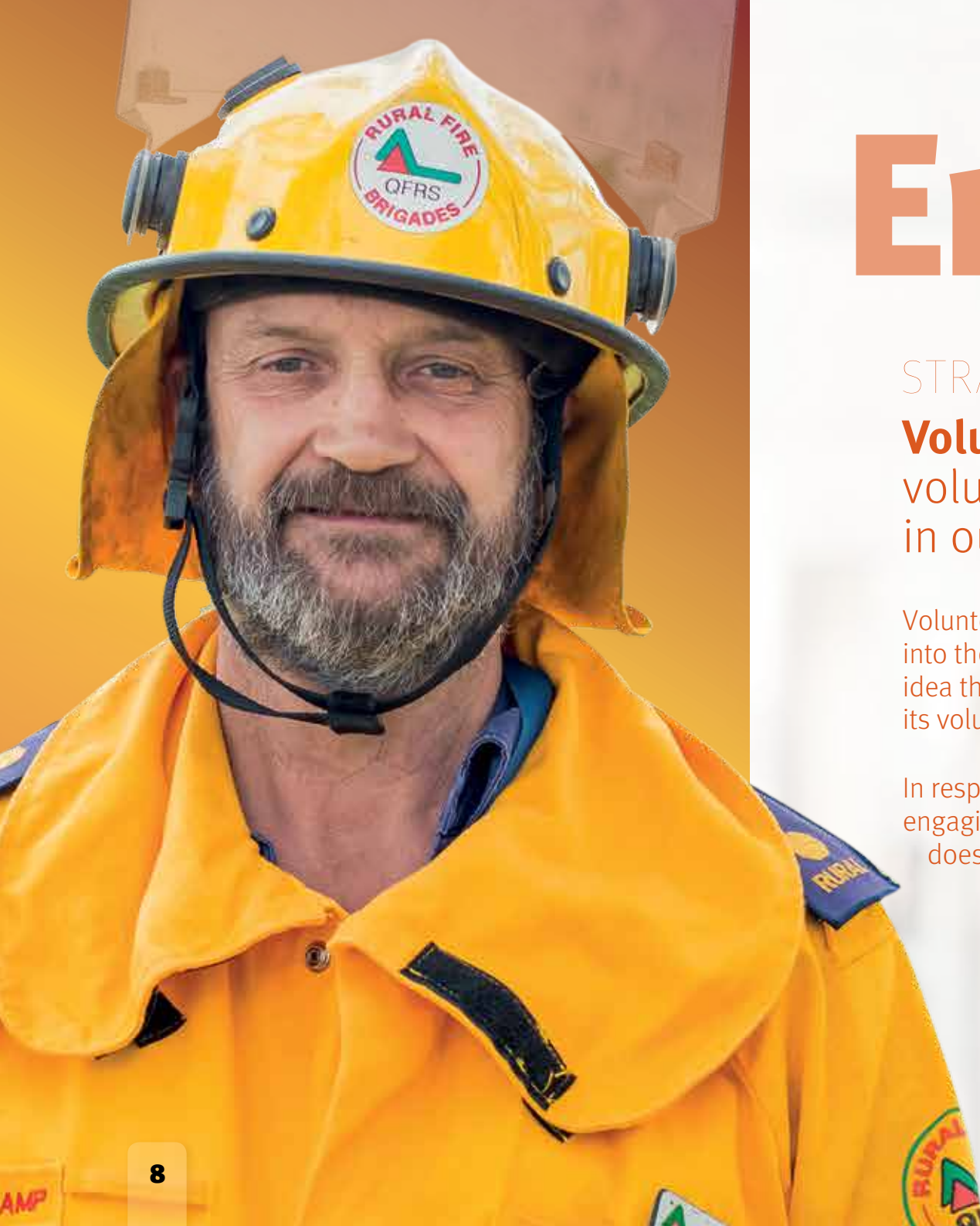
Responding to its volunteers' requests for greater input, QFES will utilise its volunteers' local knowledge and connections in the community by ensuring its workforce feels they can express their ideas and provide input into how their jobs are completed.

By delivering a future culture of volunteer engagement and collaboration rather than just volunteer management, QFES will embrace broader volunteerism trends.

Survey to Strategy

A timeline of events from 2016 to now on the development of this strategy.





Embrace

STRATEGIC PRIORITY ONE

Volunteers, volunteering, and volunteerism are deeply embedded in our culture and ethos

Volunteers, volunteering and volunteerism will be embedded into the QFES culture, ethos and values. QFES will embrace the idea that “it is everyone’s responsibility” and a commitment to its volunteer workforce to ensure volunteers feel supported.

In response, volunteers will benefit from a collaborative and engaging QFES that applies a volunteer lens to everything it does.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Volunteers are respected, recognised and rewarded for their local knowledge

The volunteer workforce contributes significantly to the operational capability of QFES as well as nationally and across-agencies. Many QFES volunteers are part of multiple volunteering organisations and may have skills and experiences they can bring from their other endeavours. One of the best ways to support volunteers, and QFES values, is to acknowledge and value the enormous contributions that they make to their communities and embrace a culture of respect for their local knowledge.

This culture of respect will continue to be reflected in the way QFES collaborates and communicates with its volunteers during their everyday work. QFES recognises the need for people to feel capable to execute their tasks properly in their local area based on their local knowledge. As such, it will engage more with its volunteers to develop volunteer-owned solutions to challenges and opportunities rather than imposing departmental-directed ideas onto the local volunteer groups.

The life experience and knowledge of volunteers is utilised

QFES will foster an inclusive organisational environment which recognises the different skills, abilities and availability of its volunteers. Volunteers will be acknowledged, both formally and informally, for the knowledge, skills and attributes they bring to QFES. By supporting volunteers to play a role that is the 'right fit' for them, these volunteers are better equipped to contribute to the community and will be more satisfied in

their chosen role. Utilising the range of skills and abilities of QFES volunteers shows respect for their capabilities, deepens their volunteering experience and impact, and acknowledges the desire of many volunteers to make a greater contribution to their local communities.


Volunteer expertise and experience can drive real change. QFES is committed to recognising the unique attributes that each of its members brings to the workforce and utilising these attributes to find solutions that best suit each individual community's needs.

The volunteering experience is enhanced, valued and mutually beneficial

QFES values are key to supporting the physical and mental health and safety of our people. Future QFES mechanisms and structures will support flexible individual volunteer needs, life-stages, cultures and practices ensuring a more inclusive workforce.

QFES will focus on improving the working environment of volunteers by actively seeking alternative strategies and solutions that may better assist volunteers to do their job in the community. This may include producing clearer role descriptions, managing staff and volunteers' expectations, requiring future QFES staff to be experienced in engaging with volunteers, and providing uniform inductions across all local community volunteering groups ensuring consistent information is provided to all.

Retaining volunteers, enabling volunteering and promoting a healthy volunteerism culture can be achieved through inclusion and having flexible volunteering options beyond the norm of emergency response and training. This builds the knowledge, skills and abilities of our volunteers while adding personal and professional value to their families, employers, community and importantly themselves.



Rewarding volunteers is keeping them engaged with good quality training, giving them skills that can help them outside the organisation. Make them feel valued by recognising their whole life experience. And keep them safe with good leadership and the right protective gear



Case Study

Embrace

SES Townsville/ Thuringowa Groups



A key priority for QFES is to encourage a more collaborative culture where volunteers from across the organisation can interact and inspire positive change.

The Townsville/Thuringowa SES Groups work closely together out of the one facility. After attending the 'Inspire - Retain - Engage' workshops, the members introduced a number of changes to capitalise on the skills their volunteers bring to the service. This concept has brought members closer together and built a stronger sense of belonging and ownership where members are empowered to affect changes that make their volunteering more practical and experience more enjoyable.

Members are using their real-life skills to perform informal roles within their groups. This greater autonomy has resulted in the introduction of changes to suit the groups, their local response areas and their membership.

Actions taken:

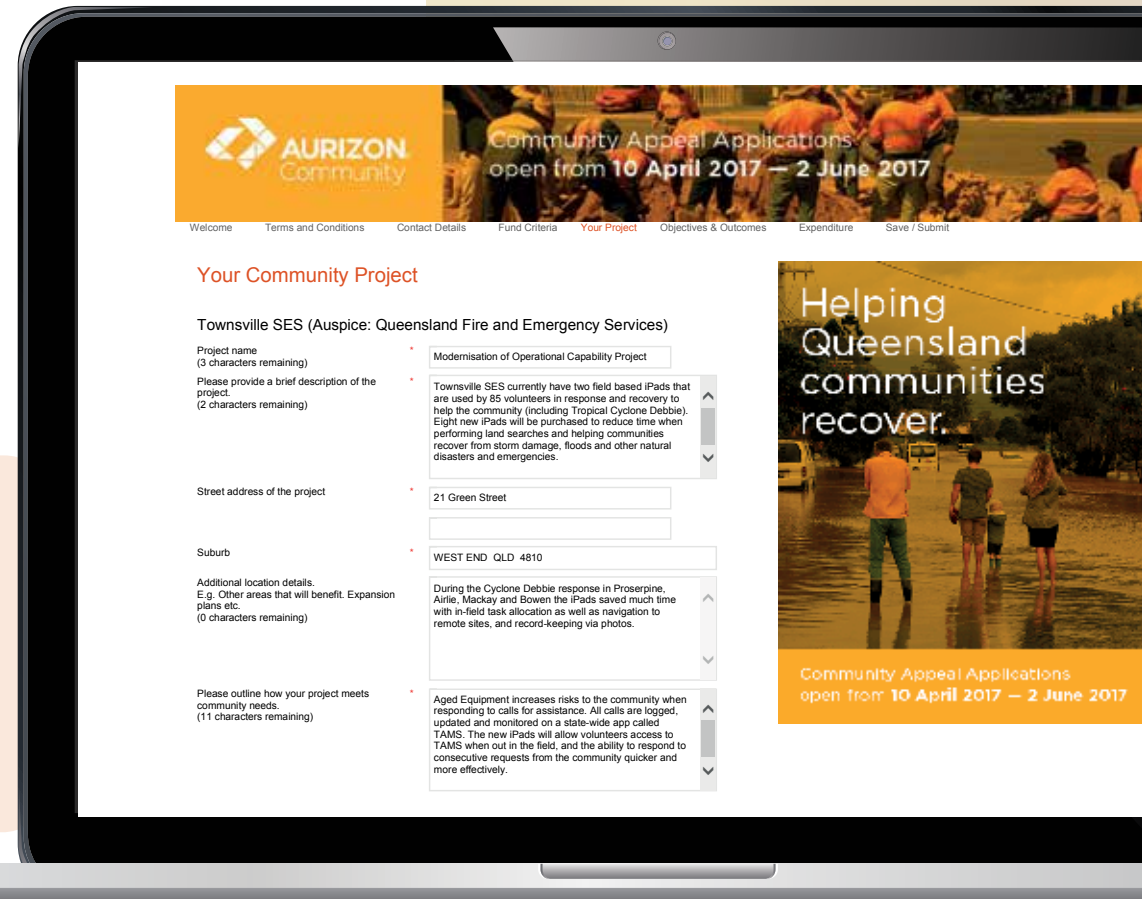
- Appointed section leaders who are responsible for their section including overseeing its resources, helping to ensure members are currently competent, putting forward new ideas on how to improve their section and performing stock takes
- Assembled a number of teams within the group, each with their own team leader and deputy, bringing volunteers closer together and offering a sense of belonging to a team within a team
- Implemented numerous competency maintenance opportunities within the teams or section leaders where groups share advice and ensure everyone remains capable to do what they want to do

Actions taken: *continued*

- Set up technology and innovation capabilities to find ways of using technology to make life easier and better for the volunteers
- Appointed a grants team to obtain funding for improvement ideas via the section groups and the technology/innovation team
- Developed a volunteering roster for maintenance of the radios, vehicles, the bus, trailers, and the store
- Established a community awareness section, which delivers preparedness messaging to the public and runs stalls and displays to ensure the message is getting out there to the public about how they can be prepared and resilient.

Through these changes, the volunteers are using the skills they've gained outside of the SES to make their volunteer life more practical and enjoyable while demonstrating their capabilities to other volunteers. Through these changes, volunteers are feeling more empowered and accepted into the groups and are valued for the skills they can bring from their everyday lives.

Chris Quin, Deputy Group Leader of Townsville / Thuringowa SES said "Through the Aurizon Community Giving Fund grant we are purchasing 8 new tablets. We are in the process of modernising our approach to delivering emergency services and these tablets save valuable time before, during and after emergencies. We have better maintained equipment and are able to respond more rapidly when in the field. Thanks to the generosity of Aurizon, our community will soon be even safer."



The screenshot shows the 'Your Community Project' form on the Aurizon Community website. The form is for the 'Townsville SES (Auspice: Queensland Fire and Emergency Services)'. It includes fields for Project name, description, street address, suburb, additional location details, and a description of how the project meets community needs. The form is partially filled out with the following information:

- Project name:** Modernisation of Operational Capability Project
- Description:** Townsville SES currently have two field based iPads that are used by 85 volunteers in response and recovery to help the community (including Tropical Cyclone Debbie). Eight new iPads will be purchased to reduce time when performing land searches and helping communities recover from storm damage, floods and other natural disasters and emergencies.
- Street address:** 21 Green Street
- Suburb:** WEST END QLD 4810
- Additional location details:** During the Cyclone Debbie response in Proserpine, Airlie, Mackay and Bowen the iPads saved much time with in-field task allocation as well as navigation to remote sites, and record-keeping via photos.
- How project meets community needs:** Aged Equipment increases risks to the community when responding to calls for assistance. All calls are logged, updated and monitored on a state-wide app called TAMS. The new iPads will allow volunteers access to TAMS when out in the field, and the ability to respond to consecutive requests from the community quicker and more effectively.

The website header includes the Aurizon Community logo and a banner for 'Community Appeal Applications open from 10 April 2017 - 2 June 2017'. The navigation menu includes: Welcome, Terms and Conditions, Contact Details, Fund Criteria, Your Project, Objectives & Outcomes, Expenditure, and Save / Submit. On the right side of the form, there is a vertical banner with the text 'Helping Queensland communities recover.' and 'Community Appeal Applications open from 10 April 2017 - 2 June 2017'.



Empower

STRATEGIC PRIORITY TWO

QFES contributes to engaged, aware and resilient **communities**

QFES will have strong working relationships across all areas of the community that enable a collaborative approach and shared responsibility in prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.

QFES has a collective responsibility to build capability and resilience in local communities.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Volunteers work collaboratively with community members, other volunteers and QFES to strengthen community resilience

QFES will actively foster and support the growth of healthier communities in Queensland by empowering its volunteers to collaborate across-agency and with other volunteer organisations, businesses and community groups/members to grow a more

connected community. With enhanced and strengthened partnerships in place across all levels of QFES, community members will be encouraged to become drivers of change. This will occur as the community becomes aware of their environment, the services provided by its local volunteering groups, and the gaps that need to be filled by the community itself that will add value to community strengths and potentials including resources, skills and experiences. Each community is different with its own unique set of risks and hazards. By understanding the parameters of QFES and how it can support each local area, the community will have a heightened resilience and understanding of their individual role during emergency situations.

Better collaboration will help communities to identify and engage with its vulnerable members and develop a cohesive understanding of shared responsibility for better preparation and response in order to target the needs of its community members.

QFES acknowledges that there is no one standard approach to volunteer programs. Queensland communities are as varied as the landscape they reside on. Each community volunteering program may require different approaches to reach a common intent of safe and resilient communities. This approach will allow QFES to be closer to community, allow leaders to be involved with other leaders, demonstrate that our people care and listen, and recognise community changes such as growth and decline so we can adapt accordingly.

Roles performed by volunteers are understood by QFES and the community

As communities change, so too do the services they need. This evolution may affect a local community's understanding of the resulting changes to QFES roles and services. QFES will work closely with volunteers to inform their local communities of any changes to their

divergent risk profiles, what they can expect from their local volunteers, and how they can share responsibility to help themselves in times of emergencies.

QFES will build trusted partnerships in communities to deliver a better understanding of the capabilities and services that emergency service volunteers can and cannot provide before, during and after an event.

This resulting increased community appreciation of volunteer roles and responsibilities should then increase local understanding of mutual obligations.

QFES volunteers are close to their local communities, reflect community demographics and help strengthen communities

QFES will develop programs supporting closer relationships between volunteers and all sectors of their community, reducing the risk of volunteers conducting their business in isolation.

It will actively seek volunteers from groups not currently represented to better reflect the local community and will continue to develop youth engagement programs that are accessible and deliver an increased capability among younger community members.

Specific strategies will also be introduced to align with local community demographics and, in particular, concentrate on developing capabilities in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and marginalised and vulnerable communities.

Volunteer organisations that have a diverse membership reflecting their local community will be more innovative and sustainable, responsive to local community needs, and empowered to foster close local connections.

“Weaving new patterns of resilience with our communities”



Case Study

Empower

Hell's Gate



Working collaboratively with local community members is a key priority for QFES and evident in one of its newest cross-collaborative fire training programs.

The Jigija Indigenous Fire Training Program is a wholly indigenous-owned business that provides fire management and mitigation training on the traditional country of the Gangalidda People in the Gulf of Queensland. The program consists of controlled burns and demonstrated planning for fire management across different landscapes. It provides a unique opportunity for traditional owners to share their knowledge of fire, together with practical lessons that are relevant to contemporary fire management across Australia.

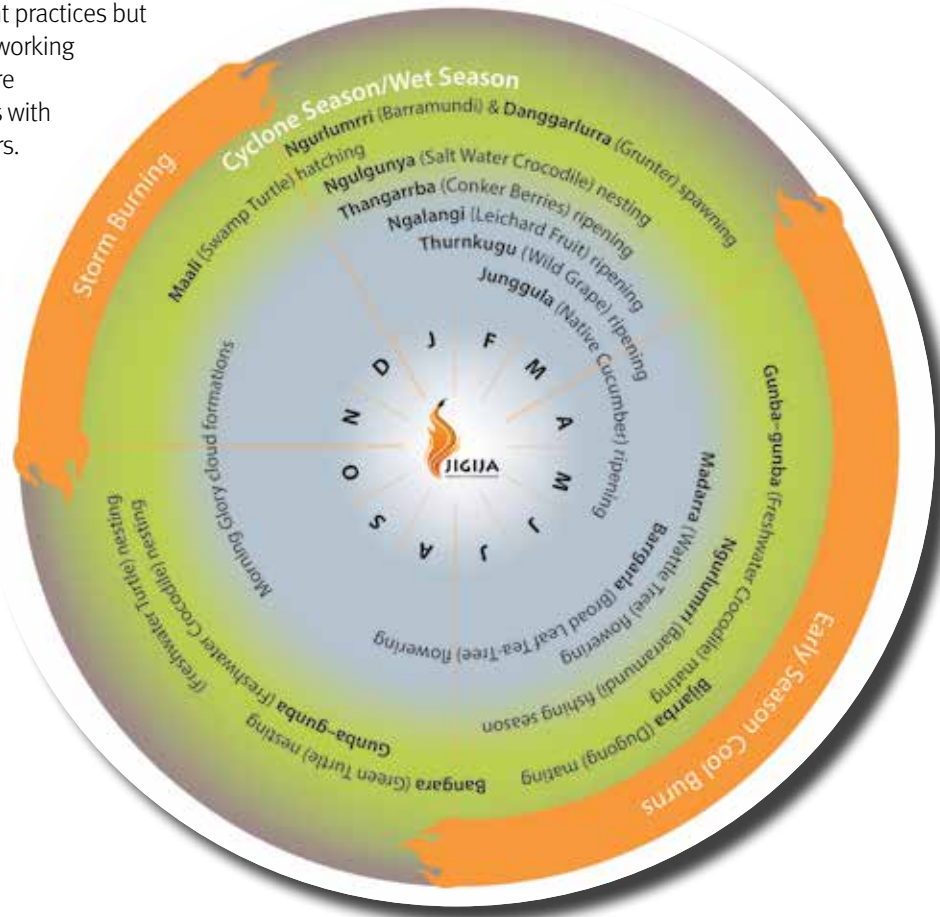
Gangalidda and Garawa Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) is the system of understanding the environment, built over generations as the Jigija people depended on the land and sea for their food, material and culture. Knowledge of fire is an important part of their law and culture, part of the reciprocal relationship they have with the land and responsibility to it.

Understanding of traditional fire management practice is held and passed down by elders through the teaching of Dreamtime stories, detailed environmental knowledge and burning skills. The result is a complex and multidimensional contribution to the maintenance of landscapes, ecological diversity and environmental health.

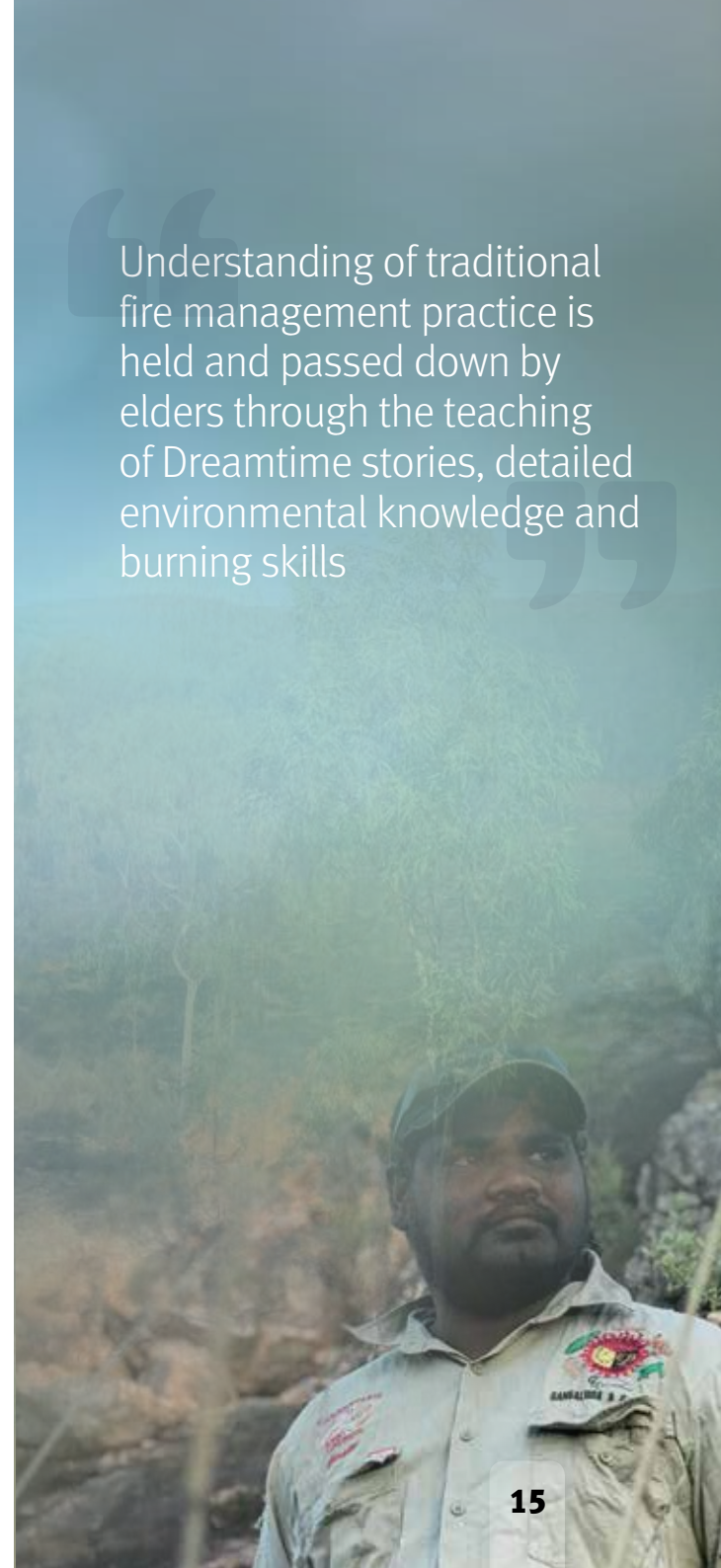
The Jigija Indigenous Fire Training Program provides the cross-cultural means to organise and communicate TEK to enable its inclusion in contemporary fire management practice.

A successful pilot course was held in May 2017 with representatives from Fire and Rescue, Rural Fire Service, State Emergency Service, Emergency Management, and the Public Safety Business Agency.

The benefits for QFES lay not only in the sharing of knowledge of fire management practices but also in the opportunity for networking and building stronger and more cohesive internal relationships with its key community stakeholders.



Understanding of traditional fire management practice is held and passed down by elders through the teaching of Dreamtime stories, detailed environmental knowledge and burning skills





Enhance

STRATEGIC PRIORITY THREE

QFES provides proficient support services to our volunteers and communities

QFES' forward thinking and planning will focus on increasing effectiveness to face the challenges of tomorrow through ensuring modern volunteer workforce programs.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A volunteer lens will be applied to all QFES activities

QFES will apply a “volunteer lens” by consulting with volunteers and considering volunteer impacts and outcomes related to all work undertaken. QFES will seek to better understand the communities they work with and therefore best utilise its volunteer workforce. This will be achieved through QFES engaging, listening, understanding and approaching its business by being flexible to its varying needs.

In this way, volunteers will be involved in solutions and the delivery of systems which impact directly upon them.

Volunteers will have access to timely, relevant and accurate information. They will be part of knowledge sharing initiatives that enhance the management and provision of their services while supporting modern volunteer workforce programs. They will also have access to effective and integrated systems and services to better support their roles, functions and work within their communities.

Finally, volunteers will be better able to carry out their responsibilities through the provision of clear and open communication paths and information.

Volunteers are supported by appropriate resource initiatives

QFES will ensure that departmental, service-specific and regional resourcing initiatives support volunteer capabilities and reflect local risk profiles. The provision and management of vehicles, equipment and facilities will be appropriate for the work volunteers are required to do and will take into consideration other available resources within QFES and the community.

New programs of work within QFES will take a whole of QFES approach and equitable resource contributions will be made acknowledging the multiplier of public value in better supporting and utilising volunteers.

Volunteers are not paid however the level of expertise and professional services they provide to their communities is significant. QFES recognises that supporting volunteers to deliver this work through better provision of resources is not free, but the value of volunteerism in local communities far exceeds any cost of supporting volunteers.

QFES training framework and platforms develop capability and enhance the volunteer experience

QFES will develop its peoples’ capability and improve development opportunities by providing appropriate training and development to enable volunteers to successfully undertake their roles. Training will be responsive to the role undertaken by the volunteer based on their community risk profile.

Volunteers will have opportunities to develop and grow in their roles through clear training development pathways. Training will be more accessible to all members and will be adapted to suit multiple learning styles. In addition, it will be transferrable across different volunteering groups and competency maintenance will be better streamlined to ensure all volunteers remain skilled and qualified to undertake their designated roles.

QFES’ volunteer training development pathways will have a stronger emphasis on promoting leadership, increasing volunteer knowledge, and developing volunteers’ skills and attributes. Through this increased knowledge, QFES will be better placed to understand each community’s requirements, including its need for equipment, training and assistance, based on its independent risk.

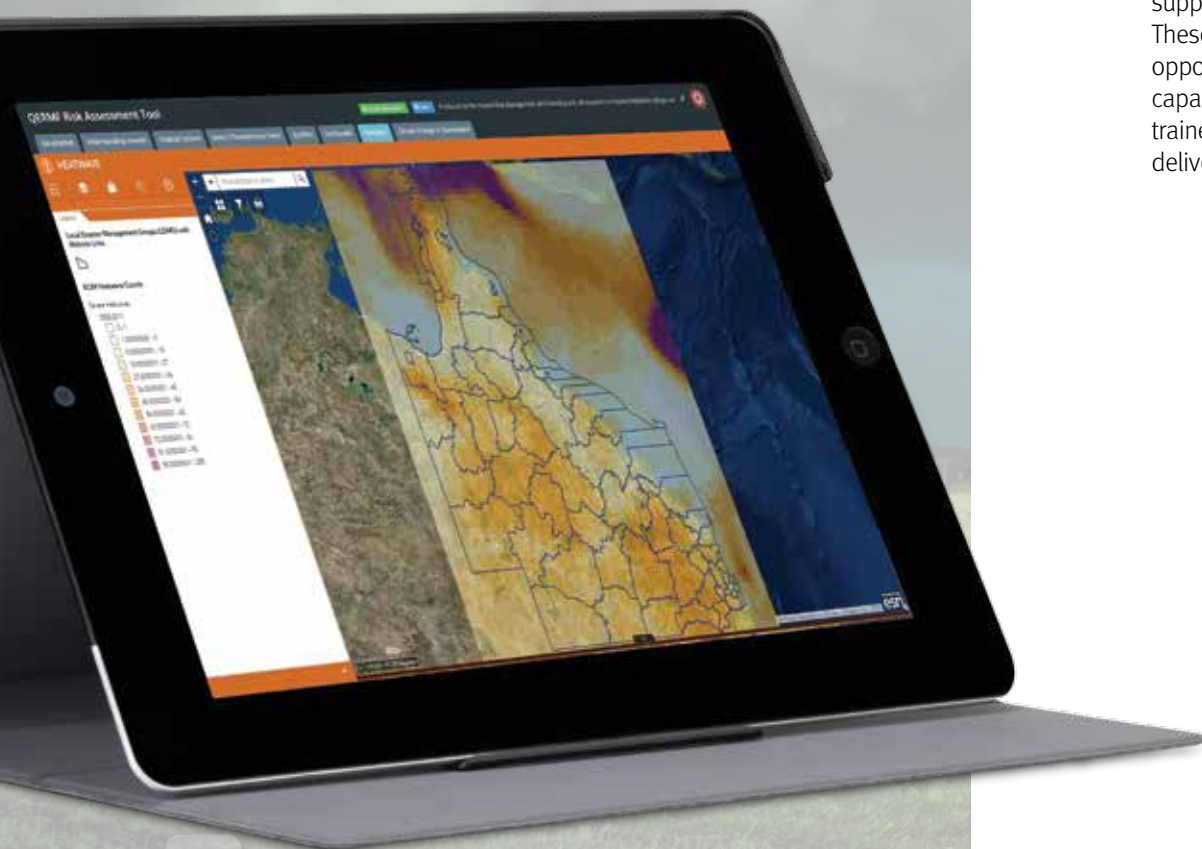
“ I would also like to comment on the running of similar courses by RFS and SES. Under the one QFES banner I would hope these courses are made the same with just specialist service modules for each group



Case Study

Enhance

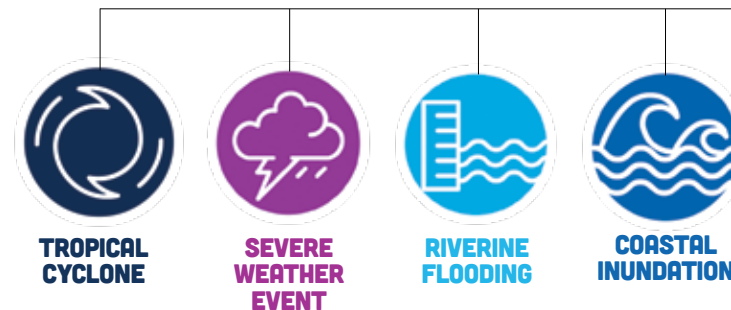
Local Risk Profiles



Knowledge is one of the most valuable organisational assets of the future. As an organisation that consists of many services and partners, QFES seeks to embrace its extensive internal knowledge to drive sustainable development and planning considerations that better service Queensland communities.

Queensland is the most disaster impacted state in Australia. Through the Queensland Emergency Risk Management Framework, QFES is working collaboratively with other agencies to develop a consistent state-wide approach to understanding disaster risk. In collaboration with local, regional, state and industry partners, QFES is facilitating a supported integration program of risk workshops applying a community lens approach. These workshops seek to inform risk-based planning, mitigation or investment opportunities from local through to state partnerships. QFES also has a hazard specific capability for bushfires. This capability is underpinned by a team of technical experts trained in bushfire prediction that use the latest science, tools and technologies to deliver decision support products and services.

NATURAL HAZARDS



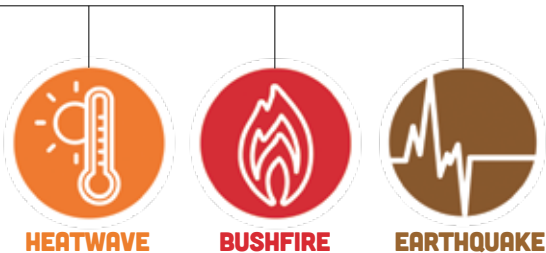
This capability provides a repeatable, reliable, evidence based, authoritative and consistent process to support decision makers internally and externally.

Products can be published and shared internally and externally, including to volunteers anywhere there is connectivity using the SABRE (Simulation Assessment-Based Risk Evaluation) platform that enables delivery of products that support response, preparedness, prevention and recovery.

Sharing organisational-intelligence maximises opportunities for adaptive capacity decisions to be made within and across organisations aimed at supporting a workforce that is agile and adaptive in an environment of ever-changing risks.

Evidence-based decisions result in more appropriately delivered resources and training frameworks and platforms for our volunteers. This means increased opportunity for greater innovation and best practice, allowing the organisation to be better positioned to achieve the **four key objectives of the Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience:**

1. **Queenslanders understand their disaster risk**
2. **Strengthened disaster risk management**
3. **Queenslanders are invested in disaster risk reduction**
4. **There is continuous improvement in disaster preparedness, response and recovery.**



“QFES is working collaboratively with other agencies to develop a consistent state-wide approach to understanding disaster risk”





Excel

STRATEGIC PRIORITY FOUR

QFES leads through a philosophy of best practice and **innovation**

QFES recognises its volunteer workforce as professional and actively promotes and sources opportunities to utilise its diverse expertise in guiding best practice for a sustainable service delivery model.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Volunteers have flexibility in how they support their communities

QFES will transform its traditional model of volunteering into a suite of contemporary, flexible volunteering opportunities that reflect the growing pressures on balancing family, work and social responsibilities.

By making localised, flexible volunteer options available, QFES will be better placed to attract and retain volunteers during their various stages of availability and levels of commitment.

QFES will develop a broad range of short-term and long-term volunteering options to better meet the expectations of different age groups, backgrounds and circumstances.

Digital or virtual opportunities will also provide opportunities for people who may not wish to volunteer in traditional roles. A broader range of frontline and support volunteering options will be available to appeal to a cross-section of community members reducing the administrative burden on volunteers more focused on operations and front-line activities.

QFES volunteers are supported through a culture of engagement

Traditional command and control working environments can run counter to the nature of volunteerism and QFES values.

To ensure QFES has an empowered workforce that is trusted, competent and understands how staff

and volunteers can work together to serve their local community, QFES staff will adopt a more collaborative approach to volunteer engagement. This will include better understanding how volunteers are involved in QFES' delivery management model and the experience and diversity they can bring to each situation through their own professional backgrounds.

QFES will focus on assisting communities to drive their local efforts rather than dictating their activities. Recognising that locals often know their community capability and assets best, QFES will support a "lead from the inside-out" approach when appropriate.

Active involvement of volunteers in discussions that shape the direction of the department, and in decision-making which directly affects their work, will benefit QFES, its volunteers and the wider community.

QFES will have clear yet agile strategies which support innovation and best practice

QFES will explore and develop opportunities for improvement into best practice and centres of excellence to support its volunteers. This may include temporarily bringing expertise together from across different areas of the organisation to achieve a common objective as well as introducing less prescriptive rules with a 'more than one right way' principle. Through this enriched support provided to local volunteering groups, volunteers will be better equipped with information and training resulting in more effective use of their time.

Through greater investment in continual improvement and flexibility, QFES will be better placed to anticipate and plan for disasters and events, and in doing so, empower and position the community so it too can be ready.

“A flexible volunteerism model would mean that the time I gift to volunteering would allow for fluctuations in my life external to my brigade, group or unit”



Case Study

Excel

Managing memberships



Throughout 2017 the Ipswich City's SES Local Controller undertook a thorough analysis of the Unit's membership and retention. The analysis found that many issues were directly related to applicants' lack of understanding of the roles of SES volunteers, the membership process and expectations.

Applicants were leaving the service before the application process was complete because they were not aware of the need to undertake a criminal history check, and the possibility that they may need to undertake a medical assessment for certain functions.

On top of this, applicants had little understanding of the variations of roles performed and that they are dependent on community need, and based on local risk profiles.

As a result, the SES Local Controller developed an initiative, Unit-specific "induction", that provided timely, relevant and up-to-date information to applicants such as:

- Providing information regarding the requirements of criminal history checks and medicals up front
- Clarifying the functions of the specific SES Group based on their risk profile and
- Outlining what roles/functions are actually available (like a workplace there are limits to the number of volunteers who can be equipped and trained within an SES Group).

The successes of the introduction of this tool ranged from:

- Less time wasted processing applications for people who were unwilling to undertake a criminal history check or medical
- Greater screening of memberships
- Better management of applicant expectations
- Fewer complaints
- Reduced member disruption and
- Greater realisation of capability.

Value was further added to the initiative through it being available electronically, resulting in:

- All applicants interested in joining an Ipswich City SES Group receiving the same message
- A 'free' online tool that is simple to set up, easy to access, and can provide statistics regarding the number of member applications discontinued and
- Time saved where volunteer and staff resources are not required for the first stage of the membership application process.

“ Meeting the expectations of the volunteer while meeting the communities' needs and be flexible to adapt to changing requirements ”



QFES Volunteerism Strategy

GROWING QFES TOGETHER

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Embrace

Volunteers, volunteering and volunteerism are deeply embedded in QFES culture and ethos

Empower

QFES contributes to engaged, aware and resilient communities

Enhance

QFES provides proficient support services to our volunteers and communities

Excel

QFES leads through a philosophy of best practice and innovation

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Respect, recognise and reward

Utilise life experience and knowledge

Experience is enhanced, valued and mutually beneficial

Working collaboratively

QFES & the community understand volunteer roles

Communities are strengthened

Volunteer lens is applied to all QFES activities

Appropriate resource initiatives

Clear training framework and platforms

Flexible volunteering options

A culture of engagement

Innovation and best practice

Acknowledgements

A literature review informed the development of this Strategy. Key references are noted below.

QFES Volunteerism Strategy Discussion Paper (2017)

QFES Strategic Plans: 2017-2021 and 2015-2019

QFES Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Action Plan 2017-2020

New South Wales State Emergency Service: *Volunteer Sustainability Strategy 2017-2020*

New South Wales Volunteering Strategy 2016-2020

Bush Fire Bulletin – *Community Engagement (2017)*

Volunteer Canada and Manulife Financial: *Building the Bridge for Volunteer Engagement (2013)*

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