

RESPONSE

QUEENSLAND'S OFFICIAL FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES MAGAZINE

EDITION 13



STATE TRAINING

30 YEARS PREPARING QUEENSLAND'S FIREFIGHTERS

OUR VISION:

COOL BURN:

RECRUIT COURSE 100:

QFES STRATEGIC PLAN FOCUSES ON SHARED VALUES

REGIONAL APPROACH TO BUSHFIRE HAZARD MITIGATION

QFES' 100TH RECRUIT COURSE GRADUATES

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ON THE COVER

In May, FRS instructors of auxiliary firefighters from each region attended an instructional skills course at the School of Fire and Emergency Services Training to hone their skills as trainers and ensure consistency in course delivery to auxiliaries undertaking recruit training around the state.

Photo: John McMartin.

RESPONSE is a bi-monthly magazine produced by the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services' Media, Communication and Engagement Unit. Contributions and feedback are welcome. The Editor reserves the right to edit submissions for brevity and clarity.

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FOREWORDS



Katarina Carroll

Commissioner QUEENSLAND FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

At time of writing, the international community is reeling from the devastating terrorist attacks in London and Manchester and the tragic Grenfell Tower fire in North Kensington.

My thoughts are with the victims and their families and on behalf of QFES I extend my deepest sympathies to all those affected.

In these increasingly uncertain times, emergency management agencies must adapt, and traditional planning and operational models evolve, if we are to effectively manage these threats.

QFES is committed to having the policies, frameworks, skills and capabilities in place so that we, alongside our partners and the community, can prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from even the most challenging and complex situations.

The new QFES Strategic Plan 2017–21 outlines our vision, purpose and values, and reinforces our steadfast commitment to Queensland by minimising the impact and consequences of emergencies on communities around the state. More detail on the new Strategic Plan, including QFES' priorities for the years ahead, can be found on page 4.

In May, Minister for Fire and Emergency Services Mark Ryan announced the release of the QFES Volunteerism Strategy Discussion Paper — more information is provided on page 9. When completed, the Strategy will help shape QFES and allow us to better meet the challenges and opportunities of emergency volunteering into the future, and I invite everyone to provide input into its development.



Mike Wassing

Deputy Commissioner EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, VOLUNTEERISM AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

The establishment of our new division — Emergency Management, Volunteerism and Community Resilience (EMVCR) provides a number of exciting opportunities to enable even better support for our communities, our volunteers and staff and QFES' three services.

EMVCR incorporates the accountabilities for the SES and RFS through Assistant Commissioners Peter Jeffrey and Tom Dawson, through to myself as Chief Officer for both services. Our new division also brings together the new areas of Community Resilience and Risk Mitigation, and Volunteer Capability and Coordination led by Acting Assistant Commissioner Emergency Management and Community Capability (EMCC) Wayne Hepple.

While this area will focus primarily on prevention and mitigation, community preparedness and recovery for QFES, it is important to acknowledge that these are shared responsibilities, with many stakeholders and partners including whole-of-government, local government, the private sector and broader community.

Volunteers across all services — FRS, SES and RFS — will benefit greatly under the realigned QFES structure. The creation of the new Volunteer Capability and Coordination Branch will further embed and support volunteerism across the department and increase support and sustainability for our volunteers. With responsibility and oversight of the QFES Volunteerism Strategy, this will ensure QFES has a robust and sustainable model for volunteers into the future.

These are exciting times and I look forward to the many opportunities it will bring to better support our people and our communities.



Mark Ryan

Minister POLICE, FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Recently, a tragic fire occurred at Grenfell Tower in North Kensington, England. On behalf of Queenslanders, I extend my sincere condolences to the family and friends of those who died in that fire. Our thoughts and prayers are with the people of England.

While fires, floods and cyclones often dominate the headlines, we all know the work of QFES never ends. Every day you are called on to protect and assist Queenslanders and you respond rapidly, skilfully and with compassion every time.

I am proud that in this year's State Budget the Government has acknowledged the vital work you do with new and improved resources to keep you and your communities safe. Queensland is growing and our operational response has to grow with it.

This year is no exception with our fire and rescue service firefighters and our rural fire service volunteers to be supported with more than \$47 million to replace and purchase new vehicles. This includes the \$30.1 million Accelerated Rural Fleet Program which will see 60 RFS vehicles replaced during 2017–18, and many more in the following financial year.

All up, more than \$107 million has been set aside for QFES facilities, vehicles and communications equipment throughout the state. This includes \$19.2 million for upgrades to auxiliary fire stations; and \$5.8 million to complete the multi-service facility at Bundaberg, the FRS station and communications centre in Rockhampton and the FRS Station in Smithfield. Plus there are many more projects funded in this year's Budget. We will also invest \$3.7 million in operational equipment and protective clothing to increase the safety of our workforce.

Thank you for the work that you do. The challenges you face are ever-changing and this year's Budget provides new resources and facilities to help you do your job of keeping Queenslanders safe.



New QFES Strategic Plan emphasises shared values and priorities

The recent realignment of QFES, in both its capabilities and organisational structure, provided an ideal opportunity for us to review our focus and inform the development of the new *QFES Strategic Plan 2017–21*.

The *QFES Strategic Plan 2017–21* is a four-year blueprint for the department and clearly communicates to you — our workforce, partners, stakeholders and the community — QFES' priorities as well as outlining the work that will be undertaken to achieve them.

It also demonstrates our One QFES approach to meeting strategic objectives and our revised vision and purpose, showing the department's ongoing commitment to building community resilience and to helping Queenslanders when they need us the most.

Our vision:

One QFES creating safe and resilient communities

Our purpose:

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

Further to this, the plan introduces the five shared values for QFES. These reflect values identified by members of our workforce during the QFES Transforms workshops as well as from feedback from the 2016 Working for Queensland survey, and represent a good fit of both personal and professional values.

These values articulate what we expect of all QFES personnel in relation to behaviour at work and in the workplace as well as our relationships with those external to the department. To all QFES members, paid and volunteer: these are your values. These are the values you told us resonated with you and those that we believe also firmly align with the expectations of the community.

QFES' five shared values:

Respect – We appreciate and value each other and our differences.

Integrity – We are individually accountable for our performance and undertake our duties with diligence and transparency.

Courage – We are brave when facing adversity, value ethical behaviour and challenge wrongdoing.

Loyalty – We are committed to each other, have pride in our organisation and are dedicated to keeping Queensland communities safe.

Trust – We are open, honest and dependable.

Our priority areas

The new plan also outlines QFES' five priority areas being:

- Prevention and preparedness
- Response
- Recovery
- Strategic capability
- Business enabling services.

The *QFES Strategic Plan 2017–21* also clearly defines the strategies and performance measures that will be used to assess how well we achieve our objectives and to drive departmental strategy through the rollout of business planning (formally known as operational planning).



The new QFES Strategic Plan 2017–21 is available on the QFES Gateway intranet and will be available on the QFES website by 1 July 2017.



Stronger governance for a stronger future

For the past 12 months, QFES has been working towards a stronger governance framework to ensure the proper processes are in place to support informed decision-making. Now ideas, variation and adaptation regarding the way we do business — no matter the scale — are required to have undergone consultation and endorsement through prescribed channels before they can be actioned.

Put simply, governance is the set of responsibilities and practices, policies and procedures exercised by all QFES members. Governance underpins our overarching direction for the future — it is how decisions are made, how we operate, and how we plan and prioritise what we do.

Good governance ensures QFES has the oversight needed to appropriately manage risk and that, as a department, we use resources responsibly and with the necessary transparency and accountability.

Executive Director Executive, Ministerial and Corporate Services Adam Stevenson said the new QFES Governance Framework, supported by the QFES Committee Structure, makes certain that all decisions made within the department are authorised, needs-based and in alignment with departmental priorities.

“Without proper governance processes in place, the Board of Management (BoM) is limited in its ability to make sound decisions,” Mr Stevenson said.

“Decision makers need to know the bigger picture; what the budget impact of a decision will be, what

effect a decision may have on other business areas and services, as well as the findings of any assessment of need — whether the department does in fact need the equipment, project or resources being requested and whether the same or similar has already been purchased or produced by another area.

“This review has not been work for work’s sake. The new QFES Governance Framework and committee structure will provide a greater level of clarity and dependability in the department’s decision-making process.”

The eight committees within the QFES Committee Structure — Strategic Projects; Audit and Risk; Health and Safety; Finance and Budget; Information, Communication and Technology; People and Culture; Workplace Representatives and Operations Management — exist to support the BoM’s decision-making by driving accountability and managing requests that fall within their designated area of responsibility. The committees are reviewed annually by the BoM to ensure their structure, membership and purpose continue to support the governance needs of QFES.

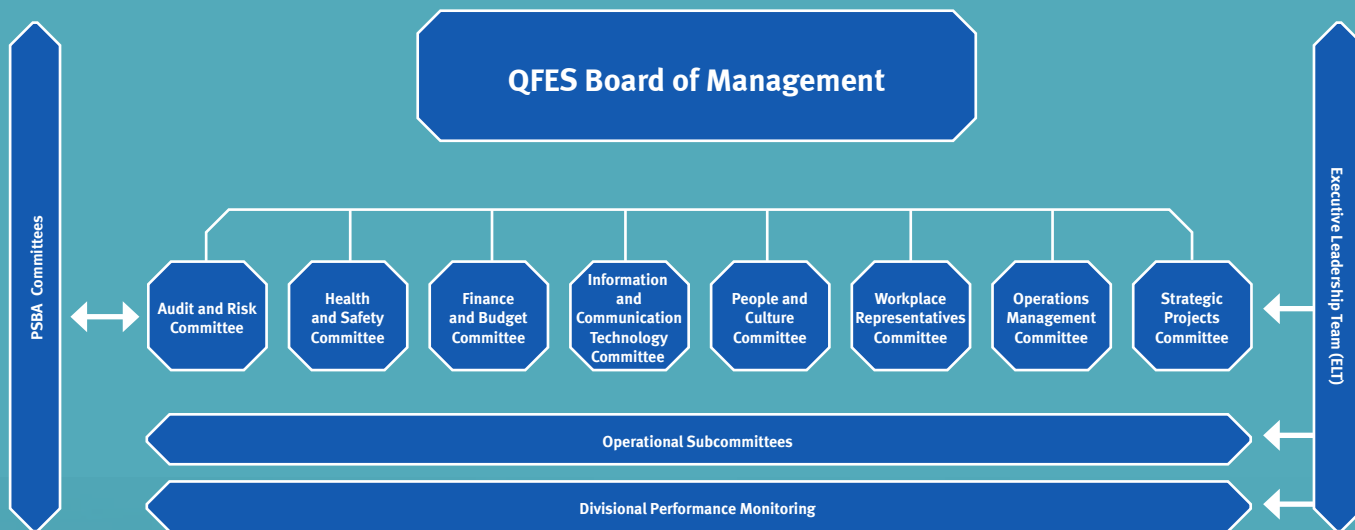
Operations Management Committee Chair, Deputy Commissioner Mark Roche, said the QFES Committee Structure plays an integral role in supporting the BoM to make determinations by providing complete and verified information and advice.

“The purpose of the QFES Committee Structure is to provide a necessary and important set of extra steps in the decision-making process,” Mr Roche said.

“Through the committees, the Board of Management can better rely on proposals and initiatives having been through an appropriate level of consultation and evaluation before they are submitted for the Board’s consideration.”

The QFES Governance Framework is critical for the department, but also for our partners at the Public Safety Business Agency (PSBA), the agency responsible for the bulk of QFES procurement, across capital works, fleet and other areas.

Under the framework, the relevant committee will make considerations and if deemed suitable for further assessment will refer them to other committees, such as the Finance



QFES Committee Structure

and Budget Committee and Audit and Risk Committee and PSBA who will conduct market testing, evaluate market options and choose the most appropriate provider. The recommendations of both PSBA and the committees are provided to the BoM which can then decide whether to approve the expenditure based on confirmed need and availability of resources.

Mr Stevenson said that independent, nonpartisan market engagement is crucial for accountability and transparency.

“QFES is implementing first-class processes that separate purchaser and provider functions so that the department meets its statutory obligations and runs like a professional organisation,” Mr Stevenson said.

“By engaging PSBA to manage market testing and asset management on our behalf, we are building into our business defensible, robust and arms-length market testing and asset management procurement.”

PSBA Chief Operating Officer Peter Griffin said that an effective and efficient QFES Governance Framework would be a key factor in the delivery of timely, efficient and cost-effective services across the state.

“A sound governance framework serves as the ideal platform for well-informed decision-making within QFES and PSBA,” Mr Griffin said.

“All relevant parties have an opportunity to consider opportunities and risks based on the provision of accurate data gathering and analysis and, in turn, provide the basis for decision-making at the Board level.”



QFES Governance Framework Elements



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QFES Volunteerism Strategy Discussion Paper: 2017

The release of our discussion paper marks the next stage in the development of the QFES Volunteerism Strategy as we continue the important conversation with the community, our workforce, partners and key stakeholders on volunteerism.

Emergency services organisations locally, nationally and internationally are facing the challenge of how to continue to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from the increasing demands caused by natural and man-made disasters and events.

This, accompanied by the challenges with traditional models of volunteerism, has identified a crucial need for these organisations to develop clear yet agile strategies to ensure ongoing support for our broader communities is there. Conversely, there is also the need to support, attract and retain volunteers in this ever-changing and challenging environment.

For QFES, our volunteer workforce is integral to not only service delivery but to building community resilience and supporting Queenslanders. With more than 42,000 volunteers around the state ready to help when they are needed most, it is a priority for the department to identify and understand challenges facing volunteers and volunteerism, and to work with each other and the sector to develop strategies to pre-emptively address these challenges.

From recruitment and retention initiatives to training and volunteering opportunities, the framework for the QFES Volunteerism Strategy is being developed to help shape the department allowing it to better meet the challenges of the present and future, and in turn, the needs and expectations of the community.



The *QFES Volunteerism Strategy Discussion Paper: 2017* outlines the challenges facing the department in this area and invites key internal and external stakeholders, as well as the community we serve, to be part of a broader conversation about them. It will be focused on providing a prospective future state for QFES in regards to volunteering and volunteerism focusing on four areas:

- Investing in our people: developing personal capability
- Proficient support services
- Building healthy communities
- Exceptional service delivery.

A series of stakeholder workshops is being planned across the state to ensure engagement with volunteers, staff and our partners and to help deliver a strategy that builds a robust and sustainable volunteerism model for QFES. More information will be released on these workshops in the near future.



People are also invited to participate in the consultation by visiting the Queensland Government's *Get Involved* page where feedback* on the discussion paper can be made online at www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au.

Alternatively you can email your submission to volunteerstrategy@qfes.qld.gov.au or send in writing to:
Mr Troy Davies
QFES Volunteerism Strategy
Discussion Paper: 2017
C/- GPO Box 1425 Brisbane QLD 4001

The *QFES Volunteerism Strategy Discussion Paper: 2017* presents a rare opportunity for Queenslanders to help shape the future of the department with the QFES Volunteerism Strategy scheduled for release later this year.

* To be included, all submissions must be received by 5pm on Monday, 31 July 2017.



Operation Queensland Recovery

Brigadier Christopher Field and Acting Assistant Commissioner Kevin Walsh leading the planning at Lavarack Barracks in Townsville.



QFES continues to play a leading role in recovery efforts in the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Debbie and helping thousands of Queenslanders in communities hardest hit get back on their feet.

In response to the widespread and significant impact of TC Debbie across many Queensland regions, Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk appointed Australian Army Brigadier Christopher Field as State Recovery Coordinator (SRC), with QFES Acting Assistant Commissioner Kevin Walsh appointed Deputy State Recovery Coordinator (DSRC). Under this direction, Operation Queensland Recovery has been underway across the eight highly impacted areas of Whitsunday, Mackay, Isaac, Rockhampton, Livingstone, Scenic Rim, Logan and the Gold Coast.

DSRC Walsh said QFES' high-level involvement in the operation as part of the State Recovery Team was significant for the department.

"The opportunity for QFES to serve the community in this prominent role alongside the SRC reinforces the department as a leader in disaster management," Mr Walsh said.

Operation Queensland Recovery began with an intense planning phase at the Lavarack Barracks in Townsville with DSRC Walsh and QFES Executive Advisor Janet Richardson embedded in the integrated State Recovery Team,

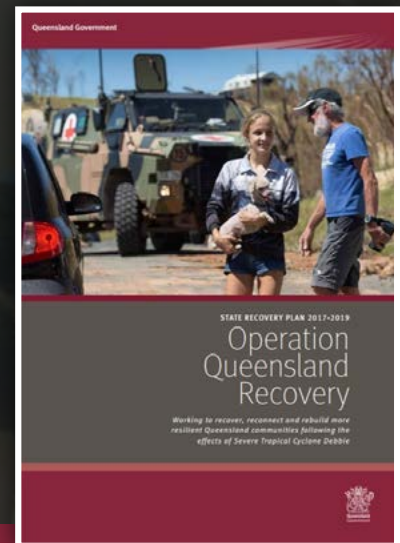
comprising Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel and Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA) officers.

The initial focus for the team was the development of state and local planning mechanisms to work with and support local communities to recover, reconnect and rebuild resilience. This high-level planning was guided by the ADF military appreciation process — a decision-making and planning tool — to develop the *State Recovery Plan 2017–2019* and local recovery plans to map efforts across human and social, economic, environmental, building, and roads and transport recovery. Months on from the disaster event itself, Operation Queensland Recovery continues to focus on connecting with and supporting communities impacted by TC Debbie. The State Recovery Team has been divided into a northern and southern team with the appointment of a second DSRC in April, QPS Chief Superintendent Charysse Pond, to oversee operations in southern communities. DSRC Walsh continues to provide the SRC with crucial on-the-ground assistance in the north.

DSRC Pond said the recovery operation was strengthened by its multi-agency, whole-of-community approach.

"True partnerships and our agencies working jointly with the Queensland community are the foundation to rebuilding after this event," Ms Pond said.

At the end of May, Brigadier Field transitioned the recovery efforts and the continued implementation of the *State Recovery Plan 2017–2019* to QRA CEO Brendan Moon, with DSRCs Walsh and Pond continuing to lead recovery efforts on the ground in partnership with local councils, not-for-profit organisations, primary producers and small business communities in the eight key impact areas.



The *State Recovery Plan 2017-2019* is available on the Queensland Reconstruction Authority website: www.qldreconstruction.org.au



Operation Cool Burn 2017 underway

Bushfire hazard reduction activities have begun in many parts of the state, taking advantage of the lower fire-danger risk in cooler months to prepare for the bushfire season ahead.

QFES' annual bushfire hazard mitigation operation, Operation Cool Burn, commenced on 18 April with the RFS and FRS working with their key partners including land management agencies, local government and other organisations to plan key mitigation priorities for the season.

At the end of May, more than 250 mitigation activities had been planned in 107 priority areas with some activities already completed where conditions have allowed. Mitigation activities include hazard reduction burns, targeted education in high risk areas, fire line maintenance, and slashing and track development.

Operation Cool Burn is a statewide operation; however, the diversity of climates and landscapes across Queensland means operational scheduling varies from region to region.

Heavy rain in recent months has delayed activities in some areas, while others are progressing. TC Debbie has left a heavier than usual fuel load on the ground in some areas and Central Region in particular has been developing a taskforce approach to plan how to mitigate this increased hazard following on from the successful approach used with TC Marcia.

Assistant Commissioner Central Region Ewan Cayzer said Operation Cool Burn is an important time for the RFS and FRS in central Queensland.

"Central Region is highly bushfire prone having seen some of the major campaign fires in recent times, such as the Mount Archer fire and the Barcardine fires which called upon crews from across the state to deploy to Central Region," Mr Cayzer said.

"Through Operation Cool Burn, our services work together with our partners, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, along with major landholders to reduce the risk of bushfires occurring later in the year.

"Operation Cool Burn was used effectively in 2015 and 2016 to reduce the very high fuel loads left behind by TC Marcia around Rockhampton and Yeppoon.

"Through a taskforce set up with our partners, we were able to undertake complex hazard reduction burns to protect communities."

Depending on conditions on the ground, Operation Cool Burn is expected to run to early August.





100th firefighter recruit course graduates

QFES celebrated a historic milestone in May with the graduation of the 100th FRS recruit course, marking 30 years of excellence in state training of frontline firefighters.



As Queensland's newest permanent firefighters, graduates of Recruit Course 100 represent the pinnacle of many years of evolution and development of the basegrade firefighter training program.

The 22 recruits, comprising four women and 18 men from a range of professional backgrounds including seven FRS auxiliary firefighters, have completed an intense 78-day program that involved specialist training in live fire behaviour, wildfire, road crash rescue, technical rescue and hazardous materials management.

They will take up positions in Brisbane, Toowoomba, Charters Towers, Mackay, Ingham and Rockhampton.

Commissioner Katarina Carroll welcomed the graduates at a ceremony held at the Queensland Combined Emergency Services Academy (QCESA) facility at Whyte Island in Brisbane on 18 May.

Commissioner Carroll said the recruits will come through the ranks of a revitalised QFES, focused now more than ever on fostering strong relationships across the emergency

management sector to deliver the best possible outcomes for Queensland.

"As one QFES delivering critical emergency management capabilities to Queensland communities, we are stronger when we work together," Ms Carroll said.

"Today's recruits, as they progress in their careers with the department, will work alongside their RFS and SES colleagues as well partner agencies and organisations as we continue

to build resilience and protect the community in a constantly changing emergency landscape."

Since the first centralised firefighting course was held in Lytton in 1987, more than 1800 recruits have graduated with the necessary skills and training to protect our state from a range of threats. At QCESA, the Tactical Training Unit and onsite Live Fire Campus has been developed to international best practice standards providing world-class, realistic fire training in a safe and controlled environment.



State challenge puts SES rescue skills to the test



This year's SES State Disaster Rescue Challenge was held in Townsville over the Labour Day long weekend with a team from each region battling it out to be crowned Queensland's best SES disaster rescue team.

In April, the highest performing SES teams selected from each region during SES Regional Disaster Rescue Challenges over the past 12 months met in Townsville to showcase their skills and compete in the SES State Disaster Rescue Challenge (SDRC).

Teams took part in seven events over two days, testing their capabilities in the areas of safe operations, hazard assessments, teamwork, leadership, first aid, rescue and casualty handling.

Day one opened with a simulated rescue of a casualty caught in machinery from the top of a crane gantry and the recovery of a casualty from a collapse, followed by a rescue of two casualties inside a large water reservoir. The day concluded with a scenario involving a high speed boat crash over a weir with one person ejected and another trapped inside the boat.

Day two saw teams tackle a mass casualty scenario resulting from a transformer explosion with casualties suffering burns, broken bones and shock, followed by a heavy lift rescue to free a casualty with a steel rod through his leg and finally, a navigation exercise.

Deputy Commissioner Emergency Management, Volunteerism and Community Resilience and Chief Officer SES Mike Wassing said the teams displayed an exceptional level of professionalism and skill.

"The competitors in this year's SES State Disaster Rescue Challenge showcased the proficiency of our SES in all manner of rescue situations and demonstrated the incredible capability the SES provides to the people of Queensland," Mr Wassing said.

"Congratulations to the 2017 SDRC winners, and to all teams selected to represent their regions in this significant event in the QFES calendar."

Northern Region's Townsville team was announced the winner and presented with the coveted Minister's Cup at the awards evening on the final night of the challenge. Brisbane Region's Redlands team placed second, with South Western Region's Southern Downs team placing third.

The Townville SES team will go on to represent Queensland in the SES National Disaster Rescue Challenge in November.

The weekend was made possible by the generous support of local businesses and corporate sponsors who donated winner prizes and trophies. Thanks also to the many event casualties, judges, moulage (mock injury makeup) experts and organisers who volunteered their time and played a key role in bringing everything together for a successful event.



Traditional fire management at Hells Gate

QFES members have taken part in a four-day pilot course in the Gulf of Carpentaria to learn about Indigenous land management and hazard mitigation burning practises.



A group of 16 QFES members representing all regions headed to the remote north-west Queensland area of Hells Gate in May to participate in the Jigija Indigenous Fire Training program, learning about traditional fire ecology and land management practices from local Indigenous rangers.

The pilot program was coordinated by the RFS and delivered by the Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (CLCAC) fire management team.

The course included traditional knowledge theory sessions and the opportunity for participants to observe various landscapes, fauna and vegetation and gain an understanding of traditional

owners' connection to each. Students also gained practical experience in Indigenous fire management practises and the development of fire management plans incorporating traditional techniques which are described as 'mosaic burning'.

Acting Assistant Commissioner Emergency Management Wayne Hepple took part in the course and said it was a unique opportunity for QFES to partner with the CLCAC and see Indigenous land management methods in action.

"The principles we learnt over the week are actively being applied across a number of pastoral areas in the region and the beneficial

results were clearly evident when we visited these sites," Mr Hepple said.

"Several times throughout the week QFES members commented on the change of mindset they now held on the use of fire in the landscape.

"The program was a great success and a credit to those involved in bringing it together as well as those who, for many years, have worked to build the strong partnerships behind this collaboration."

Far Northern Region Regional Community Educator Chris Wegger was also among the participants and said the experience had been invaluable.

"As an Indigenous staff member it was great to work, learn and share cultural connections with other Indigenous peoples working in the field of natural and cultural resource management," Mr Wegger said.

"Participants learnt how significant fire actually was to Indigenous peoples' in the managing of country and culture. Indigenous peoples use of fire both pre-colonisation and now in its contemporary form still has the same significance and benefits in promoting healthy country."



QFES steps out against domestic and family violence

In May, around 40 QFES members participated in the Darkness to Daylight Challenge at Brisbane's South Bank to raise awareness and funds for domestic and family violence.

QFES walkers, including the entire Executive Leadership Team, were among more than 2000 participants who gathered in the dark, before setting off at 6am for a 3km walk along South Bank to support the challenge.

The event, now in its fourth year, is organised by Australia's CEO Challenge (ACEOC) and encourages community engagement in the response to and prevention of domestic and family violence. It includes a 110km run, with every kilometre representing one of the 110 lives lost each year on average due to domestic and family violence. Beginning the night

before, much of the run is done in the dark, symbolising the isolation felt by victims.

A number of QFES members also participated in the 10km run, which started at 5.30am. The 110km, 10km and 3km event course converged before the finish line, representing participants' united front against domestic and family violence.

The QFES team raised more than \$5300 for the challenge, which raised almost \$100,000 in total for ACEOC to continue their work preventing domestic violence through workplace and community partnerships and awareness raising activities.



Hendra Fire and Rescue Station firefighters with Guide Dogs Queensland Puppy Raiser Fiona Leonard and Guide Dog-in-training Julia.

QFES on board with Guide Dogs Queensland to help launch new bumper sticker

A new 'Guide Dog on Board' sticker has been launched by Guide Dogs Queensland to help emergency responders know what to do if a Guide Dog is inside a vehicle involved in a road accident.

On International Guide Dogs Day in April, firefighters at Hendra Fire and Rescue Station got to meet some of Queensland's Guide Dogs and puppies-in-training and helped launch the 'Guide Dog on Board' bumper sticker and instruction card campaign — the first of its kind in Australia.

The Guide Dog on Board sticker alerts emergency service personnel and members of the public arriving at the scene of an accident that a Guide Dog

may be involved and points them to an instruction card inside the vehicle's glovebox that provides contact numbers and advice on what action to take.

Commissioner Katarina Carroll said the stickers would make it easier for emergency response crews to provide appropriate care for these vitally important service dogs if needed.

"The nature of road crash response is very unpredictable so the more information our fire and rescue crews have, the better," Ms Carroll said.

"These stickers, and the complementary information card, will provide our crews with a better understanding of the situation they are facing so they can provide the best care and response to all involved."



Disaster management conference strengthens partnerships



Commissioner Katarina Carroll with Acting CEO LGAQ Sarah Buckler

The 2017 Local Government Disaster Management Conference was held in Mackay in May and was firmly focused on conversations to continue building resilience and safety in our communities.

From 9–11 May, QFES and other representatives from Queensland’s emergency management sector met in Mackay to share information and insights to look at ways to work together to build crucial partnerships to increase resilience and safety in local communities.

The 2017 Local Disaster Management Conference delivered by the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) had the theme of ‘Our New Conversations’ and centred around building on existing dialogue between local, state and non-government agencies to ensure effective leadership and support in times of disaster and emergency.

The conference also provided an opportunity for delegates to gain an understanding of many councils’ experiences, hearing about lessons learned as well as areas and opportunities for development.

Topics covered at the conference included understanding community response to disaster, community and capability, response and relief, resilience, probability and practice, communications and disasters as well as directions for disaster policy and the job ahead for local government.

The hosting of the conference was timely, given the recent challenges faced by Queensland’s emergency management sector in the form of TC Debbie, and a number of presentations and conversations focused on learnings from this event.

During day two of the conference, the Disaster Management Alliance Memorandum of Understanding 2017–2020 (the MoU) between the LGAQ and the State of Queensland, through QFES, was also signed.

The MoU reiterated the shared fundamental philosophy of cooperation, engagement and collaboration in Disaster Management Arrangements between Queensland’s local and state governments and also established a clear understanding of how they will cooperate and collaborate in relation to these arrangements.

While serving the community is the key objective of QFES, strong working relationships with sector partners remain essential to our success. It is through attending and participating at conferences like this that QFES actively engages and works with our emergency management colleagues to build the resilience of Queensland communities.



Disaster management discussion panellists from left: Queensland Reconstruction Authority CEO Brendan Moon, Commissioner Katarina Carroll, QPS Assistant Commissioner Alistair Dawson and Inspector-General Emergency Management Iain MacKenzie.



PSBA Triple Zero (000) survey

The National Emergency Communications Working Group Australia–New Zealand’s Next Generation Triple Zero (000) Strategy aims to enable Australians to contact Triple Zero (000) through any device, anywhere and anytime. But how do Queenslanders contact Triple Zero (000) now, and how would they like to in the future?

In late 2016, the PSBA Public Safety Communications Program engaged market research company TNS to conduct an online survey to determine community expectations of the Triple Zero (000) service in Queensland. Similar national surveys have been conducted in the past, but this was the first to focus on how Queenslanders wanted to contact Triple Zero (000).

As expected, knowledge of the Triple Zero (000) service is widespread, with four in five spontaneously aware it is the number to call in an emergency situation, and more than nine in 10 aware of the number when prompted.

However, there is some confusion over how Triple Zero (000) can be contacted. Although the large majority of respondents (94 per cent — see Fig. 1) correctly nominated a phone call as the method to contact Triple Zero (000), around 30 per cent also believed incorrectly it can be contacted

via other channels. Almost one in five (19 per cent) believe you can connect via automated alert devices and 15 per cent by smartphone app.

When presented with different contact channel options for emergency scenarios, Queenslanders overwhelmingly would prefer to contact the Triple Zero (000) service via the current phone channel. However, there is preference for using SMS or an app in situations where voice calls may not be possible or safe (see Fig. 2).

When making a Triple Zero (000) call, more than three in four respondents (77 per cent) believe the operators know their phone number, two thirds (65 per cent) believe the operators know their current location and almost two in five (38 per cent) believe their name is known (see Fig. 3).

Although online surveys are a fast way to receive answers, they can miss those with special needs and those outside of the

online community. Further work is also proposed to determine how these groups expect to communicate with the Triple Zero (000) service.

QFES Director Specialist Response and Communications Branch John Gresty said it was important for emergency service agencies to continue to evaluate Triple Zero (000) systems and procedures.

“QFES is always looking to maximise efficiency in responding to requests for assistance from the public,” Mr Gresty said.

“We are aware of emerging technologies in the area of emergency call taking and consideration will be given to incorporating these into future upgrades of our systems as appropriate.”

For further information contact Craig Anderson, Director, Public Safety Communications Program at craig.anderson@psba.qld.gov.au

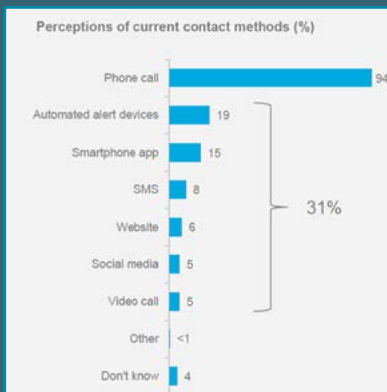


Fig. 1. Perceptions of current contact methods

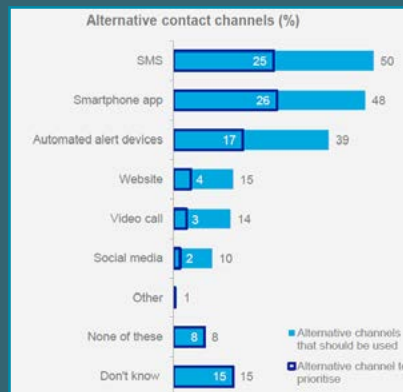


Fig. 2. Alternative contact channels

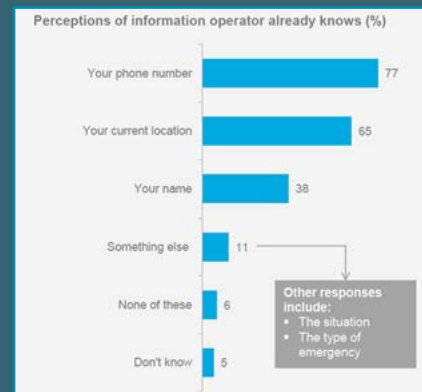


Fig. 3. Perceptions of information operator already knows



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North Coast Region

Construction is well underway on the new Bundaberg combined QFES and QAS facility, with an expected completion date of August 2017.

This modern building will replace the existing Bundaberg Fire and Rescue Station and incorporate the Bundaberg FRS Area Office, RFS Area Office, Emergency Management Office and the Bundaberg Community Safety and Professional Development Units which are currently housed at Bargara. QAS will occupy the second building at the site.

QFES' co-location with QAS will better enable the two agencies to work together to deliver essential services to the community. The building's size, modern facilities and central location in the Bundaberg CBD will allow them to provide a coordinated response for approximately 100,000 people in Bundaberg City, Bargara and coastal areas well into the future.



On 25 April, 17 North Coast Region FRS and RFS firefighters proudly represented QFES at the ANZAC Day dawn service on the Bargara foreshore, marching in the parade in full dress uniform and laying a wreath in respect for our fallen servicemen and women.

The service had an immense turnout, with a reported 8000 people in attendance — almost equalling the total population of the town. After the ceremony, officers returned to the station for a BBQ breakfast prepared by Bargara auxiliary firefighter Michelle Murray. Photo thanks to Nev Swan Photography.



Kunda Park Regional Office received a special thank you recently for QFES Senior Mechanic Damien Russell from the regional fleet maintenance workshop after he assisted members of the public when their vehicle had broken down on the Bruce Highway:

"We would like to pass on our enormous thanks to Damien our 'knight in shining armour' who came to our rescue a couple of weeks ago. On our way to a relaxing weekend camping, our anticipation ground to a halt when we lost a tyre on our campervan. Towing being our only other option, we decided to unpack the boot and have a go at changing the tyre ourselves — only to find that we couldn't get the spare off...the spanner was missing in action! Kids, dog, Friday afternoon on a busy highway — things were looking pretty dismal. Then who should drive up behind us but Damien, who had been travelling on the other side of the highway when he saw our plight and took the next exit to turn around and come to our assistance. In next to no time he fixed our problem and we were once again on our way to enjoy our camping weekend. Damien himself would accept nothing more than a handshake for helping us out. His actions prove that there are still very decent people in the world and we thank him very much for his kindness."

Great work Damien!





Brisbane Region

Brisbane Region is holding a series of four simulated fire exercises throughout May and June 2017.

Exercise Central Ready is a sequence of multi-agency exercises designed to test and improve FRS operational service delivery; specifically response, command and control, and tactical considerations of fire safety systems at a simulated high-rise fire in the Brisbane city area. Based at Waterfront Place office building on Eagle Street, the exercises focus on:

- revision and practical exercises in tactical directives, operational guides and procedures in a safe, controlled and realistic environment
- developing FRS interoperability with emergency service partners including QPS, QAS and the AFP
- operational collaboration between emergency services using the Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS) principles.

In this year's exercise, 11 FRS crews are participating alongside QFES senior and training officers, Firecom staff and students from St Laurence's College who are providing simulated casualty role play.



The annual Samford Combined Emergency Services Expo was held on Sunday 7 May at John Scott Park, Samford. The event was hosted by the Moreton Bay Regional Council and was an opportunity for all emergency service agencies and organisations to demonstrate their resources and capabilities.

QFES was represented on the day by each of our three services, FRS, SES and RFS, who conducted skills and drills, road crash rescue, sandbagging, bush fire simulator, and kitchen fire simulator demonstrations for a crowd of more than 700 people.

Events such as these are a fun way to engage the community to raise awareness of the work emergency services do and to provide people with important safety information to help them keep themselves and their families safe.

In May, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) hosted a two-day practical air observer training course for 16 SES members across the Brisbane Region.

This was the first course that AMSA has run under their new RTO accreditation and comprised six comprehensive online eLearning modules for participants to complete prior to the practical component.

On the first day, participants revised the online theory modules and were familiarised with some of the equipment required for an air observer search. They then headed off to the nearby YMCA pool to conduct the water safety component of the course.

On day two, participants arrived at Archerfield Airfield for the practical observation component of the course. Participants set out in a Beech B200 Super King VH-WXO over Moreton Island to practise marine search techniques such as spotting and identifying moving vessels from heights between 100ft and 500ft and recognising the difference when a vessel is stationary. They then headed over land to practise their land search techniques. This is a great course and a credit to the AMSA team for making it so worthwhile for SES members.





South Eastern Region

In May, South Eastern Region FRS vertical rescue technicians were called to the Bellbird Lookout at Binna Burra to rescue an abseiler who was in trouble.

Crews 639A and 639K from Nerang Fire and Rescue Station arrived on the scene, with Station Officer John McGhee appointed Incident Controller and Acting Station Officer Matt Roser taking up operations. At the edge, vertical rescue technician Ben Northcott was harnessed up before making his way down to the casualty, some 30 metres from the top, to assess the situation. The casualty was in good spirits with only minor injuries but was clearly exhausted. The decision was made to use an evac-stretcher to take him back to the top where QAS were on-hand to treat the casualty. The rescue was successful with many difficulties navigated and overcome by the rescue team.



In April, Ipswich North Rotary Club hosted and sponsored the annual Rotary Pride of Workmanship Police and Emergency Officer of the Year Awards in Ipswich.

These awards recognise outstanding achievements and professionalism of emergency services personnel from QFES, QPS and QAS — congratulations to all of the recipients. The QFES winners were:

State Emergency Service

- Community SES Member of the Year: Kevin Ruthenberg
- SES Member of the Year: Beth Suhr

Rural Fire Service

- Community Rural Fire Officer of the Year: Mary Jo Warren
- Peer Recognised Rural Fire Officer of the Year: Bill Doorley
- Rural Fire Officer of the Year: Sally Bennett

Fire and Rescue Service

- Community Fire and Emergency Officer of the Year: Michael McCoy
- Peer Recognised Fire and Emergency Officer of the Year: Dan Toohill
- Fire and Emergency Officer of the Year: Trevor Meier



Ex-TC Debbie impacted South Eastern Region on the evening of 30 March, with widespread heavy rain, strong winds, flash flooding and riverine flooding experienced across the local government areas of Logan, Gold Coast, Scenic Rim, Ipswich, Lockyer Valley and Somerset.

As part of QFES' response to this significant weather event, more than 30 swiftwater rescues were conducted, along with 13 other water-related rescues. Throughout the recovery phase of the event, 716 rapid damage assessments were completed within the Gold Coast Council Local Government Area (LGA), 995 in the Logan LGA, 379 in the Scenic Rim LGA and two within the Ipswich LGA. The SES completed 237 tasked washout jobs and RFS crews conducted 88 initial site assessments. The Regional Operations Centre was stood up for more than three weeks, from 22 March to 14 April. Throughout this period there were 516 QFES members deployed out of region and involved within region in both the response and recovery phases of this event.

Congratulations to all involved in the region's highly professional, well-organised and collaborative response to ex-TC Debbie. A big pat on the back goes out to everybody for staying safe and delivering exemplary emergency management activities to our communities within the region and around the state.





South Western Region

QFES South Western Region recently assisted in the development and delivery of a multi-agency exercise focused on a potential future foot-and-mouth disease outbreak on the Darling Downs.

The exercise encompassed three disaster districts and five local government areas in the region. QFES Emergency Management Coordinators Scott Walsh, Bede Wilson and Prue Patch worked with QPS executive officers to design and evaluate the exercise and Regional Community Engagement Officer Tracey Brown and SES Area Controller Ian Phipps also worked on the evaluation team. QFES disaster management representatives included Inspectors Hemmo de Vries, Lance McHugh, Neil Fanning, Warren Buckley and Ross Mutzelburg.

Biosecurity Queensland advise that a foot and mouth disease outbreak in Australia could require a response phase of 12 months and up to 10 years for recovery of the affected industries, with costs estimated to exceed \$50 billion over that 10-year period. This projection emphasises the importance of preparedness and planning exercises such as this and the significant role Queensland's disaster management sector would have in minimising this major threat to local and national interests.



In April, a combined team from the Southern Downs Regional SES Unit represented South Western Region at the 2017 State Disaster Rescue Challenge in Townsville, placing third overall.

Team members Kris Duncan (Team Manager), Matt Sondergeld (Team Leader), Vance Sinden, Janine Hegarty, Shaun Palmer, Russell Carnell, Jess Sondergeld and John Newley (Reserve) — all members from Warwick and Stanthorpe SES Groups — were selected to represent the region after participating in the Regional Rescue Challenge last year.

The two-day event tested competing teams' teamwork, safe work practices, delivery of immediate first aid and safe extraction of casualties. As part of their prize the team won specialised road crash rescue (RCR) equipment, which will be gifted to one of the SES groups in South Western Region that has been allocated RCR in their area of response. Congratulations to Matt Sondergeld, who was singled out for special mention for his leadership during the event.



Recently, QFES' Roma Area Office staff travelled to the more remote parts of the area to meet with RFS brigades and SES groups and engage with local residents and land holders.

Building strong networks and having effective conversations with stakeholders about emergency and fire management planning is ever-important in this arid rural environment. While the eastern part of the state has been dealing with the impact of TC Debbie, much of the South Western Region remains seriously affected by ongoing drought. Every bundle of grass counts as important fodder for livestock and fire is used less as a hazard mitigation tool than as a pasture management strategy to improve grass production and manage weeds under a holistic approach for landscape health while maintaining biodiversity.





Far Northern Region

The RFS Certificate II in Public Safety (Firefighting Operations) High School Program is growing, with three high schools now participating in the program in the Far Northern Region.

Innisfail State College in the south of the region and Mareeba State High School located in the Cairns hinterland are the latest to join the program, with participants well into their studies and practical workshops under the guidance of instructors and mentors from both RFS and FRS. In the region's north-west, Mareeba High School participants have started the community engagement phase of the program, participating in the FNQ Mareeba Field Days in May where they promoted property preparedness and provided information and advice to the community on mitigating bushfire hazards.

The program, coordinated by the RFS Innisfail and Cairns area offices, covers 17 weeks of classes over the school year and includes excursions for community engagement and practical firefighting. Upon graduation, Registered Junior Firefighters will have attained a level of Firefighter Minimum Skills and Firefighter Advanced Skills and be recognised as operational rural firefighters ready to assist their brigades and QFES in protecting their communities.



Staff from the QFES Office of Bushfire Mitigation (OBM) ran two redi-portal (Risk Evaluation and Disaster Information) training workshops in Far Northern Region recently, the first being with members of the region's Capability Coordination Hub and the second for RFS Area Office staff and state and local government land managers.

The redi-portal lets disaster managers identify where risks are and enables them to prioritise mitigation or response activities by providing users with access to a rich suite of data, mapping and analytical tools. The portal is also used to assist in the identification and mapping of bushfire mitigation activities with data currently being used to directly report initiatives and outcomes from the Operation Cool Burn 2017 period.



Far Northern Region personnel showed their support for International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOT) on 17 May by participating in a number of local community events.

Commencing in 2004, the IDAHOT movement has grown over the years to become a global initiative and QFES was proud to take part in a day celebrating diversity and inclusion.




QFES members attended a public event held by QPS at the Cairns Esplanade, with a barbeque and the raising of the rainbow flag in a show of support for LGBTIQ+ people within the workplace and the community.



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Northern Region

As TC Debbie travelled down the Queensland coast, Local Disaster Management Groups (LDMGs) in the cyclone's predicted path were stood up in preparation for the event, with QFES members working alongside LDMGs providing disaster management support.

In Northern Region, the Regional Operations Command (ROC) was activated to support operational crews and saw the largest and widest deployment in its history. For the first time, the region deployed a small taskforce of FRS, SES and RFS personnel to Palm Island to help the local government with preparedness and planning. As LDMGs stood up cyclone shelters, QFES deployed members to support the management teams of these facilities. QFES members also assisted the Townsville City Council, QPS and other key government agencies with the establishment of facilities to help the approximately 300 people transported back to the mainland from the Whitsunday Islands to continue their holiday or return home.

Taskforces comprising members of all QFES services continued to be deployed to help communities in those areas hardest hit for several weeks post-event. The scale of the event required FRS, SES, and RFS personnel to work side by side in many different functions to achieve the shared goal of getting local residents back on their feet. The response Northern Region was able to provide to communities during this time was made possible thanks to the commitment, professionalism and dedication of the region's staff and volunteers. Thank you and well done to all involved.

In April, Northern Region — working in partnership with the QFES Officer Development Unit — hosted the Residential Phase of the FRS Officer Development Program 1 (ODP1).

This phase is an arduous three-week assessment phase where candidates are required to achieve competency in six units as well as undertake practical scenarios. This is the first time the course has been run outside the Brisbane Region, presenting an opportunity to develop a learning culture that encompasses regional resources for positive QFES business outcomes; draw on experiences and talent outside of the Brisbane Region; and identify other regions as viable training alternatives to meet industry and national training competencies.

Northern Region's pilot program, 'ODP1 Bravo Course 2017', comprised 12 candidates and seven instructors and concluded on 19 May. Delta Course commenced on 29 May with a second tranche of 12 enthusiastic officer candidates. The Bravo and Delta ODP courses being offered in Townsville are part of a suite of five courses for 2017, training 60 officer candidates.

The capability of RFS and SES members operating within the Hinchinbrook Shire has significantly increased with the opening of two new facilities — Hinchinbrook Station and Stone River Station — on 6 May. Originally scheduled for April, the official opening of each facility was postponed to allow for crews to support the TC Debbie response and recovery.

The Hinchinbrook facility is the former Ingham Fire and Rescue Station, previously occupied by FRS who have moved to a new complex. Now occupied by the Toobanna Rural Fire Brigade and Hinchinbrook SES Unit, the facility provides members with a base to securely store equipment and conduct training exercises. The station will also serve a meeting place for combined training events for brigades within the shire.

The development of the Stone River Rural Fire Station is a major achievement for the members of the brigade, who now have a permanent facility which will not only provide a venue for equipment storage, meetings and training, but also help to build stronger relationships between the community and their local brigade.





Central Region

The inaugural Gracemere Emergency Services Open Day was held at the combined Gracemere Ambulance and Fire Station in May to build community relationships and raise awareness of local emergency services and their capabilities.

A number of services from the Gracemere area were involved in the Open Day, including FRS auxiliary firefighters, the RFS, SES, QAS and QPS with each service holding interactive displays and activities throughout the day. FRS firefighters had flame-shaped target shooting using hose reels which was popular with adults and children alike. Gracemere SES Group had a flood boat on display for the community to see firsthand the rescue equipment used in a flood emergency. FRS firefighters held an impressive simulated road crash rescue disentanglement demonstration with QAS on hand to provide on-scene medical assistance to the casualty.

More than 300 local residents attended and the day was also a lot of fun for the children who enjoyed the jumping castle, face painting, Lil Squirt rides and Blazer delivering fire safety messages.

FRS Longreach Command coordinated a joint-agency road traffic crash exercise in April in preparation for the school holiday period, when an increased number of travellers and holidaymakers were on the area's roads. Other participating agencies included the SES, RFS, QAS, QPS and Queensland Health with more than 60 personnel involved in total.

The scenario was a high-impact, three-vehicle incident with multiple casualties set in a complex environment. Each agency used the opportunity to test their capabilities and interoperability in emergency response situations, with key emphasis on command and control, patient management and patient extraction.

The crews worked for more than two hours with the scenario changing throughout the exercise to test skills and capabilities. A debrief was conducted at the completion of the exercise with many learnings highlighted from the agencies involved. It gave crews a comprehensive understanding of a multi-agency response and working collaboratively to achieve a shared objective.

In April, Mackay Mayor Greg Williamson officially acknowledged the Emergency Liaison Officer (ELO) volunteers and the critical role they played during TC Debbie. ELOs are the conduit between Local Disaster Management Groups (LDMGs) and the community, with many also members of the RFS or SES.

The ELO role is unique and highly valued, strengthening LDMG operations by assisting local and pocket communities where access to emergency services is limited during disasters. During TC Debbie, ELOs provided rapid impact assessments, coordination of resupply activities and contributed knowledge and expertise to solve problems. Many ELOs also helped with clearing roads for access, clearing trees from homes, fuelling generators to power infrastructure and relaying public information on behalf of the LDMG in Mackay.





Enduring partnership helping Queenslanders in need

The SES has maintained a close working relationship with NRMA Insurance for a decade. In May, it was announced this important collaboration to build resilient Queensland communities would remain in place for a further two years.



The SES and NRMA Insurance confirmed their continued commitment to the partnership on Wear Orange Wednesday, the national day to recognise and thank SES volunteers for their contribution to communities.

It will see SES members around the state provided with vital practical equipment and the service supported by storm preparedness education campaigns to help the community prepare for and respond to emergency events.

SES Assistant Commissioner Peter Jeffrey thanked NRMA Insurance for their ongoing

support of SES volunteers who would receive important resources that will be put to good use helping Queenslanders during storms and other emergencies.

“There are more than 6000 SES volunteers in Queensland who are trained and ready to respond when they’re needed,” Mr Jeffrey said.

“Only recently they were called on to assist communities in north, central and south east Queensland during Tropical Cyclone Debbie and the

subsequent flooding events, responding to 8000 requests for assistance.

“I would like to thank NRMA Insurance for their ongoing commitment to the SES to provide these important services to Queenslanders.”

IAG — NRMA Insurance’s parent company — Group Executive People, Performance and Reputation Jacki Johnson said NRMA was proud to continue to support the SES in Queensland.

“We have seen firsthand the vital role the SES plays in helping Queenslanders in times

of need, and have worked side-by-side in the community recovery effort following events like Tropical Cyclone Debbie,” Ms Johnson said.

“Through our principal partnership with the SES we will be investing in helping communities be more prepared for severe weather events, as well as equipping volunteers with the resources and tools to help affected communities get back on their feet faster following disasters.”

With thanks to Leah Hornibrook



“Community resilience rather than community reliance is a big thing”

Northern Region RFS Bushfire Safety Officer Gordon Yorke has spent his life in the Australian outdoors, building a career in agriculture before joining the RFS 10 years ago. His work keeps him close to the land he loves and lets him use his passion to help others — for Gordon, there’s nothing he’d rather do.

Despite being born and raised in Sydney, RFS Bushfire Safety Officer and rural firefighter Gordon Yorke was never a city kid, feeling more at home on his family’s sheep property in the regional NSW town of Bathurst.

After high school, Gordon studied at the then Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture and began a career working on and managing various properties in NSW, the Northern Territory and Queensland. In 1989, Gordon moved to the Burdekin in Northern Region and it was here that his love of agriculture and land management began to take on a new focus.

“I was working on a property and the fella I was working with kept taking me out to help other landowners deal with fires on their properties,” he said.

“He said to me one day: ‘why don’t you join the rural brigade?’, so I went and had a look.”

Gordon joined the Scott Rural Fire Brigade in 2007, and is now the brigade’s First Officer and the Fire Warden for his local community.

“I have a passion for country and a deep interest in community — the RFS links these together perfectly,” he said.

“Being a part of the RFS brings me enormous satisfaction. I love being part of a team of like-minded people and helping people to help themselves, their neighbours and their communities,” he said.

For Gordon, brigades working together and strong community engagement are key to building resilient communities.

“Brigade interoperability strengthens our capability and lets us look at how we can better prepare our communities as a whole and, most importantly, help them better prepare themselves,” he said.

“Doing this well means getting involved in our communities. A lot of people out my way are ‘blockies’ or small landholders like me; they may not have the firefighting gear or the experience so we bring them in, teach them about hazard reduction burns and how to look after themselves — that’s where we’re focused.”

The newly built Scott Rural Fire Station was officially opened in March this year in Giru, south of Townsville, and is a great source of pride for Gordon and his team who believe the facility will strengthen ties between the brigade and local residents.

“The purpose of the new station is to be a community hub, where people can come and learn and get involved,” he said.

“We’ll be running land management workshops for local property owners to learn how to manage fire and, going forward, the



I have a passion for country and a deep interest in community — the RFS links these together perfectly



use of fire for land management in a way that is environmentally friendly, economically sound and culturally sensitive.”

This collaborative approach to bushfire safety extends to the RFS’ many partner agencies in Northern Region, and Gordon emphasises the importance of team work for achieving shared community safety outcomes.

“We spend a lot of time working with local councils, Indigenous ranger groups and land management agencies to mitigate risks and provide the best service we can to the people living in the region,” he said.

In 2011, Gordon made the transition to paid staff member after hearing the RFS Northern Region Area Office had a position available for a Bushfire Safety Officer (BSO).

“I had been going into the office about once a week to do some project work and there was a job going so I thought I’d give it a go,” he said.

“I took a chance because being with the RFS is something I really enjoy. I had a crack and it paid off — now I get to support communities at a regional, area and local level and I still get to drag a hose on the fire ground too.”

As a BSO, Gordon’s role is to support and guide strategic bushfire management in the region by way of community and stakeholder engagement through planning, prevention and preparedness activities.

He feels the most important part of his job is to facilitate conversations between sections of the community so they can develop appropriate local solutions to the specific risks they face.

“By bringing local government, landowners, rural brigades, fire wardens, neighbours and other stakeholders together and encouraging them to identify risks, acknowledge mitigation options and come up with a plan, BSOs give people the tools to protect themselves.

“Community resilience rather than community reliance is a big thing — we’ve all got to be in it and this comes down to engagement and education.”

Gordon is also a qualified Air Observer which allows him to draw on another of his passions; mapping and navigation.

“It’s great to get up in the air and do some mapping to help people of the ground during an event, whatever it may be — flood, cyclone or fire,” he said.

“There are so many opportunities in the RFS and specialist pathways are becoming more and more available. No two days are the same; it’s challenging and it’s rewarding.”

Not surprisingly, Gordon’s lifelong love for the land is reflected in his personal life as well.

“We live on 12 acres on the edge of the Mount Elliot National Park,” he said.

“We used to grow crops and take them to market which I enjoyed very much. These days we spend a lot of time at the beach or at the creek fishing — we love living in the bush and being part of the land.”

Gordon’s wife Lisa is also a member of the Scott Rural Fire Brigade; the two joined together on the same day.

“My wife is a huge support to me — I am often away on deployment and that can be tough, but Lisa is behind me all the way and I’m very grateful for that,” he said.





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Rural firefighters in south-east Queensland welcome Energex support

RFS brigades in the West Moreton and Caboolture areas received lifesaving equipment from energy provider Energex at two official handover ceremonies in May.



More than \$40,000 worth of equipment, provided under the Energex RFS Equipment Program, was handed over to 26 rural fire brigades in south-east Queensland at ceremonies in Fernvale and Caboolture.

Energex provided \$16,200 worth of equipment to 11 rural fire brigades in the West Moreton area of South Eastern Region, and equipment worth just under \$24,000 to 15 brigades operating in Brisbane Region's Caboolture area.

The equipment, including collar tanks, chainsaws, fuel spill kits, automated external defibrillators and operational support equipment, will help local brigades respond to bushfires and conduct important mitigation activities to reduce the threat of bushfires.

Assistant Commissioner RFS Tom Dawson said the equipment was a welcome addition to the RFS' capability in south-east Queensland.

"There are more than 5000 RFS volunteers operating in the Brisbane and South Eastern regions who dedicate a lot of time and energy to protecting the safety and wellbeing of their communities," Mr Dawson said.

"I would like thank Energex for their ongoing support that helps the RFS continue to provide life-saving services."

The Energex RFS Equipment Program has seen Energex generously donate more than \$600,000 worth of equipment to RFS brigades over the past eight years, with \$75,000 earmarked for south-east Queensland brigades this year alone.

With thanks to Leah Hornibrook



Brisbane Region FRS firefighters took part in the Climb for Cancer challenge in May, racing up 810 steps — 37 flights — at Brisbane city's Waterfront Place and raising more than \$8000 for cancer research.



The annual Great Wheelbarrow Race between Chillagoe and Mareeba in Far Northern Region was held in May, with three SES teams and solo-runner Rick Heaton (Cairns SES Group) taking part in the three-day, 144km race to raise money for their chosen charities.



In May, 32 volunteers from NSW SES were given a tour of the Queensland Combined Services Academy at Whyte Island and the Special Operations Support Centre at Cannon Hill in a visit organised by QFES Volunteer Emergency Services Training Command.



QFES Roma Area FRS auxiliary firefighters and Orange Hill Rural Fire Brigade held a joint training evening recently, sharing knowledge and developing a better understanding of the different skills and resources each service offers.



FRS instructors of auxiliary firefighters from each region attended an instructional skills course in May to refresh their knowledge of state standards of auxiliary recruit training and covering areas including managing behaviours, documenting events and training improvement plans.



During National Volunteer Week the RFS and SES joined forces with another Queensland-based volunteer organisation, Orange Sky Laundry, to celebrate and promote the work of volunteers throughout the state and around the country.






The Yowah Opal Field Rural Fire Brigade, located approximately 740km south west of Roma, recently took part in combined live-fire training with the RFS regional tanker in Yowah, delivered by the Roma Area Office.



QFES Central Region joined QPS and QAS for the annual Rockhampton Romp in the Park festival for children and young families. The FRS, RFS and SES were there to engage with the community and share important safety information with locals.

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Recruit Course 1/1987

Back from left: Station Officer Kevin Brazel, Firefighter Mark Revell, Firefighter Robert Orchard, Firefighter Brian Formston, Firefighter Wayne Halverson, Firefighter Dean Smyth, Firefighter J. Haywood, Station Officer Graeme Thom.
Front: Firefighter Graham Hanlon, Firefighter Kevin Bertwistle, Firefighter Brett Ford, Firefighter Peter Wright, Firefighter Trevor Stark.



The class photo of Recruit Course 1 captures a very different time in firefighter recruit training in Queensland. While a lot has changed since then and now, the rigorous training, camaraderie and recruits' passion for the job remains the same.

The 100th firefighter recruit course graduated in May, more than 30 years after Recruit Course 1 graduated on 20 March 1987.

Of the original line up, eight of the 11 recruit firefighters who graduated are still with the FRS today.

Firefighter Trevor Stark is now a Senior Station Officer at Burpengary Fire and Rescue Station and remembers his time as a recruit fondly.

"The first recruit course was at Enoggera Station — five days a week there — and we were told every 10 minutes that if we don't pass this we're out," Mr Stark said.

"It was one of the hardest things I've ever done. Station Officer Kevin Brazel and Station Officer Graeme Thom were our two instructors and they were fantastic — they taught us well."

Dux of Recruit Course 1, retired firefighter Graham Hanlon was an auxiliary firefighter when he applied to become a permanent firefighter in 1987.

"I joined in the old days, when (the Queensland Fire Service) was originally run by all the local councils and that was in '87 — I can't believe there's been 100 recruit courses that have gone since I first started" Mr Hanlon said.

"Being a firefighter was the greatest job I ever had — it's a brilliant career."

Commissioner Katarina Carroll said firefighter training had advanced considerably since centralised state training was established for Queensland's firefighters.

"There's been some 1800 recruits graduate in the past 30 years and we have seen significant change in that period of time: higher standards of equipment, technology, training and capability," Ms Carroll said.

"The Queensland Combined Emergency Services Academy is a world-class facility and we're very proud of it and of the quality of training we deliver."

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