

# RESPONSE

RESILIENT AND READY FOR THE PEOPLE OF QUEENSLAND

QUEENSLAND'S OFFICIAL FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES MAGAZINE EDITION 24



## READY FOR ACTION

REAL-LIFE TRAINING HELPS SWIFTWATER CREWS PREPARE FOR ANY SITUATION - PAGE 31

STRATEGY 2030

FIRE BEHAVIOUR

CYCLONE TREVOR

NINE KEY INITIATIVES PREPARE QFES FOR THE FUTURE

THE SCIENCE BEHIND A FIRE

QFES DEPLOYMENT PREPARES LOCKHART RIVER FOR IMPACT

- PAGE 4

- PAGE 9

- PAGE 12



# CONTENTS

## HIGHLIGHTS

**STRATEGY 2030**  
Enabling QFES for an unpredictable future

**4**



**AFTER THE FIRE**  
Family thanks QFES one year on

**18**



**FLOOD RESPONSE**  
The faces behind the flood response

**28**




### ON THE COVER

This photo of recruit firefighter Brentt Hartwig was captured during a swiftwater training exercise at Whyte Island.

Photo: Rohan Watyluk

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Let the Editor know what you think about this edition of Response by providing your feedback to QFESMagazine. Editor@qfes.qld.gov.au

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- » Enabling QFES for an unpredictable future **4**
- » The science behind a fire **9**
- » International Women's Day Awards **10**
- » QFES deploy to Lockhart River to prepare for Cyclone Trevor **12**
- » Emergency services receive upgrades to enhance services **13**
- » Celebrating the quiet achievers that support QFES **14**
- » Smoke Alarm laws get industry thinking **17**
- » Home fire safety paramount as family reflects one year on **18**

### AROUND THE STATE

- » South Eastern Region **20**
- » South Western Region **21**
- » Far Northern Region **22**
- » Northern Region **23**
- » Central Region **25**
- » North Coast Region **26**
- » Brisbane Region **27**

### SPOTLIGHT

- » The faces behind the flood response **28**

### TRAINING

- » Swiftwater rescue training ramps up **31**

### GALLERY

- 32**

### COMMEMORATE

- » Celebrating a lifetime of service **34**



# FOREWORDS



**KATARINA CARROLL**  
Commissioner

## QUEENSLAND FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Tropical Cyclone Trevor hit North Queensland in March, again demonstrating the impacts of climate change on our state.

QFES deployed crews to affected areas and again showed how effectively our personnel and volunteers work to help communities before, during and after these severe weather events.

The frequency and complexity of recent natural disasters highlight the need for QFES to adapt so we can provide effective emergency services into the future.

As a modern department, we need to look for ways to continually improve how we deliver emergency services. A number of reviews, reports and consultation across both internal and external stakeholders has prompted us to proactively improve the way we do business.

From 8 April this year, QFES will move to a model to focus on regional service delivery, improving clarity of command, operational capability and efficiency and providing more autonomy for regionally-based personnel to make locally appropriate decisions.

We are currently developing new initiatives to help build a preferred future for the department and its staff and volunteers, which will be discussed on pages 4-7.

This new strategy is part of QFES' commitment towards continuous improvement and being able to prepare for the evolving landscape of emergency services.

While we look towards the future, I also want to celebrate the achievements of QFES personnel who were recently recognised for their outstanding contributions to their communities and our organisation.

During Peer Support Officer (PSO) Week we celebrated the valuable work our PSOs do behind the scenes in improving the health and wellbeing of our organisation and you can read more about this on pages 14-15. On International Women's Day we celebrated the wonderful contributions QFES members have made to improving diversity and inclusion in their workplaces. See pages 10-11. Congratulations to all our award recipients.

As the weather cools we now focus on home fire safety and Operation Cool Burn in time for peak fire season. Thank you for your efforts helping our communities prepare.

**Katarina Carroll**  
Commissioner  
Queensland Fire and Emergency Services



**DOUG SMITH**  
Deputy Commissioner

## STRATEGY AND CORPORATE SERVICES DIVISION

We had an unprecedented summer season with QFES personnel responding to multiple events which lead to the cessation of non-essential functions during that time. On the back of those difficulties, I am proud to celebrate just some of our achievements as we continue into 2019.

QFES Futures is launching a new approach to innovation thanks to a generous scholarship from the Department of Innovation, Tourism Industry Development and the Commonwealth Games. Effective from April 2019, the QFES Planning, Research and Innovation Unit will participate in a six-month States of Change learning program run by Nesta.

The training program is designed to strengthen innovation capacity across governments and develop the next generation of public innovation learning. Ten government departments and agencies from around Australia will be participating in the program.

A small project team was established towards the end of 2018 to look at opportunities to enhance the workability and readability of QFES portfolio legislation.

The team has been meeting with corporate and operational areas over the last couple of months to identify issues.

The team will be extending consultation to a broader range of stakeholders in the near future.

The School of Fire and Emergency Services Training (SFEST) is conducting two recruit firefighter courses in Townsville in 2019, along with the usual scheduled courses at the Whyte Island campus.

The SFEST instructors, who are selected from regions across the state, impart a broad range of general and specialist firefighter knowledge and skills.

QFES personnel, especially those from the Townsville region, are encouraged to support these new recruit firefighters by attending the Townsville graduation ceremonies scheduled for June and October 2019.

Over the summer season our Strategic Content Services Branch have once again excelled, providing vision and social content for the Queensland bushfires and Townsville floods.

Between disaster events, the team also travelled to St George, Mt Isa, Toowoomba, Charlton and across Brisbane in support of International Women's Day ventures.

**Doug Smith**  
Deputy Commissioner  
Strategy and Corporate Services Division



**HON CRAIG CRAWFORD**  
Minister

## MINISTER FOR FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

While this magazine was being put together, I was in Lockhart River, about 36 hours after Tropical Cyclone Trevor had clipped it on its way across Cape York Peninsula. Trees had been stripped of foliage, streets were clogged with branches and trees across the township had been uprooted. There was some damage at the school but it would be ready to open within a few days.

Power had been knocked out, but by the time I got back on the plane home, there was a clear plan to get it back on again within hours. Extra police who had been flown in were sleeping on makeshift beds at the police station, vying with each other to snore the loudest. The same with QFES volunteers and staff, who were at the ready as Trevor prepared to make landfall and who were there to help with the mop up.

Talking with Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council Mayor Wayne Butcher it was evident that they were more than prepared for Trevor and for his aftermath. For a start – they'd been here before. Cyclones are no stranger to far north Queensland, which also happens to be my home. And the one element that stands out is the preparedness to be flexible – to be well prepared for any eventuality, from loss of power to flying debris and everything in between.

On that flight home, I had the chance to have a chat with our Commissioner, Katarina Carroll, about our excitement at the challenges we had already met and the anticipation of the challenges that were to come.

When I took over the QFES portfolio, the Commissioner was already well down the path of reviewing reports into QFES operations and being at the helm of extensive consultation. She and her deputy and assistant commissioners had spent hundreds of hours talking with QFES staff and volunteers about what they wanted from the service and how they could contribute to it.

From these consultations, the concept of 'continuous improvement' was born and now we're starting to see that concept come to fruition. From April 8, our regional QFES managers will all report to their respective Assistant Commissioner who is on the ground and across regional issues. With our managers reporting to their own Regional Assistant Commissioners, there can be more flexibility on the ground and more flexibility in preparing for the very specific conditions that relate to your geographic area.

This is an exciting time and one that will, ultimately, be for the benefit of all Queenslanders.

**Hon Craig Crawford**  
Minister for Fire and Emergency Services

# Enabling QFES for an unpredictable future

To prepare for the future needs of Queensland communities, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) has nine key initiatives to help realise our Strategy 2030 preferred future.

QFES must position itself for a future in which natural disasters occur more frequently and with more ferocity.

Commissioner Katarina Carroll said unprecedented weather-related events in recent months highlighted the pressing need for the department to continuously evolve so it can provide effective services to Queenslanders well into the future.

“As a progressive department, we must proactively look for opportunities to improve how we do business to remain a world-class service and meet our legislative requirements and community expectations,” Commissioner Carroll said.

“Over the past few years the department has also received reviews and reports highlighting the need to progress culturally, operationally and in its fiscal management.”

The responsibility to proactively plan for an unpredictable future and to respond to the drivers of improvement calls for a clear

organisational strategy. That’s where the QFES Strategy 2030 fits in.

“Strategy 2030 is an overarching approach to inform how we operate in this ever-evolving landscape,” Commissioner Carroll said.

*While we don’t know what the future will look like, we can prepare now to be agile, responsive and sustainable. Strategy 2030 will guide us in maintaining relevance into the future.*

- Katarina Carroll

“While we don’t know what the future will look like, we can prepare now to be agile, responsive and sustainable. Strategy 2030 will guide us in maintaining relevance into the future.”

## Continuous improvements

QFES leaders and key stakeholders from across the state have worked collaboratively to establish a continuous improvement agenda to support Strategy 2030 and the nine strategic initiatives, which are discussed in detail on pages 6-7 of *Response*.

These improvement areas will be developed through the initiatives and other business-as-usual work over the coming years.

The nine key initiatives align with the Strategy 2030 guiding principles, which will see QFES:

- create **capable communities** which provide local solutions to local problems
- be **interoperable**, allowing all parts of the system to work together in a coordinated way
- use **intelligence** in making decisions with greater confidence
- be **sustainable** in contributing to a capable and adaptive Queensland
- be **adaptive** in enhancing our collective ability to manage the unexpected.





# New model provides clarity for State Offices and regions

**During March 2019, two improvements aligned to the Service Alignment initiative were announced to staff, volunteers and stakeholders.**

When QFES became a department, a new organisational structure was put in place.

The model focused on State Office functions while regions essentially continued with business as usual.

QFES is now moving to a model which will focus on regional service delivery, improving clarity of command, operational capability and efficiency, and providing more autonomy for regionally-based personnel to make locally appropriate decisions.

The new model will allow regional Assistant Commissioners to have direct reporting and accountability for all regionally-based staff across all services.

It will not affect the roles or reporting lines for frontline staff and volunteers and it will not result in any job losses.

The individual services will retain their unique qualities and management; responsibility will remain with Rural Fire Service (RFS) and State Emergency Service (SES) Regional Managers and the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) Director of Regional Operations, with additional support from their regional Assistant Commissioner to identify and deliver place-based approaches.

State-based Assistant Commissioners and their support staff for SES, RFS and FRS will continue to play an important role in providing strategic oversight and guidance for support and consistency across the state.

The transition to a regional model will take place from 8 April 2019, with formalities such as human resource systems being finalised by 1 July 2019.

## SOC and ROC

QFES must also be agile to scale-up operations during disaster events.

For this reason, from May 2019 the State Operations Centre (SOC) and Regional Operations Centres (ROCs) will be required to maintain 24-hour capability.

This active oversight will ensure a seamless escalation to response when major incidents break.

These proactive improvements will increase the clarity of command, provide a strengthened process for learning and improving through each event, increase accountability and ensure systems are inclusive of all services.

Initial ROC changes will be activated 1 May with training and exercise programs in place by June and full implementation scheduled to be complete by July.



# The nine key initiatives



## Engagement Strategy

**Aim:** To embed engagement with our people, partners and communities when making important decisions or seeking positive action.

**Delivery:** The draft Engagement Strategy is currently out for consultation. Once all feedback has been reviewed and considered, the strategy will be refined, approved and published within the coming months.

“It’s vitally important for all our workforce to listen first to those who have a stake in a decision before we make it. I look forward to a future where engagement is so embedded in our daily work that it forms part of our everyday practice.”

– Michelle Tayler, Executive Director Organisational Engagement

## People and Culture Strategy

**Aim:** To complement and support the delivery of Strategy 2030 by enabling our people for success.

**Delivery:** The People and Culture Strategy is being developed in the first half of 2019, with programs of work to be identified and consultation on the implementation plan to follow in the latter half of the year.

“People are at the heart of everything we do. We rely on our staff and volunteers for their unique skills, expertise and commitment to the organisation. We therefore need to provide the right environment for success during their journey with QFES.”

– Callum MacSween, Director Human Capital Strategy

## Volunteerism Strategy

**Aim:** To create contemporary volunteer models which reflect best practice, innovation and social trends across volunteerism, and embed these models in the QFES culture and ethos.

**Delivery:** The Volunteerism Strategy has been launched. A draft implementation plan for the Volunteerism Strategy will be developed in the first half of 2019, following stakeholder engagement. The implementation plan will then be

managed through the QFES governance framework.

“The Volunteerism Strategy 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 change.”

– Troy Davies, Acting Executive Director Emergency Management and Community Capability

## Digital Transformation Strategy

**Aim:** To enable a future-ready state where people, technology, process and information are aligned and where QFES is empowered and equipped to do new things, in new ways to meet evolving demands and expectations.

**Delivery:** The Digital Transformation program will shift the organisation to new ways of thinking and working using digital, social, mobile and emerging technologies. The ongoing program, which began in late 2018, involves changing leadership approaches, introducing new thinking models, and encouraging and sustaining innovation. The focus for 2019 and towards 2030 is to increase the use

of appropriate technology to improve the way QFES’ workforce, volunteers, citizens, clients, partners, stakeholders and suppliers work together.

“One of our key drivers for Digital Transformation is to make people’s jobs easier. It’s important we understand the role of information and communications technology in enabling future QFES service delivery to our communities, and over time this will allow us to introduce more cutting-edge solutions and devices to our frontline.”

– Matt Dorfstaetter, Director Strategic Platforms and Systems Branch



# under Strategy 2030

## Legislation Review

**Aim:** To provide analysis and recommendations for legislative reform to allow QFES to meet future needs.

**Delivery:** Research, analysis and consultation has commenced for the purpose of informing opportunities for improvements to portfolio legislation in the short and long term.

“Ongoing review of the legislative framework which guides the purpose and priorities of the department, whether in part or as a whole, will help ensure the legislation remains contemporary and fit for purpose.” – *Carly Osborne, Director Legislative Review Project Team*

## Knowledge Environment

**Aim:** To create an environment that supports QFES in its delivery of policy, procedure, doctrine and other capabilities. To create this, the set of initiatives will:

- establish a set of baseline capabilities and a model to access, develop, plan and evaluate capabilities into the future;
- establish an environment of knowledge-sharing through strategic, operational and tactical policy and doctrine;
- establish a learning environment through lessons management which supports ongoing development of capability, policy and doctrine;
- establish elements of assurance which underpin the integrity of decision

making on capability through functions such as internal audit, external reporting and the Portfolio Management Office.

**Delivery:** The combination of initiatives which make up the Knowledge Environment will be implemented in stages across the remainder of 2019.

“By establishing a streamlined Knowledge Environment, which is connected to the outcomes of the other initiatives, QFES will be better able to understand and develop its capabilities, assist decision making, align investment and support frontline delivery through learning.” – *Meg Lowe, Director Policy Branch*

## Strategic Investment Plan

**Aim:** To develop a robust framework for identifying and prioritising investments, to support decision making and contribute to fiscal sustainability.

**Delivery:** The Strategic Investment Framework is currently being developed and will be presented to the Board of Management in the second half of 2019. A Strategic Investment Plan will then be developed, using the framework.

“By strengthening the decision framework, we can ensure that the funding entrusted to us by the Queensland community is invested in those things that best support the services we deliver.”

– *Sam Thompson, Director Strategic Policy and Legislation Unit*

## Emergency Management Levy Review

**Aim:** To ensure a sustainable funding base for QFES to deliver vital fire and emergency services to Queenslanders. The Emergency Management Levy (EML) supports and sustains all of QFES’ disaster management fire and rescue services.

**Delivery:** QFES is currently considering options for the EML’s contribution to a sustainable funding base for the department.

“As the needs of people across the state change, so too will the demands on our organisation. The Emergency Management Levy Review will investigate sustainable options for future EML funding of QFES to ensure communities continue to receive a world-class fire and emergency service response.”

– *Nicole Lott, Director Strategy and Planning*

## Service Alignment Plan

**Aim:** Strengthening QFES’ local capacity to ensure adequate support, resources and local decision making and that our regional service delivery considers a place-based approach.

**Delivery:** The Service Alignment Plan is currently being defined, taking into consideration the engagement with our staff and volunteers on the continuous improvement directions and the other eight key initiatives.

“As a maturing department, QFES must look for opportunities to improve how we do business. The Service Alignment Plan will enhance connections across our department, by improving collaboration, coordination and communication both internally and externally, enabling increased localised support and decision making.” – *Louise Snowdon, Executive Manager Service Integration and Alignment*





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# The science behind a fire

When bushfires raged across Queensland late last year, QFES Fire Behaviour Analysts (FBAN) were able to clearly identify the increased fire potential in the days leading up to and during the event, and predict how the fires were most likely to spread over time. Their expertise has again been called on to assist in Victoria, where bushfires burnt thousands of hectares across the state in March.

When record temperatures and a lack of rainfall combined in 2018, it resulted in unprecedented bushfires across Queensland. Similar conditions have also caused havoc for Victoria.

Predictive Services Unit Manager and Fire Behaviour Analyst Andrew Sturgess, along with five colleagues, were deployed to assist in the Victorian bushfires.

When *Response* spoke to the team in early March during their deployment, there were 18 fires burning that were not yet contained; the largest covering 40 000 hectares in the East Gippsland region, where the elevation, rugged topography, and drought-stressed fuels made conditions more dangerous than in a normal year.

The FBAN were integrated in Incident Control Centres (ICC) in Gippsland where they worked with the Country Fire Authority, Victorian Department of Environment, Land and Planning, Parks Victoria, and Victorian Police Service, as well as representatives from private plantations.

“We provide specific advice to the planning section and Incident Management Teams (IMT) about fire behaviour, fire spread, intensity and spotting. The team also say how far the fires are likely to run today or tomorrow and when a bad day might be coming and what that could look like,” Mr Sturgess said.

“The Victorian agencies have a lot of experience with managing campaign fires; they have had a number of years where alpine fires burnt thousands and thousands of hectares for many weeks, so they are very good at this,” Mr Sturgess said.

Brisbane Region Station Officer and Fire Behaviour Analyst Graeme Martin said the predictive mapping provided an “eagle eye” view of a fire.

“It’s a combination of using the existing gridded weather and Incident Weather Forecasts from the Bureau of Meteorology to analyse and run simulations and cross-reference with ground or air observations to make the best possible predictions,” he said.

“By stepping back from the individual incidents, it helps provide an eagle eye view of the fire for the people on the ground who can’t see that when they’re on the frontlines.

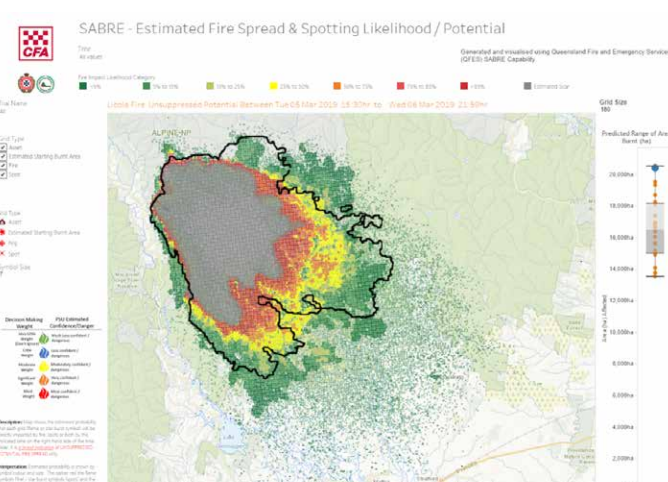
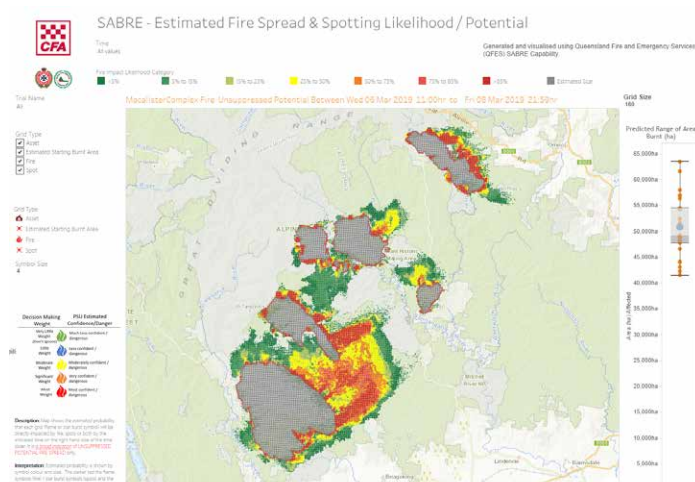
“Some of the biggest lessons I’ve learned are not so much about creating maps, but about firefighters’ safety at significant times of the day; that could be simple advice about spotting potential at a particular point on the fireline.

“Alternatively, it could be a specific time of the day, positioning of crews or whether offensive or defensive suppression strategies are more likely to be safe and effective in fighting the fire.”

Executive Manager Advanced Capability Support Unit Ben Twomey worked in the Erica ICC that managed the Licola fire which covered more than 40 000 hectares. This fire threatened remote communities and Ben was able to produce SABRE probabilistic fire spread maps (pictured) that were used operationally for the first time in Victoria. Ben said the IMT were very appreciative of these QFES-developed products.

Mr Sturgess said the QFES members would bring the lessons they learned from the deployment back with them.

“After each fire, you learn something new and each deployment is mutually beneficial – it’s not just what happens on the fire ground, but also the lessons you learn working with people with different skills, knowledge and experience as well,” he said.



QFES produced SABRE probabilistic fire spread maps to assist Victorian authorities to fight fires throughout March.

# International Women’s Day awards recognise leaders

They came from diverse backgrounds and regions for the Women in Fire and Emergency Services Awards at the Public Safety International Women’s Day event on Friday 8 March, but there was one thing that united the recipients: a dedication and commitment to the role they fulfil in the community.

Hundreds of staff and volunteers across Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) attended the event at the RNA Showgrounds to celebrate this year’s theme #BalanceforBetter, aimed at building a gender-balanced world.

Commissioner Katarina Carroll said the day’s theme reflected the need to work together to achieve balance across all areas of the workplace.

“Whether it’s balance in boardrooms, in governments, in the media, in sport or in our workplaces, by working together to achieve balance we can create a better future for ourselves, our sons and daughters.”

Ms Carroll acknowledged the hard work of award recipients in showing outstanding leadership to support, promote and improve the standing of women in QFES.

Joint winners of the Outstanding Operational Female Leader were Shakira Westdorp, from the South Eastern Region, and Melissa Collins, from the Far Northern Region.

Gold Coast Senior Firefighter Shakira Westdorp said QFES has provided her with a supportive environment to learn skills needed to serve the community.

“The crew and station officers I work with at Surfers Paradise Fire and Rescue Station are amazing. They took me under their wing, showed me how to be a really good firefighter, and conducted themselves around the station and at jobs as really good role models,” Ms Westdorp said.

“As my career has continued I feel like every firefighter I’ve come across has helped me.”

During her QFES career, Shakira has won seven Australian Titles and three World Titles for Stand-Up Paddle-boarding (Surfing Category), promoting firefighting at events and even encouraging fellow competitors to take up the career.

“Being in the sporting community, there are a lot of strong women physically and mentally, and they ask me about my job, so I tell them how to get the ball rolling to become a firefighter,” she said.

“When you’re so determined in a sporting sense, you’ve got a head for hard work and the physical fitness for the role so there’s a lot of crossover.”

As a true ambassador for QFES and its core values in activities outside of work, Shakira also brings these values as a representative firefighter delegate for the United Firefighters Union of Queensland (UFUQ).



Outstanding Female Leader - Operational - Melissa Collins.



Outstanding Female Leader - Volunteer - Rebecca Powell.





“If you want to work hard and achieve your goals, you can do whatever you want,” she said.

“Some things are going to be harder than others, but if you put in the time and effort, this is a rewarding job.”

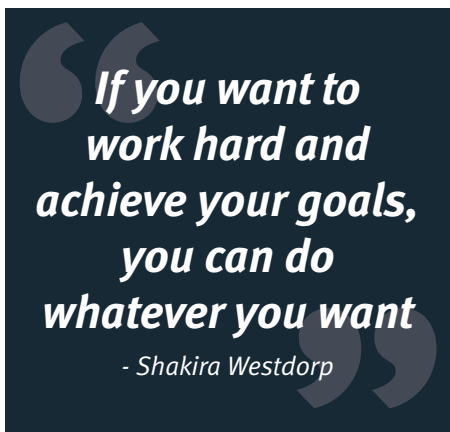
Fellow winner, Auxiliary Captain Melissa Collins from Mossman Fire Station, regularly visits primary and high schools to provide fire education and present road accident awareness programs.

“The young girls really love seeing a woman in charge and it is heartening to see the number of girls showing an interest in firefighting,” Ms Collins said.

“As a captain I also need to lead by example by gaining the respect and trust of my peers. If you’re telling the crew to go into a burning building, you have to prove to them you have their back.”

Auxiliary Firefighter Mandy Price, from North Coast Region, was awarded Mentor of the

Year and said the number of female recruits joining QFES is increasing every year.



“I travel around to schools and when we ask the question ‘Who wants to be a firefighter?’ it used to be all the boys that put their hands up, but now it’s mostly girls.

“It’s been amazing to see the show of hands change over the years.”

Rebecca Powell (RFS) received the award for Outstanding Female Volunteer Leader and Jennifer Crump (SES) and Judith Ferrari (RFS) were highly commended.

Anita Sandeman (QFES Digital and Information Branch) was recognised as Outstanding Female Leader in Support/ Administration and Kathleen Buchanan (SES) was highly commended.

Caitlin Duncan (Office of the Assistant Commissioner, Human Capital Management) received the Champion of Change Award.

Ms Carroll congratulated all award recipients and thanked them for their commitment to QFES.

QFES employs approximately 100 female firefighters, and this number is set to increase following the 2019 recruit firefighter graduations. This year’s classes of 118 members holds the largest percentage of female recruits in QFES’ history, with 24 female recruits expected to graduate.



Outstanding Female Leader, Operational Shakira Westdorp, Mentor of the Year Mandy Price, Outstanding Female Leader, Support & Administration Anita Sandeman and Champion of Change Caitlin Duncan.

# Cyclone Trevor hits far north Queensland

As Tropical Cyclone Trevor hit far north Queensland in March, the community of Lockhart River went into lockdown. But thanks to preparation by Queensland Fire and Emergency Services crews, the town was able to manage the impact of the cyclone.

Cyclone Trevor came in from the Coral Sea, hitting Lockhart River as a category three system on Tuesday 19 March.

The cyclone made landfall about 40km south-east of Lockhart River on the east coast of Cape York Peninsula.

The remote town was in lockdown from lunchtime Tuesday as it braced for wind gusts of 133km/h.

Eventually the cyclone weakened as it headed south-west, but not before leaving a trail of destruction through the town.

SES Far Northern Region Area Controller James Gegg was pre-deployed with a four-member team of SES, Emergency Management and Fire and Rescue personnel to help prepare the community for the cyclone.

Mr Gegg said Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS), also known as drones, were used to provide a full map of the township, before and after the event, providing valuable information about damage to the community.

“Drones were pre-deployed on Monday from Cairns, with mapping flights completed on Tuesday and again post-event on Friday when weather conditions were favourable,” Mr Gegg said.

“We worked with local authorities to assist residents in their awareness and preparedness, and thankfully the community heeded our advice to take necessary precautions to keep themselves out of harm’s way.

“Lockhart River Council should be commended for completing their annual community clean-up in December as this greatly reduced the risks of flying debris during a cyclonic event.”

An SES strike team flew in from Cairns on Wednesday afternoon to assist the community with the clean-up and completed 40 chainsaw jobs.

Mr Gegg led the six-person Chainsaw Strike team, which helped with the removal of fallen trees from residential areas and a hose out of the local school’s assembly and play area.

“Thanks to the efforts of SES personnel and well-practised preparation activities undertaken, the town battened down before the cyclone hit,” Mr Gegg said.



SES crews help with the recovery following Cyclone Trevor.



SES crews on their way to Lockhart River.





# Emergency services receive upgrades to enhance services

New equipment and station enhance emergency services in the south east.

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) brigades and units have welcomed a boost to their capabilities with new equipment and appliances and the opening of a brand new station on Lamb Island.

The Lamb Island Rural Fire Station was officially opened in March with the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services Craig Crawford and members of QFES' executive leadership attending the event.

Commissioner Katarina Carroll said the new multi-agency facility would help provide safe storage for emergency response appliances and give the Rural Fire Service (RFS) volunteers a base to conduct important operational training and tasks.

"RFS, State Emergency Service (SES), Queensland Ambulance Service and Energex will use this station to house vehicles and equipment, which will improve responses for all emergency incidents in the region," Ms Carroll said.

"The new facility was completed in October last year and has already proven its value when it was used as a hub for distributing drinking water when main water supplies on the Bay Islands were damaged and shut down for three days last year."

In addition to the opening of the new \$375,000 station, Lamb Island Rural Fire

Brigade (RFB) and Russell Island RFB also received two new \$200,000 Isuzu Dual Cab medium attack appliances.

SES groups in the Sunshine Coast region also received a new flood boat, outboard motor and storm damage trailers valued at almost \$130,000.

The new flood boat was named after Leading Field Operations Member Rod Bock, who has been a member of the SES since 1999 and made significant contributions to flood boat operations, training and maintenance throughout the region.

Mr Bock said he was shocked the boat was named after him and privileged to be given this honour.

"A lot of people have congratulated me and it makes me proud to be recognised for all the work I have done on the boats over the years," Mr Bock said.

Mr Crawford conducted the handover of new equipment to Caloundra, Kawana and Coolum SES groups and said it was fantastic to see their capabilities enhanced with the addition of new assets.



Sunshine Coast SES Groups celebrate new equipment including a new flood boat named after Leading Field Operations Member Rod Bock.



Lamb Island RFB and partners celebrate a new station and appliance.

# Celebrating the quiet achievers that support QFES

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) celebrated the fifth annual Peer Support Officer (PSO) Week from 11 – 17 March to recognise the important work PSOs do to improve the health and wellbeing of QFES' workforce.

PSOs are a group of volunteers who work behind the scenes to provide support and guidance to colleagues experiencing work related or personal difficulties. Due to the confidential nature of peer support work, the efforts of PSOs often go unnoticed.

During PSO Week, QFES acknowledges PSOs who have provided outstanding services with the PSO Awards, including the Olga Wilson PSO of the Year Award.

The 2018 award recipient was Senior Firefighter Richard 'Ric' Attard from South Eastern Region.

Ric said he has had many jobs in his life but none more rewarding than his career in emergency services.

"Peer support officers respond to people who have initially been to an incident, had a fatality or been in a situation that needs emotional care. But most of my work comes from non-fire related work; the personal and relationship problems that people have outside of work," Ric said.

"There are a tremendous amount of people out there who are

struggling and the difficult thing about a person's emotional state is that you can't see what is going on inside.

"I can be on the phone for hours at a time, and through the course of days, weeks and years with people, supporting and guiding them through problems in their life.

"Being a PSO can affect your personal life because you don't know when you will receive a call, but I put my hand up to do this, so there is a responsibility for me to help people when they need it.

"When you get that genuine heartfelt, sometimes tearful, thank you from someone for being there to listen and help, you are instantly humbled because the experience you gain by making someone breathe easier is very rewarding."

Ric received two nominations from colleagues and peers for his dedication to the peer support team and for his professional and empathetic approach in helping members after their involvement with critical incidents.



PSO Award winners Richard Attard and Giuseppina (Josie) Montano with Assistant Commissioner Neil Reid and Commissioner Katarina Carroll.





“Receiving this award is truly humbling and encouraging because it makes me feel I have helped someone enough for them to nominate me and submit their stamp of approval,” Ric said.

“Peer support is a vital service that can save lives in ways that aren’t so obvious.

“I encourage people to talk about their problems and seek advice because sitting in a corner and “eating from a bag of cement” to toughen up does more harm than good.

“Just talking to a friend, colleague, spouse or anybody about a problem without expecting a solution can add tremendous cathartic benefit and often alleviates emotional pain. You’ll be amazed at what sharing your problems can do for you – you’re rarely alone in your experiences.”

If you would like to contact a Peer Support Officer for a confidential chat you can find their contact details at: [www.qfes.qld.gov/fessn/](http://www.qfes.qld.gov/fessn/) or call the FESSN Office on 1300 309 508.



2018 QFES Olga Wilson PSO of the Year Award winner Ric Attard says being a PSO is very rewarding.

## PSO Award recipients

|   |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p><b>Richard Attard</b><br/>Senior Firefighter<br/>South Eastern Region</p>                          | <p>Ric was nominated for co-ordinating the South Eastern Region peer support team over an extensive period and for his professional and empathetic approach in helping members involved in critical incidents.</p>  | <p><b>Station Officer Bradley Jeffs</b><br/>South Eastern Region</p>       | <p>Brad provides proactive support across various stations in South Eastern Region to assist individuals with work or personal challenges. Brad is acknowledged by his peers for his professionalism and approachability.</p>  |
| <p><b>Christopher Nealon</b><br/>Station Officer<br/>Brisbane Region</p>                              | <p>Chris was the winner of the Award in 2011 and has been nominated this year for his professionalism and empathy in supporting colleagues from a wide range of areas and roles within QFES.</p>  | <p><b>Jody Bell</b><br/>SES Volunteer Mareeba<br/>Far Northern Region</p>  | <p>Jody has co-ordinated the Far Northern Region SES peer support team over an extensive period and has provided outstanding support to QFES members through a wide range of incidents and disaster situations. Jody is acknowledged for her generosity and compassion in assisting others.</p>  |
| <p><b>Giuseppina (Josie) Montano</b><br/>Field Officer<br/>SES Northern Group<br/>Brisbane Region</p> | <p>Nominated for her active role in supporting colleagues during disaster situations and following critical incidents. Josie has been a PSO since 2010 and has played an important role in the development of the peer support program.</p>                 | <p><b>Robert Doyle</b><br/>Captain (Ravenshoe)<br/>Far Northern Region</p> | <p>Rob has been nominated for his dedication and extensive service as a PSO for more than 13 years. Rob has been engaged with a broad range of activities that provide valuable support to QFES and his local community. He is recognised for his generosity, respectful approach, and contribution to the development of the Far Northern PSO team.</p> |
| <p><b>Cameron Jensen</b><br/>Senior Firefighter<br/>Central Region</p>                                | <p>Peers have praised Cameron for his positive nature, humility and generosity in helping colleagues through difficult times. He has been described as compassionate, “the quiet achiever”, a great listener and a champion for positive mental health.</p> |  |  |



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# Smoke Alarm laws get industry thinking

**New smoke alarm legislation will make Queensland households among the safest in the world in the event of a housefire. QFES stakeholders met with industry leaders at a 'Think Tank' in March to share ideas on driving compliance with the new Queensland legislation.**

Industry leaders, electricians, key stakeholders and QFES representatives came together for the forum at Kedron Wavell Services Club on 14 March, hosted by Assistant Commissioner for the South Eastern Region Neil Reid and organised by Regional Community Engagement Officer for South Eastern Region Hailey Hayes.

The meeting was staged to gather ideas to better inform Queenslanders of the new legislation, with a key focus on the 1 January 2022 compliance deadline for all tenanted properties.

A group of 50 stakeholders discussed issues ranging from education and awareness to compliance and enforcement at the 'Think Tank' session, facilitated by Communication, Engagement and Online Director Kath Ryan.

New smoke alarm legislation introduced on 1 January 2017 mandates that all Queensland homes have interconnected

photoelectric smoke alarms installed in each bedroom, in hallways connecting bedrooms and in the exit pathway on every level of the dwelling.

To meet the looming deadline, QFES is working with industry to ensure consistent messaging informs property managers, landlords, real estate agents and investors of the need to upgrade their smoke alarms.

Fire and Safety Technologies owner David Isaac said the new legislation offered the best protection against housefires as photoelectric smoke alarms were up to 30 minutes faster in alerting people to a smouldering fire, compared to ionisation alarms.

The forum discussed ways for industry to help disseminate key messages and improve standards, performance, compliance and enforcement, affordability and incentives and implementation timeframes.

Special guest speaker Matt Golinski spoke about the housefire which claimed the lives of his wife and three children in 2011 and the importance of the safety message when educating the public about the new legislation.

His father, Keith Golinski, requested the 'Think Tank' and said it was an important opportunity to ensure the rollout of new smoke alarms was adopted by all households ahead of the final compliance deadline of 1 January 2027.

"The worst fire is the one you or your family experiences," he said.

"Now's the time for us to look at how things can be done better."

QFES will work with industry stakeholders and representatives from the forum to disseminate the smoke alarms message as part of its paid and unpaid public awareness campaign.



# Out of the ashes

## Home fire safety paramount as Logan family reflects one year on

**On 30 January 2018, the Jones family's Waterford West home was destroyed in an early morning fire. One year on, the family invited firefighters to return as they celebrated a new beginning.**

It was a Tuesday morning, just before 7.30am; Annette Jones was at work when she took a call from her husband telling her their house had burned down after a fire started in one of the front bedrooms.

"He said everyone was safe and he'd see me after work. I thought he was joking," she said.

"When I realised he was serious, I drove home and saw the road was closed off by police and they walked me around to where the house was on fire. Everyone was out in the street, there were neighbours and lots of people around."

Loganlea First-class Firefighter Lochlan Patterson said firefighters responded and were at the house in just a few minutes, but it was already well involved by the time they got there.

"It just goes to show how quickly a fire can spread; they lost the whole top floor of the home, which was completely destroyed."

For Mrs Jones, the shock of losing her home was allayed only by the fact her family had escaped unharmed.

"I was in a bit of daze, we had some very thoughtful neighbours who gave us clothes and toothbrushes, but we had nowhere to put it. We were just standing on the side of the road and by lunchtime everyone had left, but we were still in front of our burned house with a few bags of clothing and my children."

Thankfully the family was fully insured and stayed in emergency accommodation until they could find a house to rent.

"The first few weeks were the hardest, it was sickening to drive past our house and see that it wasn't our home anymore; it had to be boarded up and it was probably three weeks until we could go back," Mrs Jones said.

"We couldn't salvage anything from the top floor, but we did manage to get the washing machine out."

While the family was able to get back to some normality while their new house was being built, the emotional toll was still being felt months later.

"We moved into a rental house about three weeks after the fire and cooked our first meal there, and our little daughter completely freaked out – even though the fire didn't start in the kitchen, she ran to the neighbour's house. Another time our other daughter had a hot shower and when she walked out the steam set off the smoke alarm which frightened us all.

"There have been a lot of tears; the kids are afraid of different sounds that remind them of the fire, and the smell of smoke – even if it's someone having a BBQ next door – means I'm pacing around for a few hours checking on everything."

After a tumultuous year, the Jones family was able to rebuild and in February they invited firefighting crews from Loganlea back to celebrate the new house.

"We've been at the new house for four months now, but the fact that it's brand new means it doesn't feel like ours. We lived in the old house for 17 years; all our memories are gone.



*The Jones family home burnt down in January 2018.*





"We decided to have a party a year after the fire and my daughter suggested we invite the fireies along. It was great they came along, it has helped us to mark the end so we can get back to everyday stuff."

Firefighter Patterson said the crew was pleased to see the family had rebuilt and were moving on.

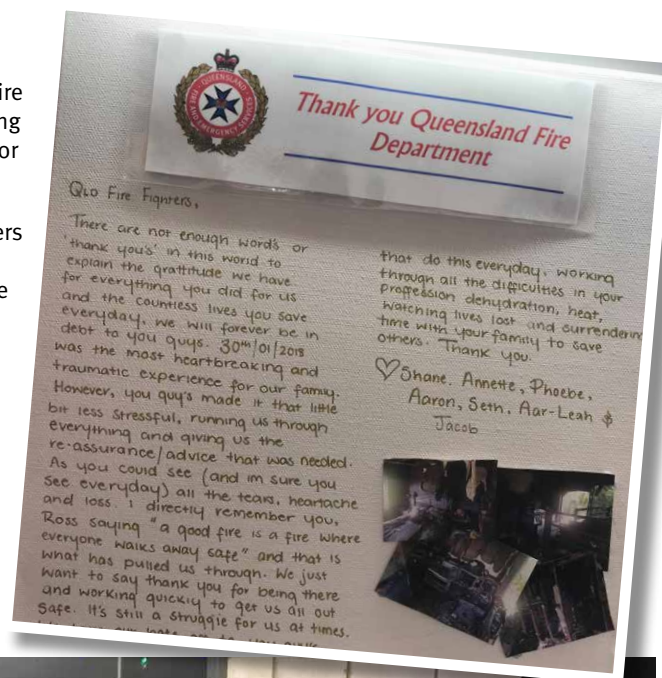
"It's uncommon for us to have post-incident contact with victims of fire, so it was great to meet the family 12 months on and listen to the experiences they had encountered," Mr Patterson said.

"They are a really nice family and they do good things in the community, but obviously there are still times when it's difficult for them – if they go to look for a photo on the wall and find that it's not there anymore."

The family presented firefighters with a letter of thanks, saying the house fire was "the most heartbreaking and traumatic experience for our family".

Mr Patterson said firefighters took the opportunity to talk to the family about fire safety.

"It was great from a firefighters' perspective to follow up with victims and see that from such a tragedy, positive new beginnings have taken place."



The Jones family with the QFES crew one year after their house burnt down.

## Keep your family safe this winter

As winter approaches, the incidence of housefires across Queensland increases – last year, more than 500 housefires were recorded in the winter months alone.

To encourage households to prepare, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services launches its annual Home Fire Safety advertising campaign in the lead up to winter.

The public awareness campaign urges people to prepare, plan and practise a fire escape in their own home, with a particular focus on families with primary school aged children.

A public event called Queensland's Great Escape is on June 28 and provides an

opportunity for individual households to rehearse an evacuation and to be prepared if a fire occurs.

Whether you have a young family or live on your own, fire happens fast. It's important to be prepared and ensure each member of the household knows what they have to do in an emergency and where to safely meet outside.

The public safety advertising campaign will feature on social media, radio and digital channels.







# SOUTH EASTERN REGION

## Emergency Services cadets visit Southport station

Wolfdene Emergency Services cadets enjoyed a behind-the-scenes look at an operational fire station and what it takes to be a Fire Communications Officer when they visited Southport Fire Station recently.

Twelve cadets and three adult leaders toured the station and Breathing Apparatus (BA) training facility, learned from Firecom Officers, checked out appliances, met the crew and shared in a sausage sizzle before returning to the PCYC.

Local Cadet Coordinator Sue Bernard said the visit was “a great insight into the behind-the-scenes of an operational station”.

Inspector Robert Bloss was a fun and informative tour guide for the day and the cadets wished to thank B Shift Southport, Firecom and Inspector Bloss for making them feel welcome and sharing their knowledge.



## SES assists in Townsville clean-up

South Eastern Region State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers deployed to Far North Queensland to assist with the Townsville floods clean-up in February.

Volunteers from the Gold Coast, Ipswich City, Logan, Scenic Rim and Somerset Units assisted in washing out and cleaning up homes and yards, roof repairs and community education tasks. They provided physical support on the ground and offered

emotional support to the affected communities. The volunteers were also on hand to provide relief to local emergency services and helped the city get back on its feet.

The teams left their own families, work and other commitments to volunteer – often taking unpaid time off or using annual leave to assist communities in need. Like all emergency services personnel, they do amazing work and are an inspirational part of the organisation.



## Logan Village enhanced capability launch

Logan Village commenced as an auxiliary station in February, adding to the operational capabilities of the Logan Command.

After much hard work, the crews at Logan Village have now obtained the required accreditation and will commence working with communities in and around the growing area of Logan Village.

Member for Logan Linus Power represented Minister Craig Crawford at an appliance handover event also attended by Deputy Commissioner Mark Roche and Acting Assistant Commissioner South Eastern Region Michael O'Neill.

Mr Power handed over the keys to a new type 2 CAFS Pumper to Station 55 Captain Paul Womersley in front of families, locals and crews from the Logan Command.







# SOUTH WESTERN REGION

## No stone unturned as SES assist police with search

On 2 February, more than 60 SES volunteers from across the South Western Region joined with members of Queensland Police Service to conduct a search. The response included specialist State Emergency Service (SES) Vertical Rescue teams from the Southern Downs area, who also deployed the Polaris Ranger Crew to assist with the heavy lifting.

The search area was on treacherous ground, with a risk of serious injury to volunteers if they didn't have secure footing. Despite

the personal risk, the SES volunteers joined with police to ensure nothing was missed during the search.

QFES used Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS), or drones, to look for clues and also ensure the safety of the searchers. This provided invaluable support and allowed large areas to be searched, reducing the risk to volunteers. It also gave some of our volunteers experience as observers and a glimpse into how drones can assist us moving into the future.



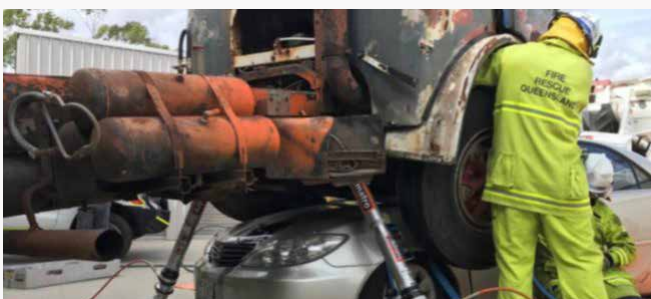
## Heavyweights in Roma

Professional Development Command Training Officers Station Officer (SO) Tim Akers and SO Stewart Lange headed west to Roma in February for a Heavy Vehicle Awareness training weekend.

Course attendees included two SES members and others from Roma, Wandoan, Miles and Charleville.

SO Lange commented on the outstanding local business support, which was key to the success of the weekend. The provision of a heavy lift truck, a water tanker semi-trailer and a flat-bed trailer were used to demonstrate important points for course attendees.

Holmatro power shores, low pressure air bags and Holmatro 50 tonne heavy lift jacks were all used during the training weekend. Acting Inspector Stewart Dundas was also acknowledged for his efforts in assisting with organising a successful weekend.



## Australia Day Award from Maranoa Regional Council

Wallumbilla SES and Rural Fire Brigade were awarded Project of the Year for the Wallumbilla Community in the Maranoa Regional Council Australia Day Awards.

The award recognised their efforts over the past two years in obtaining financial and sponsorship support for a Combined Emergency Services Facility to include vehicle and equipment storage as well as training and operational capabilities.

The facility was officially opened in 2018 and has proven to be an excellent addition to the Wallumbilla community's disaster response capability. Congratulations to all the volunteer members, without whom the project would never have eventuated.







# FAR NORTHERN REGION

## SES training exercise covers all bases

State Emergency Service (SES) Groups from across the Far Northern Region descended on the Atherton Tablelands for a weekend of training in March.

Exercise LAWSART (Land, Air Water, Search And Rescue Training) was staged at Lake Tinaroo and covered a number of educational and practical exercises for the SES Groups.

The exercise was divided over the two days and on Saturday a series of breakout workshops were delivered on topics relating to land, air and water operations for search and rescue.

The Queensland Police Service (QPS) Major Crimes Unit also delivered a keynote address about evidence searching in relation to drug and murder investigations.

On Sunday, a search and rescue exercise was conducted consisting of land-based field operations, flood boat operations, Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) or drone operations as well as field emergency operations centre and headquarters operations.

Thirteen SES Groups from across the region attended the exercise, which incorporated the activation of five flood boats of various capabilities, QFES drones, seven search and rescue teams and a total of 55 volunteers.

The training provided Far Northern Region SES Groups valuable lessons to assist in future operations, training requirements and exercises.

Members were also able to practise the use of emergency flares and get a hands-on learning experience of the new QFES radios during the exercise.



## FNR team learn new ways to approach challenges

A group of Far Northern Region QFES personnel were pleased to take part in an Emerging Leaders course in Townsville recently.

Station Officer Rory Kelliher said it was a fantastic opportunity to learn, network and brainstorm solutions to create a better workplace for the future.

“It’s interesting how we all encounter the same sort of issues no matter what industry or role we have,” he said.

“It’s been a very positive experience and beneficial in developing techniques and strategies to assist in getting the very best out of yourself and the team. I’m looking forward to building stronger relationships within our organisation and in my local area with the lessons learnt.”







# NORTHERN REGION

## Northern Region to host two recruit courses

This year two recruit firefighter training courses will be held in Townsville, the first time this training will be conducted outside of Brisbane. After conducting a feasibility study in 2018, Townsville was chosen due to the high quality of available training venues and the commitment of Northern Region in supporting the project.

Each recruit course will have 28 firefighters from all over the state. It remains a four-month intensive course to prepare recruits for their role as operational firefighters. Recruits will complete all operational skills and drills in Townsville before travelling to Brisbane for a 15-day intensive live-fire program at QCESA live fire campus. Graduation for each course will be held in Townsville.



Firefighter Development Unit – Northern Campus has developed relationships with many local vendors and will inject almost three million dollars into the local economy during 2019. Conducting Recruit Firefighter training in Townsville also allows Fire and Rescue to work collaboratively with other regionally based services, such as the Rural Fire Service, State Emergency Service and Aviation Fire and Rescue. This will help to expand the recruits' knowledge and understanding of the range of services that provide assistance to the people of Queensland.



## RFS thanks DAF for key partnership

Northern Region recently presented a certificate of appreciation to staff from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) for running three-day Grazing Land Management Workshops for QFES staff and volunteers.

The workshops have enhanced understanding of land management practices and the impacts fire and decision-making may have on these systems.

To date, two workshops have been delivered to 45 QFES members involving the use of DAF resources and facilities as well as a trip to a rural property.

The workshops are part of the Rural Fire Service's Project 'KEAHI', aiming to build on the knowledge of staff and volunteers in the appropriate application of fire in the landscape.







# Looking after members' retirements savings since 1912.

Welcome to super without surprises

The logo for QSuper, featuring a stylized white 'Q' followed by the word 'Super' in a white sans-serif font.



# CENTRAL REGION

For this edition of Response, Central Region has featured two of its valued female members in celebration of International Women's Day on March 8.

## Rural Firefighter's valuable contribution to Eungella

Dalrymple Heights Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) Secretary Tamara Smith has the vital role of coordinating community support and relief for firefighters.

Tam and husband Ian "Stringy" Smith and their families have seen multiple activations in recent years, including Tropical Cyclones Ului and Debbie and the bushfires which threatened the Pioneer Valley in November 2018.

During the severe bushfires, Eungella was attacked on four fronts and Rural Fire Service (RFS) volunteers and community members worked around the clock for two weeks fighting fires.

Tam's role proved vital during the fires. When the RFS shed, set up as the communications centre, had to be relocated to the Eungella Community Hub across the road, she tasked her nephews and son with making sandwiches and providing supplies to volunteers while they battled the fires.

Following the fires, Tam said a visit from Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk and Commissioner Katarina Carroll showed support for the community and demonstrated the size and scale of the event.

The region also recently received a new RFS vehicle which they affectionately named Annastacia.

Tam is most proud of how the community has built resilience and has a positive attitude to helping when their roads, power supply, supply routes, lives, property and environment is threatened.

"Volunteering for your community brings a lot of satisfaction and builds resilience, you don't have to be on the front line, you can make a difference by volunteering any way you can," Tam said.

*Contributions: Thank you to Carla Adams (story) and Alex Battye (image)*



Tam Smith, Ian Smith, Jo Freegard, Wayne Smith and Nathan Doyle.

## A walk down memory lane at Mackay fire station

Gillian, a Volunteer in Policing (VIP) was treated to a walk down memory lane when she visited Mackay Fire and Rescue Station recently.

Gillian's late father, Rees Greenlees, was a former station officer at Mackay. In 1998 they named a Telescopic Aerial Pumper (TAP) in his honour.

Gillian, along with Senior Constable Victoria Hubbard, took a tour of the fire station and saw the plaque and the honour board proudly displaying Rees Greenlees' name.

Firefighter Horner led the tour while Gillian reminisced about her father's time working as a firefighter as well as the work he did in the 2/11 Australian General Hospital during the war before he joined the fire service.



## SES provides exhilarating way to connect to the community

After 10 years' dedicated service to the Agnes Water State Emergency Service (SES) group, Karen Thompson says she's proud to do her bit to keep communities safe.

"We have responded to many varied requests for help including removal of trees from driveways or the roof of buildings after storms; winching cars from bogs or creek beds; traffic management at accidents or community events; assisting at incidents such as plane crashes and marine disasters," she said.

"Whatever skills you have, the SES has a role for you to play."

Karen said as Group Leader of Agnes Water SES, her aim was to broaden the skill base so the group could provide even more assistance when needed. She said the 2018 fires allowed locals to see the role the SES played in the community.

"The SES was able to assist the community in so many ways during the recent catastrophic fires as our local knowledge of the area and facilities available proved invaluable," she said.

"It was hot, tiring work and each long day brought new tasks and challenges, but it was also exhilarating. I felt proud that I was able to 'do my bit' in these difficult times and that our

small group was able to provide well maintained equipment and supplies to visiting SES personnel."

Karen said volunteers provided many essential services, especially for small towns.

"As a volunteer in the SES and other community groups, I benefit in so many ways. I get to meet a great bunch of people who come together for a common goal and who are there for each other," she said.





# NORTH COAST REGION

## Noosa 'Fit for Task' walk

Noosa State Emergency Service (SES) members participated in a "Fit for Task" walk along the fire trails of the Tewantin National Park recently.

The volunteers covered approximately nine kilometres over different terrain with varying degrees of difficulty. After leaving McKinnon Drive, they made their way to Mt Tinbeerwah lookout and back to the bus. After the "Fit for Task" walk, the group headed to the Tewantin shed for a well-deserved morning tea break, organised by SES member Bruce McDonald.

The exercise was designed to allow members to check their fitness levels over various terrain at their own pace. It was well received by those who attended and many commented that they would like to undertake more exercises like this to increase their fitness and wellbeing.

It was also a great opportunity to speak with the community, and there were a number of families on the track at the same time. A seven-year-old girl offered to carry the pack of one of the SES volunteers, saying she would like to join the SES when she gets older. She was a great helper and her mum was impressed with the interaction as well.



## Mary Valley Recruitment Day

Emergency services came together for the Mary Valley Recruitment Day recently.

State Emergency Service Gympie Unit had their flood boat and storm trailer on show.

The Fire and Rescue Service's Sierra Command Unit from Caloundra were also there, while 452A from Imbil and 745A from Kenilworth had hoses laid out for people to test their ability to knock over traffic cones. They also encouraged members of the public to practice the Auxiliary entry fitness test and everyone had lots of goodies to give away as well.

The emergency service crews then demonstrated a joint road crash rescue demonstration, extracting four casualties from a vehicle.

The day was a great success with engaging displays, educational demonstrations, great food and even a jumping castle to keep the children entertained.



## Maryborough blood donation champs!

The Australian Red Cross Blood Service presented a trophy and plaque to QFES members at their Fraser Coast regional office in Maryborough recently.

The trophy acknowledged blood donors who took part in the RED25 corporate challenge. QFES came second overall behind the Fraser Coast Regional Council and ahead of all other emergency service organisations in the region.

A small number of donors consistently donate and Red Cross representative Jacinta O'Brien said their 129 donations via the RED25 event would help save 387 lives.

Fraser Coast QFES staff donated through the Hervey Bay Blood Donation centre and were also acknowledged for achieving the donation goal they set themselves.







# BRISBANE REGION

## Sandgate crews catch up with “Groover”

Northern Brisbane firefighters took time out recently to catch up with former colleague Dave “Groover” Galvin.

Groover was a Station Officer at Roma Street Fire Station when he had an accident that resulted in him having to leave QFES in 2010.

Since then, at least once a year, Christ Butterworth and the C Shift crew from Sandgate Station organise a get together with Groover.

This year they gathered at the bottom of the cliffs at Shorncliffe pier for a sausage sizzle.

It was great to see so many QFES members attend the catch up, and special thanks to Steve Holland for his efforts at the event.



## New Road Crash Rescue Training Facility at Wishart

The Mt Gravatt Command and Southern Zone have opened the Road Crash Rescue (RCR) Training Facility at Wishart Fire Station.

The newly completed roof and associated infrastructure will allow crews to train in all conditions, year-round and with direct access to state level trainers and specialist RCR vehicles and equipment.

This facility will provide long-term strategic benefit to the region by contributing to the ongoing professional development of RCR skills and increasing awareness of new car technologies for firefighters of all ranks within the Southern Zone and Brisbane Region.



## Doctor’s inspirational story sparks friendship

On 31 January 2010 Dinesh Palipana was involved in a serious car crash on the Gateway Motorway and suffered a spinal cord injury which left him a quadriplegic.

Wishart Fire and Rescue Station 517A and 517K crews attended the accident, and in February the six crew members – Station Officers Bruce Quinn and Ian Ames and firefighters Carl Van Zyderveld, Karl Ryder, Sasha Jelacic and Luke Kennedy – met with Dinesh and his mother, Chithraheer.

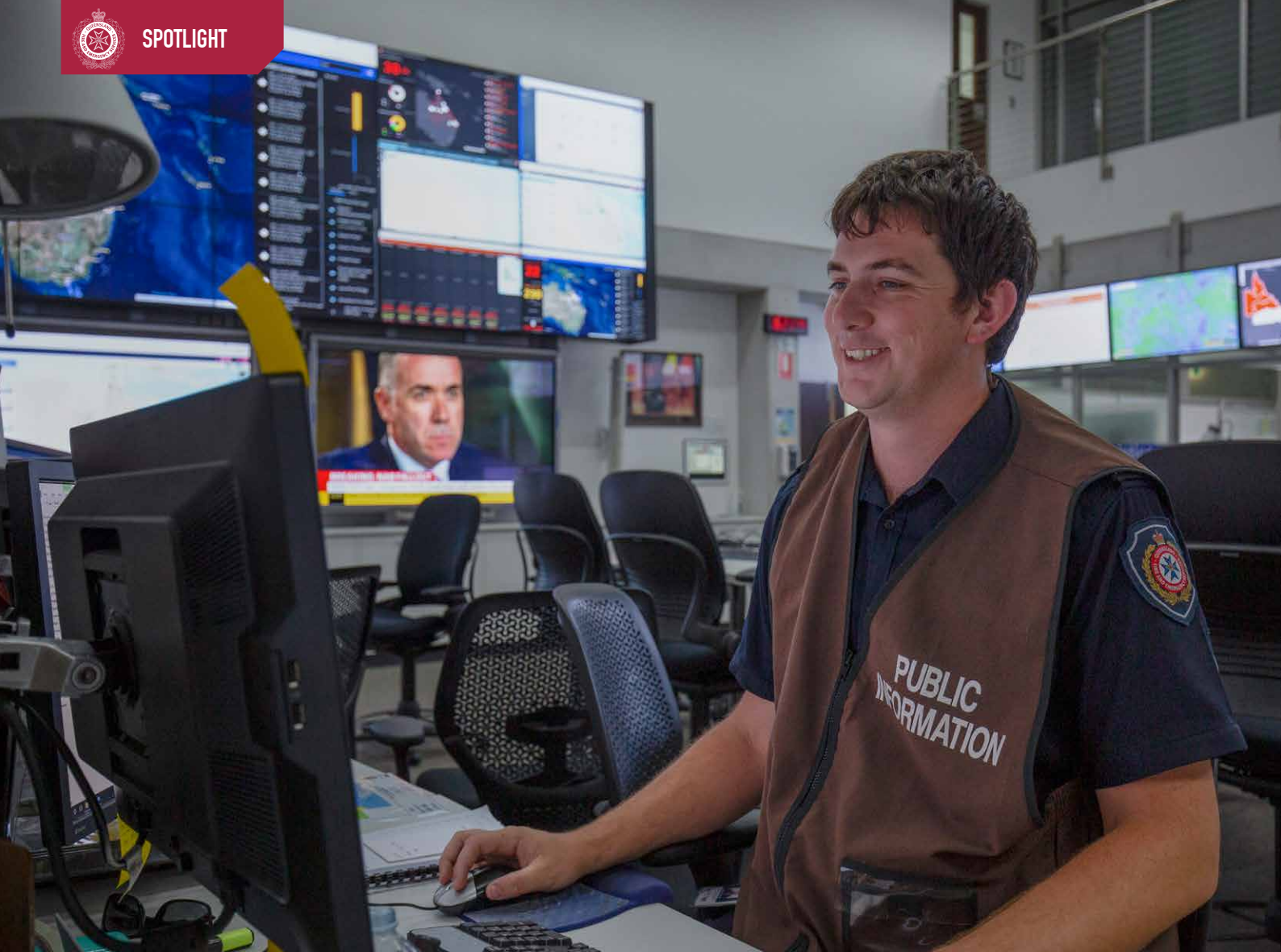
Since his accident, Dinesh has gone on to finish medical school, graduating in 2016 and now works at Gold Coast University Hospital’s accident and emergency department. He was awarded the Order of Australia medal in the 2019 Australia Day Honours list.

Dinesh has also spoken to QFES recruits from the Queensland Combined Emergency Services Academy (QCESA) who have completed the road crash rescue component of their training, and his warmth and tenacity have led to strong friendships with a number of QFES staff.



## Special Thanks

On Sunday 3 March, Chermiside Fire Station B-Shift made a huge impact on a young boy and his family as they participated in his “Make-A-Wish” fulfilment. They brought both trucks and set up the Telescopic Aerial Pumper’s water monitor. It was a major highlight for him and his entire family – many of whom had flown interstate. Sadly, the boy passed away not long after this visit. An enormous thank you to B-Shift Chermiside Crew: Tim Molloy, Gary Hall, Peter Tomkins, Josh Park, Robert Miller, and Steven Ryan.



*Brisbane South Firefighter Mitchell Rogers enjoyed working as a Public Information Officer during the January floods.*

# The faces behind the flood response

**When a northern monsoon trough hit Queensland in January bringing record floods, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) members played a variety of roles in helping with the preparation, response and recovery.**

Emergency Management Coordinator for the Northern Region Andy Pethybridge said council areas covering Townsville, Burdekin, Charters Towers, Flinders and Richmond as well as those in the Mt Isa district were all impacted.

“It was a difficult challenge in a difficult environment – a lot of areas had record floods observed in that time,” he said.

For Mr Pethybridge, the work to prepare his region is a year-round commitment so when disaster strikes, the response is not only quick but effective.

“My role starts out-of-season to provide guidance and education to build resilience in these communities in conjunction with the Local Disaster Management Group members, so when a disaster strikes there is a link from QFES to these communities,” he said.

Mr Pethybridge provided a range of support to local councils and helped to coordinate everything from delivery of essential medical supplies and food supplies to evacuations, emergency alerts and media responses.

While Mr Pethybridge was working with communities in the north, Brisbane South Firefighter Mitchell Rogers stepped out of the





station and into the role of a Public Information Officer (PIO) at the State Operations Centre in Brisbane.

“I worked under the section leader and my role was to maintain awareness of Emergency Alerts and information that were being issued from councils and Local Disaster Management Groups, and also monitor social media occurring across different groups and pages, both official government and non-official sites, and write reports on those,” he said.

“I’d never done a PIO role to that scale before and it was interesting to see the variety of information I had access to.

“It was good being able to see the wider picture, not only involved in what I was doing as a PIO, but also compared to logistics, planning and other areas.”

Mitchell said the atmosphere at the State Operations Centre was different to working at a fire station.

“When you’re on shift you’re really concentrated on what your station is doing and any incidents happening at a local level, so it’s good to be able to see (what QFES does) at a broader level.”

The experience has given Mitchell – who is also a volunteer with the Birnam Rural Fire Brigade in the South East Region – the desire to complete his PIO training to become a section leader.

He encourages others to take up the opportunity to learn more about QFES’ operations during natural disasters.

“It’s good to get involved and see things from that aspect, it’s something you don’t often get to see as a fire, so if you can receive the training it’s a great opportunity.”

Meanwhile back in Townsville, Fire Communications Manager for the Northern Region, Tina Kimlin and her team coordinated emergency responses.

Sunday 3 February proved the busiest day for the Fire Communications Centre in Townsville, and after having to redirect Triple Zero (000) calls to other Fire Communications Centres across the state, those in Townsville concentrated on dispatching and monitoring rescues.

As the rain continued and the floodwaters rose, Mrs Kimlin said all Fire Communications staff on shift chose to continue working and night shift crews were called to come in early, while they could still get through some of the roadways.



Emergency Management Coordinator Andy Pethybridge with Mayor of Flinders Jane McNamara.

“There was one incident we were called to in Idalia where a mother was holding her baby above chest height in the water. The swiftwater crews were tasked the job and when they arrived no one was in sight. We phoned the original caller as this job was allocated through ICEMS. The caller, a grandmother, was extremely distressed. I managed to calm her down for her to give me enough information relating to where her daughter should be. We were able to send the crews there in time to rescue the lady and her baby. I rang the grandmother back to let her know everything was fine and daughter and baby were safe and she burst into tears again.”

Mrs Kimlin said in these stressful situations, it was important Fire Communications Officers adhered to operational requirements and stayed calm under pressure.

“The main thing to remember is that you’re not in that dangerous situation, so it’s your job to make sure everyone else is okay, to prioritise and follow procedures.”

She said the team of 15 staff, with experience ranging from 18 months to 25 years within the service, were close knit and supported each other throughout the extended extreme weather event.

“They all did a fantastic job and I am very proud to be part of this team.”

Peer Support Coordinator for the Northern Region Daryl Robinson was one of 12 peer support officers, along with two counsellors, to travel to Townsville to support staff and volunteers after the floods.

“When people come away from their families and relationships, life goes on back home and it can be hard for them to cope and sometimes it’s easier to talk to someone like me,” he said.

“I spoke to someone out west who had lost fence lines and stock, but they were more worried about their neighbours than their own losses, and that’s what is so incredible, that people care about each other even when they’re going through hard times themselves.”

Mr Robinson said his role as a Peer Support Officer made him appreciate other people’s commitment to their communities and to QFES.

Ongoing support is available for anyone affected, via the Fire and Emergency Services Support Network on the QFES website [www.qfes.qld.gov.au/fessn/](http://www.qfes.qld.gov.au/fessn/)



PSO team deploy to Townsville Doug Scott, Andrew Vaughan, Anita Artiemiew, Daryl Robinson, Ric Attard, Heather French.



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# Swiftwater rescue training ramps up in Brisbane

Statistics show there are more rescues from swiftwater situations than rescues from fires. As Queensland is well known for its storm and cyclone season, it's important that our swiftwater rescue crews sharpen their skills each season.

In early December, Brisbane Region swiftwater technicians participated in a swiftwater training exercise held at Wivenhoe Dam.

The annual training exercise is usually held over four days – covering all shifts – in the lead up to storm and cyclone season.

Unfortunately, this year only D Shift were able to complete the training due to the severe state-wide fires during late November and early December.

Technical Rescue Training Officer Adam Martin said the exercise allowed technicians to prepare and train in real swiftwater environments.

“We’re fortunate enough to work in conjunction with Seqwater who allow us access to an amazing facility, where we are able to simulate swiftwater situations,” Mr Martin said.

“The technicians practised their skills in the areas of self-rescue techniques, “throw bagging” and setting up rope systems and casualty handling in the water and boats.

“We also set up more complicated systems, which simulated the recovery of casualties with foot entrapments and casualties on top of submerged vehicles and clinging to trees.

“The skills developed during the exercise included swimming in swiftwater, reading hazards in the water, as well as technical skills like paddling and flip drills.

“During storm and cyclone seasons, swiftwater rescue teams not only perform emergency rescues, but also assist with support for

medical emergencies, evacuating and relocating residents and resupplying towns with food and medication.

“This type of annual training provides an important opportunity for our technicians to brush up on their skills, ensuring they can continue to provide a world-class service to the Queensland community during critical times,” Mr Martin said.







Emergency Services Cadets have launched three new units with 94 new members in Charters Towers, Hinchinbrook and South Burnett. Hosted by Charters Towers SES, Ingham Flotilla Coast Guard and Nanango SES, the cadets thanked emergency services personnel who helped get the units up and running.



Colleen Zaloum and 'Madeline' from Redcliffe SES Group at an International Women's Day event, showcasing the equipment used by a flood boat coxswain and working at heights operator.



Former SES cadet and Olympic cycling gold medalist Anna Meares thanked Bundaberg SES Unit for assisting with the Cycle Fest International event in February.



Gladstone Rural Fire Service's command conference was a great day with about 80 brigade officers attending. "Moving forward by looking back" was this year's theme.

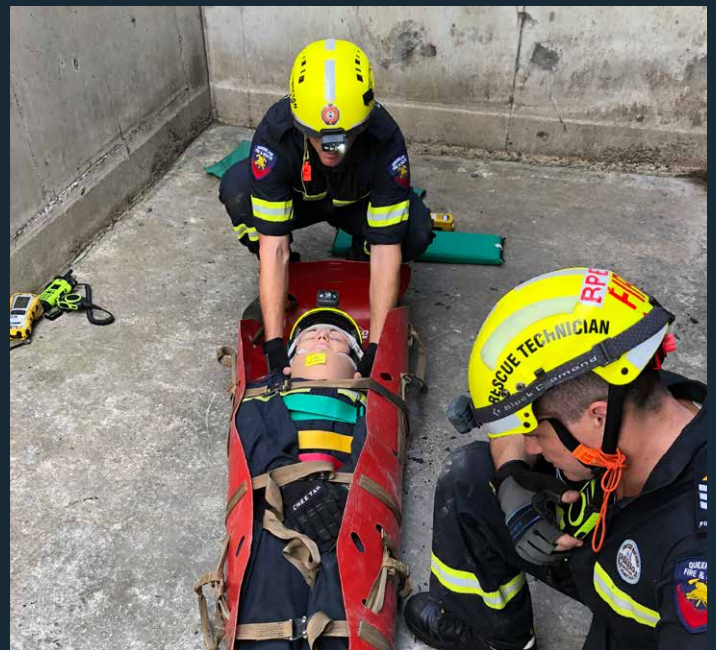


These 85 new QFES staff members, pictured with members of the ELT, got off to a great start with another inspiring induction forum in Brisbane last month.





Firefighter Derek Walsh represents QFES at a Red Cross Blood Service event in Brisbane in February. The event was celebrating organisations who are major blood donors.



QFES Brisbane Region Technical Rescue team completed confined space training at the Brisbane Transit Centre in March.



QFES recently donated around 150 lunchboxes to our charity partner Zephyr Education to help children in domestic and family violence shelters get back to school.



QFES, alongside partner organisations, recently held a media launch to promote the Sunshine Coast Emergency Services Community Expo to be held in May.



QFES attended the Brisbane Home Show in March.



South Eastern Region SES Units are pumped to travel to Townsville to assist with flood response and recovery.



# Celebrating a lifetime of diligent service

The average person spends about three-and-a-half years in one job. Multiply that by 15 and you're getting closer to the number of years Rod Silver spent as a firefighter.

Many young boys dream of becoming a firefighter when they grow up, but Rod Silver's dream became a reality as a teenager growing up in Victoria – and it's a role he stuck with for more than 51 years.

Mr Silver developed a passion for fighting fires when he was 13 and signed up as a Country Fire Authority junior in Victoria, before eventually moving to Queensland.

"Not many little boys realise their dream of becoming firefighters and that time in the junior brigades was probably a highlight," he said.

"I started turning out to fires at 16, I didn't have a licence, so I would put on the helmet and coat and ride the bike to the station and then to the fire."

He described his early years in the firefighting service as "a boy on a man's mission".

After serving in both the Victorian and Queensland firefighting services, Mr Silver saw many fires in his tenure, including the 1983 Ash Wednesday fires in Victoria.

"I worked in South-West Victoria, at Warrnambool, for 19 years and unfortunately not long after arriving there ... in 1983, witnessed the Ash Wednesday fires, which had a big impact."

Mr Silver fought alongside fellow firefighters and volunteers to bring the 520 000 hectare fire under control and described the event as a "steep learning curve".

"Coming to Queensland was another learning curve to change jurisdictions, but the bread and butter of the fire service doesn't change wherever you go," he said.

Having also served overseas, including in California in the United States, Mr Silver said he had witnessed much change across equipment and appliances and had learnt something new "every step of the way".

He retired in December 2018 and admitted it was hard to "turn the switch off" but would remain part of the broader firefighting community in retirement.



Building Approval Officers Rod Silver, Garry Cosmo and Graham Pointing.





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