

RESPONSE

RESILIENT AND READY FOR THE PEOPLE OF QUEENSLAND

QUEENSLAND'S OFFICIAL FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES MAGAZINE EDITION 28



**ALWAYS
READY**

November fires 2019

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ON THE COVER

The Rural Fire Service at the Pechey fire on 19 November 2019.

Photo: Strategic Content Services

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Address: Response magazine, Communications, Engagement and Online Branch, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, GPO Box 1425, Brisbane, QLD, 4001

Editor: Jarryd Luke
Phone: 07 3635 3314
Email: Magazine.Editor@qfes.qld.gov.au
Advertising: Martyn Hewett
Email: mkhewett@bigpond.com
Graphic Design: Dexart Graphic Design
Email: dexartgraphicdesign@gmail.com

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FOREWORDS



GREG LEACH
Commissioner

QUEENSLAND FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Thank-you for the warm welcome you have extended me as I join the QFES family. I am very excited to be here and to share my first foreword for Response.

I know you've had a challenging year – bouncing from one critical incident to another. I've been impressed with how seamlessly you come together as one QFES – supporting each other when times are tough and fatigue kicks in. You simply roll up your sleeves to get the job done.

I would like to add my thanks to the outpouring of gratitude we've received from the public for the courage and resilience you've shown this year. You should all be enormously proud of your efforts.

We know there are both opportunities and challenges ahead and I look forward to working with you to embrace them, and build positive solutions for QFES and Queensland communities.

Having resources on the ground is essential, and we will request support from our interstate colleagues when needed. However, with so much of the country facing some of the worst ever seen fire conditions, we must consider all available options to respond to whatever Mother Nature will throw at us.

Communicating with our people, partners and stakeholders will be an essential part of our response and ongoing continuous improvement work. Our corporate and operational initiatives and projects play a large role in building a strong future. They also ensure we adapt to meet the community's needs as disasters continue to change.

The upcoming storm and cyclone season has been dubbed "Operation Dovetail" because it will overlap with the bushfire season. We may be simultaneously hit by bushfires, storms, cyclones and floods and I have unwavering confidence we will rise to the challenge.

I would like to thank Acting Commissioner Mike Wassing for his outstanding leadership over the past six months. He has guided you through unprecedented fire conditions with calm, steadfastness and confidence. I look forward to working with him, and all of the Executive Leadership Team as we enter an exciting new decade.

Over the next few months I will be travelling across the state, and look forward to the opportunity to get to know many of you.

I wish you and your loved ones a safe and happy festive season. It could be a busy time for some of you who may be called on to respond to emergencies, so please take time to rest where you can.



JOHN BOLGER
Acting Deputy Commissioner

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, VOLUNTEERISM AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

QFES staff and volunteers have faced harsh conditions in the ongoing bushfire season across the state. I want to thank all QFES members for giving your all to protect Queenslanders, their properties and their businesses. Australia, and the world, has watched you band together and marvelled at your resilience as you turn up day after day to protect and serve your communities.

Whether you work for the Fire and Rescue Service, or volunteer for the Rural Fire Service or State Emergency Service, you should all be proud of your achievements. While you all wear your individual badges, it's times like this that demonstrate we really are one QFES.

It never ceases to amaze me how quickly our staff and volunteers rally together – united, strong and passionate about defending their communities.

The bushfire season has been unforgiving, and there will likely be more to come, but I stand fast in the knowledge that we, and the community, are capable and prepared to respond to whatever comes our way.

While we have lost homes and structures this fire season, we haven't lost any lives, and that is a testament to your efforts, and the community listening to and acting on our advice. We have issued 2,200 bushfire warnings from July to November, which demonstrates the amount we are communicating with the public in an effort to keep them informed, prepared and safe.

Due to the significant bushfire operations, QFES staff and volunteers who require a blue card, now have until 31 March 2020 to apply. Thank you to those who have already submitted your application.

I would like to acknowledge the outstanding leadership of Acting Commissioner Mike Wassing over the last few months. He has led us through these unprecedented events with confidence, commitment and a steady hand.

In the year ahead, our staff and volunteers will remain ready to meet the needs of Queenslanders, no matter what happens. I am excited for 2020, and QFES' ongoing transformation, as we work towards creating a strong department.

Thank you again to all our staff and volunteers for showing such dedication and drive for protecting Queensland. I wish you all a safe and happy holiday season.



HON CRAIG CRAWFORD
Minister

MINISTER FOR FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

I would like to recognise your tireless efforts in battling the recent bushfires. Whether you've been on the front line or behind the scenes, you are to be commended for your selflessness, courage and dedication to serving and protecting the people of Queensland.

The severity of this current bushfire season continues to challenge us, but as Queenslanders, we always rise to it. Unfortunately, the season is set to continue, with storm and cyclone seasons fast approaching, so please remember to look after yourself, and each other, as we continue to battle whatever Mother Nature may throw at us.

The recent launch of Get Ready Week sent a clear message to Queenslanders- take steps now to protect what's most important to you. When it comes to extreme weather events in Queensland, we know it's not a matter of 'if' but 'when'.

The Premier and I welcomed new QFES Commissioner Greg Leach to Parliament House last month where we spoke about the challenges and opportunities ahead. Greg has managed responses to some of our nation's worst fire disasters in his 32-year career so his vast knowledge and experience will prove a valuable asset to us. I'm sure you will join me in welcoming Greg to the QFES family.

Acting Commissioner Mike Wassing and I welcomed 28 new recruits to QFES at the graduation of Firefighter Recruit Course 107T in Townsville. They will now put their training into practice on different frontlines across the State.

This year's SES Week Awards ceremony recognised the men and women in orange who have dedicated over 15,900 hours helping Queenslanders since July. I make special mention of William Sterling of Buchan Point for taking home the Minister's Cup for Queensland SES Member of the Year.

As 2020 fast approaches, I hope you can take time to reflect on the amazing feats we've achieved this year. From monsoons, cyclones, and bushfires, to our everyday role, you have all made a difference to the lives of Queenslanders. I hope you can take some time to enjoy the holiday season with your loved ones, and I look forward to starting a new decade with you in January.

QLD's marathon FIRE SEASON

With a severe bushfire season upon us, QFES is taking an evolving approach to planning and firefighting to protect Queenslanders.

After fighting more than 1800 bushfires across September and October, we were once again challenged when conditions peaked at the start of November.

The prevailing drought conditions combined with hot, dry winds, and unseasonal temperatures, to spark bushfires across the state.

This incident brought significant challenges with fires igniting at lower fire danger ratings than expected, drier fuels, steep and difficult terrain and fires burning through the night.

The severity and duration of this year's bushfire season has pushed QFES staff and volunteers to respond to and fight fires burning faster, harder and longer than

ever before. With little reprieve between critical incidents, Acting Commissioner Mike Wassing described the current season as a "...marathon with sprints in between."

One of the largest sprints came when the changing weather conditions saw the number of active bushfires peak at close to 100 on a single day. With bushfires burning from Far North Queensland, to the New



Battling the Pechey fire on 19 November 2019.

3600+ firefighters

40 aircraft

1200+ bushfire warnings

SES: 167 Agency Support Requests

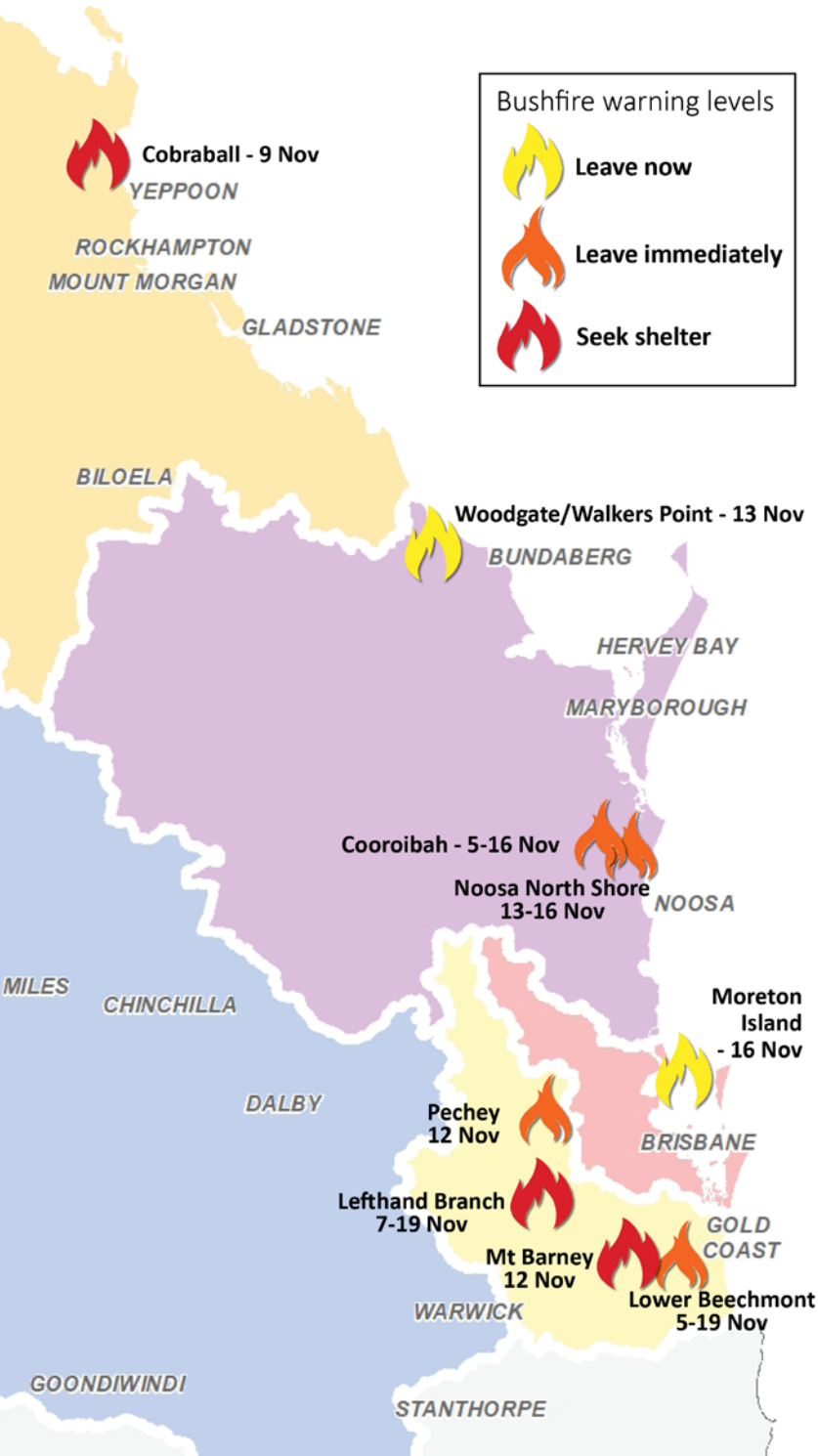
South Wales border, the severity, breadth and landscape prompted a range of new defences to battle the blazes.

"Boots on the ground"

As the bushfire incident continued, managing competing priorities became a challenge. Our staff and volunteers were deployed across the state, with some travelling long distances to lend their support.

We called upon our interstate and international colleagues, with more than 150 personnel from Tasmania, Victoria, Northern Territory, Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and New Zealand providing essential support.

Over 3600 firefighters were involved in this incident response and having these "boots on the ground" allowed us to plan for and respond to the bushfires as they



Some of the major fires during November.

started, grew and changed course. Our workforce was essential to ensuring there has been no loss of lives.

On 11 November, the Chief of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) announced their support to Queensland and New South Wales, providing personnel to clear land and create firebreaks in key areas such as Canungra. They also offered support with essential logistics, transport, engineering and air observation support.

“Angels in the sky”

Aircraft played a major role in supporting firefighters to contain the fires, with 40 deployed across the state. We received many messages from grateful Queenslanders describing the air presence as “angels in the sky.”



Up to 37 were airborne on a given day, providing widespread coverage across the state. Our SES volunteers contributed by refuelling aircraft to get them back in the air as soon as possible.

In a first for air operations, a 737 Large Air Tanker was deployed from New South Wales to complete three 15 000-litre drops of fire retardant on Pechey State Forest, ahead of the fire front in a bid to slow the advancing fire.

The retardant contained a red oxide pigment to allow firefighters to see it on the ground. Large Air Tankers had only been previously used with other suppressants.

Queensland also became the first emergency services jurisdiction in Australia to contract a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter for 45 days



Clockwise from far left:

- Appliances on scene at the Noosa fire.
- After parts of Noosa were evacuated, SES members entered exclusion areas to feed and water livestock.
- Smoke seen from the water at Burrum Heads. Photo by Heli Pep.
- RFS at the Pechey fire.
- Waterbombing at the Noosa fire.
- The fire at Cunninghams Gap. Photo by Hugh Strong.
- Waterbombing on 12 November.

to boost our air response. Based at the Toowoomba Aerodrome, the ex-military aircraft was converted to carry up to 3400 litres of water. With a range of 630km and a cruise speed of 250km/h it can travel further, faster and deliver more water than the current Helitak aircrafts.

We also used military aircraft for mapping major bushfires such as Cobraball and Pechey. This deployment provided high-quality mapping to aide our response, along with valuable experience for military personnel.

“Every new fire stretches our resources”

With so many firefighters deployed, and the perseverance of significantly heightened weather conditions, a State of Fire

Emergency was declared for the first time in Queensland on 9 November. It applied to 42 Local Government Areas (LGAs) and prohibited the lighting of all types of outdoor fires and banned certain activities that can cause fires to ignite.

The declaration was the next step from active fire bans that were in place across large parts of the state and vital to preventing new bushfires from starting, which could pose a danger to lives and property. The declaration was lifted from 36 LGAs on 20 November and revoked on 22 November.

“Making sure loss of life remains zero”

Protecting Queenslanders and their properties is always our priority, so sharing information and bushfire warnings so they



The Villeneuve fire. Photo by Kellie Stickler.



Drawings sent to the Highfields ICC.



Appliances from Delaneys Creek Rural Fire Brigade. Photo by Dan Fyfe.

can take necessary action is a key part of managing any critical response. QFES informs the community through the media, social media and various website updates.

Between 7 and 25 November, our Media Team issued more than 1200 bushfire warnings, which the SDCC Watch Desk reinforced with nearly 60 Emergency Alerts. This staggering amount is more than double the bushfire community warnings that were issued in the 2018 November/December bushfires.

Sharing this amount of bushfire warnings became a significant task with 325 media interviews coordinated and more than 600 Facebook posts. Queenslanders turned to social media for bushfire updates, with the QFES Facebook page growing by more than 54 000 followers over this time.

Our social media presence was picked up internationally, which led to media interviews with the BBC, CNN and World English News Istanbul.

“Thank you for everything you do”

We were overwhelmed with messages of support, thanking QFES for our firefighting efforts. From those on the ground, to those supporting behind the scenes, Queenslanders were touched by your efforts.

From food donations, offers of hot showers and beds, interest in volunteering and drawings from children, people wanted to show their appreciation in any way they could.

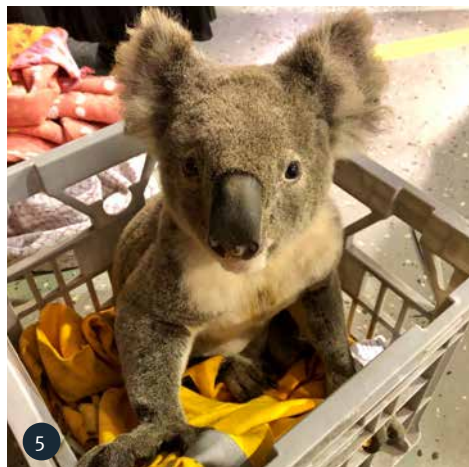
Your communities recognise your bravery, courage and selfless acts to protect them, their families and friends.

This is what you do every day, but in the current situation, it means so much more.

Please continue to look after yourselves, and your mates, and know how much Queenslanders appreciate what you are doing to keep them safe.



Spirits remained high through it all



- 1 – Near the Lower Beechmont and Tarome fires. Photo by Benjamin Macht.
- 2 – SES members supporting the bushfire response.
- 3 – The Aratula Rural Fire Brigade protected a home with support from Brisbane Region.
- 4 – Many QFES members, including Brendan West on the Sunshine Coast volunteer for both the RFS and SES.
- 5 – Maryvale Rural Fire Brigade rescued two koalas and a sugar glider from the Spicers Peak Lodge fire.
- 6 – Three good samaritans visited B Shift Acacia Ridge with soft drinks and chocolates for a much needed sugar hit.
- 7 – SES supporting air base operations at Kybong, Gympie.
- 8 – A creative way of saying thanks in Clayfield.
- 9 – Members of the Woodgate Rural Fire Brigade, all over 70 years of age, affectionately known as Dad's Army.
- 10 – Firefighters returning home to Western Australia after supporting QFES.



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Meet Commissioner Greg Leach

Shortly after Commissioner Leach moved to Queensland to take up his new position, *Response* sat down with him to find out more about him and his plans for leading QFES into the new decade.

I'm very honoured to officially begin my tenure as the Commissioner of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES). It's a privilege to lead a workforce that is held in such high-esteem by the community it serves and protects.

While this new role has seen me move states, I know the one thing we have in common is the commitment to providing a world-class emergency service and protecting the community from disasters.

Like many of you, I've dedicated my life to the emergency services and am passionate about protecting the community. I've worked across several emergency service organisations in Victoria, including the Country Fire Authority, Ambulance Victoria and the Metropolitan Fire Brigade.

So while I'm new to Queensland, I'm not new to what QFES does. I've stood on the fire ground as a rural firefighter and

played a role in managing many major emergencies that have impacted Victoria over the last 30 years, so I know the challenges we face.

I have a lot to learn about Queensland life, like how to manage the heat, humidity and mozzies, but I'm someone who faces these things head on. I plan to listen and learn about the unique aspects of the Queensland emergency services landscape and meet the skilled experts we have to respond to them.

I know this year has been a difficult one for QFES – battling floods, cyclones, bushfires and the everyday emergencies. I admire the courage and professionalism our staff and volunteers have shown in responding to the recent bushfires and look forward to playing my part.

We are facing a pattern of longer, hotter, dryer bushfire seasons which means we

have to continually review the way we respond to and manage these events. We need to learn lessons from each event and adapt our response practices to battle this more extreme fire behaviour. We need to educate the community about the changing fire risk and assist them to develop their awareness, preparedness and resilience.

I look forward to leading QFES into a new decade where we will work together to continue to build a strong, innovative and responsive department. I would describe myself as a collaborative leader because I recognise that we are only as strong as the people we have.

I look forward to visiting the regions over the coming weeks and months, and meeting staff, volunteers, partners and the Queensland community. I'm excited about the things we will achieve and look forward to working with you to do it.

Challenges and triumphs of the year that was

In a year that delivered unprecedented fires and floods, it's time to take a moment to reflect on the hard work of our QFES staff and volunteers, who banded together to keep Queenslanders safe.

We launched major strategic initiatives, supported a range of community events, progressed continuous improvement and welcomed a new Commissioner.

A challenging start

The year began with record-breaking floods in North Queensland, which forced many families to evacuate and cost graziers their livelihoods.

As the Ross River dam filled to more than double its capacity, more than 800 QFES personnel were deployed from around the state and worked tirelessly to help the community.

The state's north was hit again, with Tropical Cyclone Trevor striking in March and QFES crews deployed to support communities.

Farewells and new faces

In June, QFES farewelled Commissioner Katarina Carroll to take up her new position as Commissioner of the Queensland Police Service. After more than four years of exceptional leadership, Ms Carroll left with a heavy heart.

"What an amazing group of people we have in QFES. I know everyone will keep working together for the betterment of their community," Ms Carroll said.

Deputy Commissioner, Emergency Management, Volunteerism and Community Resilience (EMVCR) Mike Wassing was appointed Acting Commissioner, with John Bolger acting as Deputy Commissioner EMVCR.

Corporate governance expert Jennifer Robertson was appointed to the QFES Board of Management as the inaugural independent member at the start of the year. This new role provides insights

into 'best practice' procedures to improve accountability and transparency.

At mid-year Gary McCormack was appointed as a permanent Assistant Commissioner leading the North Coast Region and Dave Hermann was appointed as the Assistant Commissioner for Northern Region. We also welcomed Joanne Greenfield as a new Assistant Commissioner for Emergency Management and Community Capability, drawing on her experience leading large-scale operations in some of the most complex environments in the world. In July, Deputy Commissioner Doug Smith was seconded to the Public Safety Business Agency as its Acting Chief Operating Officer.

In December, our new Commissioner Greg Leach joined us from Victoria. Mr Leach brings more than 30 years' experience in rural firefighting and emergency management to the role (see p11 for more).

Creating a strong future

QFES launched two major strategic frameworks to help shape its work into the future: Strategy 2030 and the Engagement Strategy.

Strategy 2030 sets QFES' future direction as a contemporary emergency services agency that understands and responds to the community's expectations and needs. It is driven by our ongoing commitment to continuous improvement through the guiding principles – capable communities, interoperable, intelligence, sustainable and adaptive.

The Engagement Strategy outlines our approach to working with the community, partners and stakeholders to enable us to make



The SES received more than 4800 requests for help during the North Queensland floods.



Operation Cool Burn launched on 9 April.



The FRS at the North Queensland floods.

better decisions. Our engagement approach will be guided by local knowledge and relationships to ensure we deliver positive results for Queensland.

The strategy will help QFES build relationships and achieve Strategy 2030's vision of building "a connected and capable Queensland in the face of emergencies".

Community building

May

National Volunteer Week gave QFES the chance to highlight the amazing work our volunteers do in serving, protecting and educating their communities.

A record number of staff and volunteers participated in the Darkness to Daylight event for Domestic Family Violence Prevention Month. They took on the challenge of walking or running 110km, with each kilometre representing a life lost to domestic and family violence in Australia each year.

July

From Cape York to Coolangatta and Mackay to Mt Isa, QFES staff and volunteers participated in NAIDOC Week events including family fun days, community days and marches.

September

The Rural Fire Service celebrated its 70th anniversary, welcoming community members and past volunteers to mark this special milestone.

Following the outpouring of community support after the September bushfires, QFES held our first, statewide Open Day. More than 60 Fire and Rescue and Rural Fire Service stations opened their doors to the public. More than 4500 people came to learn about bushfire preparedness.

October

From 12 to 20 October, SES Week celebrated the dedication of SES volunteers at award ceremonies across the state.

November

QFES supported important mental health initiatives with Movember and MenTall to encourage all staff and volunteers to take the time to look after themselves and their mates.

Continuous improvement

February

The Blue Water Review Working Group was established to develop the future vision for the volunteer marine sector. The Working Group presented an implementation plan to the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services Craig Crawford at the end of November.

June

QFES received a record of more than \$740 million in the 2019-20 State Budget. Funding included facility upgrades and replacements, including a new mechanical workshop in Brisbane and upgrades to the communications centre in Cairns.

QFES received 75 new appliances for the FRS and RFS, while the SES received \$4 million for south-east Queensland groups to join the Government Wireless Network.

August

Two reports into the 2018 bushfires were released – Operation Synergy and the Inspector General Emergency Management's (IGEM) Report. The reports examined what QFES did well and provided recommendations for improvement. QFES will continue to learn from these events to prepare for future events. Numerous recommendations have already been implemented, and we continue to work through the others.

Minister Crawford announced an independent review of the SES, looking at future options for funding and management. It's been led by former Director General of Emergency Management Australia Campbell Darby DSC AM, who has undertaken significant consultation with SES groups, units and local councils. Recommendations will be presented in the new year.

Bushfire season

To help communities prepare ahead of bushfire season, QFES ran Operation Cool Burn from April to August, hosting activities around Queensland to mitigate the risk of wildfire and help the community prepare.

The bushfire season, Operation Redux, had an early and devastating start in September. From Stanthorpe to Sarabah and Peregian, firefighters battled major blazes in tough conditions. Several houses were lost, but there was no loss of life.

In September, former Police Commissioner Ian Stewart was appointed to lead Queensland's bushfire recovery and Minister Crawford requested the IGEM undertake a thorough investigation, similar to 2018's bushfire review.

In November the fire activity flared up again – see p4 for more.

Looking ahead

QFES is prepared for challenging bushfire weather conditions to continue into the new year. The summer months will also bring the potential for floods and cyclones. We are a resilient organisation, and no matter what the weather brings, QFES staff and volunteers will be prepared to take on all challenges and seize all opportunities.



Volunteers received the new volunteer pin during National Volunteer Week.



The State Operations Centre during the September fires.

Photos from the frontlines

QFES Multimedia Producer Sarah Ebsworth is showcasing the hard work of staff and volunteers through her award-winning photos.

Sarah Ebsworth is part of QFES' Strategic Content Services branch, which travels around the state, to capture the reality of natural disasters.

She was deployed to Wartburg Rural Fire Station, during the ferocious Deepwater bushfire in December 2018, when a towering wall of flame approached the station.

"Firefighters were charging towards the fire as it reached the other side of the road," Ms Ebsworth said.

"Where most people would run away, they kept fighting."

Ms Ebsworth captured the moment with a photo titled "Grit and Courage", which won the People's Choice Photography Award in the 2019 Get Ready Queensland Resilient Australia Awards.

"This award isn't just for me, it's for our whole team as we're all passionate about highlighting QFES' hard work, and giving people an idea of the harsh conditions people face," she said.

"I was in Binna Burra in September and it was so sad to see how many houses had burnt down. The fire was so fierce the trees were all twisted in the same direction.

"Firefighters were walking down the street to see what houses they could save, and behind them trees were falling down.

"Not many people would go to such lengths for their community but all of the QFES members I've worked with have been friendly and helpful."

Originally from Sydney, Ms Ebsworth's work has taken her north to Aurukun and west to St George.

"I like to capture these events as they unfold," Ms Ebsworth said.

"During the September fires at Peregrin Beach, I got to take aerial photos of helicopters waterbombing.

"I was blown away by the sheer scale of the disaster and amazed at the accuracy of the aircraft. It was like a well-orchestrated dance."

Ms Ebsworth has perfected her

photography skills, having worked in the Australian Navy and being deployed to the Middle East.

"I've learnt how to manage aircraft vibrations, keep a camera dry in cyclones and steady myself on ships," she said.

"I really enjoy teaching my team about photo techniques and sharing my experiences so we can get the best possible photos.

"The people in my division are very creative and they teach me a lot as well. If I need support in the field, they're always there for me."



Sarah Ebsworth's award-winning photo "Grit and Courage", which graced the cover of the December 2018 edition of Response.



Ms Ebsworth shot a QGAir winching exercise with QFES from below to capture the perspective of someone being winched to safety.



Trees hollowed out by fire fell onto the road at Binna Burra.



Light shining through the trees in Wongawallan after a fire front passed Mr Neville's brigade.

When photojournalist Cam Neville joined the Guanaba Rural Fire Brigade in 2013, he started taking honest, raw photos of firefighters in action.

Originally a studio photographer from Sydney, Mr Neville became intrigued by the way volunteer firefighters went straight from their home or office to face a fire when he started volunteering.

"I wanted to understand what kind of people can easily make that transition and what drives them to do so," Mr Neville said.

"I wanted to explore how they adjust mentally to high-stress situations and potential hazards.

"As the project unfolded, it became clear something greater was at work, a kind of spirit I hadn't encountered before."

Mr Neville takes photos in between responding to fires.

"Putting out fires and ensuring the safety of my crew members is always my priority," Mr Neville said.

"I just carry my camera with me because you never know what will happen in your down time.

"Last year, I focussed on capturing the movement and intensity of fires, trying to get my viewers on the frontline with me.

"I want people to experience the heat, the ferocity or the silence after a fire has passed. It's important that the work keeps evolving.

"I want to show things as they are – raw, gritty, hot, exhausting and dangerous."

After several years of shooting on the frontline, Mr Neville has built a solid body of work, but wants to convey a deeper connection to the firefighters.

"I wanted my photos to be more personal – for people to know the men and women in the yellow trucks who were out there day and night protecting them.

"I had shot a portrait of legendary firefighter Terry Whitehead, one of the founding members of our brigade.

"From that, a series of portraits evolved, as I wanted to see into their souls and show what drives these people to do the extraordinary work they do.

"It's really all down to the trust and friendships I have formed. I am very grateful to them."

Mr Neville's photos are collected in his internationally acclaimed book *Into the Fire*. He is currently working on a second volume.



Mr Neville's portrait of Terry Whitehead, a founding member of the Guanaba Rural Fire Brigade.



Backburning at the Sarabah fire in September.



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Auxiliary firefighter training improves incident responses

Auxiliary firefighters from across the state attended a two-week course to enhance their skills in incident management.

Auxiliary firefighters from rank 2 and above developed their incident response skills for the opportunity to become incident controllers. Six auxiliaries attended the Operations Supervision Residential course at the Queensland Combined Emergency Services Academy, which teaches incident management, training and mentoring skills.

The course combines theory with practical scenarios, where participants manage two-appliance responses to fires in a range of settings, including virtual reality.

Captain Rowan O'Donoghue said he attended the course to become a better leader and role model.

"I want to lead by example and learn more about what QFES is looking for in terms of our command and control, tactical decision making and incident leadership," Mr O'Donoghue said.

"The skills we learnt relate to everything we do, particularly structural fires. One of the key things I learnt was a better way of tasking crews and getting your intentions and action plans across, from the minute you get a job."

Mr O'Donoghue said the practical scenarios were the biggest challenge.

"It was very life-like and we had to think on our feet to avoid serious ramifications and bring the incident under control in a safe and timely manner," he said.

"At times it felt like we were set up to fail but it was actually a learning process.

"We had to find it in ourselves and trust our experiences and knowledge to turn the negatives into positives.

"As a result, we improved ourselves as individuals and leaders, for the benefit of our communities. I can't recommend the course highly enough."



Auxiliary firefighters from rank 2 and above participated in the Operations Supervision Residential course at the Queensland Combined Emergency Services Academy.

Lead instructor Grant Feeny said teaching the course allowed him to help keep auxiliaries and their crews as safe as possible when they respond to emergencies.

"The course places participants under pressure and I'm proud of how hard they worked," he said.

"It was rewarding to see them achieve things they didn't know they could do, and I believe this course is essential for all auxiliary firefighters who will manage an incident."

The course was the culmination of many months of study under the Officer Training for Auxiliary Firefighters (OTAF).

Participants received their *Certificate IV in Public Safety (Firefighting Supervision)* in recognition of their dedication to their community and continuous improvement.

If you'd like to participate in the course in 2020, contact the Auxiliary Firefighter Development Unit on 3635 3119.



Participants managed responses to fires in a range of settings.

In the 2018-19 financial year, there were 198.6 Full-time Equivalent (FTE) auxiliary firefighters, with each firefighter representing 0.1 of an FTE.

Firefighter recruits reunite to celebrate 30 years of service

Recruit course 15 recently reunited to celebrate the 30th anniversary of their graduation. All 11 firefighters are still proudly in the job.

When 11 men started firefighter training at the Brisbane Fire and Rescue Academy in 1989, they were total strangers. By the time their graduation ceremony came around, they had formed an indelible bond that has stood the test of time.

Acting Inspector Timothy Clark said the group would always have a special bond.

“We went through an intense recruit training course over 12 weeks,” he said.

“As a firefighter, you rely on your mates in a tough situation – you know who’s standing beside you and feel confident in what you can achieve as a team.

“We thoroughly enjoyed learning from our recruiting instructors as there was always a mutual respect between us and we’ve remained friends ever since.

“In 1989, Brisbane felt like an isolated region, but now we’re one department right across Queensland.

“We love QFES and what we do for the community – we never really considered doing anything else.”

Fellow recruit Acting Chief Superintendent Far Northern Region Craig Smith said the group keeps in touch regularly, even though they’ve pursued different career pathways.

“Over the years we’ve worked together at many big fires,” Mr Smith said.

“Most of us went to the 1990 Woolstore fires just after we joined which was a real eye opener.

“We’ve moved through quite a few changes – from the Metropolitan Fire Brigade to QFES.

“It’s great to be united with the State Emergency Service and Rural Fire Service now, working more closely and cohesively with them.

“We’re all on the other side of the hill now, so we’re teaching the new guys to leave things in good hands.”

Terry Thistleton was one of the group’s instructors who trained about 40 firefighters in his career.

“The academy was new at the time and we were based in these old timber buildings that were originally from a quarantine centre,” Mr Thistleton said.

“These guys were a great bunch of blokes but I remember one of them just couldn’t get the march right.

“He kept swinging his arms out of time and the day before march out, he was still out there practising with broom handles in each hand.

“Miraculously, he came good on the day.

“It was amazing to see this group again after so long and just goes to show you get a lot out of seeing the raw product develop into the finished product.”



Back row from left: Acting Chief Superintendent Craig Smith FNR, Acting Superintendent Michael Albrow, Senior Firefighter Damian MacNamara, Firefighter 1st Class Alan Hales, Station Officer Brett Burgess.
Front row from left: Station Officer Iain Thomson, Station Officer Drew Argent, Station Officer Brian Lemke, Retired Station Officer Terry Thistleton (Instructor), Station Officer Matthew Paszkowski, Station Officer Frank Calabrese, Acting Inspector Timothy Clark.

“Keep learning new skills and nurture the good friendships you make along your career.”

- Craig Smith

“Enjoy your recruitment and the special bonds you form. It’s hard work but it’s something special, so stay with it.”

- Timothy Clark

“Be true to yourself. Try as many different aspects of work at QFES as you can.”

- Terry Thistleton



The Maroochydore SES Group was awarded the Commissioner's Cup for the Queensland SES Unit or Group of the Year.

SES volunteers recognised in state awards

State Emergency Service (SES) Week celebrated and recognised the invaluable commitment of our 5300 volunteers.

A range of events were held across the state to celebrate SES Week from 12 to 20 October and acknowledge the dedication and commitment of SES volunteers. The week culminated in the State Awards Ceremony in Brisbane.

SES volunteers dedicated more than 56 000 hours of their time away from family and friends to help Queenslanders in the 2018-19 financial year.

From search and rescue, to storms and floods, and the recent bushfires, volunteers pull on their orange suits every day to keep Queenslanders safe.

The State Awards Ceremony recognised those volunteers, units and groups who go above and beyond the call of duty.

William Sterling of the Buchan Point SES Group was awarded the Minister's Cup. An active SES member for the last six years, he was appointed as Local Controller in 2018.

"I appreciate this recognition and am a little bit lost for words," Mr Sterling said.

"I'm very grateful to my team. A leader's efficacy strongly reflects the quality of their team, and I'm lucky to have such an effective team that drives me to be the best leader I can be.

"We have gone through so many different situations together from large-scale cyclone responses to searches with varying outcomes."

Mr Sterling said he was proud of his work as a volunteer because it gave him a sense of meaning and community contribution.

"I like the excitement, the varied training and the feeling of accomplishment you get when pushed outside your comfort zone.

"Learning new skills and meeting other volunteers is rewarding – they come from varied backgrounds with their own wealth of experience, but are all there for the same reasons."

SES Week Awards

Congratulations to all of the finalists and winners for their hard work supporting our communities.

Minister's Cup for Queensland SES Member of the Year

William Sterling of Buchan Point SES Group
For distinguished service to the SES through outstanding leadership and excellence in ensuring operational readiness within the community.

Commissioner's Cup for the Queensland SES Unit or Group of the Year

Maroochydore SES Group
For outstanding management, training, operational response and growth of the Maroochydore SES Group.

Highly Commended

Ipswich City SES Unit

For embracing change, empowering a resilient community, and providing generous support to other Units, Regions, and services through training and operations.

Assistant Commissioner's Shield for the Queensland SES Operational Response of the Year

Townsville City SES Unit

For exceptional commitment and dedication while responding to the community during unprecedented rain and flooding across Townsville.

Joyce Scorey Shield for Queensland SES Trainer of the Year

Daniel Kingdom of Thuringowa SES Group

For distinguished service to the SES by displaying outstanding drive and dedication to training and mentoring of SES members and trainers in the group, unit and region.

SES Life Member Award

Sixteen SES members received this new award for their strong, outstanding individual commitment and special contribution to the service.



SOUTH EASTERN REGION

Queensland and New South Wales join forces for a cross-border airport exercise

On 16 October, The Gold Coast Zone Fire and Rescue Service, and Area Commanders, attended an agency training exercise and demonstration at the Gold Coast Airport with New South Wales colleagues.

The training helped cross-border agencies to better understand New South Wales counter-terrorism legislation, emergency response capabilities for hazardous materials incidents and decontamination processes.

The exercise was conducted at the Australian Federal Police (AFP) Aviation Operations Centre and included QFES, QPS, QAS, AFP, Fire and Rescue NSW, NSW Police Force and Aviation Rescue Firefighting.

The practical component gave QFES the chance to demonstrate their hazardous materials capability with a BA/HazMat vehicle from Southport Fire and Rescue station and the South Eastern Region Decontamination Trailer (DART). This component was supported by operational crews from Bilinga Fire and Rescue station.



Greenbank ready to rescue large animals

Minister for Fire and Emergency Services Craig Crawford officially handed over a new, one-of-a-kind large animal rescue appliance to the Greenbank Rural Fire Brigade in September.

It is the only appliance of its kind in Australia and was designed and built to rescue large animals such as cows and horses.

The truck carries specialist rescue equipment including a rear-mounted crane and has already seen more than eight rescues in as many weeks.

Emma Streater wins Logan Fire and Emergency Services Person of the Year

Fire Communications Supervisor Emma Streater (pictured second from right) was named the Logan Fire and Emergency Services Person of the Year 2019 at the inaugural Vocational and Pride of Workmanship Awards (VPOWA).

FRS Logan Command participated in the event at Club Beenleigh in September, hosted by the Rotary Clubs of Logan, to help celebrate employees and volunteers who have gone above and beyond in their dedication and commitment to the community.

Ms Streater provides operational oversight and resource deployment to better serve the community. She is engaged in several key organisational strategies designed to enhance service delivery, including the onboarding of SES communications with Fire Communications.

Ms Streater has a passion for personal and team development and has designed and implemented professional development packages into her workplace to grow the capability and capacity of South Eastern Region Fire Communications.

The three other finalists were Station Officer Steve Salisbury, Station Officer Andrew Rose and A/Executive Support Officer Kel-Leigh Watson.

Chief Superintendent Mark Stuart and Inspector Robert Bloss from Logan Command accompanied the nominees to the awards night.





SOUTH WESTERN REGION

Peer Support Officers hone their support skills

Thirteen Peer Support Officers (PSOs) from across QFES, and their supervising councillors, attended the recent South Western Peer Support Training weekend at the Lake Perseverance Active Recreation Centre. Led by psychologist Ian Goldsmith, and FESSN Councillor Robyn Kirby, the annual event helps PSOs hone their listening skills in an environment where they can openly discuss common concerns.

Participants were exposed to a range of issues, including personal reflection and skill building for interacting with people dealing with grief and loss. Investigative journalist, author and broadcaster Amanda Gearing was the guest presenter, sharing her book and radio documentary on the 2011 Queensland floods.

She provided great insight into the reactions and thoughts of survivors from major traumatic events, and the PSOs came away with new skills to support their valuable role and a better understanding of each other's roles within the department.



Vertical rescue trainers share knowledge with the North Coast Region

Vertical rescue trainers returned to the North Coast Region to provide another round of training to the volunteers. Undertaking training in different environments benefits the South Western Region as our trainers return with different experience and knowledge to share with their groups.

Congratulations to all the new operators who completed this challenging course and gained new skills to serve their communities.

Vertical rescue operators and trainers, both volunteers and staff, are regularly engaged in operations throughout the Southern Downs Regional Council area to support other agencies and the community.

New road safety video helps teach high school students

A video about a fatal road crash in Toowoomba was filmed at Kitchener Street Fire Station for QFES' Road Attitudes and Action Planning (RAAP) program.

QFES delivers RAAP to Year 11 students across the state to foster safe driver behaviour. The presenters are operational firefighters with experience of the trauma involved with road crashes.

The new video will show the impact on road crash victims and their loved ones. The current video was filmed 12 years ago, based on an accident in Warwick.

The people who shared their story included firefighters who were involved in the first response or the peer support program that helps other firefighters deal with road traumas. The film is due to be released at the end of the year.





FAR NORTHERN REGION



Innisfail high school students learn about road safety

The Innisfail Fire and Rescue Station joined the Queensland Police Service and Blacks Funerals to host a car crash scenario for Innisfail State College students. The demonstration promoted road safety and how to make correct choices when travelling with mates. It aims to help prevent road accidents by empowering young people to make smart travel choices.



Remembering fallen firefighters

The Far Northern Region held a Firefighters Remembrance Day service on 10 October at the Mother of Good Counsel Church Innisfail.

It was a day to remember fallen colleagues and pay tribute to Queensland firefighters past and present who face risks to protect our communities every day.



Safety demonstration helps at-risk youth

The Cairns Fire and Rescue Station's B Shift Crew ran an information session for the participants of Project Booyah, a 16-week Queensland Police Service mentor program that supports at-risk young people to graduate with a Certificate II in Skills for Work and Vocational Pathways and a Certificate of Completion.

Participants learnt about safety hazards in the workplace and watched demonstrations of how to use fire extinguishers and fire blankets, identify hazards and risk, mitigate minor spills and leaks and appropriate personal protective clothing.

The station will continue to support the project, with the next course starting in February 2020.





NORTHERN REGION

Townsville gets disaster ready

With the effects of this year's monsoon still being felt, the community eagerly attended the Townsville City Council's annual Disaster Ready Day. QFES was on hand to talk about the risks and hazards associated with natural disasters and to help people be better prepared.

QFES staff and volunteers joined with our partners to provide community education, activities and demonstrations of our capabilities.

With over 3000 properties affected by the monsoon, QFES is working with the community to ensure they understand the necessary steps to prepare for and protect their families and homes.



Townsville SES Unit doesn't rest on their laurels

The Townsville SES Unit has continued to maintain and upskill their members, as well as train new recruits who started this year.

Fresh from winning the SES Operational Response of the Year Award for their mammoth effort during this year's monsoon, the Townsville Unit has worked hard to develop more capacity coming into the wet season.

The unit would like to acknowledge the RFS and FRS who worked hand-in-hand with them during the monsoon, as well as the ADF, QPS and QAS for their support.

Local Controller Vince Close said the Townsville Unit recorded 7500 hours during operations this year.

"This does not account for all the people who deployed in to assist us. We had staff and volunteers from all over the state deployed to Townsville in support of operations," Mr Close said.

So far this year, trainers have recorded 9500 hours in training and are hoping to take some well-earned rest over Christmas.

Horseshoe Bay Rural Fire Brigade celebrates 60 years

On 19 October 1959, nine pineapple and mango farmers, an Anglican Priest and a taxi driver, bus driver, Sunday school teacher, post-master, land developer, dentist, nurseryman, mechanic and self-appointed beach park custodian formed the Horseshoe Bay Bush Fire Brigade.

Over the years, the brigade has seen the rise and fall of member numbers but has never lost its value in the local community. Sixty years on, the brigade celebrated with more than 300 members of the local community.

A great series of videos can be seen on the Horseshoe Bay Rural Fire Brigade Facebook page, including more photos from the event. One of the highlights of the day was the launch of the brigade's newest asset – an ATV Kawasaki, redesigned by Dale Burgess Townsville/Mackay Kawasaki in conjunction with the Seaforth Rural Fire Brigade.

The day was generously supported by local businesses and attended by personnel from QFES, QAS, QPS and QPWS.



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CENTRAL REGION

Disaster simulation prepares Longreach

Longreach's emergency services participated in Exercise Ark Express 2019 on 16 September 2019 to prepare for disaster response. The exercise, designed and facilitated by Emergency Management Coordinator Alan Hatcher, simulated a major flood with more than 40 incidents to respond to, including a train crash and SES volunteers bitten by snakes.

The exercise allowed the District Disaster Management Group, and Local Disaster Management Groups to practise response preparedness including discussing potential risks and priorities and making decisions in a disaster event.

Children from the local state school acted as victims on the train, throwing themselves into their parts with great gusto.



Airlie Beach gets prepared for bushfire and cyclone season

In November, the auxiliary crew from Airlie Beach Fire and Rescue Station attended the Whitsunday Regional Council's Cyclone Saturday. More than 100 people came to ask for advice about bushfire and cyclone preparedness and the kids loved checking out the truck and all of its gear.



Community-led bushfire recovery

Following last year's catastrophic bushfires, the Central Region has worked with our partners and the community on a range of bushfire recovery activities throughout the region.

These activities work towards developing greater capability through preparation, participation and knowledge sharing. Having open conversations about the incident, and explaining why the fires behaved the way they did, has generated positive results and identified opportunities for future engagement.

Celebrating our cultural diversity

QFES was a supporting partner for the third annual Multi-Faith Dinner which was held in Rockhampton. People from 15 different cultures, and five religions, came together to share a meal and celebrate the area's youth.

A panel of immigrant youths spoke about their experience coming to and living in Australia. A great night was had by all, with the chance to meet new people from different backgrounds and build relationships.





NORTH COAST REGION

Maroochydhore conducts confined space rescue training

The crew at Maroochydhore Fire and Rescue Station recently conducted a confined space rescue exercise at their training facility. The exercise simulated the rescue of an unconscious worker from a pit. With the use of the “Vortex,” participants constructed a high point to lower a crew member into the pit to access and package the casualty.

A ram fan was used to provide fresh air ventilation and the crew conducted air sampling with gas detection equipment. This



training is essential for maintaining skills and competencies and identifies any deficiencies with equipment.

A Shift also conducted a realistic HazMat training scenario as part of a three-day Chemical Detection course being rolled out across the region. Under the guidance of Station Officer Geoffrey Tunny, two firefighters, in fully encapsulated chemical suits, investigated a spill of an unknown chemical.

They used various detection equipment including the Multirae, PID, Drager Tubes and Test Strips.



Volunteer Community Educators help communities recover

SES and RFS Volunteer Community Educators (VCEs) from around the state, were deployed to help the Peregian Springs and Cooribah/Tewantin communities recover from the September fires. The VCEs engaged the community, reassuring and helping them prepare for future disasters.

They attended shopping centers, town squares, libraries and parks making a significant impact to those recovering. The VCEs were led by A/RCEO Aram Ross and Rural Officer Shaune Toohey.



37 years of service recognised

Station Officer Peter Kilfoyle retired on 31 October 2019 after an exceptional career of more than 37 years’ service with QFES. Peter held the role of Buildings Approval Officer Level 2 and worked out of the Kunda Park Complex.

A retirement farewell morning tea was held at the complex to celebrate Mr Kilfoyle’s career and his 65th birthday on the day he retired.

He was highly regarded among his peers, both within the North Coast Region, and throughout the state. Peter was a dedicated professional officer who always had the welfare of firefighting crews foremost. We wish Peter all the best in his retirement.



BRISBANE REGION



SES supports Stradbroke firefighting response

Members from the Redland and Brisbane City SES units supported their QFES colleagues, and the Queensland Police Service (QPS) to respond to a bushfire on North Stradbroke Island in September.

The fire started south of Amity township, in inaccessible swamp on 18 September, just days before the start of school holidays. The fire continued to burn late into the month.

SES members provided logistic support, evacuation centre management, fire personnel transport, road closures and public safety for waterbombing helicopters.

They played a significant role, in a coordinated effort, that included the Redland City Council, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and the Quandamooka Yoolooburabee Aboriginal Corporation.

Redland City Local Controller Clare Barker said it was wonderful how efficiently the SES units worked together.

“The SES Brisbane members worked seamlessly with our team and were integral in maintaining the support,” Ms Barker said.

QFES recognised at the Rotary Essential Services Awards

The Rotary Club of South Brisbane held their annual Essential Services Awards Dinner at the Yeronga Services and Community Club in October.

Since 2012, the awards have recognised officers from QFES, QPS and Queensland Ambulance Service who have provided a service over and above their normal duties.

Minister for Fire and Emergency Services Craig Crawford and Assistant Commissioner John Cawcutt presented the QFES awards.

A special presentation was also made recognising all of the men and women of the QFES for their dedication and commitment to keeping the community safe.



Agencies join forces for mass nursing home evacuation exercise

QFES joined QPS and Queensland Health in a major inter-agency exercise to simulate an evacuation of an aged-care facility in a flooding scenario. Fire and Rescue staff joined 133 volunteers from Brisbane City, Moreton Bay and Redland SES Units, who planned and hosted the training exercise.

The exercise involved 37 QPS recruits playing residents, who had to be rescued over three-stories at the former Hotel Jen in Brisbane. This allowed Fire and Rescue staff to practise a high-angle rescue from the eighth floor.

Queensland Health prepared participants with possible medical conditions encountered by aged-care residents and the Redland SES Unit provided expert mock injuries for Queensland University of Technology paramedic students to triage.

Thanks go to the Cross River Rail Authority for the use of Hotel Jen, which is being demolished to make way for the Cross River Rail.

Photos by Travis Bell.



Skills enhanced with crane rescue exercise

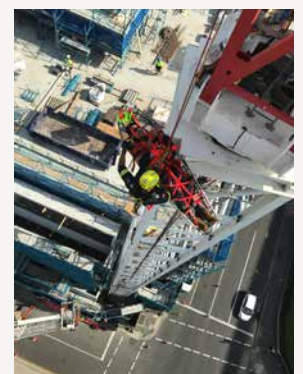
Crews from Roma Street and Kemp Place fire stations conducted a mock rescue of a casualty from a construction tower crane.

The exercise was held at a McNab construction site, with Vertical Transportation Services providing a tower crane and crew and Customised Traffic Management managing traffic and pedestrian movements.

Chris Gundersen, McNab site manager, said the exercise was a learning curve for their staff.

“Watching it all come together gave us a real understanding of just how involved and technical an actual rescue would be,” Mr Gundersen said.

“The QFES crew did a brilliant job working in the close confines of the crane to perform the rescue.”



QFES Regional Challenge raises money for sick children

QFES organised fundraising events as part of the annual Regional Challenge to support the Children's Hospital Foundation.

Both the Northern and Brisbane Regions dedicated time to raising money for the Children's Hospital Foundation (CHF) in October.

The Northern Region organised an abseil off the Aquarius apartments, the only skyscraper on the Strand in Townsville.

The event sold out, with more than 100 people abseiling down the building, including Townsville Mayor Jenny Hill and Councillor Kurt Rehbein, who is a firefighter himself.

Senior Firefighter Hal Tucker organised the event, using his experience in vertical rescue and his networks to bring everything together.

"It was great to see the participants' joy in overcoming personal challenges," Mr Tucker said.

"Some were in tears going over the top, but they were determined to achieve their goal, so were thrilled when they reached the ground.

"State Emergency Service (SES) and Rural Fire Service (RFS) volunteers really came together to deliver the event and support the participants and we also had support from the Outer Limits Adventure Fitness and the local Lions Club.

"We were thrilled to raise \$4500 for such an important cause."

Meanwhile, the Brisbane Region was invited to race against the Queensland Police Service and Queensland Ambulance Service at the annual Head of the Brisbane Regatta hosted by the Toowong Rowing Club. Funds raised on the day were split between the three services and QFES identified the Regional Challenge as their charity.

Station Officer Alex Pearl stepped up as Captain and Cox, forming a team of eight rowers.

"Everyone in the team had experience rowing in surf or flat water, so our challenge was just fitting in some practice," Mr Pearl said.

"Luckily, it all came back to us so we were thrilled to win by five boat lengths and claim gloating rights."

Each crew member received a medal and QFES had the honour of being the first service listed on the new perpetual trophy.

The United Firefighters Union supported the event and provided rowing outfits to make the team really feel the part.

All funds raised for the Regional Challenge will go towards the purchase of new equipment to help sick kids at the CHF.



More than 100 people abseiled down the Aquarius apartments in Townsville.



The QFES crew took home the trophy at the inaugural Brisbane rowing challenge.

Inspiring young women to follow their dreams

Some of QFES' women leaders shared their personal journeys with highschool students to highlight the career pathways available at the department.

Speakers from across QFES appeared at events in July and October for Girl Shaped Flames, a program that encourages young women from Years 7 to 12 to identify their passions and pursue their dreams.

Among the speakers from the July event was Director Regional Operations Michelle Young, Queensland's first female firefighter.

At the October event, Fire Communications Manager Jessica Blamires spoke about her desire to help people by becoming a fire communications officer, and the importance of having good mentors and not letting self-doubt hold you back.

Acting Director Strategic Information & Security branch Sandy Chalasani discussed the cultural and social barriers she faced growing up in India.

"Women in particular areas were not given opportunities or encouraged to leave their

town, city or country," Ms Chalasani said.

"It was tough on me to handle as a child. No one encouraged me to study beyond Year 12, but I chose to focus on education. I knew it would allow me to get out of the house, find a job and be an independent person.

"Education released me from those limitations."

Ms Chalasani said she faced many challenges but she was driven and never compromised her personal values and ethics.

"I told the participants that when you break the chains holding you back, you can become the person you want to be and make a difference in people's lives, regardless of where you're from."

After graduating with a degree in engineering, she travelled to the US and Europe to work before moving to Brisbane and joining the emergency services.

"I joined QFES because I wanted to help

the community. I add value to QFES' work protecting local communities, even if I'm not on the frontline.

"We all have unique abilities that should be embraced. Never undermine your capability or ignore your dreams."

The speakers shared a common message of overcoming their own personal barriers in pursuing their careers, to inspire the girls to challenge what they thought was possible for themselves.



Founder of FUEL and Girl Shaped Flames Tanya Meessmann, Fire Communications Manager Jessica Blamires, Acting Director Strategic Information & Security branch Sandy Chalasani, Emergency Management Coordinator Carla Adams and Office of the Commissioner – Chief of Staff Christine Pope.

Cadets put their skills to the test

Police Citizens Youth Club emergency services cadets competed at the Australian National Fire Cadet Championships in October.

The Tara and Wolfdenne Cadet Units were both selected to represent Queensland, competing against 28 teams in firefighting and team-building scenarios.

This is the second time QFES has supported the event, which is run by the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) and the NSW RFS Association at Arcadia.

Matthew Cutbush from Camira Fire and Rescue Station said it was a humbling experience to accompany the cadets and represent QFES.

"Both teams worked hard to solve realistic firefighting challenges and team-building activities," Mr Cutbush said.

"It was inspiring to watch the emergency service responders of our future showing off the skills they'd learnt from QFES streams and partner agencies."

Mr Cutbush congratulated the Wolfdenne Cadet Unit for winning the "most improved team" award and thanked the crew at Cedar Creek Wolfdenne Rural Fire Brigade for helping them prepare.

"I was honoured to accompany these amazing future leaders and I strongly recommend anyone interested in supporting communities and children to step up and show your interest."



The championships brought together young firefighters from across the country for three days of exciting competition and fun.

Queensland welcomes new recruits to the team

After three-months of intensive training, 28 firefighter recruits graduated in Townsville.

Minister for Fire and Emergency Services Craig Crawford, and QFES Acting Commissioner Mike Wassing, welcomed the newest QFES members to the team at their graduation ceremony on 25 October.

Mr Crawford said the graduating class would boost frontline firefighting services.

“With some of the best training in the world, these new recruits are now ready to don their helmets and protect communities,” Mr Crawford said.

“All recruits have completed specialised training units for live fire behaviour, road crash rescue, technical rescue and hazardous materials management.

“This culminates in the presentation of a *Certificate II in Public Safety (Firefighting and Emergency Operations)*, qualifying these men and women to wear the QFES uniform.”

Mr Wassing said he was extremely proud of the recruits for embarking on a rewarding and challenging career.

“Whether being a firefighter was a childhood dream, or a recent goal, each recruit today has achieved it,” Mr Wassing said.

“As firefighters, the graduates will now venture out across Queensland and work with the community, respond to accidents and confront disasters.”

Recruit Daniel Cooper, who will be based in the Brisbane Region, said he was excited to get out to a station and begin his career with QFES.

“Finishing the course is really exciting because now we get to enjoy the reward for months of hard work,” Mr Cooper said.

“It will be good to put the skills we’ve learnt into action and learn what life as a firefighter will be like.

“I’m looking forward to going out to jobs, serving with my peers and giving back to the community.”

Recruits will continue their studies over the next two years, completing a *Certificate III in Public Safety (Firefighting and Emergency Operations)* and a *Certificate III in Public Safety (Community Safety)*.



Blue card deadline extended

Due to the significant bushfire operations, QFES staff and volunteers requiring a blue card now have until 31 March 2020 to submit their application.

QFES staff and volunteers, requiring a blue card, will now have more time to apply following an announcement by the Premier on Sunday 17 November.

This announcement recognises the significant work QFES members are putting in to protect communities from the fires, and underscores how important it is for them to have blue cards.

QFES strongly believes blue cards are essential to our commitment to the ongoing safety and wellbeing of children. We

will continue to support our staff and volunteers with their blue card applications.

Thank you to everyone who has applied for your ongoing commitment to the Queensland community during these fires and longer term in supporting the safety of children.

For more information, please contact the QFES Blue Card Hub at QFES.BlueCard@qfes.qld.gov.au or 3635 1681.



QFES leading the way in remote mountain rescue

Caloundra firefighter Greg Toman completed an international study tour on mountain rescue to enhance QFES' capabilities.

Greg Toman is a passionate mountain-man. He went from being a full-time rock climbing instructor and mountain guide to performing cliff rescues and being one of the driving forces behind setting up the QFES Remote Rescue Team on the Sunshine Coast.

"We developed the QFES Remote Rescue Team in a relatively short period of time, drawing on expert knowledge from within QFES and externally," Mr Toman said.

"The team often rescues people who are lost, stranded or injured within the Glass House Mountains National Park and other surrounding mountains.

"We also provide safety systems for helicopter rescue crews and assist with patient extraction.

"There's a distinct difference in the equipment and techniques used for rescues in remote or mountainous environments, to that of traditional vertical rescue, so it's important we're able to do both."

Mr Toman said remote mountain rescue is unique because of the challenges it presents.

"It requires small teams, of highly skilled rescuers, to carry equipment for long distances and over challenging terrain," he said.

"It often involves scrambling or performing technical climbing in unfavourable conditions and/or at night.

"This type of rescue capability is unique in Australia, so we had limited information and resources to further develop our skills, so I applied for a Churchill Fellowship to undertake overseas research.

"I wanted the opportunity to learn from the best and bring my knowledge back to enhance our current capability, based on international best practices."

Mr Toman embarked on an 8-week international study tour in June, working with long-established mountain rescue teams in Canada, USA, UK, Austria, Italy and France.

"My research highlighted several key points, including the differences between remote mountain rescue and vertical rescue, and the skill and experience needed to operate safely in this inherently dangerous environment," he said.

"Mountain rescues require a high level of physical fitness to ensure personal safety, avoid mental stress and be self-sufficient with equipment, food, water and first aid. We can only use what we can carry in our backpacks and on our harnesses.

"You need to rely on experience and sound judgement to construct anchor points. Some rescues can take more than 12 hours to complete."

Mr Toman also learnt about the role technology plays in assisting with rescues.

"Drones are vital to the safety of the rescue team, and the success of a rescue, along with geolocation apps and systems to locate casualties," he said.

"I remember one rescue we did on Mt Beerwah where we had to abseil more than 160m into the darkness to locate the casualty, so being able to find them as soon as possible is essential.

"I'm looking forward to implementing the findings of my research and being able to grow QFES' abilities to perform these types of rescues.

"Many of the rescue organisations I visited have been operating for more than 50 years, some up to 75 years, so we can learn from their mistakes and successes."

Mr Toman's research report "Enhancing the overall safety of rescuers and those requiring rescue in mountainous and austere environments" can be downloaded from The Churchill Trust website.



Acting Commissioner Mike Wassing (centre) with participants in the Officer Development Program 1 Workshop in October.



The Redcliffe SES Group held a storm awareness stand at Bunnings Rothwell to mark the last day of SES Week and help the community prepare for storms, floods and fire.



The Minister officially opened the refurbished Dirranbandi Fire and Rescue Station. From left: Acting Assistant Commissioner South West Region Darryl King, Acting Captain Dirranbandi Station Laura Easton, Minister Crawford, Acting Inspector Goondiwindi Command Chris Martial.



QFES Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) trainers mentored China over 18 months to achieve their internationally-recognised Search and Rescue Capability reclassification.



The Minister thanked QFES staff and volunteers from the South Eastern Region at a barbeque at Canungra Rural Fire Brigade for their commitment and hard work during the September bushfires.



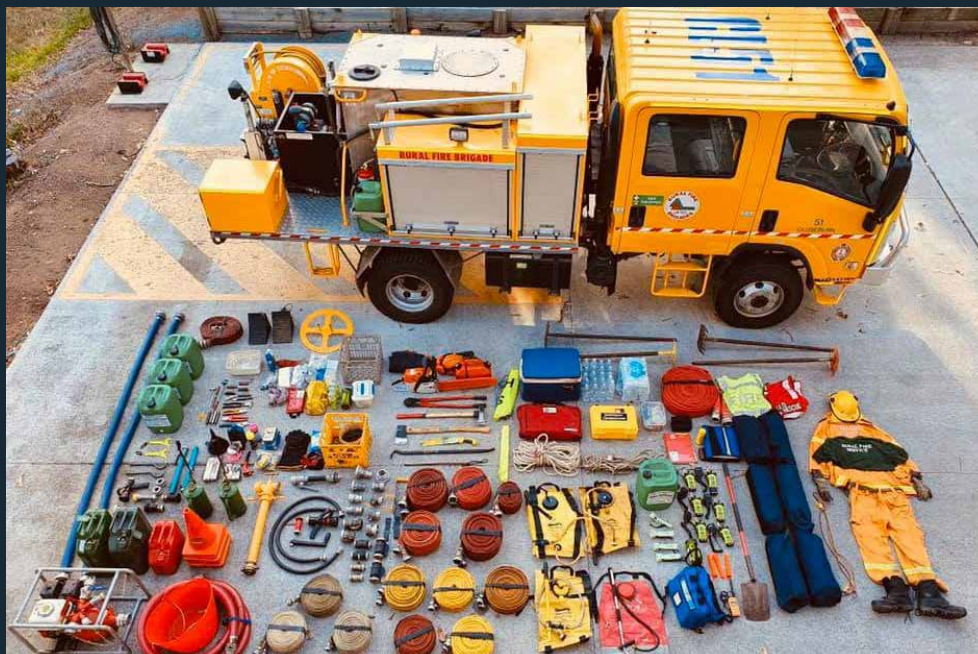
Lucas Semple and Declan Dolan from Hendra Fire Station were among other dedicated QFES staff, who received awards at the inaugural Brisbane and State Honours and Awards ceremony. Medals, clasps and certificates were presented to staff who have shown exceptional dedication, courage and loyalty over the past 12 months.



Auxiliary firefighters from Deception Bay Fire Station sharpened their skills at road crash rescue training to ensure motorists are in safe hands.



The Ripley Valley Rural Fire Brigade rescued a kangaroo after it was hit by a car. Nicknamed "Bushy" after the Rural Fire Service mascot, it was placed safely into the care of the RSPCA.



Closeburn Rural Fire Brigade got involved in the emergency services Tetris Challenge that took social media by storm.



Dalby SES Group Leader Tanya Wittman launched her Empowering Women in Orange initiative in November, for which she handmade hundreds of SES ribbons. Local Controller Sharn Pogan (pictured) supported the project's roll out in South West Queensland.



Tamborine Mountain Fire and Rescue and Tamborine Mountain Rural Fire Service conducted PREPARE.ACT. SURVIVE. presentations for the community to foster resilience and preparation in the face of bushfire season. About 500 residents attended, spurred on by the local September bushfires.



Brothers Keepers FMC, a motorcycle club for current or retired firefighters, conducted a service at the Moura Fire Station in honour of Firefighters Remembrance Day. The club has been operating in Australia since 2012, has about 1200 members, and partners with not-for-profit organisations to raise funds.



QFES members celebrated the launch of Get Ready Week with ambassador Jonathan Thurston.



Tom Dawson (left) and the day shift crew from Camp Hill Station celebrated Harold Sanders' (centre) 100th birthday.

Retired firefighter celebrates his 100th birthday

Harold Sanders celebrated his 100th birthday in October with fellow retired firefighters and the crew from Camp Hill Fire and Rescue Station.

Harold Sanders was a Brisbane firefighter for more than 44 years, spending about 15 of them at the Annerley Fire and Rescue Station. So when he turned 100, he wanted to celebrate the milestone with his firefighting family.

"To reach 100 years is a privilege and an honour, denied of many," Mr Sanders said.

"My secret is all things in moderation, a spoonful of honey in your daily cup of tea and to just keep breathing.

"We had lots of shenanigans while on shift – my nickname was Storky, but don't believe all the stories you hear.

"Our volleyball games were great fun and we would play for ice creams.

"The banter was strong, but I think some of the blokes thought we were playing for sheep stations.

"When we were at a job though, we were a reliable and strong team and survived many a dangerous job together."

According to Mr Sanders, the principles of firefighting have remained much the

same over the years, but he concedes the equipment has improved.

"It's definitely much better and lighter, but may not be as durable as our old gear," he said.

"Our gear was made to last, a bit like me.

"We used to slide down the pole to the engine room to attend a job and I could even climb up the pole.

"I used to show my kids when they visited, but that was when I was a strong young fella."

His advice for people beginning their QFES career?

"It's the best job ever!" he said.

"Study hard and be prepared to never stop learning.

"Every day and every job is different so follow your heart."

Firefighting runs in the family, with Mr Sanders' son-in-law Tom Dawson also joining QFES. They worked together for a while and fought several large fires.

Mr Dawson went on to serve as an Assistant Commissioner and is currently a QFES Associate Chaplain in his retirement.

"My father-in-law's influence to join was gentle but continuous," Mr Dawson said.

"It was his passion for the job that spoke the loudest to me.

"His job satisfaction was always obvious and I found it truly inspiring how he and his mates always showed up to help others in trouble."

A piece of wisdom his father-in-law passed down was to "always look after your mates, especially the one beside you".

"Both of us have applied this in all aspects of the service," Mr Dawson said.

"It's a simple approach based on trust and respect. I have used it as a foundation throughout my career.

"The training I received from Harold under pressure will never be forgotten. He always practised what he said."



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