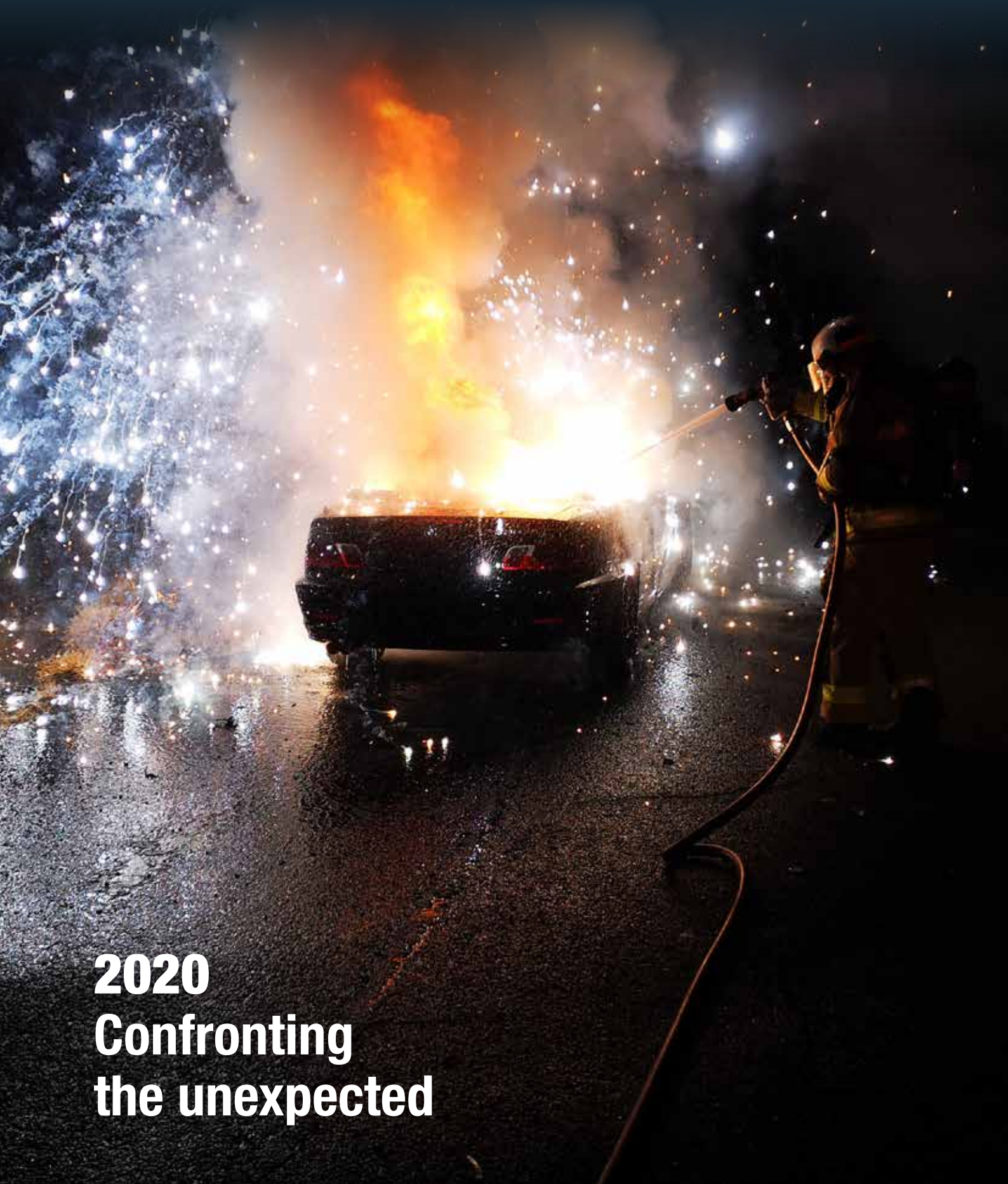


# RESPONSE

RESILIENT AND READY FOR THE PEOPLE OF QUEENSLAND

QUEENSLAND'S OFFICIAL FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES MAGAZINE EDITION 34



**2020**  
**Confronting**  
**the unexpected**

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Firefighter Andrew Fuller extinguishing a vehicle fire on the Mount Lindesay Highway at Munnruben in October. The sparks are from burning magnesium in the aluminium sunroof frame reacting with the water. Photo by Station Officer Lance Moore.

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

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# FOREWORDS



**GREG LEACH**  
Commissioner

## QUEENSLAND FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

The storm season has begun in earnest, and I would like to thank all the staff and volunteers who have responded to extreme weather events such as the hailstorms in Springfield Lakes as part of Operation Erudite. Meanwhile we have continued to battle bushfires in other parts of the state, with the fire on K'Gari (Fraser Island) burning for weeks.

This is what we train for. We are prepared for any eventuality, including a cyclone crossing the coast now that La Niña has begun. You can read more about our response to severe weather season on page 4.

I recently had the privilege of touring North Coast Region to talk with first responders from all three services about how they were working together to help communities prepare. Meeting with some of our outstanding medal recipients and hearing their stories was an inspiring reminder of the dedication at the heart of all we do.

In November we welcomed Mark Ryan as our new Minister. We are fortunate to be represented by someone with deep knowledge about emergency management from his previous experience as our Minister in 2016/17. I look forward to supporting him in his advocacy for the State Emergency Service, Rural Fire Service and Fire and Rescue Service in Parliament.

I'd like to thank our former minister Craig Crawford for everything he has done for QFES over the past three years.

The State Budget handed down on 1 December means all departments, including QFES, are affected by tight fiscal settings under the government's savings and debt plan.

I have challenged the Executive Leadership Team to look for efficiencies across operational and support areas.

We need to prove we are agile and efficient in how we plan, work with the community and deliver frontline services.

Under these financial pressures, now more than ever, we need to be resilient, and we are already working on initiatives such as reintegrating PSBA to improve how those services are delivered.

After what has been an interesting 2020, I wish you a safe holiday season with your loved ones, with time to relax and reflect on the year that was. If there is one thing I have learnt since joining QFES, it's that we can look forward to a new year of new challenges we will meet, as we always do, with confidence and determination.



**MIKE WASSING AFSM**  
Deputy Commissioner

## EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, VOLUNTEERISM AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

QFES and our partners completed a record number of activities for Operation Cool Burn.

It was a phenomenal team effort to help ensure Queensland was prepared for the 2020 fire season, so thank you to everyone involved.

Up until the recent border opening on 1 December we were also busy supporting operations at airports and the New South Wales border in respect to COVID-19.

State Emergency Service volunteers, supported by Rural Fire Service and auxiliary firefighters, have been at the border since the start of the pandemic, with some of them completing more than 100 deployments each.

Their work has been crucial to the health and safety of all Queenslanders, and they have formed valuable relationships with the other agencies working at the border.

Partnerships and collaboration are so important to the work we do. We saw this again recently during the hailstorm in south-east Queensland, when much-needed support came from SES volunteers travelling from various regions as well as from New South Wales and South Australia.

With so much going on, I want to acknowledge the high tempo of operations we've experienced throughout 2020. We have bushfires burning in some parts of the state and severe weather affecting others, all while we manage COVID-19 restrictions.

The State Operations Centre has been stood up for an amount of time we once wouldn't have thought possible. And we will continue to be busy as we head into the new year, particularly with La Niña conditions.

With all that in mind, I encourage everyone to take some time out if you can this holiday season.

Our culture here at QFES is that we keep giving, and Christmas is a giving time, but we need to give to family and friends, and to ourselves, as well.

Please look after yourselves as we head back into training and operations in the busy new year ahead.

Have a safe and enjoyable Christmas break.



Storms have brought down trees and powerlines, leaving many without power. Photo by Dan Skellern.

# Ready for La Niña

**QFES has been in continuous operations since mid-2019, responding to bushfires, the severe weather season and COVID-19. Now that La Niña has been declared, we're at the ready again to make sure Queenslanders are storm, cyclone and flood safe.**

QFES' response to the 2020-21 severe weather season, Operation Erudite, officially started on 1 November, but storms were already lashing Queensland in late October.

La Niña years are typically wetter than average across northern Australia, with earlier monsoons and more tropical cyclones. There's a greater risk of a severe tropical cyclone crossing our coast.

As in 2019, the severe weather season began while heightened bushfire conditions persisted in some parts of Queensland. This year, there's the additional complication of COVID-19 restrictions.

State Emergency Service (SES) members have been training hard to prepare for storm and flood operations, and QFES has

been working with local governments and communities to help Queenslanders get ready.

In the last week of October and first week of November, the SES received more than 7300 calls for flood or storm assistance, resulting in over 3100 tasks. Almost 90% of them were for structural damage.

The most significant storm activity so far was a series of supercells over south-east Queensland on 31 October.

On average, the Bureau of Meteorology issues 30 severe storm warnings for the area each year, but the hailstorm that afternoon was one of the most significant the area has seen.

It carved a path of destruction resulting in what the Insurance Council Australia terms a 'catastrophic event', costing an estimated \$260 million.

According to a scan by the University of Queensland, the area was hit by hailstones about 10 centimetres in diameter, with some measuring up to 14 centimetres, on par with the largest hailstones ever recorded in Australia.

The hailstones smashed roofs, solar panels and cars, and in the hours that followed about 95 000 people were left without power. Several houses were rendered uninhabitable.

SES Regional Manager for South Eastern Region, Wayne Hepple, said the hailstorm





Some hailstones were up to 14 centimetres in diameter.  
Photo by Chrissy Coles.



The SES has focused on training for storm and flood operations.



Tiled roofs were destroyed by the hailstones, with many needing to be fully replaced.

affected a wide swathe from Rosewood in the west, over the greater Springfield area and running through to Boronia Heights.

“Both the Somerset and Gold Coast areas were also affected, but to a lesser degree,” he said.

“As always, the emergency services were quick to respond to community requests for assistance and began capturing the levels of damage through damage assessments.

“SES quickly established Emergency Operations Centres at the Ipswich Unit HQ and the Logan East HQ, as well as forward staging at Goodna SES and Logan West SES Groups.”

The Rural Fire Service, Fire and Rescue Service and Technical Rescue provided assistance, as well as the New South Wales

SES, South Australia SES and intra-state deployments from across Queensland.

“Many SES groups drove in daily from as far away as South Western Region, Brisbane Region and North Coast Region,” Wayne said.

“QFES undertook an estimated 2000 shifts in direct response to the event, not including the many staff and volunteers who fulfilled support roles in the background.”

QFES provided direct support for more than 1650 tasks at time of printing.

“We completed about 165 tasks per day, on average, which is a commendable effort,” Wayne said.



SES members completed more than 1650 tasks.



# Looking back on 2020

As we near the end of a year unlike any other, Commissioner Greg Leach reflects on his first 12 months with QFES and everything we've achieved.

This year we faced two disasters that redefined our approach to emergency management – the catastrophic bushfire season and COVID-19.

Through all the upheavals, QFES, our partners and the community worked together in preparation, response and recovery.

It's an honour to lead a department held in such high regard by the community, and in 2020 I've seen countless examples of how efficiently staff and volunteers across our three services work together to meet those expectations.

## Bushfire

I joined QFES in the thick of last year's bushfire season and I was immediately impressed by the professionalism everyone showed during Operation Redux, both on the fire ground and behind the scenes.

It was an enormous effort, and on top of that, 720 QFES staff and volunteers raised their hands to help protect communities in New South Wales.

The future will bring more extreme bushfire seasons so we need to keep educating the community and adapting our approach. The Bushfires Royal Commission is an important part of that – you can read more about the findings on page 14.

Australians are more aware than ever of the danger of bushfires and the need to prepare well in advance of bushfire season.

During Operation Cool Burn QFES members, along with our land management partners and communities, worked long hours across the state to conduct a record number of risk mitigation activities.

As part of preparing for fires in the future, QFES has taken the opportunity to learn from traditional owners about Indigenous cultural fire management practices. We participated in several cultural burns, including at Tamborine Mountain and Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island). You can read more about this important work on page 12.

Starting while the 2019-20 bushfire season was still underway, the severe weather season was a relief for some because it eased drought conditions, but it also brought flash floods. QFES staff and volunteers were out in force, with the SES responding to more than 2500 requests for assistance.

## Pandemic

In some ways the start of COVID-19 feels like only yesterday, but it has brought so much change into our lives.

With the bushfire season only just behind us, the community looked to QFES for reassurance that we would get through this emergency as well.

I'm proud of the leadership and compassion QFES members showed while supporting Queenslanders through the challenges of the pandemic.



The Tamborine Mountain Rural Fire Brigade worked with traditional owners to change its fire practices. Photo by Cam Neville.



Our staff and volunteers adopted new ways of working and innovative approaches to service delivery and training. From video calls to working from home, we learnt what works and how we can keep using these solutions into the future.

Many of our people have also played a direct role in keeping Queenslanders safe during this time.

Our State Disaster Coordination Centre has been stood up for a record amount of time to manage logistics and planning for border restrictions and hotel quarantine. QFES staff and volunteers have dedicated thousands of hours supporting operations at the State Health Emergency Centre, airports and the NSW border to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

The easing of restrictions in Queensland has been a relief, but many peoples' lives have been affected and we need to remain vigilant.

### Capability

We have boosted our firefighting capabilities across the state to ensure we continue to meet community expectations.

In September, Queensland achieved a major milestone for aerial firefighting when we contracted a Large Air Tanker, one of the most innovative emergency response air tankers in the world. It can drop 10 000 litres and cover large distances.

We also boosted our firefighting and aerial rescue power with seven new Combined Aerial Pumping Appliances (CAPA).

The CAPAs, worth a combined \$12.6 million, are the first of their kind in Queensland. Their ladders can extend up to 32 metres to rescue people from buildings.

QFES also deployed 100 new Fire and Rescue Service firefighters to stations across regional Queensland to help communities prepare for the next bushfire season.

Regional communities were hit hard by the bushfires and many people lost homes and businesses, so these new firefighters are helping them recover and build resilience.

Another exciting addition to our firefighting capability was the 20 new drones we distributed around the state, almost doubling the size of our drone program.

### Community

Our community engagement looked very different this year thanks to COVID-19, but with all the challenges we faced, it was more important than ever to stay connected with the community.



QFES volunteers at the start of the Bushfire Relief Tickertape Parade in Brisbane.



QFES played a key role in supporting the community during the pandemic.

In March, Queensland said thank you to our emergency services staff and volunteers at the Bushfire Relief Tickertape Parade. I was proud to watch QFES members march alongside other agencies and organisations through the streets of Brisbane, cheered on by the community.

We commemorated ANZAC Day in a special way this year through Light Up the Dawn. Across the state, we stood at the end of our driveways, on our front verandahs or in front of fire stations, holding candles and poppies, to show our respect for all veterans.

COVID-19 has added extra layers of stress on top of our everyday worries, leaving many people struggling to cope. On R U OK? Day, we reminded ourselves how important it is to look after our mental health and reach out if we're worried about someone. If you're struggling, you can access free, confidential services through the Fire and Emergency Services Support Network.

More than 100 QFES members raised awareness and funds to help end the cycle of domestic and family violence by joining the Darkness to Daylight challenge in October. Thank you to everyone who donated and took part.

### Facing the future together

Now that La Niña has begun, we can expect storms and cyclones to lash Queensland in the months ahead. One disaster gives way to another, but we are always ready.

With our community and partners, we will continue building a strong foundation of resilience that will help us stand firm against the emergencies of tomorrow.



More than 700 QFES members travelled interstate to help fight the bushfires.

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# Recognising our SES volunteers

During State Emergency Service (SES) Week in October, we honoured the hard work our SES volunteers and staff put in every day to protect the people of Queensland.

SES volunteers have given generously of their time in 2020, supporting bushfire operations as well as pandemic and storm responses.

Normally QFES would hold celebrations across the state for SES Week, but this year's events were adapted to COVID-19 and celebrated with smaller events in each region.

Ryszard Klima, who has been with the Logan East SES Group for six years, was awarded the Minister's Cup.

Ryszard attended almost all of his group's storm damage operations in the past 12 months, contributing more than 500 hours of his time.

When COVID-19 forced his group to cease training, he was one of the first to suggest they do something to support the less fortunate in their community. The SES

established a food warehouse, and Ryszard managed logistical operations to deliver food parcels throughout Logan.

"I managed storage, sorted the food and prepared packages for delivery by our members," Ryszard said.

He has also attended almost every search operation in Logan this year.

"We've conducted a lot of searches for missing bushwalkers in the mountains around Lamington and Mount Tamborine," he said.

"I like the searches because I enjoy bushwalking and I have the physical fitness to get across the harder sections of bush. I also have plenty of time to help out now that I'm retired.

"Most searches are very satisfying – even if the outcome is not a happy one, at least it gives some closure for the family."

One of Ryszard's most challenging activations was Cyclone Debbie.

"There was so much damage, but it was a good experience working together with the Rural Fire Service (RFS) to clean houses and repair damage," Ryszard said.

"The RFS volunteers were really experienced and down-to-earth. We went on to help them during the bushfires at Boonah, managing a staging area at the Boonah Showgrounds and delivering supplies to the firefighters on the ground.

"You never know what to expect – you just go there and help. That's what we do."

In 2020, SES Week also celebrates its new principal community partnership with Suncorp.

Thank you to all our SES volunteers for your tireless commitment to your fellow Queenslanders.



Ryszard Klima with the Minister's Cup for Queensland SES Member of the Year.

## SES Week Awards

### Minister's Cup for Queensland SES Member of the Year

*Ryszard Klima of Logan East SES Group*

For distinguished service to the SES through consistent, reliable and dependable commitment to all aspects of training, activations and unit management, and special contribution to the Logan SES Unit.

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

*Scenic Rim Regional SES Unit*

For exceptional initiatives, dedicated service and outstanding operational response to the Scenic Rim Community.

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

*Coen SES Group*

For outstanding support to the displaced persons from the Aurukun community and the continuing support while they were temporarily housed in Coen.

### Joyce Scorey Shield for Queensland SES Trainer of the Year

*Ian Bacon of Cleveland SES Group*

For distinguished service to the SES through outstanding professional leadership, commitment and dedication to planning, training delivery, and members' skills development.



# Summer of Disasters – 10 years on

**It has been a decade since Queenslanders went through one of the most challenging summers, including widespread flooding and cyclones. QFES remembers the events of 2010-11 and how we have learnt and grown as a result.**

## Ten years passes quickly.

It has been 10 years since widespread flooding, destructive storms and one of the biggest cyclones to make landfall in Queensland hit many communities.

The Department of Community Safety managed the response to these disasters, which challenged our capabilities and pushed us to learn from and improve our strategies.

After being in heart-breaking drought for most of the preceding decade, the state experienced record-breaking flood events, particularly in central, southern and south-east Queensland. In January 2011 a flash flood inundated Toowoomba and devastated communities in Grantham, and a few days later Ipswich and Brisbane were flooded.

This was followed by Category 5 Cyclone Yasi, which crossed the coast near Mission Beach on 5 February.

At that time, Emergency Management Queensland included the State Emergency Service (SES), and the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service included the Rural Fire Service (RFS). Each service played a pivotal role. As a result of inquiries and reviews that followed the floods, QFES as we know it was born.

SES Regional Manager Mark Dole remembers the compounding effect of the events.

“We had continuous deployments for months to support Queensland communities as they were battered by severe weather in all parts of the state,” Mr Dole said.

“Thousands of SES volunteers were deployed, supported by thousands more from every other state and territory. It was the largest deployment we’ve ever had within the SES.

“In the 11 weeks after Christmas 2010, the SES received about 112 000 calls. Our volunteers didn’t hesitate in putting their hands up to support their fellow Queenslanders.

“As terrible as the events of that summer were, the achievements of SES members over such a long period of time cemented our reputation within the community as a trusted service Queenslanders can rely on in an emergency.”

Assistant Commissioner Stephen Smith was the Manager of Technical Rescue during the floods and, over Christmas and January, was the Acting Superintendent of Special Operations, responsible for the coordination of specialist capabilities. This included technical rescue, HAZMAT, swiftwater, Urban Search and Rescue (USAR), damage assessment and the flexible habitat capability.





“Without a doubt, it was the most challenging operational period of my career,” Mr Smith said.

“We were actively deployed for 86 days in a row, from December through to March.

“There were events in every corner of the state and we had to try new approaches to meet expectations. We were managing multiple taskforces from interstate and more people, equipment and specialist responses than ever before.”

Mr Smith said the 2010-11 severe weather season was a definite turning point for swiftwater capability within QFES.

“Swiftwater capability and capacity had been steadily developing but operations were not really frequent in the decade leading up to the floods due to the drought,” he said.

“During the floods, we had access to skilled swiftwater technicians for in-water operations, but our motorised boat capability was limited to SES floodboats, which are designed to be used in certain situations and environments.

“The department relied on a lot of collaboration, working with a range of partners and using what was available – the Queensland Police Service, Volunteer Marine Rescue Queensland and Surf Life Saving Queensland – everyone worked as one.”

After the floods, there was a Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry, and internally a Commissioner’s Review of Swiftwater Capability, which led to a wide range of capability enhancements.

These included more swiftwater rescue technicians, the creation of swiftwater rescue operators and the introduction of helicopter winch operations and specialised motorised swiftwater rescue craft, as well as equipment, training and procedural improvements.

“It may sound strange, but the floods and weather events in that period have had a hugely positive impact on our operations ever since – we experienced and learnt a lot,” Mr Smith said.

Graeme Hall was the Fire and Rescue Service Operations Manager for the response to Cyclone Yasi, which included six weeks of non-stop operations.

“The morning after Yasi hit, two of our crews based in Innisfail used chainsaws to clear their way down the Bruce Highway to get to Tully,” Mr Hall said.

“We went there initially for search and rescue operations but we also conducted damage assessments.”

Just about every home in Tully was damaged, and there were no leaves left on

the trees in the surrounding rainforests. The hills had turned from green to brown.

“Some towns were inaccessible for days. We also had teams airlifted into coastline and island communities that were completely isolated,” Mr Hall said. “The damage to houses and boats was extensive.”

During operations, flexible habitats or tented accommodation is used to create a living environment so there’s no additional burden on a community to house or feed crews.

“We camped underneath a school and were completely self-sufficient,” Mr Hall said.

“There was a sense of hopelessness everywhere. I remember the faces of people who’d lost their property and didn’t know where they were going to live.

“It’s important to learn from disasters like these and use this knowledge for future events.

“The floods changed how we conduct damage assessments, which was useful for the 2014 Bundaberg floods and the recent hailstorms at Springfield Lakes,” he said.

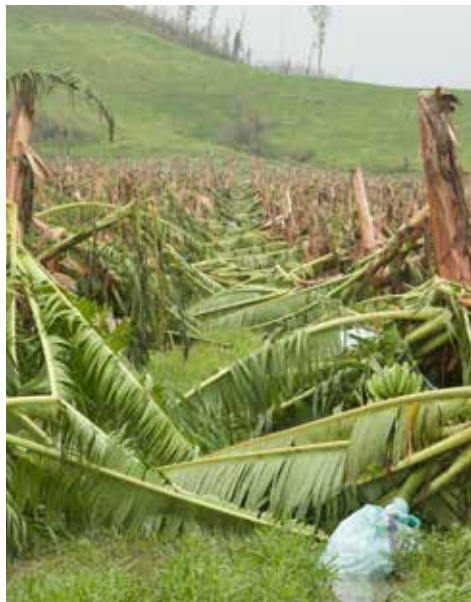
“We can now collect valuable data that helps other government departments support those who are displaced by severe weather events.”

Another key part of the response to the 2010-11 floods was providing support to staff and volunteers on the ground.

Critical Incidents and Peer Support/ Operations Support Manager Barb Gonda coordinated peer support during this time.

“For Peer Support Officers (PSOs), the 2010-11 summer floods were one of their first forays into supporting our members in the community at the frontline,” Ms Gonda said.

“As a team, we provided ongoing support for operations and people in the field.



“We supported first responders through long-term fatigue and the effects of exposure to the environmental destruction and emotional toll of helping people through their distress and loss.

“I stood on a beach after Cyclone Yasi and saw a house where the only thing left was a toilet.

“A big part of our role was also just being there so our crews knew someone had their backs.

“Talking to someone and telling your story is profoundly important, whether you’re a firefighter or an SES volunteer or a community member.

“To have someone listen to you is paramount to recovery and healing.”

Barb remembers the enormity of what faced them early in the season and wondering how they were going to get through it all.

“There was potential to be overwhelmed, but we just took one day at a time and did what we could,” she recalled.

“It helped us see we can handle anything that comes our way.

“We all developed a sense of solidarity, both within ourselves as responders and as part of QFES.

“I have the greatest respect for what everyone achieved, and I think it’s important to celebrate that.

“Challenge after challenge without celebrating the achievement doesn’t give you a sense of meaning, and I think through events like that you have to have a sense of purpose and meaning.

“Stopping to reflect helps us recognise who we are so we can build on that.”







The Darumbal People Aboriginal Corporation Registered Native Title Body trained with QFES to share skills for conducting hazard reduction burns on their own land.

# Always Was, Always Will Be

This year's NAIDOC Week explored the theme of *Always Was, Always Will Be* in recognition that First Nations people have occupied and cared for this country for more than 65 000 years.

QFES has learnt important lessons about Indigenous cultural fire management from traditional owners in 2020.

Our engagement with Indigenous communities has included training with Indigenous fire practitioners and reaching out to rural and remote communities in the lead-up to storm season.

## Understanding our environment

By supporting cultural burning and listening to the diverse voices and experiences of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues, QFES can build greater resilience in our community.

One QFES member leading the way is Kylee Clubb, who joined the Tinaroo Rural Fire Brigade in 2017 because she wanted to help motivate young people in her small town of Malanda on the Atherton Tablelands.

"We have a lot of young people unsure of what they want to do, so a group of us joined our brigade to show our young people they have so much to offer the Rural Fire Service (RFS), and the RFS has a lot to offer us as well," Kylee said.

"At first it was daunting, but I met some inspirational brigade members and our young people started to attend. It helped build their confidence and social skills."

Kylee is also a director with Gambir Yidinji Cultural Heritage and Protection Aboriginal Corporations and the Queensland Director of the Firesticks Alliance. She recently completed a cultural burn alongside Buluwai Elders and Djabugay Rangers in Buluwai Country as part of the ABC documentary series *Big Weather*.

Kylee said to perform a cultural burn, a traditional owner of the local area who

has practised fire and was taught by their elders must be present.

"Local people help you take into consideration what is located within that area and what they may want to protect when performing the cultural burn," she said.

"We don't use drip torch fuel to accelerate the burn – we want the burn to move through slow enough so animals get away.

"The cooler burn will help trees regenerate, making sure the impact of the fire is low on the soils and canopy.

"We allow the trees to get used to the fire and make them stronger and more resilient for the seasons to come."

Kylee said her brigade takes a holistic approach to cultural burns and wants to make others aware of the benefits it can have on our environment.





Kylee Clubb (back row, second from left) with other members of the Tinaroo Rural Fire Brigade.



Kylee Clubb has been with the Tinaroo Rural Fire Brigade since 2017.

“It comes back to making me and my brigade feel socially and emotionally well, knowing we did a good job by taking the steps to apply fire appropriately. Just like any tool, you can feel when you are using it right,” she said.

“Being a cultural fire practitioner complements my work with the RFS. We can work alongside each other by having cultural diversity within our brigade and sharing different views on how we can better manage fire together.”

Kylee said she thinks there is an increasing acceptance of cultural burns in Queensland.

“I feel there is a lot of interest around the technique and the continuing practice of cultural burning. Being able to observe fire behaviour is making the practice more accepted through better understanding of our environment and becoming more aware of our surroundings.”

### Indigenous ranger training

Ten members of the Darumbal People Aboriginal Corporation Registered Native Title Body (DPAC RNTBC) recently took part in a QFES training course to build their skills around conducting hazard reduction burns on their own land.

RFS Rockhampton Area Director Chris Spencer said they spent the first four days studying in Rockhampton before heading out to their land at Cawarral to conduct a hazard reduction burn.

“The skills they learnt will be of great benefit to their program for emerging young Indigenous rangers,” Chris said.

“They have now earned their Certificate II in Public Safety (Firefighting Operations), which covers fire behaviour and how to work safely on the fireground.”

The DPAC RNTBC members will now go on to learn cultural burning practices suitable for their area.

“Our training provided increased resilience for the Darumbal community, as well as strengthening relationships with neighbouring landholders,” he said.

“A lot of the volunteers from DPAC RNTBC have also joined the Cawarral Rural Fire Brigade, so they can help the greater Capricornia community in times of need.

“Joining the RFS also means they can get further qualifications and complete speciality courses.”

Chris said the training course was a two-way learning process.

“By working with the Darumbal community, QFES is learning about Indigenous history and the key priorities for their burning practices.

“It’s a really positive step into the future for collaborative partnerships between traditional owners and QFES.”

### Remote communities

Arama Samuel and Mark Sarago both work as State Emergency Service (SES) Indigenous Capability Officers in Far Northern Region, travelling to remote Indigenous communities to provide and deliver training.

Arama recently visited 10 Indigenous island communities in the Torres Strait. Now Cairns based, Arama used to live on Horn Island and began his career with QFES there as a volunteer for the SES and RFS.

“I am identified as a Torres Strait Islander by the elders in the community I lived in for many years,” Arama said.

“Each of these islands has its own distinct culture, is rich in history and speaks multilingual native languages – all are fluent in Torres Strait Creole.

“Visiting SES groups on the islands to help educate and train volunteers is incredibly rewarding.”

Arama talked with the communities about being prepared for storms and cyclones, ran storm-damage training, and participated in a rescue with local SES members.

“Training for storm damage is a major push to enhance their skills and ability to empower people to help themselves and others in their communities in times of emergency,” he said.

“I take every opportunity I get to speak to community members to discuss plans to better prepare for upcoming storm events – sand bagging, ways of protecting their properties from storm surge (king tides), and protecting their household items.”

Arama’s fellow Indigenous Capability Officer, Mark Sarago, visits communities in the Cape York region.

“We try to visit those communities as much as we can,” Mark said.

“I talk with them about cleaning up around the house, clearing out gutters, storm damage and so on.

“Storms are the biggest threat in those communities, but when the tourist season starts there are road crashes as well.”

Mark drives for up to 12 hours to reach communities as far north as Weipa.

“I find it rewarding to give back to communities by sharing knowledge and helping them establish a functional emergency services response,” he said.

### Start your learning journey

If you’d like to learn more about the lived experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland and explore your own cultural identity, you can complete our new interactive course, Starting the Journey, on the QFES Learning Cache or in the Nexus Learning module.

# Royal Commission makes recommendations for national improvements

**The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements, also known as the Bushfires Royal Commission, released its final report on 28 October, calling for a range of changes to strengthen national natural disaster arrangements.**

The Commission was established in February this year in response to the catastrophic 2019-20 bushfire season.

Four public hearing blocks and around 1800 submissions resulted in a 600-page report with hundreds of observations that form the basis of 80 recommendations.

Commissioner Greg Leach said QFES looks forward to supporting the implementation of the Queensland Government-endorsed recommendations.

“As the report points out, climate change will result in natural disasters in Australia becoming more frequent and more intense,” he said.

“If natural disasters are changing, then we need to change, and this report provides some high-level guidance for how the future of Prevention, Preparation, Response and Recovery might look at a national level.

“There will be a lot of work involved as agencies across the country, including all levels of government, consider these recommendations.

“QFES is already undertaking significant work to understand the recommendations and what might be involved in their implementation.

“Some recommendations are already in progress, such as the working groups to finalise a national approach to fire danger ratings and warnings.

“While there may be some early outcomes, the majority of the recommendations will take time to consider and implement, especially considering the collaboration that will be involved with our partners around the country.”

In its response to the report, released on 13 November, the Australian Government said it would support all recommendations directed to federal government, except for the recommendation to establish a national aerial firefighting capability.

The Australian Government also committed to establishing a national resilience, relief and recovery agency and a climate and disaster risk information service by 1 July 2021.

## **A snapshot of the report's observations**

*Natural disasters have changed, and it has become clear to us that the nation's disaster management arrangements must also change.*

*Australia needs a national approach to natural disasters. This does not mean that the Australian Government should ‘take over’ from state and territory governments. Rather, it means that we need ‘whole-of-nation’, ‘whole-of-government’ and ‘whole-of-society’ cooperation and effort.*

*To make Australia more resilient to natural disasters demands action on multiple fronts. We need to do much more than put out fires. A resilient nation will seek to mitigate the risk of disasters through a wide range of measures, and it will attend to all of the complex and sometimes long-term consequences.*

*Governments, businesses, communities and individuals each play a role in various aspects of natural disaster mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.*

*A national approach calls for greater cooperation and coordination across governments and agencies; a greater sharing of resources across jurisdictions; an agile emergency response and recovery capability, with skills and technology that can be used across the country; and the data, systems and research to help us manage and mitigate disaster risk, efficiently and effectively.*





*QFES is mapping out how we will implement the Commission's recommendations. Photo by Cam Neville.*

## A snapshot of the 80 recommendations

- 3.4 Australian Government agencies should work together across all phases of disaster management.
- 3.5 The Australian Government should establish a standing entity that will enhance national natural disaster resilience and recovery, focused on long-term disaster risk reduction.
- 3.6 The Australian Government should enhance national preparedness for, and response to, natural disasters, building on the responsibilities of Emergency Management Australia, to include facilitating resource sharing decisions of governments and stress testing national disaster plans.
- 4.1 Australian, state and territory governments should prioritise the implementation of harmonised data governance and national data standards.
- 4.2 Australian, state and territory governments should create common information platforms and share technologies to enable collaboration in the production, analysis, access, and exchange of information, data and knowledge about climate and disaster risks.
- 5.1 The Australian Government should make provision, in legislation, for a declaration of a state of national emergency.
- 6.3 State and territory governments should update and implement the National Framework to Improve Government Radio Communications Interoperability, or otherwise agree a new strategy, to achieve interoperable communications across jurisdictions.
- 6.4 Australian, state and territory governments should expedite the delivery of a Public Safety Mobile Broadband capability.
- 8.1 Australian, state and territory governments should develop an Australian-based and registered national aerial firefighting capability, to be tasked according to greatest national need.
- 13.1 State and territory governments should expedite the development and implementation of the Australian Fire Danger Rating System.
- 13.3 State and territory governments should urgently deliver and implement the all-hazard Australian Warning System.
- 13.6 Australian, state and territory governments should continue to explore the feasibility of a national, all-hazard emergency warning app.
- 17.2 Australian, state and territory governments should review the assessment and approval processes relating to vegetation management, bushfire mitigation and hazard reduction.
- 18.1 Australian, state, territory and local governments should engage further with Traditional Owners to explore the relationship between Indigenous land and fire management and natural disaster resilience.

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# Training on a cliff edge

Firefighters face different situations every day, so they train for all kinds of emergencies, including extreme road crashes.

Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) staff from Ashgrove, Roma Street and Enoggera recently completed a multi-agency training exercise at Ashgrove Fire and Rescue Station that strengthened their skills in vertical rescue, road crash rescue (RCR) and first aid.

They worked alongside Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) paramedics and Queensland Police Service (QPS) officers, with about 35 first responders on scene in total.

The scenario involved two cars that had driven over an embankment at Mount Nebo.

Station Officer Mark Millanta said carrying out the exercise was vital because firefighters regularly responded to similar incidents in the area.

“Crews recently helped rescue a delivery driver whose van lost control on a corner and plunged 30 metres off a cliff,” Mark said.

“The van was full of LPG bottles, but thankfully a large tree stopped its descent.

“FRS were first on scene and their challenge was to retrieve the driver, who had a broken arm, as well as making sure the gas bottles were safe.

“This job called on both vertical and rescue skills, just like our training exercise.

“We train for things we actually go to. We identify hazards within our station boundaries and plan for them. It hones our skills for future jobs down the line.”

Mark said the exercise participants had to think about how to stabilise the casualty and then retrieve them, as well as getting equipment down the embankment.

“The vertical component focused on getting the equipment and people over the edge to the incident, which the QAS paramedics hadn’t done before.

“Firefighters practised immediate first aid before handing over to the paramedics. This then freed them up to complete the RCR component.”

He said the multi-agency exercise was a chance for FRS, QAS and QPS to all get together and work on a scenario.

“It was great to have everyone there working as a team to achieve the outcome,” Mark said.

“QPS provided scene security and advised us on the forensic crash unit’s requirements, while QAS managed patient handling and care.

“Working alongside the other agencies is a massive bonus for us. It lets us focus on our areas of expertise while also seeing how they operate.”

Mark said the exercise’s success inspired them to plan another.

“The paramedics who went over the edge on a harness and rope have asked to learn more about our processes, so the next scenario will focus on achieving similar results,” he said.



Participants practised rescuing someone from a car at the base of a cliff.



FRS crews often conduct road crash rescues in the area.

# Learning from your feedback

The majority of QFES staff and volunteers said they feel motivated and inspired by their work in the 2020 Working for Queensland and Volunteering for Queensland surveys.

This year's surveys had a great participation rate, with more than 4600 QFES staff and volunteers taking the opportunity to have their say.

Among the most positive results were taking pride in working for QFES, understanding how our work contributes to QFES' objectives, and incorporating the QFES values into our work.

There was strong agreement across the department about feeling a personal attachment to QFES and our work.

Regina O'Toole, Executive Officer to the Assistant Commissioner of Brisbane Region, said the surveys were a confidential forum that allowed QFES to gauge our performance collectively and in each

division, regionally and down to the work unit level.

"As a Regional Leadership Team, we delved into the results to see what we had done well, what was going okay but could be improved on, and what areas we really had to do some work on to improve our performance," Regina said.

"We created a communications strategy in the lead up to the surveys to ensure we communicated to staff and volunteers to assure them we listen and take their feedback seriously."

As a result, Brisbane Region increased their Working for Queensland participation rates from 18% in 2019 to 33% in 2020.

QFES made the results available as soon as possible this year. Leaders at all levels of QFES are having conversations with their teams about their results and planning actions.

"In Brisbane Region, our Assistant Commissioner John Cawcutt circulated the regional results to each service-specific area. From there, focus groups will be established to work on areas of improvement," Regina said.

"It's important for us to interpret the data and gain a better understanding of what the underlying issues are."

Has your team had a conversation about your results? You can find them on the Gateway, along with a leader toolkit to help start conversations.

## Our most favourable responses

### Working for Queensland

- I understand what is expected of me to do well in my job.

92%

- I understand how my work contributes to my organisation's objectives.

92%

- People in my workgroup are committed to workplace safety.

88%

- People in my workgroup treat customers with respect.

87%

- People in my workgroup are committed to delivering excellent service to customers.

85%

### Volunteering for Queensland

- I understand what is expected of me to effectively do my volunteer role.

94%

- I am proud to tell others I volunteer for my organisation.

87%

- People in my team are committed to workplace safety.

86%

- My volunteering gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment.

86%

- I understand how I contribute to QFES objectives.

85%



# Queenslanders feel ready for storm season

Community Insights Survey results show residents feel ready for summer storms, heatwaves and further pandemics but still prefer QFES come to the rescue rather than building their own resilience.

A survey of more than 2000 Queenslanders has given QFES an insight into the state of their preparedness and attitude towards disasters.

Each year since 2004, QFES has undertaken research with Queensland Households to measure Queenslanders' level of preparedness for fire and emergency events.

Previously known as the Queensland Household Survey, the Community Insights Survey helps QFES develop community education strategies, including smoke alarm testing and legislation awareness, risk awareness and communication preferences.

QFES Analytics Executive Manager Jason Brown said the annual survey showed some big shifts from the 2019 findings.

"We see consistently that about 98 per cent of Queenslanders have smoke alarms installed but only 83.5 per cent of these have been tested or maintained in the past 12 months," Jason said.

"Also, 60 per cent of people don't have a home fire escape plan, which is an increase from 55 per cent in 2019."

Awareness of the new photoelectric interconnected smoke alarm legislation hasn't changed since last year.

While these statistics show some Queenslanders are not taking all the steps to prepare for home fires, it's encouraging to see significantly more people have checked the QFES or local council website for information and advice (30%) compared to 2019 (26%).

Jason said the survey showed community reliance on QFES to respond to emergency and disaster events has increased significantly compared to 2019.

"Last year, 63 per cent of respondents said they'd prefer QFES respond to events but that has jumped to 68 per cent.

"While it's always hard to pinpoint why, the intense and significant bushfire seasons

we've had in the past few years are a likely contributor.

"QFES' assistance and expertise are much more pivotal for this type of hazard and are still at the forefront of people's minds, when compared to floods and cyclones."

The bushfires may have increased Queenslanders' awareness of QFES' role, but there is still work to be done to encourage them to prepare for disasters and increase their own resilience instead of relying on QFES to come to the rescue.

"When we look at what actions people are taking to get ready, there is definitely room for improvement," Jason said.

He said Queenslanders in Far Northern, Northern, Central and South Western regions have generally completed more property changes to reduce the impact of emergency and disaster events, compared to their Brisbane and South Eastern region counterparts.

Results also showed most Queenslanders (87%) consider themselves responsible for preparing their household for emergency and disaster events but consider QFES the next most responsible (64%).

This sentiment is higher in Brisbane (70%) and South-Eastern Region (64%) compared to other regions.

There was also an increase in the number of people who feel more vulnerable to emergency and disaster events from last year, particularly in Brisbane Region and South-Eastern Region.

Eight per cent of respondents had gone through a disaster or emergency event in the past year, and about three in five felt the experience would improve their preparedness for future events.

In total, 39 per cent of survey respondents had received a QFES service in the last year, and overall respondents were satisfied with those services.

All reports are accessible to the public on the Queensland Open Data site.

## Community perception of risk and preparedness

Event	Perceived risk	Perceived preparedness*
Storms	69%	77%
Pandemics	64%	71%
Heatwaves	62%	75%
Cyclone	36%	71%
Storm surge	33%	62%
Bushfire	32%	60%
Transport incident	32%	49%
Flood	31%	66%
Structure fire	21%	60%
Vehicle fire	18%	49%
Terrorism	11%	20%
Hazardous materials incidents	10%	38%
Earthquakes	8%	39%

\* of those who responded 'slightly likely/very likely' for perceived risk



# NORTHERN REGION

## Girl Guides and Brownies visit Horseshoe Bay

Horseshoe Bay Rural Fire Brigade hosted 32 Girl Guides and Brownies on Magnetic Island recently to conduct practical fire-themed activities to help them earn their fire badges.

The girls participated in four challenges related to bushfire safety, campfires and home fire safety. The home fire safety exercise involved fire blankets, extinguishers, fire trucks, smoke alarms, calling Triple Zero and the importance of having a home fire safety plan.

The brigade was well supported by Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service Rangers, Jo and Sonja from Magnetic Island Base, as well as additional Volunteer Community Educators from the mainland.



The girls built a fire pyramid, completed an obstacle course and learnt about valuable life skills and volunteering.

Once the girls completed all the activities, they were presented with their fire badges by Rural Fire Service members, with six of the girls also receiving their community badge for donating their 'subs' in February this year to the Bushfires Crisis Appeal to assist injured wildlife.

At the completion of the activity the girls enjoyed a barbeque lunch and hit the beach for the afternoon where they enjoyed free gelatos generously donated by Adele's Cafe.



## Northern Region Zone Commander

Northern Region now has the support of their first Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) Zone Commander, with the position becoming operational on 2 November 2020.

Superintendent Phillip Faint was appointed to the position, which provides ongoing growth and development of emergency services delivery to the people of North Queensland.



The last 25 years have seen our services become more technical, more diverse and more contemporary in supporting local emergency response and playing key roles in disasters such as the 2019 Townsville monsoon.

Northern Region now aligns with most other regions in the state with the introduction of a Zone Commander who will align our people's direction and support a culture of professionalism, dedication and a unified approach to serving our community across the FRS and all QFES.

Phillip has been with QFES since 1996, working in many roles from firefighter to Station Officer, managing the QFES mining contract obligations in Mount Isa, leading the region's Community Safety Unit and Professional Development Unit, and serving as Area Commander for Northern, Southern and Special Operations Commands.

For the past three years, Phillip has been acting as the Director of Regional Development and the Manager of Business Operations.

## Burketown excited for new appliance

Burketown Rural Fire Brigade and town are eagerly awaiting delivery of a new heavy appliance generously funded through public donations to the Rural Fire Brigade Association of Queensland. Funding has come from corporate donations in Australia and from overseas, celebrities, fundraising efforts in Australia and donations from the general public.

The brigade has had input into the design of the appliance, which is built on an Isuzu body and will carry 3000 litres of water. The appliance has a Compressed Air Foam system and space for Road Crash Rescue equipment, allowing both the Rural Fire Service (RFS) and State Emergency Service (SES) to use it.

This heavy appliance will increase the emergency response capability in the Burke Shire because it can be used over long distances. The community is excited for it to arrive and the brigade hopes it will attract new members to the RFS and SES.







# CENTRAL REGION



## Congratulations to our SES Week Award recipients

SES Week in Central Region was celebrated with award presentations in Yeppoon, Mackay, Emerald and Rockhampton.

It was wonderful to thank and celebrate our SES volunteers for all the work they do for our communities.

### Our award winners were:

- Central Region Member of the Year – Kirby Chandler, Rockhampton SES Group
- Central Region Group of the Year – Bowen SES Group
- Central Region Operational Response of the Year – Mackay and Whitsundays SES Units



## Longreach community supports one of our own

QFES members from Longreach came together with 300 community members in September to participate in a community colour dash and provide a welcome spray of water. The community event was held to raise funds for the Jacques' Fight to Walk Again Campaign.

The event is very close to the Longreach QFES family's hearts, with the funds going to support Longreach Auxiliary Firefighter Chrisne Jacobie's family.

Chrisne's brother Jacques was involved in a motorbike accident in June, which has left him wheelchair-bound and recovering in Brisbane. The community came together to raise more than \$4000 towards Jacques' recovery and ongoing battle to walk again.



## SES builds community educator capacity for wet season

Over the past four months during the COVID-19 restrictions, Central Region has increased our community educator capability.

In the lead up to this year's severe weather season, 28 new SES volunteer community educators have completed the induction.

The training team implemented videoconferencing to enable trainers, presenters and participants to still partake through physical distancing and travel ban constraints.



# NORTH COAST REGION



## QFES personnel recognised for their contribution to the community

QFES members were recognised in the 2020 Brian Prince Awards held by the Bundaberg Central Rotary Club.

The annual awards have been running since 2014 and recognise Wide Bay emergency services for their role in the community. They are held in honour of Brian Prince, a Rotarian who dedicated more than 50 years to helping others as a first responder in the ambulance service.

The QFES Brian Prince Award winner was Auxiliary Firefighter John Ratcliffe from Childers Fire and Rescue Station, in recognition for his work in the Bundaberg and Wide Bay community.

Peter Hollier, Regional Manager Rural Fire Service (RFS), was also announced as the inaugural ABC Wide Bay Media Award winner. This award was introduced by ABC Wide Bay this year, recognising Peter's leadership in establishing strong relationships between the RFS and local media.

Volunteer of the Year was awarded to RFS member Neil Much from the Boolboonda Rural Fire Brigade.

Luke Harding from Bundaberg State Emergency Service was also a finalist in the 2020 awards.



## PIO refresher courses

There's been a raft of changes within the Queensland Government in light of the Bushfires Royal Commission.

Assistant Commissioner Gary McCormack prioritised a program to ensure North Coast Region personnel who received AIIMS Public Information Officers (PIO) training are updated with current processes.

Steve Evans and Malcolm McKay, with the assistance of the North Coast Region Senior Leadership Team, organised and delivered two refresher courses for the two North Coast Region zones.

North Coast Region Emergency Management Coordinator Peter Harkin outlined the role of the Emergency Management Coordinator, Local Disaster Management Group and District Disaster Management Group within the Disaster Management Arrangements.

The region can now strategically place its trained personnel within the Incident Management Teams to provide:

- Information and warnings – disseminate warnings and information to threatened communities, other stakeholders and the general public
- Community engagement – consult and liaise with affected communities during and after events
- Media liaison – manage contact from the media and the public on social media as they seek information about the incidents.

The participants are trained to work as a PIO team in Incident Commands, Incident Controls and Regional Commands, to ensure concurrent issues are addressed over multiple incidents and QFES meets community needs and expectations.



## SES medal presentations

When Commissioner Greg Leach visited our region in October, he took the opportunity to present SES members with their medals for SES Week.

A presentation took place at Maryborough Fire and Rescue Station, with Neil West, Barbara Rice and Darryl Scott receiving their Queensland SES Meritorious Service Medal for 10 years of service.

At Elliot Heads Auxiliary Fire and Rescue Station, Helen Lenaghan received the Queensland SES Meritorious Service Medal for 10 years of service, and Paul Hall was presented with the National Medal for 15 years of service.





# BRISBANE REGION



## Having a yarn for NAIDOC Week

QFES held NAIDOC Week events all over Brisbane Region this year to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Brisbane Regional Leadership Team saw NAIDOC Week as a perfect opportunity to learn from our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues within our paid and volunteer workforce.

To start off the celebrations, C shift at 47 station conducted a flag raising ceremony with retired Firefighter Uncle Norm Clark. For the crew, the ceremony was a way to recognise First Nations peoples, promote a sense of community partnership and demonstrate our commitment to inclusivity.

Brisbane Region then held Our People Yarning Circle, which we hope will be the first of many. Our Regional Leadership Team came together with Auxiliary Firefighter Kim Thelander, Auxiliary Firefighter Lachlan Madden and Acting Station Officer Nicholas Gahan to openly and respectfully discuss inclusivity, barriers and recruitment.

Nicholas Gahan said, "Trust, honesty and integrity are the values QFES is built upon. By trusting, listening and learning from First Nations peoples within our organisation, we're not only reflecting on the past but also working towards the future of QFES to better serve the whole Queensland community."



## Getting ready for the wet season

Our Fire and Rescue Service personnel and State Emergency Service volunteers have been actively preparing for the wet season.

SES trainers headed over to Lamb Island to train the South Moreton Bay Island Group on working safely at heights. Volunteers spent their time donning harnesses, constructing travel restraint systems and roof tarping.

Our highly trained swiftwater rescue technicians have also been undertaking training days to consolidate their skills and run through new equipment and techniques.

[www.qfes.qld.gov.au](http://www.qfes.qld.gov.au) | 13 QGOV (13 74 68)

## Helping the community prepare for bushfires

Our Brisbane Region Rural Fire Service (RFS) team has been engaging with the community to help them prepare for disasters, following on from Operation Cool Burn.

From the western suburbs to inner city Brisbane, the team has supported the community's understanding of bushfire risks.

As part of a joint project with Brisbane City Council Disaster Management Unit, QFES undertook a targeted engagement campaign in the Pullenvale Ward. The area has potential for bushfire and localised flooding that may cause some places to be isolated for periods of time.

Following a grant application, Brisbane Region Bushfire Safety Officer Wayne Ford delivered seven Prepare Act Survive presentation nights and six community hubs over two months, in conjunction with Brisbane City Council Disaster Management Unit, Ipswich City Council, Land for Wildlife, Local Laws Compliance team and the Pullenvale Ward Councillor.

The sessions provided a one-stop shop for questions about family and property preparation, vegetation management laws, property management, weed control, wildlife protection and biodiversity. As a result, we've seen a major increase in the number of community requests for property visits and information sessions.

RFS staff and volunteers have also taught children across the region about bushfire safety.

Brisbane Region received a request to present on bushfire preparedness at Fortitude Valley State Secondary College. Accompanied by Brisbane City Council, State Emergency Service (SES) and Urban Utilities, our Bushfire Safety Officer answered questions from year 7 students on the range of support QFES provides and how technologies assist the community during disasters.

Our Brisbane Region Volunteer Community Educators and Bushfire Safety Officer also attended the Moreton Kids Festival. With over 500 members of the community stopping by our stand, our volunteers educated the community on how they can prepare their properties.





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# SOUTH EASTERN REGION

## How to manage an evacuation centre during a pandemic

Managing an evacuation centre during a pandemic brings with it specific challenges that require additional roles, processes and documents.

Logan State Emergency Service (SES) and South Eastern Region Emergency Management representatives recently joined Logan City Council, Queensland Ambulance Service, Queensland Police Service, Queensland Health, NBN, Telstra, Australian Red Cross, Salvation Army and Save the Children in a three-part exercise program designed to ensure all agencies are better prepared to manage evacuation centres during a pandemic.

Part two of the program involved an evacuation centre field exercise, which explored different solutions to identify the best multi-agency COVID-19 safe arrangements.

The field exercise covered evacuation centre management, COVID-19 safety measures, sleeping and dining arrangements using cardboard partitions, short-term isolation areas for evacuees showing symptoms of COVID-19, and additional technology requirements.

All agencies actively participated in testing, assessment and improvement. It was great to see the collaboration between agency representatives in identifying and solving problems.



## Pimpama Fire and Rescue Station opening

On Friday 2 October 2020, South Eastern Region celebrated the official opening of the new Pimpama Fire and Rescue Station.

The \$4.5 million facility will boost vital services to the local community and has space to accommodate future growth, including room for more appliances and plans for a HAZMAT facility to be added in the future.

The crews also received the keys to a new Type 3 Urban Pumper appliance, which represents the latest technology in pumping and rescue equipment.







# SOUTH WESTERN REGION



## New Charlton Precinct

South Western Region is waiting for the final touches to be applied before moving into our new Charlton Precinct.

The building will house all QFES staff who are currently spread across multiple locations throughout Toowoomba, and has the ability to expand to meet the community's needs.

The project is a multi-stage development that includes a new Tactical Training Facility, Regional Headquarters (RHQ), Fire Communications Centre, Regional Operations Centre and new Charlton Fire and Rescue Station. Plans for the next stages of development include regional workshops and stores.

The new RHQ has capacity for more than 100 staff from the Fire and Rescue Service, Rural Fire Service and State Emergency Service.

The new Charlton Fire and Rescue Station is being built as an additional permanent station for Toowoomba. The 19 new staff will help meet the growing demand on services and the expectations of the rapidly developing Charlton Industrial Area, Toowoomba Wellcamp Airport and regional rail and freight hubs.

The current stages are expected to be ready for occupation by the end of February 2021.

## Blood challenge

QFES members in Toowoomba gave the highest number of donations in Queensland for this year's Australian Red Cross Lifeblood Emergency Services Blood Challenge.

They contributed a total of 265 donations as part of a True Colours campaign with colourful new arm bandages. That equates to more than 750 lives saved.

QFES went on to place fourth nationally, beating our previous effort of seventh place in 2019.







# FAR NORTHERN REGION

## Safety Squad

Over the past few months, Tablelands Regional Council, QFES, various government agencies and other community groups have been working together to create the Year 5 Safety Squad Program.

The program teaches students about natural hazards, disasters and emergencies in our region and encourages them to think about how the council and other agencies manage and respond to natural hazards and disasters. Students also learn what they can do to prevent, prepare, respond to and recover from such events.

Acting Community Engagement Officer Peta Staples and the crew from Atherton Fire and Rescue Station presented a 20-minute activity on Home Fire Safety. The presentation centred around how to increase their chances of escaping a house safely in an emergency by using a Fire Escape Plan and following evacuation signage. It also covered how smoke alarms operate and how to identify dangerous fire situations.

Students then took part in an interactive activity where they were blindfolded and tasked to find their way to the nearest fire exit using 'Blazer's Phrases'.

A few months and two trials later, the program has evolved to become an interactive, informative and fun day out for students. With the pandemic cancelling a lot of school excursions, it's great to see children back out in the community enjoying themselves.



## Get ready emergency services day

On 31 October, Cairns Local Disaster Coordination Centre opened their doors to the public so they could get a glimpse into what happens behind the scenes during a natural disaster.

Multiple government agencies showcased their capabilities during emergencies and how they can offer their support. The community found out how to prepare their home, family and pets in natural disasters, and received information about smoke alarm legislation and bushfire plans.

A Rescue 510 helicopter made an appearance before being called out to an emergency themselves. And of course, the fire trucks and a demonstration by Airport Rescue Fire Fighters put a lot of smiles on the faces of wide-eyed kids and adults in the crowd.

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## Vale Rod Jacobs

Far Northern Region State Emergency Service (SES) lost one of their own when Operational Capability Officer Rod Jacobs from SES Regional Office and Edmonton Unit passed away on Tuesday 13 October 2020.

Rod was a devoted SES volunteer for more than 25 years and worked as a Regional Trainer for the last 15 years with the Far Northern Regional Office.

He played a pivotal role in establishing the Edmonton SES Unit from its inception in 1998, starting as their first Group Leader and growing the group in that role for the next 10 years.

His experience as a senior trainer in the region was invaluable, particularly in his favourite areas of flood boat and vertical rescue.





# Darkness to Daylight

All across Queensland, QFES members put up their hands to walk in the Darkness to Daylight challenge, raising awareness and funds to help end Domestic and Family Violence.

QFES marked the start of the Darkness to Daylight challenge on 1 October with a walk along Kedron Brook.

In total, 105 QFES members from all regions took part in the challenge, even more than in previous years. They were drawn to a great cause and the need to spread the word about stopping Domestic and Family Violence (DFV).

Normally everyone would walk the 110 kilometres as a team from dusk to dawn, but this year's challenge looked a little different, with participants separately walking 110 kilometres each in a virtual run during October.

Each kilometre they covered symbolises a life lost to domestic and family violence in Australia each year, on average.

Together, they walked a combined 11 176 kilometres, raising \$15 805 in much-needed funds, improving their own fitness and mental health and having important conversations around DFV.

Commissioner Greg Leach, who took part in the Kedron Brook walk, said QFES wholeheartedly supported Darkness to Daylight's mission to raise awareness and funds for DFV prevention.

"By participating in the Darkness to Daylight challenge, we are standing beside those who have been affected by domestic and family violence," Mr Leach said.

"I am proud so many QFES members joined the challenge. It's a powerful symbol that we are all united in our efforts to help end the violence."

QFES' participation in Darkness to Daylight was organised by Kaylene Neal, Acting Program Officer State Operations Centre, who thanked all QFES staff who joined in.

"It was great to see some new people participate this year," Kaylene said.

"Events like this can help people who have been in a DFV situation open up about their experiences.

"It's also been a great way to start conversations around fitness and mental health, as well as about the bigger topic of violence."





# FRS hosts interagency AFL match

The inaugural FRS vs QPS AFL match was a resounding success and now there are plans for a women's local derby as well.

A lunchtime discussion about starting a Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) AFL team came to fruition in late October with the inaugural AFL stoush between FRS and Queensland Police Service (QPS).

On the day, the match ball was delivered by helicopter and QFES Commissioner Greg Leach was on hand to mark the start of play with a coin toss.

The teams battled it out in front of a 200-strong crowd, who braved stormy conditions at the Sherwood Magpies Australian Football Club in Chelmer, with a strong QPS team holding the trophy at the end of the day.

FRS AFL Coordinator and Ipswich Firefighter Matt Dillon, who used to play AFL semi-professionally, said part of the reason they founded the team was to help support firefighters' mental health.

"The FRS team are all about trust, courage and looking after your mates on and off the field," Matt said.

"We're well supported by the Fire and Emergency Services Support Network (FESSN) at QFES, but there's something about sport that brings people together.

"Everyone needs to get away from it all sometimes, and this has given FRS staff an opportunity to leave behind work and life stresses for a while.

"For the players, it's about being with colleagues, challenging themselves, having a bit of a laugh and gaining new skills.

"We trained once a week for 10 weeks leading up to the match and the team showed tremendous improvement, not only with fitness but getting smarter at the game as well."

Matt said some of his favourite moments are just after every training session.

"Some of the boys haven't played much before but they hang around for a kick after training and want to be that bit better. It creates a great culture."

The team were even set to play at Metricon Stadium as a curtain raiser earlier in the year, but the event was cancelled due to COVID-19.



*The first official FRS AFL team.*



*The team trained for 10 weeks to get ready for their inaugural match against QPS.*

"To get out into a big stadium would be unreal. We have good relationships with AFL Queensland and the Gold Coast Suns, so hopefully we'll be able to organise something similar in the future," Matt said.

He is also helping put together a women's AFL team for next year's season and says they already have coaches on board.

"We are lucky to have firefighters who have been playing in the local AFLW league ready to coach our women's team," he said.

"I've sent out an EOI for permanent FRS female firefighters who want to be part of the team."

Matt credits Kate Eggar from the QFES Partnerships and Sponsorships unit for

assisting with the much-needed support for the new team, enabling the team to look the part in a quality sporting environment.

The FRS team were supported by partners including Beauview BBQ, McDermott Aviation, Mizuno, LRF Sport, Vancisco Industries, Harcourts Marketplace, Sherwood Football Clubs, EVS Screens and Challenge Coins.

If you're interested in joining a team or finding out more about FRS AFL, email Matt at [matt.dillon@qfes.qld.gov.au](mailto:matt.dillon@qfes.qld.gov.au).



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# New lookbook and catalogues

Knowing what to wear, when to wear it or what's available can be a challenge.

Enter the new QFES Uniforms and PPE lookbook and service specific Uniforms, PPE and Equipment catalogues.

Deputy Commissioner Adam Stevenson said the lookbook and catalogues will support QFES staff and volunteers to continue demonstrating the professionalism of all areas of QFES.

"This information was previously available in standards and procedures but has now been combined in an easy-to-use, revamped and refreshed format," Mr Stevenson said.

"The lookbook outlines how and when to wear the uniform, while setting the expected dress standard when representing QFES – an important starting point for all staff and volunteers, from public servants to auxiliary recruits.

"Everyone has a role in presenting a professional image that reflects the high standard of QFES and maintains the community's confidence in our organisation."

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services						
Item	Size	Material Number	Quantity	Allocation	Issue to	Features
<b>Accessories</b>						
Belt Male	2XS - S M - XL 2XL - 4XL 5XL+	10005285 10005286 10005287 10005288	1	All Executives All Fire Communications All Emergency Management All Watch Desk All Chaplains Transport Officer		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Black</li> <li>Leather</li> <li>Detachable metal QFES buckle</li> <li>Male belt width 38mm / female belt width 30mm</li> </ul>
Belt Female	6-10 12-16 18-22 24-28	10005282 10005352 10005283 10005284		Allocation is either the male or female style belt		Refer to sizing chart for measurement details
Cross Chaplains			As required	All Chaplains		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Metal cross</li> <li>Silver</li> <li>Two pins on the back to secure to shirt collar</li> </ul> Ordered through State Chaplains
Dress Buttons Shirt			5	All Executives All Fire Communications All Emergency Management All Watch Desk Chaplains full-time		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>19mm button cover to conceal shirt pocket buttons</li> <li>Maltese Cross with "Queensland Fire and Emergency Services" wording</li> <li>Issued as a pair</li> </ul> Cache Item - ordered from the Regional Office
Dress Buttons Tunic		10005416	As required	Chaplains part-time		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>25mm button</li> <li>Maltese Cross with "Queensland Fire and Emergency Services" wording</li> <li>Supplied on tunic, not general issue</li> </ul> Cache Item - ordered from the Regional Office

Mr Stevenson said a huge body of work happened behind the scenes to create the lookbook and catalogues, including extensive consultation with staff and volunteers.

"For the lookbook photoshoot, personnel volunteered from all streams of QFES, and the final selection of models included staff and volunteers.

"Even Assistant Commissioner John Cawcutt threw his hat into the ring and modelled the QFES mess dress."

The Uniforms and Logistics team thanks everyone who was involved in the process.

You can view the lookbook and catalogues on the Gateway, where they are regularly updated. If you have any feedback, please email [uniforms.logistics@qfes.qld.gov.au](mailto:uniforms.logistics@qfes.qld.gov.au).

## RFS formal

**NEED TO KNOW**

- Whether the ceremonial, formal or dress combination is worn appropriate to the occasion is a matter of judgement, but in any case follow the directions from your coordinator or senior officers.
- Assembly socks and body bands are available to staff for this combination.
- The shirt strap on the peaked cap is left above the belt.
- See the **Media section** for more information on wearing medals.

**Applicable activities include:**

- formal meetings (e.g., DMG)
- representing QFES (including operational liaison)
- formal occasions where the tunic is not allocated or warranted
- occasions requiring full medals
- non-duty media appearances
- as advised in invitations or joining instructions.

The following uniform components make up the formal uniform, which is to be worn in its entirety.

- RFS dress shirt or blouse
- Trousers/slacks/skirt
- Shirt or blouse to be worn tucked in at all times. If a medical condition exists that would prevent the shirt or blouse from being tucked in, an exemption can be sought from your manager.
- Epulettes: hard board if allocated. Current issue RFS "waxed over olive" "UKRA" epulettes.
- Tie or cross tie with the bar or pin
- Shirt progress or allocated QFES name badge
- Dress buttons
- Belt: with RFS buckle
- Boots/shoes: court or dress shoes/boots should be worn by all staff with this allocation. Volunteers and other staff should wear general purpose boots.
- Shoes/boots must be clean and well maintained at all times. Court shoes should be worn with the shirt.
- Socks/headbands: socks are optional with the court shoes. Socks are optional with the shirt but strongly encouraged, subject to weather conditions.

**Optional uniform items**

General purpose jacket: where conditions permit, a jacket is worn.

**Headwear options**

Peaked cap or full broad brimmed hat is strongly preferred. Staff may wear the broad brimmed hat when sun protection is required.

# Integrating climate change

To help QFES adapt to a changing climate and continue to provide effective services with communities, we have produced the *Integrating Climate Change @ QFES* Report.

Climate science indicates Queensland will experience higher temperatures, harsher fire weather, reduced rainfall but more intense downpours in the south-east, less frequent but more intense tropical cyclones, and rising sea levels.

Given this, *Integrating Climate Change @ QFES* outlines our response to climate change and how we will continue to support the Queensland Government's Climate Adaptation Strategy and the Emergency Management Sector Adaptation Plan for climate change.

Deputy Commissioner Mike Wassing said QFES anticipates climate change will continue to have a significant impact on Queensland communities and the disaster management sector.

"QFES needs to have the foresight and agility in its services to address changes in the frequency, intensity, distribution and longevity of emergencies and disasters," Mr Wassing said.

"The changing climate is a major challenge for the emergency services and disaster management sector.

"The department's continued understanding of the impact of climate change is critical to planning and building community capability and adaptability before, during and after a wide range of emergency and disaster events."

Mr Wassing added that *Integrating Climate Change @ QFES* continues QFES' track record as a leader in climate change adaptation.

"QFES is acknowledged nationally for its deep understanding of the impact of climate change on future disasters and what this means for the emergency services.

"We're regular contributors at national forums, such as with the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre, where organisations look to our expertise when it comes to activities such as developing a suite of plausible futures that emergency services might face in the years ahead."

You can read *Integrating Climate Change @ QFES* on the Gateway.



Eight new recruits celebrated their graduation from the Auxiliary Recruit Training and Education Program in October.



Queensland's new Large Air Tanker helped bring the Kooralbyn fire under control in October by dropping retardant ahead of the fire line.



Fire and Rescue Service firefighters honed their swiftwater rescue skills at Wivenhoe Dam to get ready for the severe weather season.



QFES won this year's Australian Red Cross Lifeblood Emergency Services Blood Challenge after making 1011 donations, equating to over 3000 lives saved.



Firefighters Ben and Gabe defended last year's Head of the Brisbane emergency services rowing challenge title with another great performance against Queensland Ambulance Service and Queensland Police Service. The race helped raise funds for the Children's Hospital Foundation.  
*Photo by Mitchell Anderson.*



QFES crews completed their airbase training in August, just in time for the bushfire season. At Kybong they helped refuel aircraft fighting the fires at Curra and Tin Can Bay.





Rural Fire Service volunteer Emily shared her story for NAIDOC Week. She is a proud Kamilaroi and Wakka Wakka woman. Emily's connection with Country is fundamental to her identity as an Indigenous person, as her ancestors paint the stars every night and breathe life into the water and land.

The conservation of sacred Indigenous sites is important to Emily, as she hopes to show her future children the land her ancestors walked on for thousands of years. She continues to create art and connect with Country in the endeavour to educate others about the history of her People.



Every year Bike4Burns raises much-needed funds for the Children's Hospital Foundation Burns Research Group. This year's event was a little different – a 12-hour One Day Classic at Murarrie Criterium.



Firefighters at Gladstone Fire and Rescue Station displayed some luscious mustaches for Movember to raise awareness of men's health issues. Photo by Quinn Cramer.



The Fire and Rescue Service, Rural Fire Service and State Emergency Service worked together with the Queensland Ambulance Service to rescue an injured hiker at Tamborine Mountain. Photo by Scenic Rim SES Unit.



Keith Drummond (right) with Acting Inspector Adam Martin at Kemp Place Fire and Rescue Station.

# A lifetime of achievements

The crew at Kemp Place Fire and Rescue Station welcomed a special guest on Firefighters Remembrance Day – Keith Drummond, the last surviving Chief Officer from the days when the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) was known as the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB).

Keith attended the ceremony on 10 October at the personal invitation of Assistant Commissioner John Cawcutt and had lunch with the crew.

“It was marvellous to commemorate Firefighters Remembrance Day at Kemp Place. There was a great sense of pride in being part of an organisation like the fire service,” Keith said.

“The culture is very positive. I sat in the mess room and Acting Inspector Adam Martin and the crew welcomed me and we shared a cook-up – no rank, no nothing, just firefighters sitting down together.

“I was glad to meet the Commissioner. He comes from an impressive background with the Country Fire Authority and I think he and QFES have a brilliant future to look forward to.”

Keith talked with the crew about the changes he’s seen since he joined the MFB in 1960, including major reforms he introduced as Chief Officer from 1988 to 1990 and Assistant Commissioner, Greater Brisbane from 1990 to 1993.

“My promotion to Chief Officer was a heart-stopper and I was proud to accomplish so many things with the assistance of a good Chairman,” he said.

Keith oversaw a range of innovations, including the distribution of emergency equipment throughout Brisbane, the first computerised database of dangerous materials (the HAZCHEM system), and lobbying for the placarding of buildings.

He introduced improvements in communications, moving the ‘Watchroom’ from Windsor Station to FireCom in Woolloongabba.

Keith also established a peer support group, the forerunner to modern counselling services, after the tragic death of a firefighter.

“I was proud to introduce brigade chaplaincy. Captain Ted Harmer became our first chaplain in Queensland. He was marvellous, and today it’s blossomed all across the state,” Keith said.

“Another innovation I’m proud of is critical incident stress management. In the past, when we attended traumatic scenes, there was nothing to support us in the aftermath, like at the Whiskey Au Go Go fire in 1973.

“A cloud of super-heated gas had come up the stairwell in a mushroom form and asphyxiated people in the club.

“There was no critical stress debriefing for those of us who confronted that, we just talked it through in the mess room.”

Keith oversaw many significant events including Expo 88, the wool store fires, and a large fire at the Law Courts on George Street.

His advice to new QFES members is to embrace the experience.

“It’s a rewarding career, and you can do a lot of good in the community. You are a vital service, and your role has been expanded from when I knew it. It offers a lifetime of challenges.”





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