

RESPONSE

RESILIENT AND READY FOR THE PEOPLE OF QUEENSLAND

QUEENSLAND'S OFFICIAL FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES MAGAZINE EDITION 29



Answering the call

More than 700 QFES members
deployed interstate

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RESPONSE is a bi-monthly magazine produced by the 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

Welcome to the first edition of Response for 2020.

While bushfire conditions in Queensland have eased, our attention has now turned to severe weather events. Once again, we have been busy helping Queensland and interstate communities with operations, and I thank all QFES staff and volunteers who raised their hand to assist.

Our colleagues down south have also fought horrific fires that have captured the world's attention and changed the way many people think about bushfires. My deepest sympathies go to the family and friends of those who lost their lives so tragically during the fires, including the US air tanker crew. Our international colleagues have played a significant role in supporting us and I know many of you feel the loss deeply.

The recent bushfires forced us to adapt to changing conditions and community expectations, and have brought us into contact with greater numbers of the community. We must be prepared for the likelihood of coming into contact with children, which is why meeting our legal obligations to hold a blue card is so important.

From 31 March 2020, staff and volunteers requiring a blue card cannot continue in their role if they do not have one. For those yet to apply, I hope you choose to continue being part of QFES and encourage you to apply as soon as possible. I know some of you will choose not to apply for a blue card and I respect your decision. I want to thank you for all you have done to support your community.

I have been on a whirlwind tour of Queensland visiting all of the regions. I have been to some of those areas most impacted by last year's fires, such as Peregian, Stanthorpe and Cobrabbal, where I saw the amazing recovery process underway.

I have spoken with many staff and volunteers and your expertise and commitment is inspiring – it is clear why QFES has such a professional reputation nationally and internationally. Thank you for welcoming me and sharing your views about what working at QFES means for you.

The year has only just begun, and we have already done so much for the people of Queensland and Australia. You should be proud to be making such a difference in people's lives during these turbulent times.



MARK ROCHE
Deputy Commissioner

READINESS AND RESPONSE SERVICES

I hope everyone had an opportunity to have some time off with friends and family over the festive season, however I know this was not the case for some of our operational personnel.

I want to thank you for your outstanding work during Operation Redux, both on the fire ground and behind the scenes.

The Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) severe weather outlook for spring/summer 2019-20 identified that eastern Australian states and territories would be subject to concurrent and severe bushfire events and this was proven with QFES personnel attending over 7000 bushfires this season.

In Queensland we have seen approximately 6.6 million hectares burnt since 1 August 2019. Managing the severity of the season required 33 000 responses from our staff and volunteers, just over 3 000 appliances and over 1600 aircraft dispatches from 69 different aircraft.

I also acknowledge the 720 QFES personnel who have deployed interstate to New South Wales, Victoria and the ACT to assist firefighting efforts since 1 January. Several of these personnel have deployed multiple times, and deployments will continue for the coming weeks.

The countless messages of gratitude we received from the community show how much your work means to people right across Queensland and the country.

In July 2020, QFES will host the 2020 Australasian Rescue Challenge (ARC20) in Toowoomba, with participants from the Fire and Rescue Service, Rural Fire Service and State Emergency Service.

ARC20 allows Fire and Emergency Services, Ambulance Services and industry groups to demonstrate their road crash rescue learnings in a controlled environment. I encourage you to read more about the story on page 19 and put together your team.

I recently announced the appointment of 10 Inspectors, two Superintendents and two new Assistant Commissioners.

I would like to take this opportunity to once again congratulate the successful applicants and wish them well as they take up their new positions.



HON CRAIG CRAWFORD
Minister

MINISTER FOR FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Last time this magazine went to print, QFES' operational demands had, thankfully, started to ease following an unprecedented season. But as our own bushfire emergency de-escalated, conditions only intensified down south.

In true Queensland spirit, more than 700 of you – the men and women of QFES – put your hand up to support efforts in New South Wales, Victoria and the ACT. Despite your own exhaustion and months away from your loved ones, you signed up to do it all again.

Queensland crews could be found in places like Albury, Bega, Shoalhaven and Nowra. Not only were they fighting fires, they were the fire behaviour analysts, the incident management teams and the mechanics. The firefighting community is certainly not defined by state borders.

It would be foolish to think every emergency response is perfect. As a department, we are always learning from one natural disaster to better prepare ourselves for the next.

The Inspector-General Emergency Management (IGEM) is an important piece to this learning process. IGEM recommendations ensure our future preparations and responses are in line with best practice so that QFES continues to deliver nation-leading emergency services.

Five Queenslanders were honoured with Australian Fire Service Medals this year. The recipients have shown great dedication and leadership in their communities. I was incredibly proud to see them recognised at a national level. Congratulations to Station Officer Gregory Duncan, First Officer Patrick Kraut, firefighter Rodger Sambrooks, First Officer Bevan Love and Assistant Commissioner Steve Barber.

As we head into the severe weather season, I thank you all once again for the work you do. How we best prepare for and respond to emergencies is a job requiring teamwork and the very best in the business. You have all proven yourselves time and time again.



Supporting our southern colleagues

More than 700 QFES staff and volunteers have travelled interstate to support colleagues in their fight against the devastating bushfires.

Strike Team Tango (night shift) was tasked to the Tanja fires near Tathra.

QFES members have supported firefighting efforts in NSW, VIC and the ACT since the start of the year and continue to do so.

QFES crews have fought the fires and protected structures at locations such as Nowra, Queanbeyan, Orchard Hills, Tumut, Bega, Moruya, Picton and surrounding areas.

They have supported local crews by performing many roles, including mechanics, logistics support, staging officers, planning officers, heavy plant supervisors, air attack supervisors and fire behaviour analysts.

Rural Fire Service (RFS) volunteer Caitlyn Forsyth from the Pine Mountain and Districts Rural Fire Brigade said the conditions were the most horrific she'd ever seen.

"A pyrocumulus cloud generated by the bushfires collapsed over us," Ms Forsyth said.

"It looked like a giant plume of smoke. The sky went dark, like an apocalypse. Intense winds came from all directions.

"As a firefighter, it was thrilling to experience. Being able to handle a fire like that prepares us for other events in the future.

"We were also moved by the community's response.

"The whole deployment was incredibly humbling and at times I was overwhelmed with emotion," she said.

"People who had lost their homes were approaching us and thanking us for the work we were doing. The community spirit amongst all that devastation was phenomenal."

A helping hand

Deployments are a complex process. Once QFES receives a Request for Assistance from an interstate agency, we analyse it and decide if we can provide support.

The request is then circulated to regions to provide staff or equipment and the logistics team decides who is best to fulfil the request.

Travel arrangements are sourced and booked, and mobilisation plans are prepared and supplied to the region and the host state.

The same process is carried out in reverse for demobilisation. The situation often changes, so our teams must be flexible and update their plans as needed.

Superintendent David Brazel led a Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) strike team protecting houses and structures in the Blue Mountains, Nowra and Batemans Bay.

"We were also called on to doorknock some areas and reassure people, including a visit to a nursing home to check their booster connection and make sure the staff were aware of the situation," Mr Brazel said.



“So, part of our role was to reassure the community and provide confidence and comfort.

“Their response was overawing. Everywhere you went, people were so appreciative. A few of our crew members were quite taken back by it.

“Our work freed up the NSW FRS crews so they could travel to other areas where they were urgently needed.”

Fighting side-by-side

Superintendent Tony Hazell said QFES crews received a warm welcome from NSW firefighters.

“QFES is keen to support our southern colleagues,” he said.

“Late last year NSW firefighters helped us fight the fires on the Darling Downs and south-east Queensland. This is our opportunity to repay their contribution.”

Ms Forsyth said all of the teams worked together.

“We all felt like a family. That was one of the best things I took away with me.

“The QLD team I went with absolutely filled me with confidence. I felt safe and secure, knowing we would come out ok.

“And we wouldn’t be able to do the job we do without the hard work of everyone behind the scenes back at home and in NSW.”

Lessons learnt

Mr Hazell said every time crews deploy into a new environment there is an opportunity to learn and enhance their skill sets, which they then take home to develop their own capability.

“The most rewarding learning opportunity comes from the new networks we build through working with new people in the industry,” he said.

Ms Forsyth’s brigade gained a valuable new experience when they completed backburning in the mountainous terrain and misty rains of Kangaroo Valley, a world away from the landscapes of Queensland.

Mr Brazel’s crews worked with a liaison officer from NSW FRS and learnt a lot comparing equipment, practices and policies of the services in Queensland and NSW.

“It was interesting to see the differences, like when we had to use adaptors so our appliances could use their water network and hoses.”

According to Mr Hazel, during the deployment, QFES members met firefighters from across Australia as well as New Zealand, Canada and the US.

“Due to the protracted length of this summer’s fire season we have become much better at organising and deploying people,” he said.



More than 50 RFS volunteers deployed on 6 January to relieve the previous RFS contingent.



Strike Team Whiskey with NSW RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons while on deployment at Tumarumba.



An FRS strike team supporting the NSW RFS deep in the Blue Mountains fire zone.

Australia Day Awards celebrate our best

Dedicated QFES staff and volunteers were recognised in the 2020 Australia Day Honours List and at the Australia Day Achievement Awards ceremonies across Queensland, supported by QSuper. We spoke to some of the recipients about their work and what it means to be recognised.

Five QFES personnel received the Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM), one of the highest honours that can be bestowed upon QFES personnel: Assistant Commissioner Steve Barber, Station Officer Gregory Duncan, First Officers Patrick 'Rusty' Kraut and Bevan Love, and Firefighter Rodger Sambrooks.

Auxiliary Captain, Yungaburra Fire and Rescue Service Ashley Cupitt was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in the General Division (OAM).

Seventy-two QFES personnel were recognised at this year's Australia Day Achievement Awards for going above and beyond their normal course of duty over the past 12 months.

QFES also recognised 13 individuals and organisations outside of the department who have supported us to provide services to Queensland.

The award recipients come from areas across QFES and their achievements range from community engagement to training,

fundraising and supporting their communities in emergency situations.

Commissioner Greg Leach said he was immensely proud of the recipients for their outstanding work for Queensland communities.

"From the North Queensland floods to the devastating bushfire season, staff and volunteers from the Fire and Rescue Service, State Emergency Service and Rural Fire Service have worked tremendously hard under great pressure in the last 12 months," Mr Leach said.

"The recipients have exemplified QFES' core values of respect, integrity, courage, loyalty and trust.

"Thanks to their outstanding achievements, Queenslanders can rest assured they are in safe hands when disaster strikes."

Assistant Commissioner Steve Barber said he was shocked and humbled to be honoured with the AFSM.



The North Coast Region awards ceremony at the Gympie Civic Centre.



“Whatever my role, my team and I go about our work without any thought of a reward, knowing we have made a difference,” Mr Barber said.

“For me this is an acknowledgement of the overwhelming support of my family, who have enabled me to undertake many opportunities and roles across QFES.

“It is also a wonderful recognition for the staff and volunteers I have worked with and led in supporting our journey.

“Even after all these years, I am still humbled by the great work our staff and volunteers do every day in protecting and supporting their communities.”

Station Officer Gregory Duncan said he was very surprised to be awarded the AFSM.

“This award is for all technical rescue teams who have helped advance the field – all the people I’ve been involved with over the years,” Mr Duncan said.

“Everybody can take something from it, not just me. Technical rescue has come a long way thanks to their hard work.

“Swiftwater jobs are one of the most dangerous places you might end up, from changing water levels to wind, darkness, debris, wildlife and water-borne biological dangers.

“You have to have your wits about you and understand what’s in your capability and what’s not.

“The role of firefighters has changed a lot over my 37 years in the job, and technical rescue in particular has ramped up dramatically over the last 20 years.

“New developments are always coming through so it has given me an interesting and exciting career.”

First Officer Rusty Kraut said being awarded the AFSM was a great privilege.

“I really believe family support is behind the achievements of any of our firefighters,” Mr Kraut said.

“My work wouldn’t have been possible without my family—that’s the most important ingredient.

“It’s been a wonderful journey, being a firefighter.

“Every time you come home from a fire front, you can say, ‘We’ve done our best and we’ve done our job.’”

Mr Kraut is also a champion of community education.

“It’s so rewarding to walk out of a scenario knowing someone has benefited from what we’ve learned after a disaster or emergency.”

First Officer Bevan Love said he’d been on top of the world since the medal was announced.

“There are a lot of good people who volunteer and work for QFES,” Mr Love said.



The award winners from Far Northern Region.



The award recipients at the Brisbane ceremony in Kedron.

AFSM recipients

Assistant Commissioner Steve Barber has served the communities of Tasmania and Queensland for more than 35 years with both the FRS and RFS. He has been a catalyst for positive cultural and behavioural change, particularly during his time leading the Northern and Central Regions.

Station Officer Gregory Duncan received the AFSM for his contributions to technical rescue, where he was instrumental in the development of world class curriculum and capability for swift and flood water rescue, as well as urban search and rescue.

First Officer Rusty Kraut joined the Toogoolawah Rural Fire Brigade in 1967 as one of its foundation members. He has excelled in his firefighting duties and devoted his time to spreading the word about fire management and brigade training.

First Officer Bevan Love was recognised for his 47 years with the RFS and dedicated service to the community. Mr Love is a patient and inspiring leader, who is a big believer in training and arming brigades with modern equipment to best meet the community’s needs.

Firefighter Rodger Sambrooks was honoured with an AFSM for his outstanding work serving his community for about 60 years. As a life member and president of the Queensland Auxiliary Firefighter Association, Mr Sambrooks is a respected leader in the North Coast Region.

“It’s a wonderful organisation that gives you the chance to meet people and do your bit to contribute to the community.

“I’ve held almost every position possible with the Pimpama Rural Fire Brigade, which is now the Ormeau Rural Fire Brigade – from Chairman to Treasurer, Secretary, Training Officer, First Officer and so on.

“It’s heartening when I go to fires and meet people I know from other brigades. We’ve formed strong bonds over the years.”

Firefighter Rodger Sambrooks said the AFSM was a great honour.

“I like working with the community, especially in small towns where you know everyone,” Mr Sambrooks said.

He joined the Kerang Urban Fire Brigade in Victoria at the age of 15 and has been fighting fires ever since – more than 2800 in fact. He was Captain of the Buderim Urban Fire Brigade for 10 years, and after retiring in 2008, he joined the Palmwoods Rural Fire Brigade.

He has taken on a wide range of roles throughout his career, including on the committee investigating the Childers fire and the steering committee for the STAIV Review that managed the transition of the Queensland Fire Service to the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service.

“To be presented with this honour means a lot to me, my wife and family who have supported me along the way.

“So many times I rushed out the door to attend a fire, sometimes for days, leaving my wife to run a motel on her own.

“When I talk to young firefighters, I tell them you’re there for the community, to do your best.”

Mr Cupitt was recognised with the OAM for his 34 years of exemplary service as Auxiliary Captain of Yungaburra Fire and Rescue Service, his passion for improving fire education and road accident awareness in local schools, and his outstanding contributions to the local community.

Staff Officer Paula Conaty said she was genuinely humbled to be recognised with an Australia Day Achievement Award for coordinating and organising the 2019 QFES Statewide Decision Making Workshop.

“The workshop was an excellent opportunity to reinforce a common understanding across all levels of management of the standards expected of all QFES employees and volunteers,” Ms Conaty said.

“Seeing the end result of the workshop, where attendees were passionate about speaking up when something is not right, showed our people are keen to model the values of QFES.”

Fire Communications Officer Sonya Weymouth from North Coast Region was awarded the Australia Day Achievement Award for her involvement in the Emergency Services Expo in Kawana.

She created an interactive board at the QFES display that allowed children to learn more about the emergency services.

“I was happy to be recognised for something outside what I normally do,” Ms Weymouth said.

“I enjoy my work as a Fire Communications Officer because I’m the first contact for people in some form of distress—it’s rewarding to know I’m getting them help.

“It’s nice to be recognised for going the extra mile.”

Among the external organisations who received awards was Coff & Co Bakery in Kilcoy, who received an Australia Day Appreciation Certificate for showing excellent support to QFES by providing catering to our members.

Pyramid Power Australian Rules and Sporting Club Inc in the Far Northern Region also received a certificate for supporting the SES by allowing volunteers to train at their AFL facilities.

Congratulations to all the recipients and thank you to QSuper for their ongoing support of QFES and the Australia Day Achievement Awards.



The Central Region award recipients.



Our thanks to those
serving our communities,
you never know what's
going to happen on the job.

Welcome to super without surprises

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



Tackling the challenges of working in emergency services

Working as an emergency responder creates a range of challenges, including managing stress, energy and pressure. It requires us to sacrifice time with our family and friends, and emotional resilience as we deal with distressing situations.

As we face longer and more intense situations, knowing how to manage these effects is essential to ensure we can continue to serve ourselves, our families and our communities.

According to Manager Clinical Services and Organisation Development Dr Bernie Scully, managing the impacts of ongoing exposure to emergency events can have a significant effect on emergency responders.

“It’s not unusual for people to suffer physical and emotional exhaustion from long hours, stress and witnessing distressing events,” he said.

“This can affect critical decision-making, mood and our general approach to life.

“We know fatigue can impair decision-making, to the same extent as blood alcohol concentrations over 0.05%, which could put people’s safety at risk.

“People may not realise how affected they are by prolonged periods of response which we’re currently seeing as the bushfire season continues.

“We tend to spend long periods in high stress which allows the body to run off the adrenaline it creates.

“It gives emergency responders the endurance they need to go above and beyond their normal efforts but it only lasts so long.”

Dr Scully said many emergency responders found it difficult to switch-off after a heightened period of service.

“Some people find it difficult to return to their normal routine which can be unsettling,” Dr Scully said.

“It may cause anger, frustration and irritability, which family and friends may notice but the individual may not.

“It’s important to remember that these may be normal reactions and they need to be dealt with to minimise any long-lasting negative impacts.”

Dr Scully said preparation and patience was the key to effective recovery.

“Just like the affected communities, businesses and people we help, we need to think about what we’ll do to maximise our recovery after disasters,” Dr Scully said.

“This can include taking stock and allowing yourself time to

absorb your experiences and become aware of what ongoing reactions you’re having.

“Your plan might involve giving yourself some time out to rest, catching up on sleep, exercising, eating healthy and cutting back on alcohol.

“These are all vital components to achieving good sleep which allows our brain to process distressing information and move on.

“Social interaction is also important – whether it’s just talking to friends and family about nothing specific, or reaching out to a Fire and Emergency Services Support Network (FESSN) Peer Support Officer (PSO), interacting with other people is a powerful tool for personal resilience.”

Patience is also essential as everyone needs to give themselves time to resettle after responding to an incident.

Each person will respond differently, so we can’t compare our experience or recovery process to others’.

Dr Scully said firefighters and emergency responders tend to be resilient and the majority recover from events on a regular basis.

“It’s not uncommon for people to feel lingering effects after significant events,” he said.

“Most reactions settle within two to four weeks.

“If you’re concerned about anything you are experiencing, or feel your reactions are lasting too long, FESSN counsellors can help.

“This is a free, confidential service and our counsellors are selected for their expertise in our organisation and the challenges we face.

“Simple strategies from experts can minimise effects and provide additional skills to cope in the future.”

If you need further support, you can contact a FESSN counsellor or PSO through the FESSN page on the QFES website.



Fighting bushfires through drought conditions

Fighting bushfires is always difficult, but when you're faced with drought conditions, it brings a new set of challenges and opportunities.

The aftermath of the Cobraball fire. Photo by Anthony Sylvester, Bungundarra Rural Fire Brigade.

The drought conditions that gripped much of Queensland during the bushfire season had a major effect on the way bushfires behaved and how we responded to them.

From an increase in surface fuel and normally wet and fire-resistant forests burning to water shortages and dwindling dam levels, the drought forced new approaches to respond to the climatic conditions.

New tactics

Firefighters constantly assess the conditions and adapt their strategies to manage bushfire response.

Acting Chief Superintendent Tony Johnstone said firefighting in a drought is similar to dry firefighting, which is often used in rural areas.

"Firefighters draw on a limited water supply and work into the night," Mr Johnstone said.

"They evaluate the way in which they set prescribed burns, backburns or burnouts, which is determined by weather, fuel, ignition system, topographic and other

factors that affect fire behaviour and the objective of the burn.

"Because of the drought, we moved a lot of those strategies into populated areas and the coastal fringe.

"Many firefighters in those areas weren't used to those strategies, but they learnt from others.

"It made them think about how they could fight fires differently in the future. Now those skills will be there for next time."

Fighting from the air

Mr Johnstone said QFES used more air assets than ever before to respond to fires quickly and keep them small.

"We relied on local knowledge, maps and aircraft to find water sources. In some regions, we set up remote bases, and in others the local council offered bore water.

"In the past we might have had a helicopter over every job, but this season we used more fixed wings, particularly at fires such as Sarabah, Rockhampton, Bundaberg and Toowoomba, where there

were more dedicated water supplies. The advantage of fixed-wing aircraft is they can fly from a fixed-base with water."

QFES also used bigger aircraft such as the Black Hawk, which carries about 3000 litres.

"To support fire forecasting, the aircraft did a lot more line scanning, using special cameras to capture data very quickly, allowing incident control to see the spotting and change where they deployed people," Mr Johnstone said.

"We also collaborated with the Australian Defence Force (ADF) to help map out the fires at night, so the next morning the crews knew the fire's exact location."

Adapting to conditions

Mr Johnstone said firefighters on the ground had to deal with hotter, drier and dustier conditions.

"Fire behaves differently in a drought. You're thinking about what you need to do next, looking behind you a lot more, watching where your water's going.



QFES used a record number of aircraft to fight the bushfires.

“You’re constantly thinking: do I have enough trucks in case the fire jumps, where’s the water supply, how far do I have to travel?”

“Many firefighters used high-pressure pumps, increased their foam and worked later into the night.”

During Operation Redux, firefighters worked more 24-hour shifts because everything was so dry the fires were burning intensely at night.

“Trees were exceptionally dry and prone to falling over. Firefighters spent more time looking into the hollows of trees to make sure they were blacked out so they wouldn’t start another fire two or three days later,” Mr Johnstone said.

“Embers also travelled greater distances. At Peregian we saw embers go two or three streets back.

“At Bundamba the brigades were fighting spot fires at houses far from the fire itself because of the embers and dry material.

“We saw mulch on people’s gardens ignite from one ember. Fences would suddenly start burning. Firefighters had to think ahead and spray foam on them to prevent the risk.”

Responding to climate change

Deputy Commissioner, Emergency Management, Volunteerism and Community Resilience Mike Wassing said the drought and the impact of climate change have

contributed to the length and severity of Operation Redux through the heat, limited water and dry fuel loads.

“We anticipate these extremes will likely reoccur more frequently in the future, as bushfire seasons are starting earlier and lasting longer,” Mr Wassing said.

“We can reasonably expect storms, cyclones and bushfires to affect parts of Queensland simultaneously in the future.

“Strategy 2030 identifies climate change as an enterprise risk and a key consideration when making strategic decisions.

“The realities of a changing climate are of fundamental importance to our work,” Mr Wassing said.

“We need to adapt to their impact on our services and reduce our own carbon footprint.”

QFES supports several key strategies and initiatives for climate change, including the Queensland Government’s Climate Adaptation Strategy and the Emergency

Management Sector Adaptation Plan for Climate Change.

Lessons learnt

Mr Johnstone said QFES learnt many lessons about timing and delivery methods during the bushfire season that helped shape the way we fight fires during a drought.

“We took those lessons from the ground and used them the next time a fire popped up,” Mr Johnstone said.

“We’re still learning about water use, lighting patterns, authorisation of backburns, exceptionally dry timber and fires burning long into the night.

“QFES members adopted new strategies and tactics, joining together to do what they needed to do.

“I want to thank all of our fantastic volunteers and their families, along with their employers for releasing them to fight the fires.”



The Monsildale fire in November. Photo by John Blake.



Working for Queensland and Volunteering for Queensland 2019 survey results

The results of the 2019 workforce surveys reflect QFES staff and volunteers' outstanding commitment to protecting the community.

As an emergency services department, QFES is only as strong as our staff and volunteers. Whether they are on the frontline serving the community, or behind the scenes providing operational support, our workforce is essential to everything we do.

Assistant Commissioner, Human Capital Management Stephen Smith said QFES is committed to developing a diverse, capable and connected workforce. "QFES participates in the annual Working for Queensland survey, which provides staff the opportunity to share their views on their position, management, work culture and the organisation. Volunteers have the same opportunity through the Volunteering for Queensland survey," he said.

"These surveys provide us with many different perspectives, which allows us to identify areas of strength and those needing improvement."

Mr Smith said reviewing the results annually ensured QFES remained focussed on staff and volunteer development and accountable for implementing changes.

"Conducting an annual survey means we can review our achievements and monitor our progress," he said. "We are always looking to see improvements to demonstrate to our workforce we are listening to them and taking action.

"The survey team are hosting presentations, focus groups and action planning forums to gain more insight on the results.

"These forums are to share ideas and develop actions so our workforce can continue to improve, based on what we have learnt."

The full results are available on the Gateway via the Culture and Engagement page.

Working for Queensland 2019 results snapshot

The results reveal the majority of staff feel positively about their job with 81 per cent strongly agreeing or agreeing that ‘my job gives me a sense of personal accomplishment.’ Staff are also seeing our vales in action with 86 per cent strongly agreeing or agreeing that ‘people in my workgroup are committed to delivering excellent service to customers.’

Effective teamwork is constantly being shown, with 82 per cent strongly agreeing or agreeing that ‘people in my workgroup work effectively with others to deliver services to customers.’ This work ethic reflects our vision of creating “one QFES.”

*A great organisation to work for.
Has a positive culture. People
willing to help you develop.
Great team environment.*

Volunteering for Queensland 2019 results snapshot

One of the things that unite volunteers and staff, is their shared passion for serving the community. This was highlighted with 88 per cent of volunteers strongly agreeing or agreeing that ‘my job gives me a sense of personal accomplishment’.

This supports the fact that 83 per cent strongly agree or agree that they would ‘recommend being a QFES volunteer to people I know.’ Being an emergency services volunteer is a challenging and demanding role, so it is encouraging that so many of our volunteers value the role they play.





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SES Engagement Service Lead Rick Murdoch (left) with the SES Communications Onboarding project team – Organisational Change Manager David Wilson, SES Training Coordinator Kate Lyons, and Principal Project Officer - SES Subject Matter Expert, Jason Daniels.

Changing our frequency

Ahead of changes to some Rural Fire Service (RFS) and State Emergency Service (SES) radio communications, QFES is making sure regional volunteers and staff are heard.

The needs and opinions of regional volunteers and staff will help shape the future of operational communications for the SES and RFS.

With VHF mid-band radios soon to be obsolete, QFES is developing alternative communication options. The QFES Engagement Strategy is being used to guide the process of harnessing the valuable experience and knowledge of volunteers.

RFS Engagement Service Lead, Acting Inspector Liane Henderson, who has been an RFS volunteer for 20 years, and SES Engagement Service Lead Rick Murdoch are putting their volunteer experience to good use.

Ms Henderson has helped the project team

facilitate regional workshops to seek ideas and feedback from those affected by the change in radio communications.

“We listened to what our people on the ground and our staff need because they’re the experts on this,” Ms Henderson said.

“Each region has different needs, so we were trying to find out what each area prefers to use and what’s best for them, within financial constraints.”

Once feedback is collated, a report will be presented to the Executive Leadership Team.

SES Service Lead Rick Murdoch is contributing to another change in radio communications at QFES.

He is supporting the SES Communications Onboarding project team which is working to transition SES groups in south-east Queensland over to the new government digital radio communications network (GWN). The move will bring the SES into line with other emergency service agencies.

As part of the move these SES Units will be issued with new digital-enabled radios. The transition will coincide with the commencement of FireCom progressively assisting SES across the state, not just the crews in the GWN.

“The team has worked across most of the regions, understanding the differences of how each operate and where this new initiative is going to impact,” he said.



Front row, centre: Station Officer Mick Everingham, PNGFS Chief Officer Bill Roo and Acting Superintendent Gordon Hemphrey with the 24 PNGFS Fire Investigation trainees.

QFES trains fire investigators in PNG

Two QFES fire investigators travelled to Papua New Guinea in December to provide training as part of QFES' ongoing support for the Papua New Guinea Fire Service (PNGFS).

QFES provided the training to assist the PNGFS to re-establish a fire investigation capability and build capacity for fire investigation in the nation.

The week-long training provided 24 PNGFS personnel with skills and knowledge to protect and preserve an incident scene and conduct initial investigations.

Acting Superintendent Gordon Hemphrey and Station Officer Mick Everingham conducted the training, drawing on their many years of experience as fire investigators, with Mr Hemphrey previously managing the QFES State Fire Investigation Unit for several years.

Participants learnt the fundamentals of fire investigation, from preserving and securing a scene and conducting the initial investigation to determining the suspected cause.

QFES Pacific Island Liaison Officer Network (PILON) Representative, Chief Superintendent Brad Commens, said the training was a great success.

"QFES is a leader in the field, and our engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse trainees is a great example of the flexibility and strength of our training program," Mr Commens said.

"The course included a practical assessment and investigation of an actual school fire that occurred immediately before the course.

"This allowed QFES investigators to provide quality mentoring in a realistic scenario.

"The training was developed over several months through QFES' PILON, Specialist and Technical Response Branch, Training and Emergency Management Section and State Fire Investigation Unit, along with a funding agreement through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)."

The program provided the prerequisites for participants to continue their fire investigation training through tertiary studies. Its success will likely lead to further QFES training in PNG.

The training was part of the service development and assistance QFES has provided to the PNGFS in support of the memorandum of understanding between the two organisations.

"QFES has engaged with the PNGFS for many years and will continue to provide assistance where possible," Mr Commens said.

"For example, we drew on our experiences from the 2014 G20 Brisbane Summit to assist PNGFS in the leadup to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit in November 2018."

QFES provided two refurbished breathing apparatus (BA) compressors, 16 BA sets, 32 BA cylinders and 50 sets of Personal Protective Clothing and surplus uniforms for the Summit, in a joint operation with DFAT.

To support the implementation of the first PNG Firecom system using the FireCad program, QFES provided all training materials, doctrine and procedures that were previously used for the Queensland FireCad system.

"In conjunction with DFAT and the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council, we are proud to provide a positive engagement between the services," Mr Commens said.



Station Officer Mick Everingham provided instruction on conducting a layer search of a fire scene.

Putting our rescue skills to the test

QFES is hosting the 2020 Australasian Rescue Challenge (ARC20) in Toowoomba from 16 to 19 July and is calling for nominations for teams to participate.

ARC20 is an annual event hosted by the Australasian Road Rescue Organisation (ARRO) that allows all agencies involved in road rescue response to learn, exchange ideas and participate in a skills challenge in the spirit of friendship.

ARC20 includes a learning symposium followed by road crash and trauma challenges to assess rescue and medical skills.

Teams will also have the chance to visit trade displays to learn about the latest rescue equipment.

QFES will fund the nomination fee, travel and accommodation costs for six-person teams to compete in ARC20. As with previous years, attendance will be on a voluntary basis.

Station Officer and retired ARC Team Leader from the Brisbane South team Ian Ames has learnt a lot from participating in previous ARC events.

His team has had many successes, including first place in the controlled rescue event in 2014 and 2016, the medical section in 2016, the trauma challenge in 2017 and the technical section in 2019.

“Competing in challenging road crash rescue scenarios that feel very real, with live patients and dummies, is the best training you’ll ever get for real incidents on the road,” Mr Ames said.

“You don’t know what situation you’ll have to work with, and it’s a real challenge to get the casualties out. You get 30 minutes and that goes by in a flash.

“Training with the team for months before the events leads to great teamwork and camaraderie.

“Training, attending the learning sessions and competing makes for a very informative and worthwhile experience over the four days.

“I would most definitely encourage other QFES personnel to compete in the ARC event.

“The level of competition is very high but it’s still a fantastic learning opportunity,” Mr Ames said.

Station Officer Matt Quinn competed in the

ARC 2014 and 2015 as a tool operator and in the ARC 2018 and 2019 as a team leader.

“It was great to see our team develop skills and teamwork,” Mr Quinn said.

“I learnt a lot about what you could achieve with fairly limited resources and thinking creatively about relocating vehicles.

“Competing in ARC is one of the best ways to improve your road crash rescue skills and learn from other fire and rescue services.

“You test yourself and get great feedback about your skills.”

At the end of ARC20, the two best teams will be given an opportunity to pit their skills at the World Rescue Challenge in Miami, Florida from 27 October to 1 November 2020.

You can find out more about ARC20 on the QFES website. Send your nominations to A/Staff Officer Nicole Wright at Nicole.Wright@qfes.qld.gov.au by 9am on Monday 9 March 2020.



The road crash challenge at ARC in 2018.



A team putting their medical skills to the test at ARC in 2018.



SOUTH EASTERN REGION

Combined emergency services Santa run

On Christmas Day, firefighters from Woodridge Fire and Rescue Station led a parade of emergency services vehicles on a Santa run through Logan.

Vehicles, personnel and mascots from the Fire and Rescue Service, Rural Fire Service, State Emergency Service, Queensland Ambulance Service, Queensland Police Service, Emergency Services Cadets, Logan House Fire Support Network, Nightlight Outreach and local children's organisation Lil Bug Love, escorted Santa on a 15km route through the suburbs.

Families braved the weather on Christmas morning to get a glimpse of Santa and wave to emergency services as the parade drove through their neighbourhoods.

The convoy stopped at a local community brunch before continuing on to the Logan Hospital Children's Ward to spread Christmas joy and deliver presents.



Australia Day Achievement Awards

The outstanding commitment and achievements of South Eastern Region staff and volunteers were celebrated at the 2020 Australia Day Achievement Awards ceremony.

The awards acknowledge those who have gone above and

beyond their usual duties and made outstanding contributions in their community over the past 12 months.

Seventeen Australia Day Achievement Awards and four Regional Medals were awarded at the ceremony in Beenleigh, which was followed by a morning tea with family and friends.



Tamborine Mountain residents prepare for bushfires

Tamborine Mountain Rural Fire Brigade and Fire and Rescue Service conducted several Prepare Act Survive (PAS) presentations in October and November 2019 for local residents and the surrounding community.

With a bleak fire season outlook, and minimal rain on the horizon, the risk was high. The aim of these sessions was to ensure residents knew how to prepare their properties and families for a potential bushfire and build community resilience.

Around 500 residents attended the sessions. The Rural Fire Brigade also conducted 11 site inspections to help property owners be better prepared and the Fire and Rescue Service conducted 17 SafeHome visits.



SOUTH WESTERN REGION

SES increases capacity with new Mobile Operations Centre

The South West Region recently revealed a new SES Mobile Operations Centre (MOC) which will allow the SES to attend any incident throughout the region.

Mayor of Lockyer Valley Regional Councillor Tanya Milligan and Local Member for Ipswich Jennifer Howard MP, representing the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services, joined SES volunteers and guests at the ceremony.

SES Regional Manager Robert Bundy acknowledged the foresight of Mayor Milligan, and former Lockyer Valley Regional Councillor DMO Peter Hillcoat, for identifying the need and helping QFES make it a reality.

Mr Bundy also thanked Acting Assistant Commissioner Darryl King for championing the project and helping it come to fruition.



Crows Nest Aged Care Service residents say thank-you

Residents of the Crows Nest Aged Care Service held an afternoon tea for the QFES members who assisted them to evacuate in last year's fires.

During the Crows Nest and Pechey bushfires, residents were evacuated to other care facilities across the region. The evacuation went smoothly, with many residents taking it in their stride, despite the circumstances. It was heart-warming to see their thanks and community spirit.



Commissioner Leach tours the region

As part of Commissioner Greg Leach's introduction to QFES, he is taking the opportunity to travel to every QFES region and meet as many staff and volunteers as possible.

In January he visited South Western Region to meet with a range of QFES personnel, visit local fire stations and travel to the Pechey/Crows Nest and Stanthorpe firegrounds.

One of the highlights was witnessing the significant rainfall that brought relief to Stanthorpe and other dry areas.



Goondiwindi community learns about fire safety

The Goondiwindi community attended the Fire and Rescue Station open day to tour the station, see the trucks and learn about home fire safety.

Attendees spoke with firefighters and SES members about recruitment processes and how to prepare for and respond to emergencies, watched kitchen fire demonstrations and got to sit on the boats and trucks.

A sausage sizzle was also held to raise funds for the Children's Hospital Foundation.





FAR NORTHERN REGION

Keeping Cairns streets safe

On Friday 29 November, QFES personnel attended the Cairns Safer Street Super Session at Balaclava State School.

A broad range of State and Local Government agencies joined forces at the event to improve community safety in Cairns.

It was a great event for the local community and it was good to see so many agencies and services come together to support it.

The community enjoyed a surprise visit from Santa, free burgers, live entertainment and a movie.



Australia Day Awards

Six QFES personnel from Far Northern Region were honoured at the region's Australia Day Achievement Awards ceremony in January.

Among the special guests at the ceremony were Member for Cairns Michael Healy MP, Deputy Commissioner Mike Wassing, Acting Assistant Commissioner Neil Francis and QSuper Trustee Sandra McCullagh.



Supporting the Chinese community

QFES members attended a recent meeting of the Chinese Community Crime Prevention Consultative Committee (FNQ) led by the Queensland Police Service to help support community preparedness and resilience.

They provided a presentation about QFES' engagement with the community and response to disasters, including recommendations to help the local community prepare for emergencies.

New firefighter Ken Liu also introduced himself and shared his excitement about serving the community in his new career.



NORTHERN REGION



QFES supports Rescue museum exhibit

QFES members in Northern Region were happy to lend a hand to support the Museum of Tropical Queensland during the Rescue exhibit in Townsville.

Rescue is a national museum exhibit that has toured the country, with its final exhibit running in Townsville from 30 November 2019 to 8 March 2020.

Rescue consists of 17 interactive science exhibits where visitors engage in interaction and role-play, to solve simulated rescue scenarios.

Along with prevention and preparedness products, QFES provided a swift water boat for a week during January, with the South Townsville duty crew attending during the day. The children really enjoyed having the crews on hand to answer questions and pose for photos.



Raising funds for victims of bushfires

In January, local emergency services and Hinchinbrook Blue Light joined forces with Officer in Charge of Halifax Police Station, Sergeant Gio Tantalo to launch the “Hinchinbrook Bushfire Appeal” in Borello Park, Lucinda. The event has raised more than \$2 800 for locals impacted by the recent bushfires.

Local businesses donated food, drinks and games while the community enjoyed a barbecue in the park and kids had fun playing games.

“So very many people of the Hinchinbrook community were moved by the grief and loss caused by the bushfires and although so far away, wanted to do something to help,” Sergeant Tantalo said. “Hinchinbrook may be a small shire, but the locals have a big heart.”



New recruits for Mount Isa

Mount Isa Fire Station recently received a boost to staffing with six new recruits: Boyd Moore, George O’Brien, Justin Macfarlane, Chris Davidson, Bastien Vincent and James Duffus. Pictured with A/Assistant Commissioner Michael O’Neil are Bastien Vincent and James Duffus.



CENTRAL REGION



Working together to support bushfire-affected communities

QFES joined local disaster management partners at a “pop up” recovery hub at Rosedale to provide vital support to the local community after bushfires ravaged the area in December.

The hub was set up for four days to provide information, support and referrals to necessary recovery services.

Our Emergency Management Coordinator, Public Information Officer and volunteer community educators joined members from the Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors, Department of Housing and Public Works, Red Cross, UnitingCare Community, Lifeline, Salvation Army and Gladstone Regional Council to aid the community in its recovery.



Mackay gets ready for cyclone season

Emergency service responders from QFES, Queensland Ambulance and Police joined staff from Mackay Regional Council at a cyclone shelter management training session on 17 December 2019.

These different roles will be part of a cyclone shelter management teams which would support a Cyclone Shelter Manager during category 3-5 cyclones.

Participants learnt the different roles and responsibilities in running the shelter and practised lockdown operations so they can support community members if a cyclone hits.

QFES Emergency Management Coordinator Carla Adams said, “I’m really pleased with the growing interest for cyclone shelter training. Increasing the numbers of people who can assist in cyclone shelter operations builds community resilience.”

QAS Patient Transport Officer and QFES Auxiliary Firefighter Leanne Tickle said, “The cyclone shelter training was very informative and it was great to be involved with people from all agencies who share a common interest in helping out in the community.”

SES provides valuable bushfire support

The Gladstone Regional SES Unit was busy in the last two months of 2019 with all their groups heavily involved in a range of activities to support the bushfire response.

Airbase operators were deployed to Rockhampton for the Cobraball fires then returned to Gladstone to support fires at Colosseum, Mount Maria and Lowmead.

The Rosedale, Miriam Vale, Baffle Creek and Agnes Water SES Groups worked almost continually over this two-month period providing support to the RFS and Queensland Police. They supported frontline firefighters with catering, assisted police with road closures, clearing roads and public safety and supported people who had been evacuated.

An Incident Control Centre was established at the Gladstone Fire Station, where logistics staff and support personnel did outstanding work. All groups in the Gladstone SES Unit supplied personnel over a long period of time on a 24-hour basis.

Rockhampton and Bundaberg areas also provided assistance, which was greatly appreciated.



QFES Mackay supports families in need

QFES Mackay donated five hampers to support the Mackay Daily Mercury Adopt a Family Campaign in partnership with Churches of Christ Care Mackay. Staff and volunteers came together to support a local family at Christmas to ensure they had a festive celebration.

Photo by John Pappas.





NORTH COAST REGION



Caloundra Fire Station receives a new bus for training

Bertram Birk from Buslink donated a school bus to the Caloundra Fire Station and North Coast Region to use as a prop for road traffic crash rescue training. Mr Birk presented the bus to Area Commander Caloundra Chris White and the station crew.

Disaster management training at the Sunshine Coast

Members from the Sunshine Coast Regional Council, Queensland Police Service, Mooloolah Local Emergency Group, local lifesaving groups and the community attended disaster management training to build their skills in responding to natural disasters.

North Coast Region Emergency Management Coordinator Peter Harkin conducted the session to help the group develop their own local emergency plan, as the area is regularly isolated by extreme wet weather events.

Regional Community Engagement Officer, Julie Bruynius, is working with the Council Resilience Officer and said it was a great opportunity for community members to hear more about disaster management and the arrangements and processes in place, and to meet key stakeholders.



Palmwoods community learns about bushfire safety

Fifteen volunteer firefighters from Palmwoods Rural Fire Brigade presented a bushfire information evening for the Palmwoods community. Over 90 attendees learnt about bushfire preparedness, the importance of bushfire management, landowners' rights and responsibilities, local laws and the agencies' roles and responsibilities.

Attendees also engaged with representatives from the Sunshine Coast Council, SEQ Fire and Biodiversity Consortium, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Healthy Land and Water.

Susie Chapman (Kabi Kabi First Nation, Bunya Bunya Country Aboriginal Corporation and Healthy Land and Water) gave an overview of traditional burning on the Sunshine Coast.



If It's Flooded, Forget It

It was never a matter of IF it would rain in Queensland this summer season, but WHEN. QFES's annual floodwater safety campaign was ready in market to remind drivers to 'back it up' when the heavens opened.

Queensland is a state of extremes and the country's most natural disaster-prone state – from drought to flood, bushfires to cyclones.

While much of the state has been in the grips of drought, many other areas have been hit with flash flooding, proving it's not a matter of if it will rain, but when.

QFES' *If It's Flooded, Forget It* public safety advertising campaign launched in market on 15 December in time for the shift from one extreme to the next, telling Queensland drivers the smartest and bravest thing they could do when faced with floodwater was 'back it up'.

QFES campaign coordinator Jennifer Kerr said the ad was filmed on a permanently flooded road on private property near Beaudesert, south west of Brisbane, over two nights in November.

"The shoot involved four vehicles that had been specially modified so a computer-controlled camera crane could 'fly' through the vehicles in a single shot.

"The vehicle types and the actors inside them were chosen to represent the people our research showed are most likely to attempt to drive through a flooded road.

"They included the inexperienced young driver, the car full of mates egging the driver on, the frazzled parent who just wants to get home, and the experienced driver in the 4WD who thinks their driving skill and the car are more than capable of making it to the other side.

"The actors, film crew and production team delivered a powerful and memorable campaign that we hope will stick in the minds of Queenslanders who will recall the 'back it up' message if and when they're faced with floodwater."

The long-running campaign is targeting those drivers who could be tempted to make a poor decision when faced with a flooded road.

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"Our research shows almost 20 per cent of Queensland drivers don't know if they would drive through floodwater until they are faced with a flooded road, and about 13 per cent would attempt to drive over a flooded road if they thought it was safe," Ms Kerr said.

"But we know that you can't see the depth of the water, or the dangers underneath, and you don't know how quickly conditions can change, so we're trying to target those 'undecided drivers' and plant that 'back it up' message in their memory so they make the right choice."



Shooting took place over two nights with four vehicles.

QFES Grants connects members with much-needed funds

If you're looking to win funds, the QFES Grants team can help.

The QFES Grants team helps community groups secure funding to support eligible projects.

QFES Grants Officer Leanne Riggs said there are a number of on-going and one-off local and national grants run by organisations external to QFES.

"We work with QFES staff and volunteers to navigate the process, help write and proofread applications, deliver grant workshops and sponsor applications," she said.

"In the past 12 months, QFES Grants has helped 26 SES Groups and Units secure more than \$400,000 (plus GST) in grant funding."

Successful applications have resulted in a forklift, sonar and 3D mapping tools, whitegoods, fit-out items, generators,

vehicles, sheds, rescue pods, light towers and trailers.

Banana Shire Unit SES Local Controller Tim Best said, "Without the funding the group would have struggled to have the vehicles ready to assist the community in the coming storm season."

Charters Towers Unit SES Local Controller Walter Thomasson said his unit had achieved a fully functioning Operations Centre that will have far reaching benefits to the community in the tasking of resources and volunteers in times of need.

"We have been successful in having the rooms modernised and upgraded at the same time as the equipment upgraded and we are proud of being part of the implementation process," Mr Thomasson said.

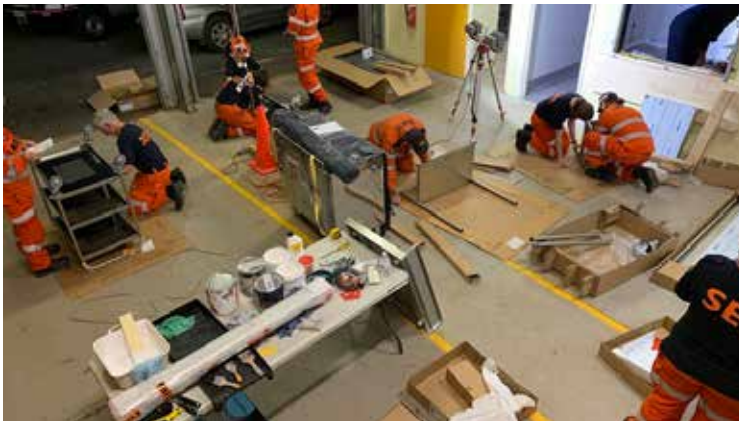
"Having this new canopy that can store and carry our equipment makes for a more time efficient activation as we can now depart in a hurry without worrying about if we have all the equipment on board."

Tambo SES Unit Coordinator Jason Karsten said, "Everything that is needed for most situations is now on the vehicle waiting for deployment to an emergency or disaster."

"The QFES Grants team love working with everyone to help groups empower their local communities achieve the ultimate goal of public safety," Ms Riggs said.

"Being able to talk with people throughout the entirety of Queensland, with such passion and dedication is truly humbling."

For more information, call the Grants team on 3635 1575 or email QFES.Grants@qfes.qld.gov.au



Some of the equipment SES Groups and Units have secured with help from QFES Grants.





Wes Bust (right) talking with RFS personnel during the bushfire season.

Associate Chaplain Wes Bust feels privileged to support the wellness and spiritual needs of QFES members and their families.

QFES staff and volunteers reach out to Wes in many ways – sending a message on social media, calling him on the phone, catching up for a coffee or meeting in the park while their kids play on the playground.

“I do everything I can to be there for them,” he said.

“They trust me enough to journey alongside them through some of their most sacred and vulnerable times.

“They have many different skills and response types, so my response to them varies a lot as well.”

Wes has been an Associate Chaplain with QFES for two years, working alongside five other associate chaplains in the South Eastern Region. Before that he worked for five years as a chaplain with the NSW Fire and Rescue Service.

Chaplaincy Services is part of the overall wellness team, along with the Fire and Emergency Services Support Network (FESSN) of Peer Support Officers and Counsellors. All QFES staff and volunteers can reach out to Chaplaincy Services, regardless of their religious background.

“We work in partnership to make sure QFES personnel thrive within their chosen career paths,” he said.

During the bushfire season, Wes supported QFES members at the Canungra and Boonah fires. He was there for the long haul, helping out at Boonah for 31 days.

“I tried to be there when the shifts changed so I could see as many people as possible, both community members and QFES personnel, under the direction of the Incident Controller.

“A lot of the firefighters gave their very best during the bushfire season, and many of them came back exhausted.

“Because the season has been so long, I had the opportunity to develop relationships I wouldn’t have been able to otherwise.

“I had ongoing conversations with people and built a rapport that will have long-lasting effects.”

Wes is also a volunteer firefighter with the Kalbar Rural Fire Brigade.

“My First Officer knows I’m a chaplain first.

“It allows me to connect with firefighters in moments such as when we’re at a fire station waiting to be tasked.”

Chaplains also support community members involved in traumatic events QFES has responded to.

“I once went out to the scene of a suicide that members of the community had witnessed,” he said.

“I felt privileged that the First Officer trusted me to work with them.

“People take great comfort in knowing that when the trucks roll away, QFES is still there caring for the community.”

Wes also conducts weddings, christenings and funerals for firefighters.

“I recently officiated a wedding for a firefighter in an old farm shed. Late last year I did one in a fire station. It’s a privilege to be a part of their life events.

“Communities in Queensland are richer due to the extraordinary human beings at QFES who want to serve their communities.”

He is studying a degree in grief and trauma, but the thing he relies on most is his good ear for listening.

“I rely on those skill sets I’ve developed in the background to just be that – in the background.”

There are 24 volunteer chaplains across the state, with two full-time state chaplains based in Brisbane.

You can contact any chaplain at any time using the direct mobile phone numbers listed on the Gateway under Personal Support Services > Chaplaincy.

If you need a chaplain urgently and the local chaplain is not available, you can reach the State Senior Chaplain on 0412 771 727 to arrange alternative local support.

Making decisions about human rights

Queensland's *Human Rights Act 2019* came into effect on 1 January 2020. How should QFES members use it to inform their decision making?

The *Human Rights Act 2019* (the Act) includes 23 human rights that protect the fundamental freedoms, equality and dignity of all people in Queensland.

Queensland Human Rights Commissioner Scott McDougall said that unlike the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991*, which protects people with particular attributes, the Act covers everyone.

“The Act is a major step forward for Queensland,” Mr McDougall said.

“Queensland has become the third state/territory in Australia to adopt a Human Rights Act.

“This is part of Queensland becoming a modern democracy. The Act adds a layer of accountability in government decision-making and improves government service delivery right across the state.”

Mr McDougall said QFES members in both operational and administrative roles should take a practical and common-sense approach to make sure they act compatibly with human rights.

“When QFES members have to make on-the-spot decisions that could affect the rights of members of the public, they need to continue exercising common sense.

“All the rights protected in Queensland are not absolute – they can be restricted. The Act sets out factors to help you decide whether a restriction is proportionate and reasonable.

“It’s also important for QFES members to consider their own rights, including their right to life when they are in emergency situations.”

According to Mr McDougall, QFES members should look at the types of decisions they make and the types of rights engaged by those decisions. Section 13 of the Act features a decision-making process they can use to weigh up human rights.

“In the heat of a situation, you may not have time, so that’s where common-sense prevails.”

For example, if QFES members were to direct the public away from the scene of a disaster, they’d need to consider whether their response was proportionate.

“It’s justified to limit freedom of movement in that situation, but it’s a question of degree and how far people have to move.”

Other situations where QFES members might need to consider the Act include managing recruitment, flexible work arrangements, health needs, leave requests, promotions and treatment of employee complaints.

Mr McDougall encouraged QFES members to read the Act and get to know the human rights.

“Even if it doesn’t seem relevant to your life, you never know when it could be.

“For example, if you had an elderly relative in an aged-care facility and they were being treated unlawfully, you could use the language of human rights to make arguments to improve their service delivery.

“Human rights are not something we want to just leave to lawyers. We need to build a human rights culture across all of society.”

You can read more about the Act, including example scenarios, on the Gateway.





Jump on your bike for burns research

Join the Bike 4 Burns Charity Bike Ride to help raise vital funds for children's burn research.

Members of QFES, the Queensland Police Service and Queensland Ambulance Service, will strap on their helmets and slip on the lycra to ride from Gympie to the Queensland Children's Hospital in South Brisbane from 3 to 9 June 2020.

The ride encourages comradeship amongst the emergency services and raises money for the Children's Hospital Foundation Burns Research Group to research and develop better methods for treating burns, and implement burns prevention campaigns.

The event has helped researchers discover that the most-effective first-aid treatment for a severe burn is to keep it under cold running water for 20 minutes. The funds raised have also helped researchers identify the protein that can help burnt skin heal, and pioneer the use of telemedicine to save patients from travelling long distances for follow-up care.

Funds raised through Bike 4 Burns have also allowed the Burns and Trauma Centre to purchase a 3D camera instrumental in the treatment of burn injuries, and "DITTO" interactive devices for decreasing pain intensity, distress, anxiety and fear.

The President of Bike 4 Burns, Acting Superintendent, Investigations and Compliance Section Gordon Hemphrey said the ride demonstrates a happy and healthy lifestyle for emergency services personnel.

"By joining the ride, you're keeping yourself healthy but also looking after your mental health by staying fit," Mr Hemphrey said.

"Working in the emergency services can be quite stressful, but the ride demonstrates a happy and balanced lifestyle."

Mr Hemphrey has participated in all 13 rides since Bike 4 Burns' inception and is looking forward to the fourteenth year.

"We've been to almost every part of Queensland because we rotate between the different regions each year.

"It's a great feeling when we're all on the road. The ride is very much a team effort. We emphasise from the start that it's a charity ride, not a race.

"We usually cover about 100 kilometres each day and split into two different speed groups so everyone can find their pace.

"Everybody has a bit of a chat while we ride, and by the last day we're a cohesive team.

"One of our most memorable rides was our 10th anniversary, where we teamed up with the NSW emergency services and rode from Sydney to Brisbane, just under 1000 kilometres, in 10 days."

You can also participate virtually by riding the same distance wherever you choose. Gather a group of friends, family or colleagues and show your support by covering the distance as a team.

The ride has raised \$728 000 since 2007 and aims to surpass \$800 000 this year.

If you're interested in joining this year's bike ride, the Information and Registration Pack is now available. Contact Karen Perry on karen.perry@qfes.qld.gov.au for more information.

All are welcome, from new riders to experienced cyclists. Register by Tuesday 3 March 2020.



Firefighters from Stanmore Rural Fire Brigade heard a baby fawn crying while they were putting out a flare up during the December bushfires. The rescued fawn is now on the road to recovery. Photo by Johnpaul Gonzo.



In December, Bargara foreshore was the site of the first handover event for the Energising SES Equipment Program for the SES partnership with Energy Queensland and Powerlink Queensland. SES Executive Manager Eamonn Lennon and Energy Queensland's Executive General Manager Michael Dart handed over \$19 500 to the Bundaberg and Fraser Coast Units from the region's \$41 500 equipment list granted under the program.



QFES partnered with PSBA to collect school lunchboxes for children escaping domestic and family violence as part of the Zephyr Education lunchbox drive. Gabby donated her own pocket money to support the cause at her Mum's work.



A red bench was installed at Kedron Park Emergency Services Complex on 4 December 2019 as part of the Red Rose Foundation's Red Bench Project. The project raises awareness and encourages conversations about domestic and family violence and the need to keep addressing this important issue.



In the 2019 Emergency Services Blood Challenge, QFES won the Queensland award for highest year-on-year growth (20%). QFES brought in 88 new donors to the challenge and completed a total of 544 donations, saving 1632 lives. QFES finished second in the state behind QPS.



Petrie firefighters helped rescue a koala who got caught in the mud at Joyner. They used an inflatable work platform and ladder to assist wildlife rescuers to reach the koala, hose it down and cool it off with water. Photo by Matt Lane.



Miriam Vale and Lowmead areas showed their support for firefighters on deployment from Brisbane.



One of the Tamborine Mountain SES Group's young volunteer members, Jess, was awarded a Bachelor of Nursing from Southern Cross University. She had been with the group for about two years and her "orange family" were proud of her achievement and all turned up to support her. The Chancellor was so impressed he gave all 10 SES members a seat in the theatre and the Vice Chancellor mentioned it in his final speech.



QFES members attended an Australia Day event held at the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association in Stockleigh. They are pictured here with Senior member of the Muslim Community Imam Atta-e-Rabbi Hadi.



In December the QFES Specialist and Technical Response and Technical Rescue Unit supported a visit by Fijian dignitaries to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade humanitarian support warehouse at Pinkenba. The unit showcased QFES' capability and resources to support disasters in Australia, the Pacific and globally, as part of the AUS-1 Disaster Assistance Response Team (AUS-1 DART).



The members of Greenbank Rural Fire Brigade received a homemade gift from a local lady – cool ties they can soak in water to keep cool.



QFES joined forces with the QPS Road Policing Command to help launch the Christmas Road Safety Campaign. The campaign urged Queenslanders to take care on the roads over Christmas and drive safely no matter where they were travelling.



Graduates from Recruit Course 108 in December.

Firefighter recruit treads in grandfather's footsteps

Ashleigh Doble graduated in Recruit Course 107 in November, paying homage to her grandfather's bravery by wearing the Fire Service Bravery Medal he received 30 years earlier.

Ashleigh was a proud firefighter recruit, not only because it recognised the hard work she had put in to graduate, but she got to tread the same path as her grandfather.

Ashleigh's grandfather, Brian Edmonds, won the medal for saving another firefighter at a Rockhampton backpackers fire in 1996.

"My grandfather and his partner David Semple were inside the backpackers when they were told to get out because the fire was intensifying," Ashleigh said.

"On their way out, the fire separated them and his partner was blown into another room.

"When my grandfather reached the door, he realised his partner was gone, so he turned around and went straight back in.

"He found his partner feeling along the wall, too disoriented to escape.

"My grandfather led him out of the building, despite his ear being badly burnt and his helmet warped by the heat."

"I've always admired my grandfather's work. When I was growing up, my mum, my little brother and I would visit him when he was on shift.

"As I grew up, I better understood the role he played in the community and had the utmost respect for him and the work he did.

"He was well known in the community because when I was doing my physical test, people I didn't even know came up to me and said, 'Oh you're Brian's granddaughter, good luck!'"

Ashleigh was proud to graduate with her grandfather and the rest of her family looking on.

"It was hard to see him because I had tears welling up in my eyes, but I knew he was so proud," she said.

In a strange twist, the uncle of Ashleigh's Recruit Course Coordinator, Acting Station Officer Paul Titman, worked alongside her grandfather.

They both displayed great courage at the Shark Nightclub bombing in 1989.

Just after 3am, an explosion rocked the club with such force that police officers felt it at the police station several suburbs away.

When the emergency services arrived at the scene, smoke was billowing out of the club and its windows were smashed.

Paul's uncle, Retired Superintendent Alan Titman, had just entered the club to assess the extent of the fire and was walking down the stairs from an old projection room when a second bomb went off.

The club's double doors were blasted open. Station Officer Trevor Kidd was struck by one of them so hard it severed the top of his helmet and knocked him to the ground.

Brian and Alan came to Trevor's aid and helped get him to safety.

Alan said several firefighters and police officers were injured that night and experienced health problems later in life as a result.

"Brian was on shift with me for many years," Alan said.

"He was a terrific firefighter, the type who just did their job 110%, and he was a great mentor for many of the new firefighters.

"You could always rely on Brian."



Ashleigh Doble (second from left) visiting her grandfather (right) at the fire station.



Ms Doble with her grandfather at her graduation in Townsville in November 2019.



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