

# RESPONSE

RESILIENT AND READY FOR THE PEOPLE OF QUEENSLAND

QUEENSLAND'S OFFICIAL FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES MAGAZINE EDITION 25



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LOST HIKERS

VOLUNTEER WEEK

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### ON THE COVER

This photo was taken during the launch of Operation Cool Burn at Fig Tree Pocket in April.

Photo: Sarah Ebsworth

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

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

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# FOREWORDS



**KATARINA CARROLL**  
**Commissioner**

## QUEENSLAND FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

This is my last *Response* magazine; a magazine I initiated when I started as Commissioner four years ago. The goal of this magazine was to open communication lines between services and regions, and to give everyone a space where we could all share in the milestones and achievements of staff and volunteers.

Each edition there have been stories from around the state reflecting our core values and demonstrating courage and integrity through amazing feats, brave acts stories of grit and determination, of loyalty and serving communities big and small. I hope that between these pages, you have been able to glean more about your co-workers and share a sense of pride in what we do.

As I leave Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES), I know this organisation is in good hands as we move forward with Strategy 2030; creating stronger and more resilient communities (See story on page 6). I am confident QFES will continue with its commitment to continuous improvement and adapt to the evolving landscape of emergency services.

I know, too, that I leave a stronger and more unified workforce. The Working for Queensland survey results have improved in the last four years. For example, staff members who said their workplace culture was inclusive rose from 68% to 74% and overall measures of engagement have improved from 68% to 75%. A stronger workplace culture was also evident in all business areas working together to achieve White Ribbon Accreditation in May. This 12-month process required many staff to undergo training and champion the cause that domestic and family violence is not okay and won't be tolerated. The story on page 9 outlines what White Ribbon Accreditation means and what we need to do to keep this accreditation.

National Volunteer Week, from 20-26 May, also highlighted the amazing work our volunteer workforce carries out in their communities. QFES could not achieve its mission of keeping Queensland communities safe without our Rural Fire, SES and Fire and Rescue volunteers. Read more about National Volunteer Week on Page 17.

I was pleased to speak to the *Response* team about my time at QFES and reflect on the significant journey we've all been on (see story on page 4). I am very proud and honoured to have led the department through a period of challenges and achievements. Thank you for your hard work and I look forward to working with you all in future.

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



**MIKE WASSING**  
**Deputy Commissioner**

## EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, VOLUNTEERISM AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE DIVISION

Following recent bushfires, cyclones and floods, a number of internal and external reviews are being conducted, which will provide Queensland Fire and Emergency Service (QFES) and other relevant organisations with important information. As the reports are finalised, we will ensure engagement with all our services and partners in applying recommendations.

Recently, more than 2500 volunteers participated in the QFES *Volunteering for Queensland* survey. Thank you to everyone who took part – your opinions and input were appreciated. Results will be made available shortly to all QFES members both on the QFES Gateway and website. Many positives were identified, including satisfaction with volunteering and 96% of volunteers intending to continue with QFES.

The review into marine rescue services in Queensland continues with QFES chairing the Blue Water Review Working Group. The Working Group has engaged with Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association and Volunteer Marine Rescue Association Queensland around the state, with further sessions planned. The Working Group has been tasked with setting the vision for the future of the marine rescue sector by June 2019 with an implementation plan to be finalised by November 2019.

The Local Government Association of Queensland and QFES are working collaboratively on the transition to achieve a State Emergency Service managed and funded by the government. A State Steering Committee, composed of key representative bodies, are working through the complexities of this transition, which is expected to take some years and in sequential phases.

On 21 December 2018 Commissioner Carroll announced that Negative Pressure Masks (P3 masks) would be deployed to frontline personnel where an enhanced level of respiratory protection may be needed. QFES is undertaking a phased, risk-based approach and a project working group has been established to ensure P3 masks are supplied safely and effectively.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of National Volunteer Week, a celebration to say thank you to the 40 000 people who generously volunteer their time within QFES. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all staff and volunteers for their dedication and commitment to keeping Queenslanders safe  
**Mike Wassing AFSM**  
**Deputy Commissioner**  
**Emergency Management, Volunteerism and Community Resilience Division**



**HON CRAIG CRAWFORD**  
**Minister**

## MINISTER FOR FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

In May we celebrated National Volunteer Week and in Queensland it was a very special occasion.

The theme for the week was Making a World of Difference – and I can't begin to tell you how true that is across the state.

Because in each of your own community patches, you are making a world of difference and we wanted to recognise that in a significant way.

During that week, along with Commissioner Katarina Carroll, I launched the Emergency Services Volunteer pin as a very visible recognition of the hard work, dedication and passion all our volunteers bring to their roles. Because, as we all know, you are, in so many ways, our quiet achievers.

This pin is for volunteers across the spectrum – the Rural Fire Brigade, Red Cross, Volunteer Marine Rescue, Australian Volunteer Coast Guard, Surf Life Saving, Royal Life Saving Society Queensland, Local Ambulance Committee and Police Citizen Youth Club.

It's our way of acknowledging each individual and the services you, as a volunteer, provide to your communities.

For more than a year now, I have shared this page with QFES Commissioner Katarina Carroll. And, as she has noted in her own column, this is her last with our organisation so I'd like to take the opportunity to thank her for the work she has done with QFES in the past four and a half years.

She has committed her professional life to the service of Queenslanders – first with the Queensland Police Service, then with QFES, and now she is returning to QPS to head up the force.

It has been an absolute honour and privilege to work alongside Commissioner Carroll and to bear witness to the significant changes she has made to our service.

From significant cultural shifts, to working with our volunteers, keeping Queenslanders safe and creating an environment for our professional staff that is inspiring and safe. But it was the Commissioner's professionalism and skill during the past few months when Queensland threw everything it had at us – catastrophic fires, cyclones, monsoons and floods – that has given me the most to ponder.

Commissioner Carroll led our organisation through the most difficult of circumstances.

Her decades of experience and dedication informed a leadership style that shone with honour, with valour and with character.

Commissioner – thank you and I'd like to wish you all the best for the next stage in your career.

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



# Leading QFES

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) will farewell Commissioner Katarina Carroll this month after more than four years of exceptional leadership. The Commissioner is returning to the Queensland Police Service as its Commissioner. With Ms Carroll at the helm, QFES began a transformation to develop into a progressive, efficient and integrated department with strong values that reflect Queensland communities. Here she shares her journey in her own words.

### In the beginning:

The organisation was a lot more complex than I had thought. QFES came together in late 2013, and when I came in a year later in late 2014, I was surprised to find there was still an extraordinary amount of work that still had to be done in working towards a combined strategic future. I was pleasantly surprised by the desire for change that existed when I spoke with people as I travelled around. We did some research at the beginning and found that close to 80 per cent were looking for change as a way forward within the department. This gave me the authority to bring about that change.

The people – the permanent staff and the volunteers – are the best part of QFES. I spent a lot of time travelling in the first several weeks to get to know the people, the culture, identity, history and issues on the ground. That is where I learnt most of what we had to do in terms of our future.

### The standouts:

I am passionate about connecting with the people of the organisation. Engagement and communication with staff and volunteers was able to grow, not just through the Commissioner's Update but through Open Line, *Response*, ELT communications and Regional and Senior Leadership Team messaging.

I am also proud of the way we reset the budget, so we now have strong, fiscal planning for growth in terms of new buildings, equipment and trucks, and that will continue.







# through transformation

I am thrilled at how the organisation at the upper levels has matured; where good governance, strategic board management, a cohesive Executive Leadership Team and strong committee structures were established early on and have been refined and improved as time goes on.

We tidied up the recruitment and training for Fire and Rescue, from a system that had been there for a long time to one of the most modern and comprehensive in Australia.

Also, I am proud of Strategy 2030 where we will reform and digitise the organisation. It was quite a radical step for QFES to engage a futurist to help us broaden our thinking and help us prepare for what we will need to do to meet the future.

Commissioner and the cohesion was pretty clunky. We got a lot better during TC Debbie, and even better again in the fires last year and floods in Townsville.

What I am extraordinarily proud of is that people are happy about their identity, history and culture but they are also very willing to work together, alongside each other, for the good of the community.

There's a lot of goodwill and a lot of good people and they are here for the right reasons and it's all about what they can contribute to making the community safe.

**QFES' future:**

I think the organisation is in a very good position. It is held in high regard by government. You know you are doing well when you get your own Minister, which happened in the last state election. We are in an excellent position leading into the future and we will continue to go from strength to strength.

**On leaving:**

I leave with a heavy heart. I consider QFES as my department, my people, and I feel responsible because I personally invested so much of myself in this organisation. For me it is bittersweet, but there comes a time when you have got to take an opportunity because they only come up every so often. I am truly blessed to have learned so many things in this department that will hold me in good stead for the rest of my professional working life.

**Combined forces:**

When I came to QFES in 2014, the QPS and QFES worked well together, and when I go back to QPS that will get even better. QFES is part of my journey and I will make sure that our relationships can be the best they can be. What an amazing group of people we have in QFES. I know everyone will keep working together for the betterment of their community.

*The people – the permanent staff and the volunteers – are the best part of QFES*  
- Katarina Carroll

Personally, it is not until you look back that you realise just how much you have learnt and how you have grown. I have learned so much about people, about governance, structure, bringing about change, about politics, culture and how strong and important it is in organisations.

**The people:**

One of the biggest things we set out to achieve was getting the separate services to work together as one department.

Cyclone Marcia happened in the first five weeks of becoming



# QFES becomes a White Ribbon workplace

QFES joined other Queensland Government departments in achieving White Ribbon Workplace Accreditation last month, a significant step in the department's commitment to respond to, and prevent, violence against women, and domestic and family violence.

To achieve accreditation, QFES undertook a 12-month program of work designed to raise awareness of domestic and family violence and violence against women, and to enhance support available to staff and volunteers who are affected by violence.

This included mandatory training for managers and supervisors, online training for staff and volunteers, providing staff and volunteers with a range of resources, implementing new policies and procedures, hosting events to raise awareness of violence, and communicating with the workforce.

Commissioner Katarina Carroll said being accredited as a White Ribbon workplace was an acknowledgment that QFES supports people experiencing violence, encourages the workforce to challenge inappropriate behaviour, holds people accountable for their behaviour, and advocates for gender equality.

## DID YOU KNOW?

- One in six Australian women, and one in 19 Australian men, have experienced physical abuse from a current or former partner.
- Two-thirds of Australian women affected by domestic and family violence are employed.
- One in five Australian women affected by violence say it continues at work.
- Nine in 10 incidents are not reported.

“This means we provide safer, more inclusive workplaces and our staff and volunteers feel assured they will be supported if they are affected by violence,” Commissioner Carroll said.

“It’s important that we have the right policies in place to provide this support and we encourage a culture of respect, understanding and awareness of these issues.”

Staff were surveyed before and after the accreditation process to gauge their awareness and attitudes of domestic and family violence.

Deputy Commissioner and White Ribbon Ambassador Mike Wassing said many survey respondents said they now have a better understanding of violence against women and how to help someone who was experiencing violence.

“We have seen some really positive changes in our workforce since we started this process a little over a year ago,” Mr Wassing said.

“The work hasn’t finished now we are accredited. There is more to be done to ensure our workplaces and communities have positive attitudes towards women.



QFES participated in Darkness to Daylight in May, walking and running more than 2800 km overnight to raise awareness and funds to help those impacted by domestic and family violence.





“We are now looking at developing training for our volunteers and volunteer leaders, providing more safety and support services for our staff, and creating further education campaigns.

“We are a public safety department and, if we are true to that, this means safety across all areas. That’s just one more reason this accreditation is so important.”

The Workplace Accreditation Program is internationally recognised and has reached more than 650,000 employees in Australia.



**White  
Ribbon  
Workplace**

#### What help is available?

##### At QFES:

- QFES Fire and Emergency Services Support Network
- Peer Support Officers
- Policies and training

##### Local, state-wide and national support services:

- There are several legal, counselling and support services available for people experiencing violence in their relationships

##### Apps:

People affected by, or escaping, domestic violence can now turn to smartphone apps to help them access financial and legal information and crisis support services.

*Ask Izzy* safely connects people with housing, food and other crisis support services. The app includes safety screening questions to help people identify if they're in immediate danger, emergency numbers and safety tips.

*PENDA* aims to break the cycle of domestic and family violence (DFV) by combining much-needed financial, personal safety and legal information with nationwide referrals.

*SmartSafe+* is designed to assist people experiencing violence collect and store evidence to help them get a Domestic and Family Violence Protection Order, or to prove a breach of an order.

*Daisy* is an app developed by 1800RESPECT to connect people experiencing violence or abuse to services in their local area.

*Positive Pathways* is a safety and wellbeing app for people experiencing domestic and family violence. Its main purpose is for use in emergencies, with audio recording, automatic help messages and GPS location, as well as a one-touch 000 call function.

*Re-focus* was developed by the Women's Legal Service and offers information for women about separating from an abusive partner. *Re-focus* explains legal rights and options for women, based on the laws in Queensland.

Apps can be downloaded for free from iTunes or Google Play.

*Please rethink downloading these apps if you feel unsafe, if your (ex) partner monitors you, or makes you feel scared, intimidated or controlled, or helped to set up your phone, had access to your phone, or has linked email or app store accounts with you. You could ask a trusted friend or family member to download the apps instead.*

##### Websites:

Not Now Not Ever, White Ribbon Australia and the Queensland Government website.

##### Where can I find out more?

Visit the QFES Gateway Domestic and Family Violence page to access support or for links to more information.





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# Strategy 2030 is already in action around the state

As Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) begins to implement Strategy 2030 in day-to-day business, there are many examples of the guiding principles already in action.

Strategy 2030 was officially released this year, providing a guide for the future of QFES. It gives the department a clear direction going forward to ensure it can continue meeting the needs of Queensland communities into the future.

There are five guiding principles outlined in the strategy: **capable communities**, **intelligence**, **interoperable**, **sustainable** and **adaptive**.

Commissioner Katarina Carroll said many of the guiding principles were already in action throughout the department.

“Strategy 2030 presents a new focus for the future and outlines how we are going to get there. However, people at QFES will be familiar with the principles because they are already part of many day-to-day activities, projects and initiatives,” Ms Carroll said.

“Record-breaking floods in Townsville in February meant more than 800 QFES personnel deployed to the region, the State Emergency Service received more than

4800 requests for help, and QFES staff and volunteers completed 8700 damage assessments.

“The event was complex, widespread and high-impact and it required a response of the highest standards in order to meet the specific needs of the community during the various stages.”

Ms Carroll said QFES was **interoperable** from the beginning, working seamlessly across services and with partners to share skills, resources and **intelligence**. This led to **capable communities** being able to help themselves when needed.

“During the preparation and response, QFES staff and volunteers used their **intelligence** and partnerships to constantly adapt their plans,” Ms Carroll said.

“QFES worked hard to be self-sufficient and **sustainable** throughout the response and not use resources that the community needed during that time, such as setting up and sleeping in habitats to free up space in local hotels.”

Ms Carroll said the principles of Strategy 2030 were also present in a number of stories featured in this edition of *Response*.

“The My Resilient Community Project (page 11), is all about working to create **capable communities**, through interoperability and being **adaptive**,” Ms Carroll said.

“You can read about how this year’s Operation Cool Burn is working hard to create **capable communities** by being more **interoperable** with its partners, particularly landholders, on page 10.

“QFES is launching a new website which is designed to create more **capable communities**.

The design and structure of the website is more **interoperable**, with all QFES content now on the same site rather than six different domains. This allows for better **intelligence** sharing. It also has an **adaptive** design which allows the most critical information to be displayed during disasters and events (Read more on page 12).”

# Community preparation the focus of Operation Cool Burn

Each year Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) runs Operation Cool Burn throughout autumn and winter, planning various activities around Queensland to mitigate the risk of wildfire before peak fire season hits.

Operation Cool Burn officially launched on 9 April with this year's focus on improving community preparedness.

Acting Inspector Craig Adams, Manager Bushfire Safety, said last year's major bushfires highlighted the importance of the community playing their part in the planning and preparation phase.

"Engagement will be a focus of Operation Cool Burn this year to improve community preparedness and resilience.

"We will be asking residents to prepare their homes and properties by reducing excess vegetation around structures, slashing, establishing fire breaks, emptying gutters and preparing a Bushfire Survival Plan," he said.

Mr Adams said one of the first steps in Operation Cool Burn was to identify the areas most at risk in the upcoming bushfire season.

"2018 was the third hottest year in Australia and the fifth hottest in Queensland since records have been kept, reinforcing the need to identify high-risk or known areas that cause concern over the bushfire operational period," Mr Adams said.

QFES works alongside partners in Area Fire Management Groups (AFMG) to gather intelligence before identifying high-risk areas and prioritising mitigation activities.

In addition to community engagement activities, QFES coordinates and supports hazard reduction burning, and maintaining and opening existing fire lines or breaks.

In recent years, QFES has increased the use of products such as SABRE offered by the Predictive Services Unit, which allows teams to identify the best times for hazard reduction burns based on forecast weather conditions.

South Western Region Bushfire Safety Officer Michael Welsh said the Rural Fire Service Area Officers had collated data from brigades about which areas were most at



Rockhampton Area Fire Management Group prioritises and coordinates mitigation activities during Operation Cool Burn

risk, including the number of properties affected in each area, who owns the land, fire history, topography and fuel loads.

"From this our AFMGs were able to identify the most at-risk areas," he said.

"For example, this year we identified that Millmerran Estates, just west of Millmerran on the Darling Downs, was one area where we needed to focus our attention due to increased fuel load, proximity of bushland to the community infrastructure and vulnerabilities of the people in the community.

"QFES will help Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships conduct a planned large-scale burn in a neighbouring State forest in the coming weeks. As part of mitigating the risk to the local Millmerran Estate community, our local brigade's Volunteer Community Educators are currently finalising their plans to engage with the community.

"A community presentation on Prepare. Act. Survive. is planned to coincide with the burn, engaging and informing the community on what steps they can take to better prepare themselves before an out-of-control bushfire impacts their home."



Volunteer Community Educators talk to the community about bushfire preparation during Operation Cool Burn.





# Working with communities to build grassroots resilience

A QFES project is achieving big results in building grassroots, community-led resilience. Co-founder of the My Resilient Community (MRC) project Liane Henderson spoke to *Response* magazine about how putting the community at the centre of disaster resilience is the way forward.

The My Resilient Community project was born when Liane Henderson, then Acting QFES Bushfire Safety Officer for Brisbane Region, was working closely with Susan Trappett from Moreton Bay Regional Council and Julia Cook QPS, the then Executive Officer for the Moreton District Disaster Group, to complete risks assessments for the Moreton Bay region.

“We soon realised how vulnerable some of the communities in the region were,” Liane said.

“The communities we identified were isolated areas that were often difficult for emergency services to get to quickly.”

The team began to create a toolkit to help those communities work together and plan for a range of disasters, including bushfire, storm, flood and cyclone.

“The first step in creating a plan is to form a community group that will take ownership over disaster preparedness, and this is probably one of the most important steps. This brings community members together, creates a shared sense of responsibility and empowers them to take action,” Liane said.

“We’re there to support them along the way, so this creates pathways to build relationships between the community, councils and emergency services.”

The toolkit is about assessing and mitigating risks, as well as identifying and using community strengths, resources and skills.

“That includes things like choosing an evacuation point, identifying vulnerable members of the community and collating key contacts and other vital information,” Liane said.

as a stakeholder, QFES might assist by providing advice on fire behaviour, or maps of local regions.”

The original project involved four communities in Moreton Bay, including Moreton Island.

Liane said Moreton Island’s plan identified a need to communicate with the highly transient holiday population who often aren’t aware of the risks and dangers.

“To mitigate this, we created videos which are now played on the ferry over to Moreton Island. This is alongside brochures and other engagement activities undertaken by QFES and other stakeholders,” she said.

In January this year funding was provided from the Queensland Reconstruction Authority to develop locally led engagement activities to enhance bushfire preparedness. The MRC project has expanded into Central and North Coast regions, where Liane is working with QFES staff, local government, supporting agencies, stakeholders and communities who are recovering from the 2018 bushfires.

“Eight councils are now part of the project and we’re hoping to eventually expand this to become part of a business-as-usual package for QFES.”

At the end of last year Liane and the team were thrilled to be awarded the Resilient Australia Queensland Award. They then went on to represent Queensland at the national Resilient Australia Awards where they also took out the top prize.

“The plan is designed to be flexible around each community’s needs. We don’t tell the community how they must do things. It’s their community, they are the people who live and work in it; we just provide them with guidance and support so they can build their own disaster plans and support each other to become a resilient community.

“The project is facilitated by the local council and,



Liane Henderson and team were awarded the My Resilient Queensland and Australia awards.



Educating the community at Moreton Island as part of the My Resilient Community project.

# New QFES website is set to launch

**QFES is launching a new website in the coming weeks that brings together six independent domains and streamlines more than 700 pages of content, helping communities to be better informed and prepared for when disaster strikes.**

The Queensland Fire and Emergency Services website has been totally rebuilt to make it easier for readers to navigate in our increasingly time-poor world.

A new feature is an ‘alerts and warnings’ ribbon across the top of the site, which can be prioritised according to need, making it easier and faster for users to find critical information when they need it.

QFES’ Online Channel Executive Manager Rose Kapaith said the new website would help QFES better serve communities.

“Information is streamlined and delivered in a simple, easy-to-read way so people can be better informed and better prepared,” Ms Kapaith said.

Previously, QFES administered six different domains but on the new website, all content exists under the same domain, incorporating the branding and identity of QFES and its frontline services; Fire and Rescue Service, Rural Fire Service and State Emergency Service.

Ms Kapaith said the new website was the culmination of extensive research and workshops.

“How information is consumed online has changed significantly since the old sites were designed so we needed to reassess our public-facing website,” Ms Kapaith said.

“And especially with the momentum towards QFES becoming an integrated, progressive, inclusive and more efficient organisation

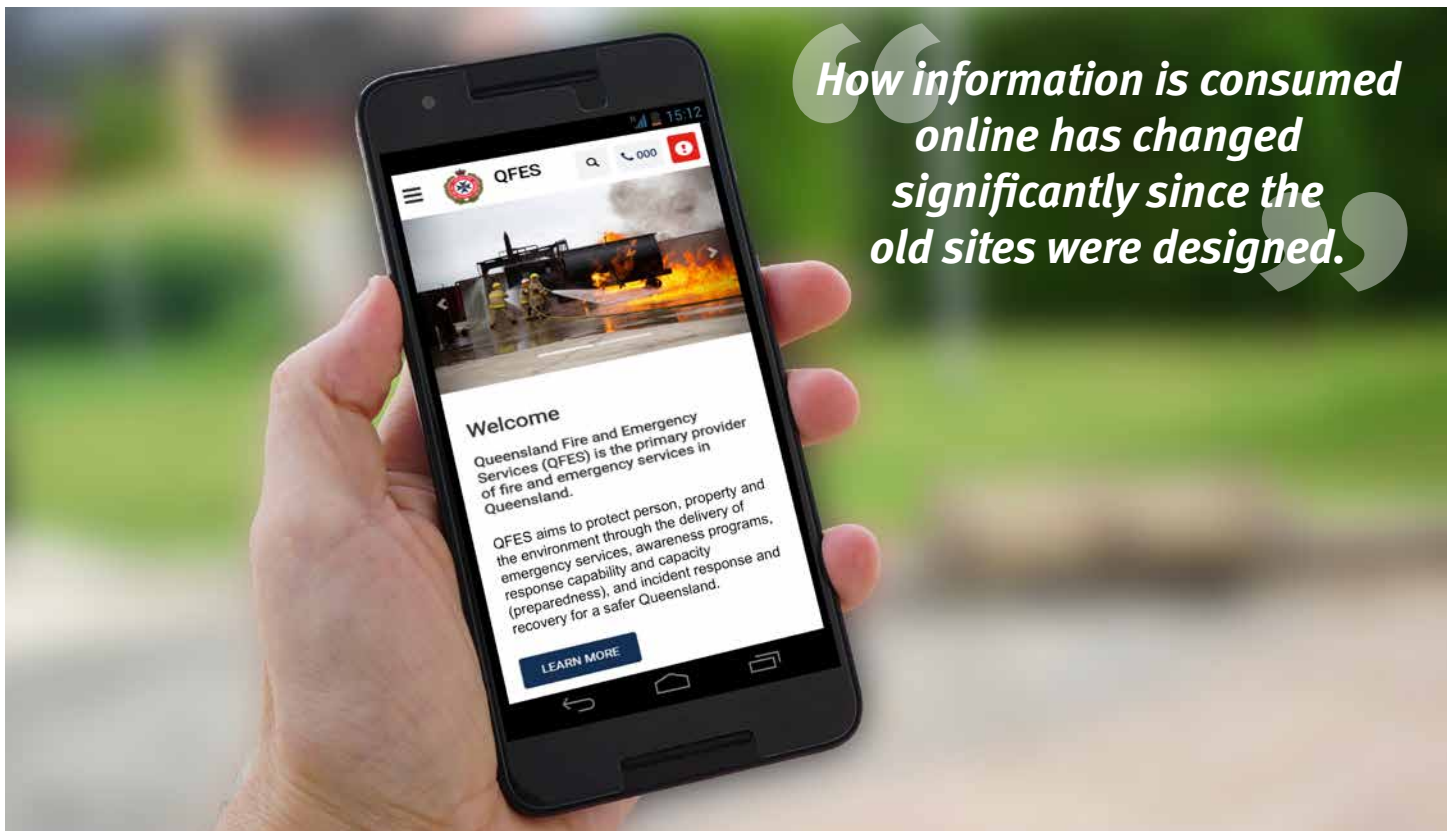


across the board, it was essential we reassessed our online approach.

“We engaged an industry expert for the review, hosted workshops and met with key stakeholders to determine exactly what a new site needed to provide.

“The build of the new website started early last year and we invested a significant amount of time and effort to make sure it would be successful, particularly the content review stage, which involved auditing and streamlining about 700 web pages.”

Following the launch of the new website, web traffic and feedback will be closely monitored to ensure any continuous improvement is managed and maintained.





# Epic search returns lost backpackers

**A gruelling 16-hour search by State Emergency Service (SES) members in dark, rainy and foggy conditions saw three French backpackers returned safely from Mount Barney.**

On a Tuesday evening in early April, volunteers Jo Bromley, Adam Dorricott, Peter Franklin and Deputy Local Controller Bill Gaudry from Scenic Rim SES Unit were on their way to training when they received an activation text message about 6pm.

Three French backpackers had been reported missing on Mount Barney. The four SES members headed straight to the search site.

The missing persons had been hiking for six hours when the alarm was raised with police. They were wearing light clothing, didn't have any food, water or first aid, and had never hiked the area before.

Located about 120 km west of Brisbane in the Scenic Rim, Mount Barney is one of the more challenging mountains to climb in South East Queensland and substantial bushwalking experience is recommended for anyone attempting the summit.

The team were aware that, due to poor weather conditions at the time, it wasn't possible to call in Air Rescue Services. Thankfully, Queensland Police Service (QPS) were able to track the hiker's mobile phone and provided the team with the coordinates of the missing persons.

SES members were briefed by QPS when they arrived and set out on the search at 9pm. The weather was cold, the rain was light, the wind was strong, and the higher they climbed the thicker the fog became. In the worst areas they had only three metres of visibility.

"It was intimidating trying to navigate over the peak of the mountain in the dark with 50 km/h winds, rain and fog on a track that none of us on this rescue have been on before," Deputy Local Controller Bill Gaudry said.

"Once we made verbal contact with the lost hikers, I remained in one position to ensure we kept our bearings, then Adam, Jo and Peter moved off to locate them. The wind, rain, low visibility and incredibly tough terrain made this task extremely difficult and from the point of verbal contact to actually finding them took almost 30 minutes."

Just after 4am the team finally located the backpackers and they began the long trek back to the car park.

After a gruelling 16 hours of hiking and navigating Mount Barney, the search team returned with the three backpackers. They were all extremely tired and in need of warm food and water.

Mr Gaudry said the Scenic Rim was a stunning place to explore but people needed to understand the importance of doing research before heading out on a hike.

"Research things like the best time to leave, the difficulty of the track, hike duration and what things to take with you," he said.

"We like to advertise this on our social media platform to ensure people are better prepared.

"Scenic Rim SES Local Controller Jeffrey McConnell, National Parks Brisbane and local Queensland Police are working together to ensure there is ample signage that assists in educating hikers before they depart on the tracks."

Thanks to Jo Bromley, Adam Dorricott, Peter Franklin and Deputy Local Controller Bill Gaudry for performing an incredibly difficult land search rescue operation. Thank you also to Diana Hughes and Kirsten Beasley from Parks Brisbane for escorting the team and lost hikers down, to QPS for their professionalism and to SES members who were there to offer the team and missing hikers some much needed hot soup, water and an opportunity to debrief after their adventure.

*Contributed by Sharee Sanderson*



*Guiding the tired and hungry hikers back to safety.*



*Three lost hikers are returned to safety thanks to Scenic Rim SES Unit.*





# RPAS to enhance QFES capability following trial

**Brisbane and Far Northern Region recently completed a two-year Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS) trial, which highlighted the successful use of RPAS, also known as drones, for QFES operations.**

Director State Operational Coordination Branch Neil Francis said a state, regional and functional area RPAS framework had been developed for QFES to integrate an RPAS capability into business-as-usual operations.

“This encompasses the regulatory regime, safety and operations, and is proportionate to the level of RPAS risk,” Mr Francis said.

“The framework identifies and addresses the challenges posed by the use of RPAS and supports the increasing range of RPAS operations and applications. It also provides governance to protect, monitor and enforce suitable RPAS use.

“RPAS are a heavily regulated tool and it is Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) policy they be operated with a level of safety similar to piloted aircraft.

“RPAS deployment over water can be faster than launching a boat into flood waters. They can be used to determine the size and spread of bushfires, and the high-resolution video cameras and infrared equipment can assist with search and rescue operations in inaccessible bushland.”

Mr Francis said RPAS can provide a low-cost, low-risk alternative to traditional search and rescue operations.

“Investment in this capability will only enhance QFES’ ability to maintain situational awareness and collect intelligence to assist with informed decision making,” he said.

In late May, QFES hosted a successful two-day RPAS workshop with Australian and New Zealand Fire and Emergency service agencies to develop and establish an RPAS network.

QFES presented on the development of its RPAS capability, with other jurisdictions also presenting their capability, learnings and future plans.

CASA discussed the current RPAS rules and future RPAS requirements. The Australian Defence Force (Army) discussed how military assets can be used to assist with civilian RPAS incidents and presented their current Army RPAS capability.

On the second day, workshop participants were invited to attend a demonstration at the Enoggera Army Barracks.





# Lucky escape for man, dog after Cooper Creek floods

A man and his dog were lucky to be rescued after their vehicle was washed off a road and into floodwaters at Cooper Creek Channels near Windorah, western Queensland, in early April.

They escaped onto the roof of the vehicle where they waited to be rescued by a State Emergency Service (SES) crew.

Secretary for Windorah SES Group and Rural Fire Brigade Trudy Gorringer said the crew was in the water ready to start their search within an hour of the man calling emergency services at 8.30pm.

“He was lucky he even had reception because he was quite remote,” Trudy said.

“The Cooper Creek river system is very wide and was about 25km across at that point.

“Crews didn’t return with the man until about 3am the next morning. It was dark, the water was flowing fast and it’s very easy to get lost, plus there was a lot of timber around.



“He was very lucky, he could have slipped in, anything could have happened. He was particularly fortunate because only a few days before the SES team had crossed the creek in order to map out a route through the debris, so they had a good idea where to go.”

Windorah is about 1200km west of Brisbane and is part of the Lake Eyre basin, meaning rains flow down into the basin from the north.

“We only had about 15mm of rain here but there was a lot of rain in the northern surrounds. It takes about three or four weeks to reach us,” Trudy said.

The brave rescue team consisted of SES members Brian Dayes and George Gorringer and police officer and SES member Rob Edwards.

## Campaign seeks to change dangerous behaviours

Floods continue to be one of the most common and dangerous disasters in Queensland, with Fire and Rescue crews attending almost 50 swiftwater incidents in the past year and a similar number of flood boat rescues by SES.

One of the most frustrating aspects is that often, injury and death is preventable. People continue to risk their lives unnecessarily by entering floodwaters.

QFES has been running the public awareness advertising campaign *If it's flooded forget it* for four years and is currently preparing this year's campaign ahead of the wet season. It will include advertising on television, social media, billboards and a revamped website.

Professor Rebekah Russell-Bennett from Queensland University of Technology's School of Advertising, Marketing and Public Relations is very familiar with the campaign after presenting on it at the 2017 World

Social Marketing conference in Washington DC.

She was so impressed with the campaign and its outcomes she also included it as a best-practice case example for an internationally-regarded textbook on consumer behaviour used by marketing and advertising students.

Professor Russell-Bennett said it was important for advertising campaigns to be complemented by other strategies, including community engagement.

“Collectively all these strategies, including advertising, work together to bring about behaviour change as none of them on their own can do this,” she said.

QFES advertising campaign coordinator Sam Belyea said this was one of the reasons *If it's flooded forget it* had been successful.

“This campaign is supported by many people, including the Premier, the

Commissioner and our operational staff who all reiterate the message in the media, and our regional community engagement officers, who are talking to people on the ground,” Ms Belyea said.

“Most people know the *If it's flooded forget it* message well. They agree it's never acceptable to drive through floodwater and they wouldn't do it under any circumstances.

“However, there's a small percentage who still think it's okay under certain conditions, so this is the group this year's advertising will target.”





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# Home fire safety is key as winter sets in

**A Brisbane apartment block was destroyed by fire in May, reminding everyone to prepare their homes and practise their fire escape plans.**

As the weather cools and heating appliances come out, the risk of house fires increase. Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) attended 1835 house fires across Queensland last year and 520 of those were in the winter months.

Already this year, QFES has attended dozens of house fires, including on 1 May when fire gutted an old home converted to apartments in West End, Brisbane (pictured). It took seven hours to extinguish the blaze with more than 30 firefighters involved.

All residents made it out safely, however, the building and the belongings inside were destroyed.

QFES Acting Superintendent Richard Gorey attended the fire and said it was always difficult to attend a fire where residents had lost both their home and personal belongings, or a loved one.

“On this occasion we were grateful that all residents were able to get out in time,” Mr Gorey said.

“The fire presented many challenges to the first and subsequent arriving crews. With the structure being fully involved and predominantly wood frame construction, structural integrity was also a major concern.

“Being an older inner-city suburb, an added concern was also for the neighbouring properties. One property was very close and suffered damage from direct fire exposure and a care facility at the rear was evacuated due to the heavy smoke.”

Mr Gorey encouraged everyone, whether home owners or tenants, to take time at the start of winter to check their home fire safety and minimise potential fire hazards around the home.

“Be it a standalone house or an apartment, the principles are the same. Ensure you have a working smoke alarm, be mindful when using heaters and candles, always



check your clothes dryer lint filter after every use, and never leave the home with the washing machine or clothes dryer running.

“Now is a great time to book an Operation Safehome visit to get a crew to give you advice on any other points around your

home where you can reduce the chance of a fire occurring.

“QFES crews would rather come and visit you at a scheduled time to discuss your safety than to make an unscheduled call under difficult circumstances.”

## Queenslanders make a Great Escape

Acting Director of Community Capability and Volunteerism Leah Hornibrook said in the event of a house fire, the best way to be prepared was to plan and practice a fire escape in your own home.

“QFES has created the ‘Great Escape’ as a fun way to get Queenslanders ready in case of a fire,” she said.

“Families and housemates are encouraged to get together on 28 June to plan, prepare and practise their fire escape at home.

“By searching ‘Fire Escape Plan’, people can go through the steps to practise their fire escape plan to make sure they can get out safely.

“This year, get yourselves and your family ready by having a fire escape plan in place at home. Save the date (June 28) to save the day.”

Visit [www.qfes.qld.gov.au](http://www.qfes.qld.gov.au) for more information on home fire safety.





Emergency Services volunteers receive the new volunteer pin during National Volunteer Week.

# QFES thanks volunteers during national week of celebration

National Volunteer Week, held in May, was a chance for Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) to recognise and celebrate its 40 000 volunteers who help make Queensland a safer place.

QFES volunteers perform a wide variety of roles in the Rural Fire Service, State Emergency Service and Fire and Rescue Service, including as peer support officers, research and scientific volunteers, technical rescue volunteers and chaplains.

Deputy Commissioner for Emergency Management, Volunteerism and Community Resilience Mike Wassing said with Queensland being the most disaster-prone state in the country, volunteers were vital to the safety and wellbeing of Queenslanders.

“Our volunteers are part of their local community and work with them to help build resilience, give comfort and hope, as well as help them with the hard work of getting devastated communities back on their feet,” he said.

“They give up time with family and friends to attend training nights to make sure they’re skilled up when the call comes to attend a disaster. They also volunteer their time at community events to make sure their local residents are prepared and resilient.

“In the midst of cyclones, floods, fires and storms they go without sleep, give up their paid jobs and put their communities first.”

During National Volunteer Week the new Emergency Services Volunteer Pin was released and QFES volunteers were among the first to be presented with the pin.

Fire and Emergency Services Minister Craig Crawford was at the launch and said the

pin, with the Maltese Cross at its centre, featured a simple design that captured the spirit of volunteering through inclusivity.

“After the past six months of natural disasters, from catastrophic bushfires to cyclones and flooding rains, I can think of no better time to launch this symbol of the government’s appreciation for all the work our volunteers do,” Mr Crawford said.

“Volunteers who have been active for more than 12 months will be eligible to receive the pin and I know that they will wear this symbol of our gratitude with pride.”

**Wear Orange Wednesday (WOW)**, the national day to celebrate and thank SES volunteers, was held during National Volunteer Week. On Wednesday 22 May, QFES staff and volunteers joined the celebrations by wearing a splash of orange and thanking SES volunteers for their contributions.

The Rural Fire Service will celebrate its **70th anniversary** during **Rural Fire Service Week** in September. Watch out for special coverage of this important milestone in the August edition of *Response*.



Maryborough SES Area Office celebrate WOW Day.



# Learning from our experiences

**QFES has developed a new debrief and lessons management process to help the department adapt and transform to meet the needs of staff, volunteers, stakeholders and community.**

In 2018, QFES volunteers and staff responded to the most challenging bushfire season in Queensland's history.

To better appreciate our efforts during Operation Synergy, a debrief program was implemented to gather facts, experience, data and feedback.

Principal Advisor Lessons Management Coralie Muddle said the debrief program was undertaken in many areas across the state, providing personnel the opportunity to reflect on operational activity during the season.

"To complement the debrief process, a dedicated email address and inbox were created, and staff and volunteers were

encouraged to submit both positive and negative observations and experiences," Ms Muddle said.

"Almost 5000 observations have been collected in relation to Operation Synergy.

"Analysis was undertaken to consolidate observations across the key categories and draw out key learnings of what worked well, the positive outcomes achieved, and identify the opportunities for improvement.

"The learnings are being workshopped with the Executive Leadership Team and Senior Leaders across QFES to confirm priorities and align them with the Continuous Improvement Directions and associated projects currently underway.

"The debrief and lessons management process gives staff and volunteers the chance to contribute to the continuous improvement of QFES, to ensure the department develops, adapts and transforms to meet the needs of the workforce, stakeholders and the Queensland community.

"No matter what your role is at QFES, you're encouraged to share what you learn from debriefs during operations and work activities."

Templates and tools can be found on the Gateway or contact the Lessons Management team at [QFES.Lessons@qfes.qld.gov.au](mailto:QFES.Lessons@qfes.qld.gov.au)

## New tools result from Toogoolawah debrief

The debrief following the Toogoolawah fire in September 2018 uncovered the need for Rural Fire Service (RFS) appliances to be equipped with bolt cutters and fencing pliers to reduce travel time when working across the landscape where fences and locked gates slow access.

As a result, an initiative is underway to ensure all new RFS appliances will be fitted with these tools.

These items will be sent directly to brigades who received appliances during the 2018-19 appliance build program and will be fitted to appliances still awaiting transport or still in the build program prior to dispatch.







# SOUTH WESTERN REGION

## APA Group give Wallumbilla services a boost

The Wallumbilla Combined Emergency Services received a donation from the Wallumbilla APA Group social club last month.

The emergency services group was humbled by the support they received from the Australian gas company in their ongoing efforts to make the facility the best it can be to respond to the needs of the community.

The gas industry has shown a lot of support to the group and this donation from APA Group will go toward further improvements to the facility.



From left - Rowan Taylor, Local Controller SES; Graham York, Group Leader SES; Steve Bobermien Senior Mechanical Technician APA Group; Paul Novinetz Team Leader APA Group; Fergus Seawright, Secretary RFS; and Michael Taylor, Second Officer RFS.

## Thanks, from CEDAR Centre Toowoomba

Toowoomba firefighters recently visited The CEDAR Centre to talk about home fire safety.

The CEDAR Centre is a community-based education centre that specialises in helping community members from diverse backgrounds achieve their goals through education, employment and community engagement.

Many of the trainees were not born in Australia and said they learned a great deal from the visit because fire safety was not a consideration in the countries they had come from.



## Crews search for answers in missing person case

More than 200 staff and volunteers were deployed at Elbow Valley on the Southern Downs to help the Queensland Police Service search for a missing person in April.

SES groups from South Eastern and South Western regions and RFS members joined the search over a number of days.

The saturation of volunteers involved in the search allowed a large area to be searched and freed up Queensland Police Service members to focus on looking for clues further afield.

They completed ground searches, walking many kilometres through bushland and along waterways, drove remote country roads, doorknocked numerous rural properties in the area and just over the border to generate leads.

Everyone was determined to leave no stone unturned to find the man, who was eventually located in early May with his family in the Bunya Mountains.







# FAR NORTHERN REGION

## Atherton Fire and Rescue Station 60-year anniversary

Around 90 people, including QFES staff, current firefighters, past firefighters and members of the public helped celebrate the 60th anniversary of Atherton Fire Station on 9 May.

Far Northern Region Western Command Inspector Shane Jarvis said the celebration recognised the past and present, as well as embracing the future.

“It was a great opportunity to meet with past staff and talk about experiences that they were part of,” Inspector Jarvis said.



“On the day there was plenty of opportunity to reflect and recognise some of the past equipment and protective clothing and compare it to the modern equipment the Fire and Rescue Service use today.”

The anniversary also had personnel significance for two Station Officers present on the day.

Ronald Wilkinson OEM, a retired Station Officer for Atherton, celebrated his birthday on the anniversary, which was the day he joined the Fire Service, the day Atherton Fire Station was opened, and the anniversary of the day he retired. Station Officer Jimmy Isabella also celebrated his birthday on the day.



## Joining forces for safer communities

Far Northern leaders from multiple agencies came together on 16 May, when Assistant Commissioner John Bolger and Queensland Police Service (QPS) Chief Superintendent Brian Huxley led a Joint Agency Leadership Team gathering.

Members from QPS, QFES, Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS), Australian Federal Police (AFP) Border Force and the Department of Corrections met for the full-day conference in what is planned to be an ongoing event.

Mr Bolger said the aim of the event was to improve cross-agency cooperation and collaboration in delivering security, safety and emergency services to communities in Far North Queensland.

“The forum provided our senior leaders with an improved understanding of each agency’s roles and responsibilities across Far North Queensland and provided a baseline for moving forward with an outcome that aligns with the theme,” he said.

“We enjoyed three inspirational key note speakers, including Deputy Commissioner Mark Roche, Readiness and Response Services, QFES, AFP Commander Jamie Strauss and QCS Commissioner Peter Martin.”

The event was sponsored by QSuper.



QPS Chief Superintendent Brian Huxley and QFES Assistant Commissioner John Bolger.





# NORTHERN REGION

## Bowen Station celebrates 50 years

On 27 April, Bowen Fire Station invited the whole community to celebrate its 50th anniversary.

With support from the SES, RFS and the PCYC Emergency Services Cadets the station opened its doors to a full day of activities and displays, with a special guest appearance by Blazer Bear.

Auxiliary Firefighter Kathleen Hickey said the community embraced the event.

“It was a great day,” she said.

“The response from the community was overwhelming with easily more than 150 guests coming along. We were not expecting such a large turnout.”

The anniversary celebration was also an opportunity for each service to demonstrate their skills and equipment ready for the community to explore and ask questions.

Guests of all ages enjoyed a sausage sizzle, saw the SES flood boat, sounded the Rural Fire Service appliance siren, as well as observed Fire and Rescue utilising road crash rescue equipment. Station 22’s D shift also carried out a simulated extraction and Blazer Bear gave out free showbags.



Visitors Abby Hallován and Tilly Pilcher with firefighter Chris Neden; Chris Neden helped Molly Beck with the fire hose; and an image from the early years.



## Horseshoe Bay brigade enjoy new shed extension

Horseshoe Bay Rural Fire Brigade recently completed the fit-out of their shed extension, giving members a fully functional training facility, which includes a kitchen, presentation area, computer area and storage. The brigade also built in a dedicated radio and comms area.

With the help of Telstra Business Centre Territory Manager Tammie Stroud, the brigade also bought an Iridium Go Satellite Base that enables them to have communications from anywhere on the island, including black spots and remote locations, using smart phones and a Telstra Nighthawk M2 Wi-Fi.

The Nighthawk allows up to 11 separate devices to be connected using wi-fi at any one time, which is great for the brigade’s online training.

A successful recruiting campaign by Volunteer Community Educator Julie Carmody recently brought nine new members to the Horseshoe Bay Rural Fire Brigade, bringing the brigade count to 24 – three support members, 12 active members and nine in recruit training as they complete their Firefighter Minimum Skills training.

“We rely on a good sense of humour and an abundance of community spirit,” she said.





# CENTRAL REGION

## Townsville wins SES State Disaster Rescue Challenge

Townsville proved the best in the state at the SES State Disaster Rescue Challenge in Rockhampton in May, blitzing the field to take home first place.

The Northern Region SES crew, who will now represent Queensland at the National Disaster Rescue Challenge later this year, was followed by Rockhampton in second place and Cairns in third.

Seven teams from across Queensland put their skills to the test across the gruelling two-day challenge on 4-5 May.

Teams from Somerset, Rockhampton, Cairns, Townsville, Bundaberg SES Unit, Redland SES Unit and Warwick took part.

The scenarios included an industrial accident, flood boat search and rescue, a heavy-lift rescue, a mass-casualty bus and train collision, and a rescue from depth, as well as other situations. Injuries included stroke, broken bones, distressed onlookers,

snake bites and the complication of language barriers. There was also a learning opportunity for SES crews to advance their skills in new areas.

SES Principal Partner NRMA Insurance made a significant contribution to this year's event.



## Demonstration shuts down central Springsure

In February the Springsure Auxiliary Fire Station held a community demonstration in the centre of Springsure.

This was a community partnership between QFES and the Central Highlands Regional Council to promote road safety in the Springsure area in response to multiple minor traffic accidents in previous months.

The demonstration consisted of two parts: a presentation to the community trying to curb these minor traffic accidents; and a multi-agency exercise attended by Springsure Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) crews, Springsure Queensland Police Service and Springsure State Emergency Services Unit. The Emerald Auxiliary Fire Station and Area Commander Clive Weekes also provided assistance.

The exercise was a great success and all agencies worked extremely well together and presented a very professional operation.

Thanks to Susie Bate from Central Highlands Regional Council and other council representatives, Dominic Ganzer, Auxiliary Support Officer Emily Lodder, Recruit Firefighter Shirrelle Jackman, QAS, Captain Pat Kooyman and everyone involved.





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# NORTH COAST REGION

## Kawana Emergency Services Expo

More than 3000 community members attended the Sunshine Coast Emergency Services Community Expo at Kawana Stadium on 19 May. The expo featured a range of displays and demonstrations and gave the public the opportunity to meet emergency services representatives, and the agencies and not-for-profits that also operate in emergency events.

All QFES streams and QFES Talent Acquisition participated along with the Sunshine Coast Council Disaster Management team, Queensland Police Service (QPS), Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS), Red Cross, Lifeline, Lifeflight, Salvation Army, St Vincent De Paul, PCYC and Emergency Services Cadets, Volunteering Sunshine Coast, Australian Volunteer Coastguard, Defence and Surf Lifesaving.



Welcome to Country was performed by Brent Miller.

## Bundaberg officer recognised with Brian Prince award

Bundaberg Station Officer Trevor Duncan was recently recognised for his contribution to his local area with the Brian Prince award. This award is given to one emergency service person from QFES, QPS and QAS each year as recognition for their services to the community in the Bundaberg area. Brian Prince was an ambulance officer for more than 40 years and died in 2014. The award was set up by the Bundaberg East Rotary Club.



James Gill, Director Regional Development, Station Officer Trevor Duncan and Ronald Higgins, Area Commander Bundaberg.

## Helping our community services be more resilient

Regional Community Engagement Officer Julie Bruynius has been conducting workshops in Gympie and the Sunshine Coast to build the resilience of local community service organisations. The workshops help organisations to plan ahead and be better prepared so they can continue service delivery to their clients, particularly those who are more vulnerable, during emergency events.

The workshop also gives a brief overview of the Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements so organisations understand the disaster management environment and processes that affect them.

Julie has developed a template based on several continuity plan toolkits, including the Australian Council of Social Services. In the workshop, participants use the template to start populating their emergency plan.

The workshops have been well received and Gympie Regional Council has booked in another two workshops in their region, including one specifically for sport and recreation organisations.



Gympie resilient community workshop.

## Air Ops training course gives hands on experience

In April SES members from the Sunshine Coast, Gympie and Bundaberg, as well as RFS and QFES, took part in an Air Base Operator course.

The course was held at Kybong Aerodrome just south of Gympie. It consisted of some theory before participants got hands-on with a helicopter from McDermott Aviation, where members took part in the loading and unloading of the aircraft and had the opportunity to go up in the aircraft as a passenger.

QFES members also trained using a fixed wing aircraft, where they set up a working airbase and used hoses to fill the fixed wing aircraft with water in preparation for a simulated water bombing adjacent to the runway.



# BRISBANE REGION

## Explosive training opportunity for crews

The Redland SES Unit came together with Queensland Water Police at Redland Bay for a boat explosion exercise on 5 March.

The scenario, which took place on the new QPS Barge stationed at Weinam Creek, involved a response team of six members and two flood boat operators. Casualties with moderate to major injuries were assessed, triaged, treated and transported via SES flood boat to a triage area for QAS transport.

This was a great joint agency exercise opportunity on a new exercise platform and was a chance for the team to use their creativity for moulage and scenario development.

Another training opportunity in April saw the Redland SES Rescue Team visit Cleveland Fire Station for advanced rescue training in preparation for the State SES Rescue Competition. The QFES Rescue crew from Wishart Station also came to share their expert knowledge in vehicle stabilisation.

The extended rescue training team of 10 members were involved in a very informative hands-on training session where the team learnt cribbing techniques, rescue tool familiarisation and use of air bags for lifting.



## SES take safety messages to the beach

Safety messages around sun (keeping hydrated), sand (maintaining a safe speed when driving on the beach), surf (swimming between the flags) and fire (extinguishing campfires with water) were part of the Straddie Safe multi-agency Easter campaign.

Over the four-day Easter period, agencies including QFES, QPS, QAS, National Parks, Surf Life Saving and Redland City Council were all involved in providing information to holidaymakers.

Twenty SES volunteers spoke directly to hundreds of holiday makers to ensure they had an enjoyable trip to North Stradbroke Island and were able to return home safely.



## Kilcoy community rallies behind fire station

The Kilcoy Rural Fire Station received both donation and recognition recently.

Kilcoy Bowls Club presented Kilcoy RFS a cheque for \$800 recently, which was gratefully accepted by Group Officer Rodney Kunde.

And Kilcoy Fire Station's Captain Mark Edwards accepted the AC's Certificate of Appreciation from Chief Superintendent Varley on behalf of Kilcoy FRS.







# SOUTH EASTERN REGION

## Woodridge Fire and Rescue Station Open Day

Woodridge Fire and Rescue Station opened its doors on Saturday 13 April, inviting the community to enjoy a fun-filled day exploring the station and learning about home fire safety.

Around 1000 people came along to see the fire trucks and rescue equipment up close, meet Blazer and chat with local firefighters about the important work they do to keep the community safe.

Through virtual reality goggles, visitors were able to practise what to do in a kitchen fire. They also took part in station tours, learnt about recruitment options, enjoyed a free sausage sizzle and took home some vital fire safety tips.

The Open Day forms part of a broader strategy in Logan Command aiming to educate the community on a range of topics, from house fire prevention, smoke alarm legislation and escape planning, with the strategic goal remaining focused on reducing the high number of house fires that occur in the area.

In delivering the event, Woodridge Fire and Rescue was supported by Hon Cameron Dick MP, Shadow Treasurer Jim Chalmers MP, Beenleigh Fire and Rescue, Loganlea Fire and Rescue, Greenbank Rural Fire Brigade, SES, Talent Acquisition, Tactical Training Unit, Regional Community Engagement Officer, Logan House Fire Support Network, and PCYC Emergency Services Cadets.



## Crew receive TC Debbie Commendation from Commissioner

Scenic Rim SES Unit members Ashleigh Bartlett, Kevin Martin, Sandy Bell, Bill Gaudry and Adam Dorricott were recently awarded Unit and Individual Commendations for flood rescues performed during Ex TC Debbie.

## Operation Brookhaven a joint success

About 100 Logan SES Unit and Cedar Creek Woldene Rural Fire Station members came together to run a joint search and recovery exercise on 15 May.

Using the scenario of a large bush fire sweeping through the new residential estate of Brookhaven in Logan and residents running from their homes into the bush, the crews searched the housing estate and surrounding bushland for missing and injured people.

The challenge for the Joint Emergency Operation Centre crew was to keep all members on task and focused. Search teams, fire crews, triage teams, welfare crews and lighting crews were all activated and deployed during the evening exercise.

The Redland SES unit graciously gave up some of their member to act as casualties for the night, complete with professional makeup which added to the realism to the event. Woldene PCYC Emergency Service Cadets also attended the exercise to learn how emergency services work together during disasters. All teams involved rated it a very successful exercise and agreed the teamwork and comradery between the services was a highlight of the evening.



# About more than just fighting fires

Each year thousands of people apply to become a recruit firefighter with QFES. *Response* spoke to some of our current crew about their journey to become Fire and Rescue firefighters and what it's like to be part of a modern fire and emergency service.

Sharnte Butler had wanted to be a firefighter since she was a child, but that didn't mean the journey to become one was easy. After six years with Queensland Fire Emergency Services (QFES) as an Auxiliary Firefighter, Training Officer and Administration Officer in the State Emergency Service, Sharnte successfully applied to become a permanent firefighter in 2018.

"I had to put a lot of work in and I had a few knock downs but that made me stronger in the long run," she said.

Sharnte, who has been based at Maryborough since completing her recruit training in December, initially applied to join in 2015, however was unsuccessful. For her second attempt, she was determined to go the extra mile.

"I studied every night for the aptitude test," she said.

"Maths was never my strong suit at school so I needed to study hard. I also did boot camp every day and had a personal trainer once a week.

"I sought out mentors for the interview stage, asked them questions and did mock interviews to put me under pressure."

When it came time to complete the assessments, Sharnte was devastated when she failed one of her physical tasks.

"I was heartbroken but luckily the process allows a second attempt. I took a few days off, locked myself in the house, did some light exercise every day, and psyched myself up for the next attempt. On the day, I ate five red frogs before the assessment and gave it a red hot go and I came out on top," she said.

"Everything I have done since I was a kid made me want to become a permanent firefighter. To finally progress through and achieve that goal of becoming who I wanted to be as a kid is an amazing feeling.

"When people say it's the best job in the world they aren't lying. Every day and every incident is different and you have to change your way of thinking at everything you go to.

"It can be challenging. When you go to a fire call you have to separate your emotional side and be focused on the job at hand."

Sharnte hopes to have a long career with QFES and progress through the ranks to become a Senior Firefighter or Station Officer and progress down the technical rescue stream.



*"I had to put a lot of work in and I had a few knock downs but that made me stronger in the long run"*

- Sharnte Butler





Area Commander for Western Command, Far Northern Region, Inspector Shane Jarvis became an Auxiliary Firefighter in 1996 at Edmonton Station, not far from where he grew up in Cairns.

Shane was introduced to the fire service through a friend and became an Auxiliary as a “taster” for life as a firefighter. He said things were very different back then.

“The fire truck we had back then was a very old International open-back style fire truck. When you sat in the vehicle you faced the back and, even in Cairns, the late-night fire calls were very cold and uncomfortable,” he said.

During his seven years as an Auxiliary Firefighter he saw the focus move largely from fires and car accidents to other areas, including technical rescue and fire investigation.

“There were a lot of opportunities available so I decided to become a permanent firefighter,” Shane said.

After successfully applying and completing his recruit training, Shane was posted to Atherton and Mareeba where he spent the first five years of his career.

He said he was lucky to work with strong mentors who helped him fulfil his potential and instilled strong values in him.

“My mentors taught me about respect and trust, not just for fellow firefighters in your station, but for other staff in the organisation and members of the community. I still hold those values today,” Shane said.

Shane is passionate about people and hopes he can now support his staff the way he was supported.

“The highlight of my career has been working with a multitude of different people with varied backgrounds. When you take the time to listen to every person they all have an amazing story and journey to be where they are today,” he said.



“I have come full circle as Area Commander in the same place where I started out as a firefighter. Now I can provide the same opportunities that I was given to the people I work with.”

Shane said, like any job, there were good days and bad days but it was important to be aware of how it could impact you.

“There are days when I absolutely love putting on my boots and coming to work. There are also days when I come home and think ‘I didn’t enjoy that’; you need to know when you need to have a break or a time out.

“That’s one thing I think we are all getting better at – having discussions with the right people and having support around us so we feel safe that we can have those discussions.

“The people I work with are very important to me. I try to understand what they’re about, what drives them and make sure they are meeting their values and that they’re in a safe environment that allows them to grow.”

Mackay-based Firefighter Codey James is coming up to his fifth year in Queensland Fire and Emergency Services.

He loves every aspect of being a firefighter, from the challenging and sometimes dangerous swiftwater rescues, to the community-based school visits.

“I love technical rescue and swiftwater. It can be very challenging and the environment is always changing,” Codey said.

“But I also love doing community safety; going to schools or visiting the elderly. That’s where it started for me, when the fire service first came to my school when I was in grade 2 or 3. I have wanted to be a firefighter since then.

“It’s great to be able to go to schools and see the kids’ eyes light up and possibly inspire them to be the next generation of firefighters.

“The fire service is very multicultural. You work and make friends with people from diverse nationalities and backgrounds and that creates a very friendly and inclusive workplace.”

As an Aboriginal man, Codey is passionate about educating other Indigenous Australians about the fire service as a career option.



“I am passionate about trying to get diversity in the workforce and pushing this as a career option to Indigenous Australians,” he said.

“I don’t think a lot of people realise the different aspects of the fire service; everyone thinks it’s just fighting fires but it’s much more than that.”

Codey said being a firefighter can be a very rewarding job.

“Being there to help someone through what is possibly the worst day of their life is one of the rewarding parts of the job.”



# Looking after members' retirements savings since 1912.

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



# Specsavers help volunteers find their gear

**When there's an activation or deployment you don't have to look too far for a stack of SES bags in the airport, field office or deployment centre. To help our SES volunteers locate their bags quickly, Specsavers have provided enormously popular luggage tags.**

Specsavers have a corporate donation program with their franchisees, which means a number of stores collectively donate to SES on a regular basis, contributing key funding for equipment supplied to the groups each year.

These donations, made through the SES Gift Fund, supported the supply of tablet devices to SES groups in 2018 and will deliver the next priority item in 2019, under the guidance of the SES Uniform and Equipment Working Group.

With the supply of hydration backpacks from SES Principal Partner NRMA Insurance, the volunteers proposed the need for backpack identification and Specsavers head office stepped up to supply the luggage tags to meet this requirement.

The luggage tags were distributed through Specsavers stores with volunteers dropping in to meet their local Specsavers staff. Volunteers without a store in their area were able to email for supplies.

Tags have been so popular that store supplies were snapped up quickly and resupplies were sent out within days of the announcement.

With all luggage tags now distributed, it is easy to see how working with local partners to develop practical ideas can deliver simple solutions to our volunteers.



# Professional development on display at expo

**Many people don't realise the wide variety of professional development opportunities available to staff and volunteers at QFES.**

From free short courses to post graduate study opportunities, there are a range of resources and links available under the Training and Development section on the QFES Gateway.

Human Capital Strategy Director Callum MacSween said QFES was committed to developing staff and volunteers.

"We have worked hard to improve the range of opportunities and resources available and improve access," he said.

In April QFES held a Professional Development Expo in Brisbane hosted by the QFES Talent Development Unit.

The expo provided staff and volunteers with an insight into some of the professional development opportunities available to them through the programs sponsored by Human Capital Management.

Mr MacSween said it was a great opportunity for people to talk directly with the education providers to assist them in planning their professional and career development pathways.

"We aim to run the Professional Development Expo on an annual basis and also find alternative ways to offer this information to the QFES workforce around the state," he said.

"In the meantime, we do offer a variety of ways for people to connect with the Talent Development Unit Team to discuss course content, register, obtain information and share experiences from course."

Visit the Training and Development intranet site for more information.







Ripley Valley Rural Fire Brigade trucks helped brighten up the smiles at the Ipswich Festival of Light parade in April.



In support of Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month last month, members of Mt Isa Fire Station attended a morning tea on 16 May at the local Domestic and Family Violence Resource Service.



In February crews from C Shift Gold Coast North and Gold Coast South Commands attended an exercise at Movie World to test the theme park emergency response plans and the deployment of QFES specialist technical rescue and aerial resources. The exercise was successful with a hot debrief held post exercise.



Four QFES members were presented with prestigious medals recently. Assistant Commissioner Far Northern Region John Bolger and Deputy Commissioner for Emergency Management, Volunteerism and Community Resilience Mike Wassing received the Australian Fire Service Medal, and Longreach SES Group Leader Karen Peters and Warwick SES Local Controller John Newley received the Emergency Services Medal.



The Bundaberg SES Unit came together on Easter Monday to take part in the annual Easter in Woodgate Fair. It provided an opportunity to promote volunteer membership and for the community to say a big thank you to volunteers for the recent efforts during the Woodgate Fire.





Organisational Engagement Directorate staff and Regional Community Engagement Officers met at the beginning of May to discuss the finalisation and implementation of the QFES Engagement Strategy. The strategy outlines QFES' approach and commitment to engaging with our people, partners and communities.



As part of Cool Burn activities, QFES attended a multi-agency mitigation burn in Gladstone run by Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships.



Redcliffe was just one of many ANZAC services across the region supported by SES members. Redcliffe SES Deputy Group Leader Michelle Bowker attended the war memorial in Redcliffe's ANZAC Square on ANZAC Day. 20 Redcliffe SES volunteers carried out crowd monitoring and first aid support at the dawn service and the parade and memorial service, attended by thousands of community members. Redcliffe Coast Guard Unit also marched in the Redcliffe ANZAC Day parade.



The Jimboomba Anzac Day march was strongly presented by QFES staff and volunteers, joining with other services to pay their respects.





# Rural firey hangs up hat

After almost 40 years as a volunteer firefighter, Rural Fire Service (RFS) Area Director Gavin Fryar retired in April. In his final week he reflected on his experience working with rural Queenslanders.

Mr Fryar has clocked up countless kilometres on the roads of western Queensland. For close to a decade he's been looking after RFS Brigades from Charters Towers to Mount Isa, north to Mornington Island, and south to Birdsville.

Despite the travel away from home, Mr Fryar said he's had the pleasure of working with hundreds of staff and volunteers whose hard work and commitment speaks to the resilience of western Queensland.

"I've always liked wide-open spaces and this job has given me the opportunity to form life-long friendships with some wonderful people who make up the heart of western Queensland," he said.

"I can travel more than 10 000 kilometres during a six-week period conducting fire management group meetings but it's never a chore because you're dealing with a very good, honest community.

"I'm there to support and assist the community but they don't ask for more than they need; they just get on with business."

Originally a dairy farmer, Mr Fryar started with the Rural Fire Service in 1981 as the inaugural First Officer at Glastonbury, a small town west of Gympie.

"I joined for the reason most people join the Rural Fire Service – to support the community in times of fire," he said.

"I left dairy farming and Queensland in 2001 to live in Victoria, where I joined the Country Fire Authority for six years.

"In 2007 I returned to Queensland as an Area Training and Support Officer for the Rural Fire Service in Rockhampton, before moving to Charters Towers as an Area Director in 2010.

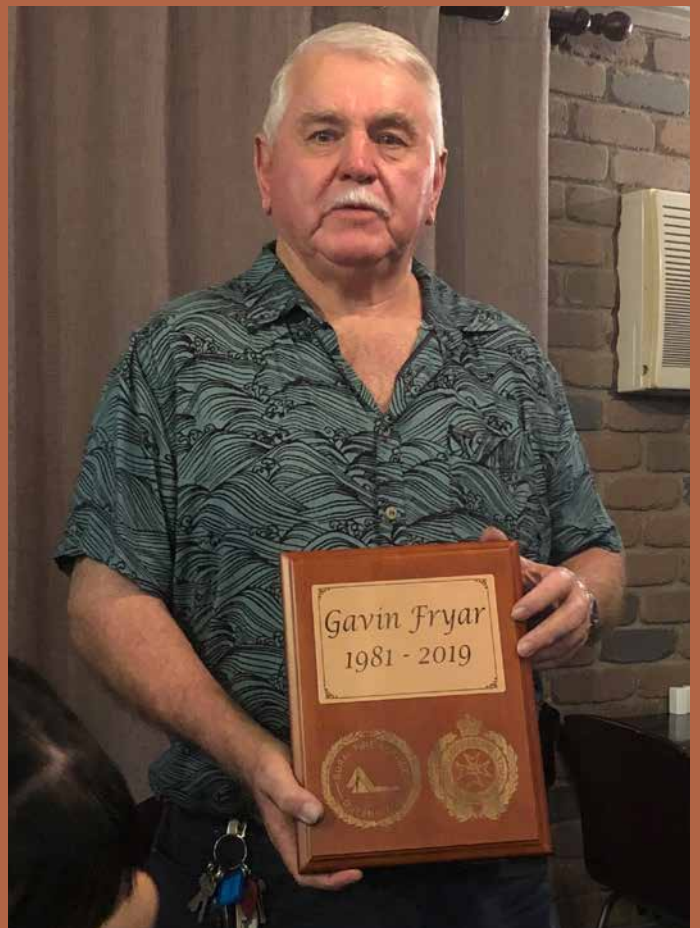
Mr Fryar said recent years have been among the toughest for western Queensland, with drought and flooding affecting hundreds of his staff, volunteers and friends.

"I experienced drought as a farmer myself, so it is heart-breaking to see the community and the people you work closely with going through times of hardship," he said.

"You have to make sure you're there to support them and sometimes just to talk to them – have a yarn."

Mr Fryar isn't sure what the future holds post-retirement, but he is going to "sit back for a little while and take everything in".

"When I'm ready I might look at going back to volunteering in some capacity, but I'd like to have a relax and maybe travel," he said.







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