

RESPONSE

RESILIENT AND READY FOR THE PEOPLE OF QUEENSLAND

QUEENSLAND'S OFFICIAL FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES MAGAZINE OCTOBER 2021



**Emergency
Services Cadets**
Future leaders shine

CONTENTS

HIGHLIGHTS

ROAD CRASH RESCUE
How to save a life

6



FIGHT FIRE FASCINATION
Expanding the program

10



QFES PRIDE
Showing our support

12




ON THE COVER

The Torres Strait Emergency Services Cadets received the Award of Excellence at the PCYC Cadet Games in Townsville. The cadets – who competed under the name *Wati Baidham* (Dangerous Shark) – are the first all-female team to compete in the games' seven-year history.

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

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» Preparing for severe weather season	4
» QFES' first apprentices	5
» Rescue on our roads	6
» Surf lifesaving drones trial	9
» Fight Fire Fascination	10
» QFES Pride	12
» Real Furies Wear Pink campaign	14
» Multicultural Month	17
» Growth in the wake of trauma	18

AROUND THE STATE

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

COMMUNITY

» September 11 Sports Day	28
» Acting on your feedback	29

HISTORY

» Trinder Park train crash	31
----------------------------	----

GALLERY

32

SPOTLIGHT

» Awarded for bravery	34
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FOREWORDS



GREG LEACH
Commissioner

QUEENSLAND FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

This severe weather season brings with it an increased risk of flooding, along with an average potential for severe thunderstorms and tropical cyclones.

A core part of our job is to work with the community to do everything we can to mitigate those risks and ensure they are prepared.

I had the pleasure of attending Get Ready Queensland Week earlier this month which encourages all Queenslanders to prepare their homes for the severe weather season and to know their local risks.

Our staff and volunteers do everything they can when emergency strikes, but when the community is better prepared and supported before a disaster, they are more resilient and able to recover faster.

SES volunteers and staff around the state have trained hard in preparation for whatever the severe weather season throws at us and are ready to respond when floods, storms or disasters strike. They have also been alongside us during bushfires and helped to protect us from the spread of COVID-19 with their ongoing support at our airports and borders. We recently had the chance to show our thanks and acknowledge the significant contributions our volunteers have made during SES Week celebrations. I would like to thank all our SES volunteers for giving up their time and supporting our communities to be more prepared and resilient.

Part of QFES' preparation for the severe weather season was the annual jurisdictional pre-season briefing on 20 September in partnership with Emergency Management Australia.

The briefing provided disaster management stakeholders with information on jurisdictional activities over the previous 12 months and highlighted important changes in the Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements and strategic direction of the Australian Government.

QFES members have also been keeping people safe during the bushfire season. Although this year's season has been relatively quiet, Rural Fire Service volunteers have been out in force conducting hazard mitigation activities. As at 30 September, they had conducted 168 hazard reduction activities and 163 community engagement activities.

Very high fire danger ratings were declared in northern and eastern Queensland this month and high fire danger ratings remain elsewhere in the state. While some areas may be wet, others have been threatened by grass fires, which our firefighters have brought under control. We must remain vigilant against what the rest of the season might bring.

Assistant Commissioner Joanne Greenfield recently gave a keynote presentation at the Australian and New Zealand Disaster and Emergency Management Conference.

She outlined how the Queensland Emergency Risk Management Framework supports Queensland communities by promoting collaboration between stakeholders when developing disaster management arrangements. This is more important than ever now that climate change is making disasters more frequent and intense. Our world is undergoing historic change and QFES must adapt, both strategically and operationally, and continue to share information openly with our partners.



ADAM STEVENSON
Acting Deputy Commissioner

STRATEGY AND CORPORATE SERVICES DIVISION

Training is an integral part of our work, helping us develop our skills and prepare for emergencies. We recently showcased this aspect of QFES in the Recruit Course 113 documentary.

Developed by QFES Media and Talent Acquisition and produced by Strategic Content Services, this film goes behind the scenes at our world-class training academy in Brisbane to help promote firefighter recruitment.

The documentary follows three recruits on their journey through the 16-week recruit course and shows what it takes to become a Fire and Rescue Service firefighter at QFES.

It's a fitting tribute to the blood, sweat and tears of our recruits as they pursue their dream of joining the emergency services, and also the professionalism of the operational instructors. I encourage everyone to watch Recruit Course 113 on the QFES Facebook page and I congratulate everyone involved in making it.

At QFES we are continuously expanding our capability so we can meet the needs of our communities in this changing world.

As part of that we celebrated the opening of two new Fire and Rescue Stations in September – Charters Towers and Longreach.

Both of these stations will better support firefighters to respond to emergencies and disasters in surrounding areas and work with their communities to get prepared and build their resilience.

A new multi-million-dollar combined fire station and emergency services facility was also officially opened in Rainbow Beach in October. It will serve as an important hub for auxiliary crews and State Emergency Service volunteers. An exciting new development for our stations is the use of solar power. Urban stations will be able to use solar split systems, with roof panels and ground level storage tanks for hot water.

This is a fantastic example of incorporating sustainability into our decision making to produce better outcomes for the community and the planet.

Similarly, we now have five electric vehicle charging bays installed at the Emergency Services Complex in Kedron in preparation for electric vehicles being introduced into our fleet.

We are taking a strong stand in support of government initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This is in line with the Queensland Government's report *The Future is Electric: Queensland's Electric Vehicle Strategy*, which makes a commitment to transition the government fleet to electric vehicles.

Climate change is having an enormous impact on the nature of our work, so we must do what we can now to reduce emissions and preserve our environment.



Gearing up for storm season

This year's severe weather season is forecast to have a greater risk of flooding, but the State Emergency Service (SES) are well prepared.

The Bureau of Meteorology's (BoM) Northern Rainfall Onset Outlook indicated early rainfall across most of Queensland, particularly central and south-western Queensland.

According to BoM, the relatively wet winter in many parts of the state means several catchments are already sodden, so persistent rain could lead to flooding.

State Emergency Service (SES) Assistant Commissioner Andrew Short said 2021's severe weather season has been forecast as wetter than usual, so we can expect to be busy.

"SES volunteers have been working hard in the lead-up to the season to make sure they are well resourced and highly trained to take on any emergencies over the next few months," Mr Short said.

This training ensures Queensland's 520 flood boat operators, 893 chainsaw operators and 3700 storm damage operators are up to date with their skills.

"We've increased our recruitment efforts so we can get people on board before the season starts and train them to the level where they can help out the community," Mr Short said.

"Our local groups have done self-checks to make sure they have enough volunteers and equipment for the season ahead.

"We've also delivered a lot of community education to give people advice around how they can prepare their family, home and community."

Mr Short said having teams on the ground during a cyclone or flood would be more complicated with COVID-19 involved.

"We're very careful around the use of personal protective equipment so our people are wearing the right gear at the right time.

"For example, when they're on a roof tarping, they don't need to wear a P2 mask, but while they're around people they

do. It's a pragmatic approach, because wearing a P2 mask does add another load to the body.

"In the event of a lockdown, QFES has protocols in place that allow us to conduct deployments between different regions and across state borders. Last year we sent teams down to northern NSW, and NSW sent people to help during the major storm at Springfield.

"Our priority is our core SES operations. If we have to choose between continuing to support operations at an airport and responding to a cyclone, the cyclone will come first.

"I always admire the commitment our SES volunteers make to their local communities. Even when an emergency affects them and their family, they still make themselves available to help others. They're wonderful people."

QFES' first apprentices

QFES has employed our first ever apprentices, who will develop their mechanical skills in regional workshops across the state.

Seven apprentices, one in each region, are learning how to service and maintain fire trucks as well as specialist firefighting equipment and systems.

When they complete their four-year apprenticeship, they will receive a Certificate III in Heavy Commercial Vehicle Mechanical Technology and can then apply for a permanent Heavy Vehicle Mechanic position at QFES.

Jackson Allott is in his third year of his apprenticeship.

"I've always liked cars," Jackson said. "At home I used to work on old cars and 4WDs.

"I looked at all my options when I was in school and I wanted to do something with cars.

"My dad had a truck and I was interested in being a heavy diesel mechanic, so I applied for the role at QFES.

"There are always surprises. New trucks came out recently and we get new equipment all the time, so we're constantly learning."

Jackson said QFES mechanics were more specialised because they didn't just look after the drive train and engine, but the whole body, including road crash rescue and pump equipment.

"All the various models of pumps work differently," he said. "The best way to learn about them is just to tear them apart and see how they work.

"We look after the spreader cutters and the airbags firefighters use to lift cars and trucks that have rolled over.

"It's a bit stressful working on those because you can't afford for them to break when someone's life is at stake. We make sure everything's 100%."

Jaidah Spencer recently became QFES' first female mechanic, starting her apprenticeship in July.

"My brother convinced me to become a mechanic," Jaidah said.

"He has a disability and he's always wanted to be a mechanic. I've thought about it since I was eight years old and I've never changed my mind."

When she was in Year 10, Jaidah did 12 months of work experience at a mechanic shop.

"It's exciting to be learning new things," she said. "So far I've learnt how to service the trucks and fix the lights and sirens. I've never really worked on big trucks so it's new to me.

"I work with two different mechanics and between them they keep an eye on me."

Jaidah hopes to open her own mechanic shop one day.

Bryce Bell, Acting Executive Manager QFES Fleet, said, "It's exciting to see such a diverse and eager group of young people start their trade with us.

"We at the QFES Fleet Team are keen to continue to develop their career goals and skills that are quite unique to this part of the industry."



Jackson Allott is in his third year of an apprenticeship with QFES.



Jaidah Spencer is QFES' first female mechanic.

Rescue on our roads

Freeing someone trapped in a crashed car is complex and time-consuming, even with state-of-the-art equipment. To mark Road Safety Week, *Response* spoke with a Road Crash Rescue (RCR) instructor to break down the process for extracting casualties.

Firefighters have to make hard choices under pressure, adapting their approach based on the type of vehicle, its position and the casualty's condition.

Station Officer Ian Ames from Wishart Fire and Rescue Station, who is retiring in November after a long career with QFES, said no two entrapments were the same. He would know – Ian was instrumental in developing QFES' RCR capability.

Setup

When crews arrive at a crash, they park their truck in the fend-off position so they can access their equipment while blocking off the scene from traffic.

"If Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) are already on site we liaise with them,"

Ian said. "Otherwise we focus more on patient care and relay their condition to QAS via FireCom."

If there's a fuel leak or oil spill, they spread a chemical absorbent that resembles cat litter.

"To stop any fuel leaks from getting worse we plug up the fuel line," he said. "We use a special putty like plasticine to stop any leaks from the fuel tank."

"We disconnect the car battery to deactivate any undeployed airbags and minimise the risk of sparks causing a fire. If we can't reach the battery, we make sure the casualty and rescuers are kept clear of the deployment area. We call that managing by distance."

Stabilising

Firefighters then get to work on stabilising the vehicle.

"We place a series of timber blocks and wedges under the main four points of the chassis," Ian said.

"If the vehicle's on its side or overturned we make it more stable with adjustable struts."

"Sometimes we have to use the winch on our truck to drag a vehicle away from a pole, tree or building so we can reach the casualty."

Lifting

Crews often use high-pressure lifting bags to raise vehicles off casualties. Lifting



Ian Ames visiting a school in Rochedale in 1991.



bags are inflated by an air compressor or breathing apparatus cylinders on the truck.

“There has to be a gap for us to fit the lifting bags under the car,” Ian said. “If the car’s hard down flat on the road, we push the tips of the spreader under it and lift it higher. We only need three or four centimetres to insert the spreader tips.

“We once attended an incident where a shipping container fell on someone riding a pushbike and we could still lift the container, even though it was quite flat on the road.

“The same thing can happen with motorbikes or pedestrians. We recently had a job where a guy jacked up his car to change a tyre and for some reason the jack dislodged and the car fell on him.

“If we need to do an ‘immediate’ lift we use spreaders and ‘pack as we jack’ with timber blocks and wedges.”

Cutting

Firefighters try to open doors to provide ventilation and help paramedics reach the casualty. If the doors won’t open, they spread and cut them away.

“Before we start cutting, we place a clear plastic sheet over the casualty to protect them from glass,” Ian said. “Then we smash all the windows with a life hammer, carefully removing the broken glass.

“The windscreen tends to crack without breaking because it’s laminated. We often need to cut across it with a reciprocating saw when removing the roof. The casualty and first responders wear a P2 mask to protect them from glass dust.

“We then use hydraulic spreaders, cutters and rams on the doors, pillars and roof.”

Spreaders were originally developed for car racing and are commonly known as the jaws of life.

“We use the hydraulic spreaders to remove both doors on one side so paramedics can access the patient more easily,” Ian said.

Cutters resemble a massive pair of garden shears, strong enough to cut through a car’s main pillars and roof struts. They leave sharp edges that could injure the casualty, so firefighters cover all sharps with a thick material held down by magnets in its corners.

“We take off the door on the casualty’s side, make a cut near the casualty’s feet, insert the spreader into that cut and then open the spreader to lift the dash up and off the casualty,” Ian said.



Ian Ames has trained more than 100 road crash rescue courses since the program started.

If firefighters need to, they use the cutters to cut the car’s six pillars and remove the roof.

Extraction

With the car cut open, firefighters work with QAS officers to get the casualty out.

“We lay their seat back so they’re lying as flat as possible and then we get a rescue board under them and slide them onto it,” Ian said.

“If we’ve taken the roof off, we lift them up and back towards the rear of the car.

“Some rescues only take 20 minutes, while others last more than an hour due to the complexity of the entrapment. Very complicated rescues, especially in a truck crash, can take several hours.”

Collaboration

Firefighters work closely with QAS officers to identify which casualty needs to be released first and how.

“We share the very limited space around the casualty,” Ian said. “The cooperation between QAS and QFES is absolutely brilliant at these hectic and stressful scenes.

“Sometimes we also assist QAS to administer CPR and support the casualty’s head during extraction.

“We support QPS with scene security, especially if the Forensic Crash Unit attends. We also wash the scene down of bodily fluids.”

Legacy

Ian attended his first road crash rescue in October 1979.

“It was a fatal crash and I remember driving home that morning at about 30kph

and looking everywhere for danger,” he said.

“I’ve been on rescue trucks ever since and I’ve attended at least 500 road crash rescues with entrapment.”

In 1993 Ian was part of the team who developed Queensland’s five-day RCR course for every recruit, auxiliary and permanent firefighter.

Ian also helped plan and develop QFES’ road rescue trucks and RCR training facility at Wishart.

“In Queensland, unlike other states, every permanent and auxiliary Fire and Rescue Service truck carries RCR equipment.

“When I first started 42 years ago, there was only one truck in the whole of Brisbane with RCR gear. Now every truck has it. It doesn’t get any better than that for people on the road.

“I’m very proud to be part of QFES’ RCR capability. When I retire in November, there’ll be really good people taking my spot.”

With Queensland recently reaching the grim milestone of 200 deaths on the road in late September, it’s more important than ever to reflect on safe driving behaviours.

“After attending so many car crashes and seeing impatient driving habits, from driving 10kph over the limit to running red lights, I get very disappointed and angry,” Ian said.

“The great majority of people drive safely, but I wish there were more drivers like that.”



Myths about novated leasing.

When it comes to the potential benefits of novated leasing, there are a lot of myths out there, like that;

- X you need to drive lots of kilometres
- X you can only lease a new car
- X you need to be a high-income earner
- X you'd be better off re-mortgaging rather than leasing
- X novated lease cars are company owned cars
- X the car has to be used for business purposes



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QFES supports surf lifesaving drones

QFES has provided funding for Surf Life Saving Queensland's (SLSQ) state-wide operations, including a trial of the ground-breaking Little Ripper drone.

Since 1997 the Queensland Government has proudly supported SLSQ's operations through partnership agreements.

In July, QFES committed new funding for SLSQ, providing partial support for their operations until June 2024.

SLSQ used some of this funding to conduct a 12-month drone trial, integrating drone operations within their everyday activities.

This enabled SLSQ to increase public safety on Queensland beaches, prevent drownings up and down the coast and mitigate the risks of dangerous marine creatures.

Little Ripper drones can spot sharks and crocodiles at popular beaches using their unique SharkSpotter and CrocSpotter algorithms.

The drones can drop inflatable pods for swimmers who are in distress to hang onto, as well as track them by dropping sea-marker dye.

Little Ripper has gained some fame for conducting the world's first marine rescue by a drone at Lennox Head. Lifesavers used

Little Ripper to deliver an inflatable pod to two young bodysurfers who were being pulled out to sea.

Drones provide a better view of the beach, including any underwater movement, than traditional beach towers or watercraft, and are more cost effective than helicopters. Their impact on marine life is negligible.

SLSQ has developed a pathway for members and lifeguards to undertake accredited training and operate the drones with full compliance.

SLSQ Acting General Manager Operations Peta Lawlor said, "Through our partnership we have been able to implement new technology, including Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems, to increase public safety on Queensland beaches.

"Drones provide another piece of equipment for our patrols to use and broaden our reach when conducting searches, rescues and preventative actions.

"We currently have more than 30 volunteer surf lifesavers operating drones across the

Queensland coastline. They were able to be trained through the funding provided.

"Our members have enjoyed the opportunity to expand their skills into a new area of lifesaving, which has already prevented numerous drownings.

"Drones have been successfully used to identify dangerous conditions, people in distress and marine creatures.

"The use of drones to identify dangerous marine creatures on our beaches has instilled confidence in swimmers, particularly in North Queensland, due to the early detection of crocodiles and sharks in the area.

"We look forward to continuing to develop, research and look for best practice in drone technology to ensure beachgoers' safety."

QFES Emergency Management and Community Capability (EMCC) and SLSQ are now in discussions to identify further opportunities for collaboration and to bolster interoperability between QFES, SLSQ and other industry partners.



Drones fly over Surfer's Paradise Beach.

Fighting fire fascination

The Fight Fire Fascination (FFF) program educates children who have started down the path of lighting fires. It was recently expanded to support more vulnerable and at-risk children across the state.

FFF is a free and confidential program where specially trained firefighters visit children's homes to discuss fire safety.

The program currently has 48 practitioners who responded to about 90 enquiries last financial year. They work in partnership with schools, mental health services and other community agencies.

Both FFF and its sister program, Road Attitudes and Action Planning (RAAP), were recently expanded to reach Restorative Justice Conferencing, Police Citizens Youth Club, community youth organisations and the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs.

Expanding the program

Gary Devitt has been an FFF presenter for 16 years.

"FFF prevents children from damaging schools, homes or even the environment," he said. "I work with children of all ages, from five to 18.

"A lot of them start off lighting small fires, so I warn them about the consequences and show them my finger, which was badly burnt.

"As they get older I tell them about how arson law goes back to the early 20th century, and how the system takes a very dim view of arson, especially if someone's hurt or it's on government property."

Gary does a lot of work with the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs in particular.

"A lot of the children, especially teenagers, are in care with organisations such as Church of Christ," he said. "It's important to form a good rapport with them.

"I work with a lot of Indigenous children. Sometimes I take them and their carer to a park in Mount Coot-tha and light up a barbeque and cook them lunch. We sit down at the brook and they talk and talk.

"I tell them they're the guardian of fire and I show them the good ways of using it – for cooking or keeping warm.

"I once worked with a girl who lit a huge fire behind a school. She was in the youth justice system, and then she did 200 hours of community service cleaning up parks in Ipswich. When she was done, they offered her a traineeship as a gardener, so something positive came out of it."

Community outreach

Gary said the environments he works in can be challenging.

"I've been to a lot of places – everywhere from Burpengary to

Logan," he said. "Sometimes when you walk into a house there are drugs lying around. I'm used to that, but I'm careful who I bring with me so it doesn't shock them.

"One time I went to sit down but there were no tables and chairs because they'd been broken in a domestic incident and the father was in jail.

"Sometimes mum and dad aren't interested – they only signed up to the program because they had to, so they sit in the background playing videogames. But I can still engage with the kids.

"At a house I went to recently, someone had just turned the Wi-Fi off so one of the children broke a door in half. It's confronting but I roll with it. I knew it was someone's birthday, so I brought morning tea and we all sat down to eat it.

"I sometimes run around to the side of the house because if the kids see me coming they jump out the windows.

"Some of the older kids record themselves making bombs or playing with spray cans and

sparklers. They almost treat it professionally and they're quite proud to show me the footage.

"They're well ahead of their years. They might be 16 but really they're 26 – they've done everything."

Talking it out

While it's natural for children to be curious about fire, this curiosity becomes risky if it leads to unsupervised play with matches, lighting fires or making bombs.

"Some kids light fires at school by setting toilet paper or bag racks on fire," Gary said. "Even if the fire's small, it makes a lot of smoke and the school goes into lockdown. The principals talk to the parents and the parents ring me.

"A lot of parents jump at the chance. I always ask for some details about the child, like their favourite sport, so I can start building rapport with them.

"Wearing the uniform is 25% of the job done. It shows we're there to talk to about something serious, but we're still friendly and we care. We're not there to take them to jail."

FFF presenters always work in pairs, so Gary brings along firefighters who want to learn more about the program.

"Sometimes little siblings come along, and sometimes all the kids in the neighbourhood sit and listen. I make sure it's





comfortable for everyone. Some parents get more excited than the kids, especially during station visits.

“I make the children the fire safety person for that house so they have some responsibility.”

Success stories

Research shows more than 90% of children who complete FFF don't continue with unsafe fire behaviour.

“It's a three- or four-month course and when the kids finish we hold a celebration,” Gary said. “Some of them come to the station and we show them around and dress them up.

“It helps them realise if they light a fire, all these agencies – QFES, Queensland Ambulance Service and Queensland Police

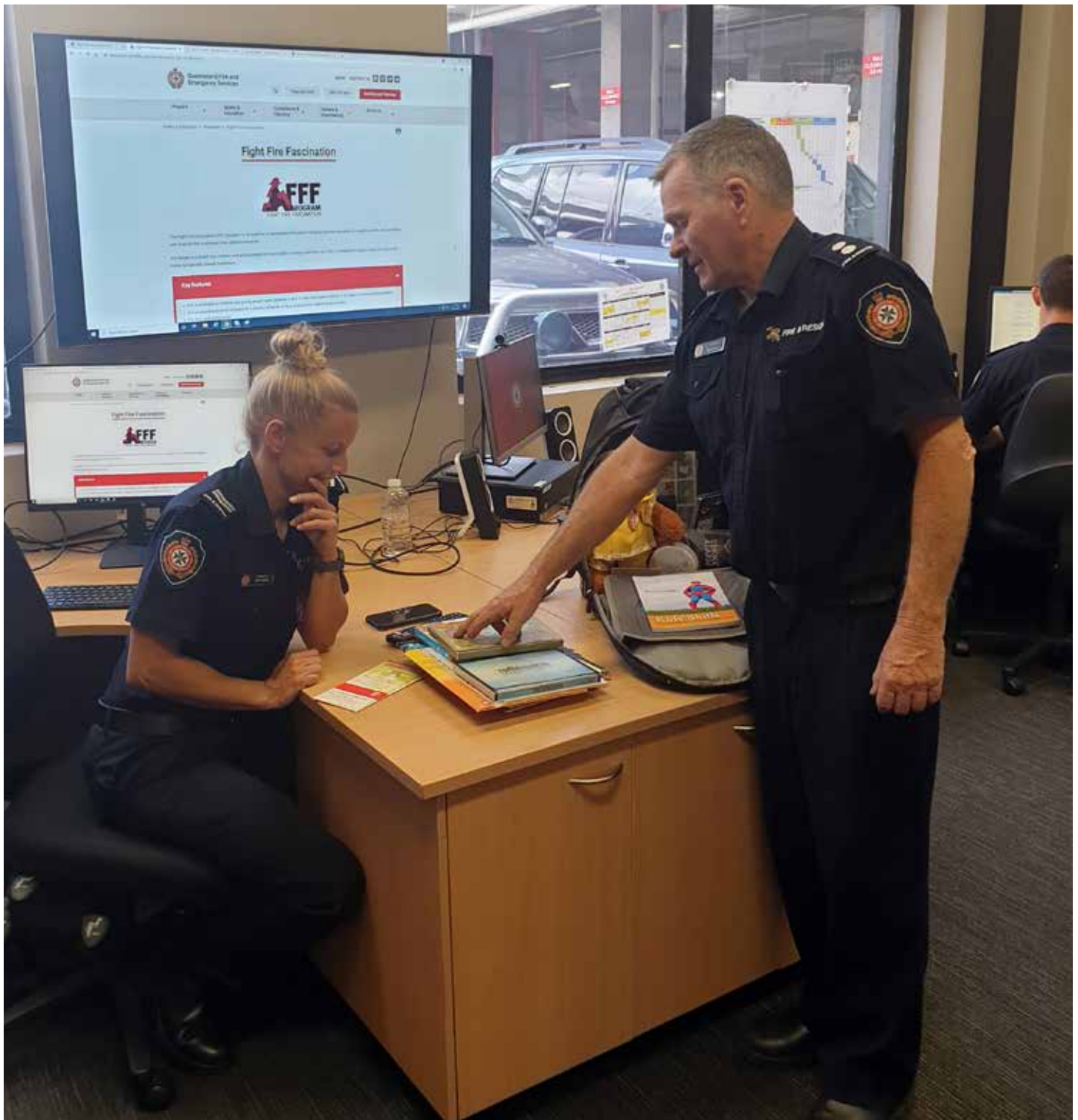
Service – have to come to make sure everything's safe.

“Only occasionally do I get calls to follow-up with children from FFF.

“There was one young man who completed FFF and ended up becoming a State Emergency Service training officer at Kedron. He was a genius – he was only 18 when they hired him.

“It's a great program and it's been great for me over the years.”

Firefighters interested in helping the FFF program by being an observer should email FFF@qfes.qld.gov.au or contact your local FFF Regional Coordinator.



FFF presenter Gary Devitt (right) has supported many children who have started lighting fires



QFES staff and volunteers at the Brisbane Pride March.

QFES Pride

Brunswick Street in Fortitude Valley becomes a sea of colour each year as thousands of people, including emergency services staff and volunteers, march down to New Farm Park as part of the Brisbane Pride Festival.

At QFES we strive to create a workplace where everyone feels welcomed, including Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Questioning (LGBTIQ+) people.

Our goal is for all our people to feel free to bring their whole selves to work without judgement.

QFES staff and volunteers join the Brisbane Pride March to show their support for LGBTIQ+ people and communities.

Assistant Commissioner John Bolger has participated in the Pride March for the last five years.

“When I first went to the march, LGBTIQ+ people couldn’t even get married in Australia, and not long before that, most of society snubbed them because of the way they were born,” Mr Bolger said.

“My son is gay. A few years ago, he lost a job because of his sexuality. The unfairness of it made me angry.

“I thought about how my son was feeling, and I knew you could multiply that feeling thousands of times across the community.

“Imagine not being able to bring your full self to work – not being able to sit around the messroom table and talk freely about

your life and what you did on the weekend and who your friends are. It’s grossly unfair.

“That led me to take a stance as a leader to say it’s ok to be gay, because QFES is a really broad group of people and everyone is welcome.”

Five years ago Mr Bolger flew down from Cairns, where he was Assistant Commissioner at the time, to attend his first march.

“I was nervous because I didn’t know what to expect or what to do, but in a short time I was surrounded by people from the State Emergency Service, Fire and Rescue Service and Rural Fire Service.



“They were all happy, bright, engaged people and I instantly felt welcomed. They were appreciative someone like me took the time to be there.

“It was a beautiful day. People just wanted to express who they were without any type of discrimination.

“There was another festival up in Cairns, so we decided to make a presence at that event as well.

“Since then, Pride March has become a highlight in my calendar where I meet up with good friends.”

Each year QFES’ presence at the Pride March has grown, along with Queensland Ambulance Service and Queensland Police Service (QPS).

“A standout for me was when our former Commissioner Katarina Carroll saw our QFES contingent and rushed over to be in a photo with us, so we all bonded as a group of emergency services responders,” Mr Bolger said.

“The Pride March is a great example of how we demonstrate our commitment to the diversity within our communities.

“Visibility is so important for us and the community. It’s hard to become what you can’t see, but if you see people in QFES are respected for who they are, then your differences should never be a barrier to who you are at QFES. I’m emboldened by the courage of people who step out and identify as LGBTIQ+.

“We’ll still get pockets of animosity, and when I started supporting Pride March I got some hate mail, but each year there’s been less and less. I always contact the sender and we have a conversation over the phone, and usually I find they’re angry about a whole lot of things that have nothing to do with Pride March.

“That kind of behaviour can’t go unchallenged because it’s in direct conflict with the organisation’s values. People need to be responsible for their actions.

“It would be wonderful if one day we didn’t have to have a conversation that singled out people for the ways they might be different. Discrimination can rob the world of beautiful people and the contributions they can make.

“I have seen some barriers broken down over the years, and I only hope that as organisations such as QFES progress, one day everyone will be able to have those open and accepting conversations around the messroom table.

“The other important thing to remember is that every single person in our organisation brings their own diversity. Their differences are all of the things that make them unique, and this brings great value to us.

“The QFES Allies of Inclusion program is about how we all have a part to play in our workplaces being safe, healthy and inclusive of everyone, where people are willing to challenge language, attitudes and behaviours that are not inclusive.

“For us inclusion is when all our people feel valued and respected, have access to opportunities and resources and can contribute their perspectives and talents to improve our organisation. It is up to all of us to contribute to inclusion in our workplaces.”

Find out more about the program on the Allies of Inclusion Gateway page.



Assistant Commissioner John Bolger raised the Pride Flag at Kedron Park.



The Real Furies Wear Pink campaign is supported by the QFES Commissioner and Deputy Commissioners.

Helping families cope with firefighter cancer

Firefighters are more likely to develop 12 types of cancer, so the Real Furies Wear Pink campaign is raising funds to support them.

The campaign is run by the Firefighters Cancer Foundation of Australia (FCFA). Station Officer Stephen Bunney founded the FCFA and it now supports firefighters not just in Queensland, but across the nation.

Post-diagnosis support

Station Officer Bruce Beasley from South Eastern Region has been involved with FCFA for about 10 years and is currently the National Director and Chair.

“Our foundation works with urban, auxiliary and rural firefighters and their families,” Bruce said. “All firefighters deal with the same thing because the carcinogens are in the smoke from the fire and the diesel from the trucks.

Queensland brought in presumptive legislation in 2015 to cover firefighters who develop any of the 12 types of cancer.

“The legislation means if they are diagnosed with cancer, they can see the best doctor and get the best treatment,” Bruce said.

During September, FCFA encouraged QFES members to wear their pink shirts with pride at the station or under their gear at the fireground.

“We appreciate all the support because we’re a not-for-profit organisation and we run on the money we make – that’s what allows us to go out and help all these people. The money goes towards

transporting them to and from medical appointments and helping out with things like buying groceries,” Bruce said.

A listening ear

FCFA also provides moral and psychological support.

“Sometimes people just need someone to talk to – someone who understands what they’re going through,” Bruce said.

“I’m a survivor – I was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2017. I ended up getting it removed the next week. My wife has also been through cancer treatment.

“My dad, who was a firefighter for 32 years, died of brain cancer the year before

the presumptive legislation came in. From diagnosis to death took six weeks. It wasn't pleasant to watch – he couldn't speak near the end.

"If someone calls up, I'm always ready to have a chat with them about it.

"Some of our foundation members have had breast cancer or kidney cancer. One of our committee members is the widow of a former firefighter and has been involved for many years.

"We've got a lot of people in our foundation who know exactly what it's like to go through that awful journey."

Fighting back against cancer

There are a lot of things firefighters can do to minimise their risk of cancer.

"It's all about keeping yourself clean," Bruce said.

"I've been 31 years on the job, and back in the day you wore your dirty uniform with pride, as if you were ten foot tall and bulletproof.

"Structured decontamination at jobs is a big step forward. We dress down and get ourselves clean at the fireground, and as soon as we get back to the station we shower and wash away those carcinogens before they absorb into our skin.

"The cleaner we can get, the safer it will be for the next generation of firefighters. That's what will save them later in life."

You can visit www.FCFA.org.au to find out more about the foundation's work and how you can support them, including by purchasing merchandise or making a donation. The foundation also holds an annual motorbike rally in April called Ride to Fire Cancer.

Increased risk of firefighters developing cancers compared to other workers

- **Testicular cancer: 102%**
- **Multiple myeloma: 53%**
- **Non-Hodgkin lymphoma: 51%**
- **Skin cancer: 39%**
- **Brain cancer: 32%**
- **Prostate cancer: 28%**
- **Stomach cancer: 22%**
- **Colon cancer: 21%**

Figures based on data from the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine.



Stephen Bunney (left) and Bruce Beasley (right) are two of the key organisers behind the Real Furies Wear Pink campaign.

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Embracing our multicultural community

In August, Multicultural Queensland Month – our state’s largest multicultural celebration – acknowledged the role everyone plays in Queensland’s culture and prosperity. Following the theme of *Inclusion in action*, QFES held events to engage with our diverse communities.

To protect all Queenslanders from disasters and help them prepare, QFES held community engagement activities that made everyone feel welcome and included.

One example of this was QFES’ collaboration with the Rockhampton Regional Council to hold educational sessions with the Rockhampton Chinese community.

All services joined in, with presenters discussing home fire safety, smoke alarm laws, bushfire safety and severe weather preparations. The day concluded with a display from the Rockhampton Regional Council on their disaster dashboard.

Regional Community Engagement Officer Julianne Webster-Scott said, “We had some great conversations about how we can work together in the future. Having time set aside for two-way conversations was very important.

“The topic of recruitment came up a lot because people wanted to join QFES as a volunteer.

“They were particularly interested in the volunteer community educator program

and becoming a point of contact with the community to pass on information and warnings.

“To truly help build a capable and connected community, we need to understand the community’s awareness of seasonal risk, their level of preparedness, their ability to recover, how they communicate and what information or assistance we can provide for them to make informed decisions.

“Events like these are great opportunities to build mutual understanding, strengthen relationships and discover if there are any cultural considerations that need to be included in our engagement processes.”

QFES members were treated to a walking tour of the temple and learnt about the history of the Rockhampton Chinese community.

“The Chinese temple in Rockhampton is 120 years old and was brought out in several pieces from Guangdong Province between 1901 and 1903 and must face a certain direction and natural features such as rivers and mountains,” Julianne said.

In Northern Region, QFES participated in a Disaster Ready Day hosted by the Townsville Intercultural Centre.

State Emergency Service (SES) and Fire and Rescue Service members talked with community members about how to get ready for emergencies.

Not-for-profit and government organisations also spoke with the community about disasters.

While they were there, QFES members took the opportunity to take part in some of the cultural activities on offer.

The Belmont Rural Fire Brigade visited the ‘Play your way around the world’ multicultural playgroup recently.

The children had fun using the hose and learning about the fire truck, and all the families enjoyed information sessions on fire safety in their homes and in the bush.

Multicultural Queensland Month may be over, but we can all keep the conversation going and continue to engage with our community so we can get prepared together.



Crews displayed their fire trucks at a Disaster Ready Day in Townsville.



Children enjoyed activities like playing with the firehose.



The event encouraged QFES members to put R U OK? Day into practice every day of the year.

Growth in the wake of trauma

On R U OK? Day, QFES took the opportunity to explore mental health with a talk from Professor Jane Shakespeare-Finch, an expert from the Queensland University of Technology specialising in post-traumatic growth.

Professor Shakespeare-Finch has been conducting research with emergency services workers for more than 20 years.

She recently started a project in partnership with QFES and the Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) on factors that influence post-traumatic growth and resilience.

Professor Shakespeare-Finch said research by Beyond Blue showed people who work in emergency services had suicidal thoughts twice as often as others, but social support was crucial in building resilience.

“Traumatic responses are personal and subjective,” she said. “A crew can go to a job and one person might have a really tough time after, but other people on the crew won’t.

“Trauma can be triggered when you make a personal connection. For example, if you see somebody in a bad way who reminds you of a family member, you can make a connection and come to perceive that event as traumatic.

“We can’t change the nature of the job, and most emergency services workers I know don’t want to. But we can change what happens before the job with education, and we can change what happens after.”

How to build resilience

Professor Shakespeare-Finch said the likelihood of emergency services workers getting PTSD was often talked about, but in reality the vast majority didn’t end up with PTSD.

“That’s not to say some people don’t suffer from severe distress, but other psychological disorders are more common, such as depression and anxiety,” she said.

“The most common reaction after a traumatic event is resilience. Engaging in a deliberate, positive rumination about an experience can create a pathway to a positive post-trauma outcome.

“That might be reminding yourself why you’re doing the job in the first place. You might think, I’m stronger than I thought I was – I didn’t realise I’d be able to handle that, but I did.

“It’s about being able to create a sense of personal strength out of vulnerability. These things are not paradoxical – they go hand in hand.

“The sense of belonging to an organisation is very important – being respected, valued and cared for by your peers and supervisors.

“We found that more than 80% of emergency services workers have moderate to high levels of post-traumatic growth, and their resilience scores are over 90%. So it’s not all doom and gloom.

“R U OK? Day is something we should be doing every day – creating a culture where people are checking up on each other.

“If we do that, not just at an organisational level but a community level, we’ll have a much healthier community.”

Being there for our people

A member of the Fire and Emergency Services Support Network (FESSN) recently moved on from QFES after more than 20 years of supporting first responders.

Barb Gonda, Manager of Critical Incident and Peer Support Services, retired at the end of September after 12 years with Firecare/FESSN.

Part of her role was being there for people in command centres and on the ground during disasters. She participated in almost every major deployment since 2011, including the Brisbane Floods, Central Region fires, Cyclone Yasi and Bundaberg Floods.

“In the old days, our team had to ask if we could go on deployments,” Barb said. “We were considered an extra. Now the organisation sees the value of supporting people through those experiences.

“As part of my role, I look for where the potential psychological risks are for our people, develop policies on critical incident management and provide one-on-one support when needed.”

Coping with burnout

Barb said she experienced burnout and compassion fatigue from her work in 2019.

“The onset was slow and insidious. It was a collection of reactions to the suffering of other people that I never had time to feel. One day it became too big and I had to feel it – the sadness and the overwhelming nature of the work we do.

“To get the job done, we have to stay in our heads and focus on professional responses and strategy, but when you burnout, you have to reconnect with the human reactions you put on hold while you were being professional.

“There’s an interesting relationship between the fragility of our being humans and our resilience and strength in the face of suffering and devastation. Suffering can then also be enlightening, if you’re supported. It’s a dance between being invincible and being vulnerable and human.

“This work has led me to develop a philosophy about the kind of person I want to be. It’s given me the courage to be human and to feel my humanity.”

Barb recalled an example of one of the special times in her work. She was training Volunteer Community Educators at Whyte Island and a young woman came up to her and asked if she could give her a hug.

“I was surprised because I didn’t recognise her. She said, ‘That’s for the hug you gave me during the Bundaberg floods.’ This was four years later. It just goes to show even the littlest thing can be significant. Never underestimate the impact you can have in just being there.”

Other highlights from Barb’s time with QFES include developing the Critical Incident Support Guide, which simplifies the process for Peer Support Officers to assess members who have been exposed to trauma and stress.

Barb said she would miss the goodness of the people at QFES.

“This has been the best job of my life. The connection, the mission that we have, and the family that we are. We can’t be good at our roles if we’re not good at being human beings.”

Barb wants to thank all those people she has worked with over these years. She thanks them for their warm hearts, their integrity and their commitment to making the world a better place and wishes them all the best of everything.

She has plans to establish a retreat for first responders in the years ahead.



Professor Jane Shakespeare-Finch shared her insights into post-traumatic growth.



Barb Gonda has supported her fellow QFES members over the past 12 years.



NORTH COAST REGION

Road safety awareness

In August representatives from QFES, Queensland Ambulance Service, Queensland Police Service and Clayton's Towing met with local news broadcasters at Torbanlea to raise awareness about road safety.

After a horror year on Queensland roads, seeing all services together with a clear message for the community was a robust start to this year's Road Safety Awareness campaign. The community were encouraged to make a pledge to drive so others survive.



Sunshine Coast disaster responders unite

The Sunshine Coast Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) recently participated in an exercise that tested their ability to respond to and recover from a major oil spill in the Mooloolaba Wharf Precinct.

Exercise Oleum Aqua involved more than 100 participants. LDMG members partnered with the District Disaster Management Group to explore the impacts an oil spill would have on the community, environment and local economy in a highly populated tourist area.

The LDMG membership includes Mayor Mark Jamieson as the chairperson, representatives from the Sunshine Coast Council, all local emergency services, key non-government departments, local education institutes, energy and water service providers and tourism organisations.

QFES representatives attended from all services – the Fire and Rescue Service, Rural Fire Service and State Emergency Service.



Joint exercise tests auxiliary firefighters and paramedics

QFES auxiliary firefighters from Craignish and representatives from the Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS), including student paramedics, participated in a training exercise simulating a traffic accident.

Everyone worked together to extricate two trapped casualties suffering major trauma.

The exercise strengthened the relationship between QFES and QAS by putting their capabilities and experience into action.



BRISBANE REGION



Endeavour Foundation visit

In August, Brisbane Region welcomed 13 clients and six staff members from the Endeavour Foundation to the Jim Sorensen Safe House on Bribie Island.

The attendees received a guided tour of the Fire and Rescue Station, 529A appliance and the safe house facility. They also had

front row seats during a kitchen fire simulation, demonstrated by Station Officers Dean Smyth and Rodney McDonald.

Endeavour Foundation Lawnton Site Manager Kerry Langan said the group enjoyed every minute of the educational tour.



Brisbane Home Show partnership

Brisbane Region partnered with Brisbane City Council (BCC) to deliver a collaborative all-hazards community engagement stall at the Brisbane Home Show.

Throughout the three-day event, State Emergency Service and Rural Fire Service volunteer community educators engaged with the community about hazards such as bushfire, floods and severe weather.

Thanks to the partnership with BCC, homeowners were able to visit the one-stop shop to learn all about prevention and preparation both inside and outside the home.





SOUTH EASTERN REGION

Mount Wangawallan hazard reduction burn

More than 460 volunteers with 136 appliances from South Eastern Region rural fire brigades came together over three days in September to complete a large strategic hazard reduction burn (HRB) at Mt Wangawallan.

The HRB involved six months of planning and preparation, with brigades cleaning up tracks, cutting in control lines and conducting regular fuel moisture readings.

The brigades conducted the burn over 175 hectares owned by 14 landholders and a small section of Gold Coast City Council land. They used about 1000 Aerial Incendiary Devices across the ridge lines to ensure there was a backing fire moving down the ridges to prevent hot and fast-moving fire from the perimeter lines.

An Incident Management Team (IMT) including Divisional Command, Sector Leaders and Staging Area with Operational Support Unit and State Emergency Service personnel managed the operation and provided a training opportunity for members to complete their Level 2 IMT recertification.

The burn was supported by QFES Media, Strategic Content Services and the Mitigation Unit, as well as Rapid Relief Team and Gold Coast City Council.



Ormeau factory fire

At around 8pm on Thursday 16 September, Fire and Rescue Service crews from South Eastern Region and Brisbane Region responded to a fire that broke out at a large cleaning product factory in Ormeau on the Gold Coast.

A Combined Aerial Pumping Appliance (CAPA) and two Compressed Air Foam Systems (CAFS) appliances attended, along with QFES Scientific Branch.



Joint exercise with paramedic interns

Crews from B shift Southport and Nerang Fire and Rescue Stations assisted in the training of Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) Critical Care Paramedic (CCP) interns at a recent exercise.

Two simulated incidents helped develop the QAS CCP interns' skills in patient care and communications at an incident site with other agencies.

The first incident simulated a house fire with two casualties. Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) crews undertook primary and secondary searches, located both casualties and delivered them to QAS for treatment. This incident demonstrated the speed, intensity and expertise needed to locate casualties through systematic search patterns while implementing incident command.

The second scenario involved a road crash with multiple vehicles. QAS provided actors who with feigned injuries. FRS crews provided extrication advice and removed the casualty while working on various tactical benchmarks to achieve their common goal.





SOUTH WESTERN REGION

New trailers for Goondiwindi SES

The State Emergency Service (SES) Goondiwindi Unit recently received three new operational trailers.

The handover took place outside the Goondiwindi Shire Council offices and all the councillors participated in the ceremony, inspected the trailers and chatted with volunteers.

Mayor Lawrence Springborg was complimentary in his acceptance speech with comments about the SES, the commitment the volunteers make and the service they provide.



The day helped strengthen the great relationship between the SES and the Goondiwindi Shire Council.

A special thank you to Teresa Pfindst from the council for making the handover possible.

With these new trailers, the SES are better equipped to serve their community. Six old and tired trailers have now been retired from the fleet.

Primary Producer Brigade workshop at Inglestone

The Western Rivers Area Office ran a Primary Producer Brigade workshop at Inglestone Community Centre attended by seven brigades, including 30 new and existing members.

Given the current fuel loading with cropping and grass growth in the area, the event provided a timely reminder to be prepared.

The brigades learnt about the fire season outlook, incident control, and resources and technology available on request. They also received updates on infield burn area mapping, the fire warden app and PPE orders.

The brigades also got their equipment serviced, including oil and filter changes.



Freestone cultural burning workshop

Fire Lore teachers Robbie and Rob Williams conducted a cultural burning workshop on a property at Freestone near Warwick, inviting local landholders and members of Freestone Rural Fire Brigade.



Getting ready for bushfire season

Wallumbilla Rural Fire Brigade recently conducted hazard mitigation activities in the town common to help keep the town safe during the upcoming fire season.

Rural Fire Service crews also completed a successful hazard reduction burn at the Crows Nest Waste Facility and surrounding areas, which haven't been burnt since the 70s.





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FAR NORTHERN REGION

Historical missing person search at Archer River

From 10 to 12 September, State Emergency Service (SES) members participated in an historical search for the remains of an Archer River woman who went missing in the area more than seven years ago.

Thirty SES volunteers participated in the foot search, which included 16 Queensland Police Service (QPS) personnel, four

horses, four quad bikes, two ATVs, one paramedic and 18 vehicles. Over five days, they covered nine square kilometres of rugged outback country.

QPS forensic officers are now investigating several items of interest identified during the search.



Cairns Fire and Rescue Station 50th anniversary

Firefighters have celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Cairns Fire and Rescue Station, first opened on 25 September 1971 to replace the Lake Street Fire Station built in the 1930s.

While the 1970s buildings remain, they have been extensively renovated and now house a range of operational response units.

Deputy Commissioner Mark Roche said the station was the busiest in the region, attending more than a third of all incidents.

"The teamwork, hard work, dedication and loyalty displayed is why we are here today celebrating the 50th anniversary of this station," Mr Roche said.

Retired firefighter Allan Hanson remembered one particular night from his 30 years of service.

"The phone rang in the middle of the night when one of the large buildings in town caught fire, but we discovered the key for the truck was broken," Allan said.

"It took me ten frantic minutes to get the truck going with a screwdriver and then we were off.

"I joined the fire service in 1967 as a mechanic building the trucks. In 1969, I started 'riding' the trucks."





NORTHERN REGION

Townsville fun run

Townsville Fire and Rescue Service entered a team into the Queensland Country Health Fund 5k Corporate Challenge, as part of the Townsville Running Festival.

Senior Firefighter Hal Tucker, who organised the challenge, said the run was undertaken in full turnout gear with breathing apparatus, which weighs in at about 25kg.

Despite the heat, all members dug deep and completed the event by managing their limits. Locals came along to cheer the firefighters and provide enthusiastic encouragement.



Disaster Ready Day

The Townsville Intercultural Centre held a Disaster Ready Day at Pallarenda Park in Townsville for the multicultural community.

Several not-for-profit and government organisations attended to provide community education.

The State Emergency Service and Fire and Rescue Service were on hand to promote disaster preparedness and home fire safety, as well as participate in some of the cultural activities.





CENTRAL REGION

R U OK? Day photo competition

Last year saw the introduction of the R U OK? photo competition in Central region, with the Moura emergency services taking home the prize.

Congratulations to the Mount Morgan emergency services for their winning entry in this year's competition.

Photographer Storm Coughran said, "The card each person is holding says 'R U OK'. The photo shows any personnel at any age or in any emergency service can be affected by mental health."



Road Safety Week visit

During Road Safety Week in August, North Mackay Fire and Rescue Station hosted the Police Citizen's Youth Club's 'Booyah' group of 10 young men, along with three young men from the Youth Justice program.

The visitors spent the morning watching the Fire and Rescue Service crew cut up a vehicle. The crew impressed on them the dangers of road crashes and explained that consequences are the inevitable result of their choices and actions.

After the vehicle was cut up and no longer recognisable, firefighters showed the 'Booyahs' the hydraulic cutters and spreaders used to dissect it.

Afterwards they shared a barbecue lunch and the firefighters passed on valuable information to help these young men make informed decisions about road safety.



Beach Day Out

As part of Disability Action Week, the Rockhampton Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DIDRR) working group held a collaborative emergency and disaster preparedness display at the Beach Day Out event at Emu Park.

The group is made up of partners interested in assisting people of all abilities to be more prepared for emergencies, including QFES, Carers Queensland, Rockhampton Regional Council and the Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships.

More than 300 visitors enjoyed the challenge of packing an emergency kit in 30 seconds.

Some great conversations were started from this activity and many people stayed to discuss the Person Centred Emergency Planning (PCEP) resources.

Honouring the fallen

To mark the 20th anniversary of September 11, QFES collaborated with the Queensland Police Service (QPS) to host a special Commemorative Sports Day.

The event honoured the almost 3000 victims and in particular the 412 emergency services workers, including 343 firefighters, who lost their lives that day.

The shadow of a potential lockdown loomed over the weekend, but thankfully the event went ahead at South Pine Sports Complex on Brisbane's northside.

The day featured cricket, football, rugby union and men's and women's Aussie Rules, capped off by a final game of rugby league.

Event organiser Station Officer Cameron Mackenzie said about 2000 people came along on the day.

"The atmosphere was unbelievable and the weather was great," Cameron said. "On top of the sports games, we had vehicle displays, rides for the kids, a climbing

wall and jumping castles. We even had a helicopter flying over.

"The QFES teams won everything except the soccer and cricket. The main football game at the end of the day was really close, but QFES ended up winning by two points. Now we lead the ledger by seven games to two.

"It was great to have both the QFES Commissioner and QPS Commissioner come to the event and share their thoughts about the anniversary of September 11.

"The event was also attended by the Minister for Emergency Services Mark Ryan and the main game was refereed by former NRL referee Tim Mander.

"The sports day was all about honouring the memory of the first responders and everyone involved on September 11. Our

goal was not to mourn the loss but honour their bravery."

The QFES teams trained for about three months leading up to the event, despite setbacks due to COVID.

"This event typifies what's important about our role – working together and camaraderie," Cam said.

"We play with people we might not normally meet, and now we're friends for life. This event really brings the whole emergency services family together.

"It took a lot of hard work from a team of dedicated volunteers to make the day a success. The event itself was free, but we raised almost \$4000 for the Queensland Firefighters Charity through raffles and selling limited merchandise."





Acting on your feedback

Commissioner Greg Leach toured around Queensland in recent months to hear what matters most to our staff and volunteers, and now QFES is turning their ideas into action.

The Commissioner met with more than 620 QFES members in 34 locations, from the south west to far northern Queensland.

Mr Leach welcomed the opportunity to have open and honest conversations so he could identify what was working well and areas for improvement.

“I felt a shared sense of genuine pride and engagement among our members across the state,” Mr Leach said.

“Our staff and volunteers have an unwavering commitment to Queenslanders and the QFES vision of capable and connected communities.

“They are extremely dedicated and capable in dealing with and supporting emergency incidents and disasters.”

QFES has already replied to some of the enquiries from the tour and work is underway to analyse and prioritise areas for improvement.

For example, the Commissioner received several questions about the review of AO2 and AO3 roles. The review was ongoing at the time of the regional tours.

The Commissioner has since advised that in consultation with representatives from Together Queensland the reclassification of in-scope AO2 roles has been successfully completed and upgraded to AO3 classification. The AO3 review is expected to be completed shortly.

QFES is now working on four main action areas.

First, the Commissioner has mobilised a working group to address the issues raised with the volunteer onboarding process. The group aims to make the process more efficient,

consistent and reliable. This 100-day project seeks to deliver recommendations by the end of October. QFES will implement the solutions in two phases over the next six months.

The Executive Leadership Team (ELT) have brainstormed ideas and solutions for the appliance fleet surge capacity, including asset management processes, protocols and planning. As a result, Asset Services Directorate are taking a lead role and will work closely with RFS representatives to deliver this project.

The ELT will also address concerns about complaints management relating to the treatment of complainants and bystanders, skills requirements and resolution timeframes. QFES People will lead the implementation of these improvements.

Finally, the Commissioner has stood up a small project team to improve the inclusion and representation of women in QFES. Mr Leach has also established a Gender Equity Advisory Group. The group will meet every two months to support the empowerment, development and retention of women and others within the paid and volunteer workforce who are from under-represented groups.

The advisory group will achieve this by encouraging and connecting QFES personnel to support women, providing training and development in relation to gender equity, advocating and advising on issues affecting women and gender equity, and promoting initiatives that support diversity and inclusion.

“Thank you to everyone who had a chat with me about their ideas and concerns,” Mr Leach said. “It was a privilege to meet so many of our wonderful staff and volunteers and discuss the future of our organisation.

“We now have a shared vision for how we can make QFES even stronger and build towards the future we want to see.”

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South-east Queensland's worst rail disaster

The Trinder Park train crash in 1985 is the worst electric train crash in south-east Queensland's history. More than 35 years later, one of the first responders on the scene looks back on what we learnt.

On the morning of 23 March 1985, two commuter trains with about 60 people on board collided head-on near Trinder Park station in Logan. Two people died and 31 were injured.

The trains should have passed safely at the station, but somehow they both ended up on the same stretch of track.

The remote-controlled signalling system, which had been installed two years previously, was functioning at the time, although there were reports that the northbound signal was red when the crash happened.

Greg Reynolds, now retired, was a Senior Firefighter at Mount Gravatt Fire and Rescue Station who drove a road crash rescue truck and attended all major vehicle accidents in the area.

"When the call came in for us to turnout to a train crash I thought a train had probably hit a car at a crossing," Greg said.

"When we pulled up, it was surprisingly serene. From a distance it didn't look like two trains had collided. It seemed as if one train had tilted off the track and leant across the overhead powerlines.

"Once we looked closely, we saw the two driving cabins had concertinaed together so much you couldn't tell them apart. The cabins had been pushed all the way back into the passenger areas."

The driver on the northbound train had jumped clear at the last second and survived. He was later found sitting dazed beside the train.

The other driver ran back through the train to warn passengers, but it was too late, and he was crushed to death, along with an 18-year-old passenger who was sitting behind the driver's cabin.

About 30 firefighters attended the crash from multiple stations, including Woodridge, Loganlea and Beenleigh, along with the Queensland Ambulance Service and Queensland Police Service.

"A few firefighters were stabilising the train, others were setting up protective lines, some were helping patients or talking to survivors, and others were using winches to try to pull the train apart," Greg said. "There was activity everywhere."

Paramedics climbed inside the trains to treat passengers, many of whom had head injuries and lacerations from being thrown around inside the carriages.

"I concentrated on trying to free the driver and passenger who were trapped in the front of the southbound train," Greg said.

"It took us about four hours to cut into the train. We didn't have the equipment then that we have now, like thermal lancers.

"We learnt from that day that the train carriages are made from very strong, reinforced metal."

The crash was heard kilometres away, and residents who'd been woken by it were among the first on the scene, helping emergency workers get people off the train.

"They were essential," Greg said.

"Everybody just got their job done as best they could."

"The Red Cross and the local Women's Association also came and provided meals.

"There was a good dynamic, with citizens, private entities and government entities all working together.

"We were nervous about other trains coming, but Queensland Rail cut the power and reassured us there were no more trains on the line."

Eventually Queensland Rail helped firefighters pull the trains apart using cranes and diesel locomotives.

"Walking in the train was hard because it was tilted and stifling inside," Greg said.

"It was an experience I won't forget in a hurry, but we learnt from it and developed training packages based on it.

"I think it helped us all in terms of how we responded to it and trained for similar incidents in the future."

The trains were repaired and continued to be used until they were retired in recent years. There is still a reduced speed limit on the bend of track near Trinder Park station.



Photos courtesy of 7NEWS.



Enoggera Fire and Rescue Station B Shift stopped by Nurseryland at Stafford for a fire safety visit.



Fire and Rescue Service firefighter Aly Bull (left) put in an outstanding performance at the Tokyo Olympics, participating in the Kayak Single and Double 500 metres. Photo by Bence Vekessy.



Kalkie State School and St Rita's School in South Johnstone welcomed Fire and Rescue Service firefighters to share some fire safety tips.



During the PCYC ESCape Week, Emergency Service Cadets spent time with the Rural Fire Service and Fire and Rescue Service, among others, for a preview of what it's like to work in the emergency services.



Fire and Rescue Service firefighters from Roma, Taroom, Miles and Tara completed their Road Crash Rescue training at Roma over two weekends.



At 10am on the 10th day of the 10th month – Firefighters Remembrance Day – QFES members honoured firefighters who lost their lives in the line of duty.



Members of the community showed great courage during a crash at Lindum Train Station earlier this year. For providing assistance alongside firefighters, paramedics and police officers, they were awarded with an Assistant Commissioner's Commendation.



About 50 Townsville firefighters climbed a staircase 400 times while wearing full PPE and breathing apparatus in memory of those who lost their lives on September 11. Funds raised went to the Ronald McDonald House.



Staff from QFES' Emergency Management and Community Capability received medals and clasps for their service during emergencies such as Tropical Cyclone Debbie, the North Queensland floods and Tasmanian bushfires.

Awarded for bravery

Senior firefighter Clinton Pilon from Wynnum Fire and Rescue Station received a Commissioner's Commendation of Notable Action award for his excellent work in a high-pressure situation. This story contains descriptions related to suicide that some readers may find disturbing.

Clinton said he was humbled by the award because he was just doing his job.

"We got a callout for a person sitting on the edge of a high-rise building," he said. "QFES was the first to arrive.

"Another firefighter and I made our way up to the roof and I just started talking to the person and trying to calm them down and get them to focus on other things.

"Time sort of got away. I'm not sure how long it was until the police showed up, but everything slowed down and we just talked.

"I told them about how things can get better if you take little steps at a time, and how it's good to talk to other people. I reflected on my own situation to personalise it a bit.

"After about 15 minutes, a Queensland Police Service (QPS) officer came up, and for a while the two of us tag teamed, so when one of us ran out of things to talk about the other one chimed in.

"About an hour later QPS negotiators arrived. I didn't realise they were there until I turned around to grab something and they told me to keep doing what I was doing."

Technicians set up a top belay vertical rescue system and Clinton put on a harness and went out on the ledge to bring the person back in.

"While I was putting a rescue strop on them the negotiator spoke to them. It all went seamlessly."

Clinton said his experience delivering the Fight Fire Fascination (FFF) and Road Attitudes and Action Planning (RAAP) programs gave him skills in talking with members of the community.

Social support is a significant factor in allowing people to calm and think more clearly about their options. FFF's focus on rapport building gave Clinton insight into the power of engaging with someone and just listening

"I was always very supportive of mental health awareness," he said. "In FFF there are a lot of young people who come from families who aren't as fortunate as what I grew up with and I come across a range of mental health issues.

"I've had colleagues who had to leave due to PTSD, so mental health is at the forefront in our line of work.

"I've started to work more with FESSN for the FFF program and the services they offer are fantastic.

"It's about getting the message out there to everyone that these services are confidential and everyone's here to help.

"I had several phone calls after this incident from our Peer Support Officers. Other crew members and team mates also checked in with me. It was overwhelming, the support I was offered."

If you need support, visit the FESSN website or call 1800 805 980 for 24-hour counselling.



Senior firefighter Clinton Pilon with his Commissioner's Commendation of Notable Action award.



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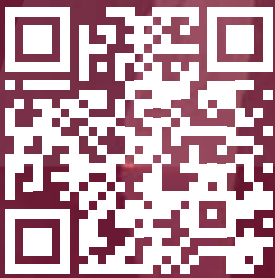
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