

*Good Jobs and Better Fire
and Emergency Services to
Support Queensland's Great
Lifestyle*



Fire and Emergency Services in Queensland

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) was established in 2013 and consists of the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS), Rural Fire Service (RFS), State Emergency Service (SES), corporate services and disaster management functions.

QFES is primarily responsible for firefighting, search and rescue and emergency and disaster management services across prevention, preparedness, response and recovery (PPRR) throughout Queensland.

QFES also manages service agreements (SAs) with other frontline and emergency services and volunteer entities including, PCYC Queensland (PCYC), Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association (AVCGA), Volunteer Marine Rescue Association of Queensland (VMRAQ), Surf Life Saving Queensland (SLSQ) and the Royal Life Saving Society Queensland (RLSSQ).

The delivery of services by QFES is governed by the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990* (FES Act), *Disaster Management Act 2003* (DM Act), *Planning Act 2016*, *Building Act 1975* and *Public Service Act 2008*.

Reforms to ensure better fire and emergency services

Over many years, many Queenslanders have contributed significantly to their communities by supporting and advocating for the delivery of fire and emergency services, whether as officers, staff members, volunteers or community supporters of those services. Queensland owes them all a debt of gratitude for their service and their contributions.

The Palaszczuk Government has a strong record of investing in frontline services and supporting the delivery of fire and emergency services in Queensland. In fact, under the Palaszczuk Government funding for fire and emergency services has increased by over \$260 million or almost 40 per cent.

However, in the face of the impending challenges that Queensland faces due to climate change, increases in the regularity and intensity of natural disasters, and the changing face of communities and community expectations, it is critical that fire and emergency services delivery in Queensland continues to evolve.

The Palaszczuk Government is committed to delivering fire and emergency services that are best positioned to meet today's challenges and anything that the future may throw at Queenslanders.

The Independent Review of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services report (the Report) was undertaken by KPMG International Limited (KPMG) and was handed to the Independent Review Steering Committee for consideration.

The Terms of Reference asked the independent reviewers to consider, among other things, the *Sustaining the SES – Partnering for Change* review (the SES Review) and the *Review into Volunteer Marine Rescue Organisations in Queensland* (the Bluewater



Review) and asked that the independent reviewers engage with stakeholders from across the fire and emergency services sector.

Importantly, and of note, the independent reviewers observed that every stakeholder who engaged in the review process believed that some form of change needed to occur, and no stakeholder felt the current arrangements were working effectively.

The Report makes 19 recommendations relating to the reform of the delivery of fire and emergency services, and disaster management in Queensland.

Due to the significance and importance of this matter, the Government has taken time to consider the recommendations and has decided to accept in principle all recommendations of the Report, with the exception of recommendation 12, which is not accepted.

The Report concluded the SES and marine rescue services, under the soon to be established Marine Rescue Queensland (MRQ), are better aligned with the Queensland Police Service (QPS). As such, the Government has decided that these services will be established as separate entities with their own dedicated budgets within the QPS.

Additionally, the Report found Queensland's disaster management functions are also better aligned with the QPS and should be transferred to the stewardship of the QPS. The government supports this transition of disaster management functions to the QPS, along with the management of SAs.

The Report also recommended the establishment of a dedicated fire services department, to ensure there is an ongoing and specific focus on fire service delivery. The Government agrees with the recommendation and will also ensure that the RFS is established as a separate entity with its own dedicated budget within the department.

To oversee these critical reforms, the Queensland Government will stand up a team of experts from across our emergency service agencies, forming a *Reform Implementation Taskforce* (the Taskforce), led by State Disaster Coordinator, Deputy Commissioner Steve Gollschewski. It is expected that the Taskforce will coordinate the implementation of the reforms over a two-year period.

In addition, the Government has committed additional funding and resources for the implementation of these reforms, with an uplift of almost 500 full time equivalent (FTE) positions and over \$400 million over four years. This additional funding and resourcing will enhance the delivery of emergency and fire services in the face of the increasing challenges from climate change and the expected intensification of impacts from emergencies and natural disasters on communities.

While the Taskforce will be responsible for the detailed scoping of the allocation of the additional funding and resourcing, it is expected this commitment of the Palaszczuk Government will deliver, once the reforms are fully implemented:



- a substantial increase to the SES annual baseline budget to approximately \$60 million for more staff and more resources, including crucial safety equipment, vehicles and vessels;
- establishment of MRQ with an annual baseline budget of approximately \$27 million for frontline support, resources, vessels and equipment, and delivering on the Government election commitment for a sustainable single integrated marine rescue service for Queensland;
- a resourcing boost to the RFS of more than 100 extra FTE positions and additional funding for new appliances, facilities and equipment;
- an additional 143 firefighter positions for the FRS (bringing the total commitment to an additional 500 firefighter positions over 6 years from 1 July 2020);
- additional funding and 30 extra FTE positions for the Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA) to support further disaster preparedness programs and initiatives; and
- dedicated annual funding of approximately \$20 million for disaster management functions.

It is important to note that the Report highlights that a strength of the SES is its partnership between the community and State and Local Governments. The Palaszczuk Government is strongly supportive of this observation and considers this partnership to be one of the most effective and nationally unique approaches to protecting and supporting citizens during natural disasters and emergencies. It is critically important for this partnership to continue, notwithstanding the significant additional investment by the Government in the SES.

Additionally, and it goes without saying, that to achieve the full benefits of the intended funding and resourcing uplift provided by the State Government, it is essential that local governments continue their current support for the SES. The Government acknowledges the advocacy of Local Governments and the Local Government Association of Queensland and is appreciative of this ongoing relationship.

The transition of the SES to the QPS will provide a robust and well-established environment, with a strong support framework, that will allow the SES to develop and enhance its operational service delivery model, to address any identified needs and deliver a strong and sustainable SES into the future.

To provide assurance about the approach adopted by Government, the Inspector-General of Emergency Management (IGEM) has been consulted on the proposed reforms. The IGEM has endorsed this approach and will provide input to the Taskforce as the reforms are implemented.

Further, and consistent with the recommendations of the Report, the Government has requested the IGEM to conduct a review of Queensland's Disaster Management Arrangements (QDMA).



The work to be undertaken by the IGEM will inform any changes to disaster management arrangements, legislative reforms, or any updates to the State Disaster Management Plan.

The proposed machinery of Government changes and adoption of a more certain funding base for fire services, the SES, disaster management and marine rescue services, will ensure Queensland's emergency and fire services are best positioned to meet community needs in this rapidly changing world.

These important reforms will ensure Queensland is in a national leading position to meet the challenges ahead.

In addition, these reforms will see more resources and more good jobs in our State's fire and emergency services, thereby delivering better services and ensuring a better lifestyle for Queenslanders, through a substantial and important investment in community safety.

The Palaszczuk Government is genuinely grateful to the selfless and brave Queenslanders who dedicate themselves to serving their fellow citizens through roles in fire and emergency services. The Government's reforms – *Good Jobs and Better Fire and Emergency Services to Support Queensland's Great Lifestyle* – not only shows appreciation to those Queenslanders but also ensures the fire and emergency services in Queensland are best placed to support community safety both now and into the future.

