

# RESPONSE

RESILIENT AND READY FOR THE PEOPLE OF QUEENSLAND

QUEENSLAND'S OFFICIAL FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES MAGAZINE FEBRUARY 2023



**Every second counts**  
Trainees face the ultimate challenge

# CONTENTS

## HIGHLIGHTS

**SEVERE WEATHER SEASON**  
Supporting our communities

**4**



**QFES VALUES IN ACTION**  
Living our shared values

**6**

Embrace diversity  
Communicate openly  
Be kind

**Trust**

Empower others  
Be open  
Be dependable

**AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS**  
QFES members honoured

**10**




### ON THE COVER

As part of QFES Air Operations training, Senior Firefighter and Rural Fire Service volunteer Tim Collingwood escaped from a simulated underwater helicopter crash.

**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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» Severe weather season	4
» QFES values in action	6
» Commissioner's insights	7
» Donating phones to DFV victims	9
» Australia Day Awards	10
» Animal rescue	12
» Librarian for Fire and Emergency Management	13
» GIS roadshow	14
» CALD community leaders discussion	15
» Helicopter Underwater Escape Training (HUET)	17
» Authors of RFS history	18

## AROUND THE STATE

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

## COMMUNITY

» Laughter is the best medicine	28
---------------------------------	----

## TRAINING

» Joint exercise in tropical paradise	29
---------------------------------------	----

## CAPABILITY

» Australian Warning System update	31
------------------------------------	----

## GALLERY

» Jackie Brown	32
----------------	----

## SPOTLIGHT

» Jackie Brown	34
----------------	----

# FOREWORDS



**GREG LEACH AFSM**

**Commissioner**

## **QUEENSLAND FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES**

It can often feel like Queensland experiences the weather like no other state. To kick-off 2023, we dealt with large bushfires in south-west and south-east Queensland, while the top end prepared for and recovered from heavy rainfall and flooding.

While this severe weather season has been milder than previous years, the consistent rain in 2022 has led to grass growth and high fuel loads, so it's critical to keep a close eye on conditions while we prepare for the upcoming bushfire season.

Thank you to our staff and volunteers who worked over the holiday period – you were there when your community needed you the most.

Unfortunately, we have already been called to numerous tragic incidents this year.

The terrible police shooting incident in South Western Region was a dark day for emergency services. Personnel from all operational streams attended the initial incident and the numerous fires in the aftermath, and our FireCom operators experienced these incidents as well.

I was proud to see so many QFES personnel attend the police officers' funerals to show their support to fallen colleagues, regardless of whether they had a connection to the tragedy.

Over the Christmas and New Year period, crews also attended a number of fatal house fires and road crashes.

The helicopter incident on the Gold Coast saw a multi-agency response from emergency services, including our Chaplains and Peer Support Officers.

It was a valiant effort by all and thank you once again for working closely and cooperatively with our Queensland Ambulance Service and Queensland Police Service counterparts on a complex incident.

The past few months are a timely reminder that we are there every hour, every day, responding to a myriad of incidents. These events force us to adapt and they ensure we continue to work collaboratively and seamlessly with external agencies.

The effects of incidents are not over once we have left the scene – they have far-reaching consequences for family and friends, the community and emergency services personnel.

As we care for the community, we must also care for ourselves. I encourage you to speak up if you are struggling and approach FESSN if you need to talk.

Your dedication to the communities we serve does not go unnoticed. Thank you again for your hard work so far and I look forward to getting out and about to hear your views on how we can transition to the Queensland Fire Department.



**MIKE WASSING AFSM**

**Deputy Commissioner**

## **READINESS AND RESPONSE SERVICES**

As my one-year anniversary as Deputy Commissioner of Readiness and Response Services ticks over in March, there are many changes underway. These include delegations to empower regional personnel, strengthening incident management, ensuring safety and wellbeing of our people and investing in new safety systems, facilities and fleet.

New incident management courses were rolled out in October 2022, with more courses to be run in planning, logistics, public information, operations, division commander and control level 1 and 2. These courses are available to all operational services, with some available to corporate services, if prerequisites are met. These courses are run externally, so contact your regional office for more information.

QFES is developing a mental health strategy, which gives an overview of our key areas and how we are performing to ensure the mental health of our people. To supplement the upcoming strategy, additional welfare support personnel will be appointed to help QFES achieve a mentally healthy workforce. The roles will be a mixture of managing state-wide programs to increase mental health wellbeing within QFES and implementing regional mental health programs.

On the operational front, we are currently trialling new remotely piloted aircraft systems technology, as well as fire detection and automated equipment through our partnership with FireTech Noosa Council.

The Moore Linville Rural Fire Brigade was the first project to be announced to benefit from the \$10 million budget boost to the Rural Fire Service (RFS). We'll also see new and upgraded Fire and Rescue Service facilities, equipment and infrastructure. Modern facilities and appliances ensure QFES personnel deliver future-proofed, world-class service to their communities.

Thank you to the QFES personnel who deployed to New South Wales and South Australia to assist with the flood recovery efforts. While Queensland has not yet experienced an extensive severe weather event, we unfortunately attended several tragic incidents over the Christmas and New Year period. As always, our staff and volunteers performed admirably in the face of distressing situations.

Congratulations to SES Townsville who were the overall winners of the Australian Disaster Rescue Challenge. The team made history by becoming the first Queensland team to win the challenge. It was a great display of QFES capability, and the team should be proud of their effort.

I look forward to engaging the regions about the upcoming QFES Reform changes. No changes will be made without an announcement, and I trust we will continue to work collaboratively, irrespective of the planned structural changes to QFES and Queensland Police Service.



A/Assistant Commissioner Lawler (second from left) and SES volunteers helped resupply the remote community of Coen.

# An old-fashioned drenching

The prolonged La Niña conditions might be weakening, but the rain isn't over yet.

2022 was Queensland's wettest year on record since 2011, meaning QFES personnel were well-prepared for the 2023 severe weather season.

Queensland's north coast bore the brunt of the rain, which left travellers stranded, properties damaged and inland towns cut off.

## Thinking outside the box

Rees May, Station Officer for Airlie Beach Fire and Rescue Station, has been called to numerous jobs throughout his almost 11-year career as a swiftwater rescue technician. This severe weather season, he experienced a career first.

Fire and Rescue Service swiftwater technicians, SES personnel, Queensland Police Service (QPS) and the Whitsunday Regional Council joined forces on a tip truck to rescue 19 people and three dogs stranded south of Proserpine on the Bruce Highway.

Motorists had driven through one section of floodwater and underestimated the depth of the next section, becoming trapped on higher ground between two bodies of water.

"I was working in the Local Disaster Management Group as a liaison officer and had a meeting with the SES Controller and Disaster Coordinator on how to manage this rescue," Rees said.

"With our combined capability, we identified SES floodboats weren't large enough to carry everyone in one trip. However, we

knew machinery had been used during the 2019 Townsville floods to rescue people.

"A tip truck isn't standard swiftwater response equipment, but we were fortunate to have one available for this rescue.

"The rescue had to be quick – it was mid-afternoon and getting dark, so this was the only way we could get everyone out in one go."

Initially, the stranded people did not want to leave their cars. As time went on, the sentiment changed.

"This was the most people I've rescued in one go in my career. Normally it's a couple of people trapped on the roof of their car, so this was definitely out of the box."

Although all personnel were highly experienced, the truck needed to drive slowly through at least 3 kilometres of low-lying floodwater.

"Our main aim was to make sure everyone was safe – we weren't sure how much more rain was coming; night was falling, and it was high tide."

There were also other dangers lurking around.

"The whole floodplain connects to the Proserpine River and there were plenty of crocodiles around. A crocodile was seen the next day when swiftwater technicians were conducting a risk assessment of flood water levels."



Once back on dry land, SES volunteers transported the stranded to the local refuge centre.

“I’d like to commend the inter-agency support between Queensland Ambulance Service – who conducted welfare checks – QPS, SES and the Whitsunday Regional Council.

“The multiple rescues conducted throughout the weather event all had positive outcomes.”

### **Rallying together for our remote communities**

Remote communities in Cape York and the Gulf relied on aerial food supply drops due to major flooding.

QFES worked with businesses, wholesale suppliers and the Cook Shire Council to coordinate delivery of essential supplies to the landlocked community of Coen, the shire’s second largest township and northernmost hub.

QFES has a strong existing relationship with Coen, as Commissioner Leach is the Queensland Government Champion for the community.

Far Northern Region Acting Assistant Commissioner Jason Lawler said the region’s Emergency Management Coordinators planned, coordinated and provided leadership and support to deliver 5500 kilograms of fresh, frozen and chilled foods to the Coen community.

“In Far Northern Region, communities need to prepare their home and family for possible periods of isolation or loss of power supply, sometimes for extended periods of time – not just days, it could be weeks in some circumstances,” Acting Assistant Commissioner Lawler said.

“SES volunteers provided loading and unloading support to contracted aircraft operators in Cairns and Coen.

“Assistance and support from local government and industry representatives and working in collaboration was critical to achieve these outcomes for the community.”

Weeks of rain had cut off major roads for communities across the Cape. At the time of printing, many roads are still inaccessible.

“This is not an unusual occurrence for far northern communities; however, it can also impact travellers and other road users, including those who deliver supplies and services to remote communities,” Acting Assistant Commissioner Lawler said.

“In Far Northern Region, there are other options for resupply and maintaining logistic supply, including sea and air. However, in severe weather season, these options can also have limitations, dependant on weather conditions.”

### **Calm within the storm**

Among the chaos of a severe weather event, a Rural Fire Service volunteer from Dalrymple Heights Rural Fire Brigade went above and beyond to assist a young mum in labour.

First Officer Ian Smith collected Angel from her home on the outskirts on Eungella and brought her back to his home.

Amid continuing rain and rising floodwaters, the community came together to transform Ian’s home into a makeshift birth suite with a GP, registered nurse and retired doctor coming to assist.

Angel’s baby was born happy, healthy and most importantly, dry.

QFES continues to support communities across Queensland, no matter the call for help. In an emergency, dial Triple Zero (000).

For non-life-threatening flood and storm emergency assistance call 132 500 for SES assistance.



First Officer Ian Smith with new mum, Angel.



Swiftwater rescue technicians spotted a crocodile in floodwater near Proserpine.



# QFES values in action

The QFES Charter was launched in December 2022 and sets behavioural expectations for the QFES workforce.

QFES personnel regularly face complex and challenging situations but when difficult situations arise the QFES values are there to guide the way we behave towards ourselves, our colleagues and others.

The values of respect, integrity, courage, loyalty and trust hold significant meaning across the workforce, with 95 per cent of staff and 93 per cent of volunteers saying they understand the importance of behaving in a manner that aligns to QFES values.

Following the 2021 Working for Queensland and Volunteering for Queensland surveys, a ‘values in action’ activity was held. The charter is the outcome of that activity and directly reflects the views of the workforce.

Staff and volunteer teams across the state were asked to have conversations about how each of the values should be demonstrated in their workplace.

Teams identified ‘above-the-line’ behaviours they wanted to see and ‘below-the-line’ behaviours that were unacceptable.

Acting Assistant Commissioner Kevin Reading said it was important to call out behaviours that don’t align with QFES values.

“Behavioural standards are evolving – actions that used to be accepted may not be tolerated today,” Mr Reading said.

“There are many ways to call out unacceptable behaviours, and we have support in place to help those who witness poor behaviours in the workplace, including talking to your manager or supervisor, contacting a Peer Support Officer, reaching out to the Health, Safety and Wellbeing team or contacting your HR advisor or Workforce Standards representative.

“The Gateway also has resources to help give you confidence to intervene in a difficult situation.”

The behaviours identified in these discussions were documented in the teams’ ‘values in action’ charts, which were compiled and submitted to the Workforce Experience Unit to build the QFES Charter. More than 100 charts were submitted as part of this process.

From these charts, almost 3000 lines of behaviours were compiled into one spreadsheet, with common themes identified.

Initially, there were 1600 above-the-line behaviours, 1300 below-the-line behaviours and 81 topics.

Charts were created to visualise the behaviours most commonly identified for each value of respect, integrity, courage, loyalty and trust.

Of all behaviours identified by QFES teams, calling out unacceptable behaviour was the most common, appearing on every chart submitted. Other commonly identified behaviours related to accountability, honesty, supporting each other, open communication and kindness.

For each value, three short, sharp calls to actions have been developed (see above). These calls to action summarise the expectations and intent of the behaviours listed and help define each value in simple terms, making both the value and the corresponding behaviours easy to learn and remember.

Commissioner Greg Leach said the Charter embeds our values in everything we say and do.

“Living our shared values means modelling acceptable behaviours. For example, we do this by calling out inappropriate actions, treating each other kindly and embracing diversity,” Commissioner Leach said.

“I encourage teams to use the Charter as a basis for conversations about their recent workforce experience survey results.

“Every step we take towards living the QFES values is a step towards a safer, more positive experience in the workplace and the communities we serve.”

Information and resources about the QFES Charter are available on the Gateway — search for ‘QFES values’.



Commissioner Leach thanked QFES personnel for their commitment.

# Looking back, looking forward

**Response sat down with Commissioner Greg Leach to hear his insights into fire and emergency services across jurisdictions and his vision for the new Queensland Fire Department.**

Commissioner Leach has an extensive background in emergency services with more than 35 years of firefighting experience under his belt.

He has worked for multiple emergency agencies in senior executive positions, such as Country Fire Authority, Ambulance Victoria and the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, before becoming QFES' Commissioner in 2019.

As an experienced Level 3 Incident Controller he has responded to some of Australia's worst incidents, including major structural fires, wildfires, floods and hazardous incidents.

Commissioner Leach said Australians, no matter in which jurisdiction they reside, can be very proud of their emergency services and what they do to support their local communities.

"The very strong ethos of volunteering that is inherent in Australians is the backbone of our emergency services, supported by a dedicated team of operational first responders and corporate and administrative personnel," Commissioner Leach said.

"When I started here in late 2019, Queensland was still in the grip of a severe bushfire season. Within months the COVID-19 pandemic commenced, and since

then we have experienced severe weather events culminating in the 2022 flood event.

"In comparing my time in Victoria and Queensland, it is the sheer geographic size of Queensland which influences the frequency and intensity of severe weather and natural hazard events.

"Because of the frequency of these events, it is also why Queensland's emergency services are so experienced and competent at dealing with a range of hazards."

The one constant in his career has been change.

"I have worked for country and metropolitan fire services that were ever evolving, and I was part of merging three ambulance services into a single service for Victoria," Commissioner Leach said.

"The QFES Independent Review is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build a future-focused Queensland Fire Department by growing the capacity and capability of the Fire and Rescue Service and the Rural Fire Service. This will ensure they continue to meet the needs of their communities in the face of increasing weather-driven climate events.

"Through the current change program we will continue to develop the capacity of the SES, build a contemporary Marine Rescue Queensland organisation, and

support important organisations like Surf Life Saving Queensland, Royal Life Saving Society Queensland and PCYC through the grants programs.

"We will also administer the disaster management arrangements and work cooperatively and collaboratively with Queensland Police Service on the transition of these services to Police.

"In the face of climate change, it is now more important than ever that emergency services work cooperatively and collaboratively with other emergency services organisations, government departments, non-government organisations, charities, and relief and recovery organisations so that we leverage the benefits for the people of Queensland.

"I am energised by this next phase of the reform program and I look forward to working with you to build our new future.

"I consider it a privilege to serve as Commissioner. It is the people of QFES that make it such a great organisation and one of the joys of my role is that I get to meet many of you and see how you support your local communities.

"Over coming months, you will hear more about the next steps of the reform journey, and the development of our annual, corporate and strategic plans that will set out the vision for the Queensland Fire Department."

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# A community approach to tackling domestic violence

**QFES is implementing a new policy which will allow for surplus QFES work phones to be donated to victims of domestic and family violence.**

The Domestic Violence (DV) Safe Phone initiative collects unused or replacement mobile phones and gives them to people who experience domestic and family violence (DFV) and are in need a mobile phone.

The phone policy, coordinated by Acting Superintendent Trevor Doyle, means QFES will be the first Queensland Government agency to have a departmental-wide phone donation policy.

Mobile phones are often damaged, stolen or monitored by DFV perpetrators, leaving the victim cut off from the outside world.

Trevor was listening to the radio on his way to work when he heard an interview with DV Safe Phone founder and had a lightbulb moment.

“The first thing that is taken from victims is their phone – we have our whole lives on our phones,” Trevor said.

“I identified the number of phones in the department and thought we should establish a policy to donate surplus mobile phones to DV Safe Phone.

“While they may not be suitable for our needs, the old phone sitting in a drawer could change someone’s life.

“We respond to emergencies and help people when they are at their worst. These are personal emergencies and personal disasters that we can indirectly help with.

“This is a tangible and measurable way QFES can actively support DFV victims whether they are involved with or have nothing to do with QFES.

“If we make a policy, we can help those who make a difference. It’s a simple way to have a direct positive impact on victims of DFV.”

To donate a surplus QFES phone or one of your own, “Find My Phone” and iCloud must

be turned off and the phone’s data “wiped clean.” DV Safe Phone will provide the former QFES phone, along with a new sim card and charging cable to the domestic violence service provider.

Phones do not need to be in perfect condition. If the phone is broken, it can still be used for parts.

North Coast Region’s FireCom are already promoting it to their staff so they can participate when the policy is launched.

South Western Region Assistant Commissioner and Chair of the DFV Working Group, David Hermann, said the new policy is a great achievement for QFES.

“As a White Ribbon accredited workplace, this policy is an extension of QFES helping the community in times of need,” Assistant Commissioner Hermann said.

“QFES is always looking to partner with other organisations that support DFV survivors. Our involvement sends a message that DFV is not tolerated.

“It’s everyone’s responsibility to work towards eliminating DFV and by simply

donating a phone, it could spark an important conversation between colleagues.

“I encourage everyone to check their desk drawer, and their junk drawer at home, and donate their old mobile phone.

“This policy is a permanent reminder that domestic and family violence is prevalent in our communities and we need to keep addressing this important issue.”

In early 2022, Assistant Commissioner Hermann assisted QFES in officially handing over a former QFES administration building in Toowoomba City to Queensland Police Service (QPS), which is now a specialised DFV service space for the Darling Downs area.

The QPS-managed DFV Hub provides a non-threatening environment for victims to access DFV services provided by police as well as other government and non-government DFV services.

If you have an initiative or idea that would help prevent DFV and support victims, contact the DFV Working Group.





# Significant contributions recognised with prestigious awards

On Australia Day, four QFES members were honoured with awards for their extraordinary dedication to fire and emergency services.

The prestigious Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM) and Emergency Services Medal (ESM) recognise the recipient's bravery and commitment in the face of disasters and emergencies.

This year, Chief Superintendent Robin (Rob) Boniwell; Brooweena District Rural Fire Brigade's Volunteer Community Educator Lesley Brand; Station Officer Ian Fulton and SES Deputy Group Leader Alex Johnson were a part of the Australia Day Honours List.

## Rob Boniwell AFSM

Chief Superintendent Rob Boniwell was awarded the AFSM for his exemplary service to his community for more than 28 years (11 in the United Kingdom and 17 in Australia).

Rob said he had an immense sense of pride and gratitude at being recognised for a diverse, rewarding and fulfilling career.

"It hadn't really sunk in how significant the award was until colleagues, friends and family started calling and messaging to congratulate me. Some of them were shift firefighters from my first fire and rescue station in the United Kingdom in 1994 and others were from family members that I hadn't heard from for years," Rob said.

Rob's personal motto is 'purpose-passion-perseverance.' He has experienced a deep personal reward and satisfaction after improving community safety – in both an operational and business context.

"It was through my fire service career I found my true purpose: creating, innovating, and building capability for future generations of firefighters and emergency service workers.

"Once you have found your purpose, your passion is your motivation, energy, and enthusiasm to drive your initiatives and programs. Perseverance is required to deliver results and achieve your objectives, navigating problems and roadblocks along the way.

"There's no one singular career highlight, but there are several moments where I look back and say, "we did well there", and in all circumstances it was a team effort, it wasn't just me that delivered."



As part of an Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART), Rob was deployed to assist in the aftermath of the 2009 Indonesian earthquake. At the time, nothing on that scale had been achieved by an Australian USAR team. Despite many challenges, the team provided outstanding support to the Indonesian Government and the Indonesian people.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, he led incident and disaster management operations in the State Operations Centre (SOC) and State Disaster Coordination Centre (SDCC).

"None of this would have been possible without the enduring, loving support of my family, who have had to put up with the fatigue, extended hours and time away from home – of course, they understood the importance, but there are only so many hours in the day. This recognition is as much about them than it is about me."

## Lesley Brand AFSM

Rural Fire Service volunteer Lesley Brand received the prestigious medal for her focus on the welfare of frontline firefighters and ensuring her community is informed, prepared and engaged.

Lesley has been with the RFS for more than 28 years, earning the respect and trust of the community.

"I never expected to receive an AFSM – not now, not ever!" Lesley said.

"I'm amazed that our bosses think that much of me, I just go in and do the job to the best of my ability."

While it's all in a day's work for Lesley, her proudest moments in her career are seeing the community's reaction after a disaster.

"I always feel good once we go to an incident – be it flood, fire, cyclone – with that little bit of knowledge to turn a frown into a smile," Lesley said.

"When someone is absolutely devastated and they don't know what to do, you sit down with them and have a conversation. When then they go 'ahhh' – that's the best part.





“During the floods last year, the RFS cleaned a house to make it habitable and I used my contacts in the community to secure furniture, as most of the furniture was destroyed.

“Thank you to all my peers, particularly Peter Hollier, that nominated me and sent in letters of recognition. I’m still in shell shock.”

This is a great achievement for the Brand family, as Lesley’s husband, who is also an RFS volunteer, received his AFSM on Australia Day in 2022.

### Ian Fulton AFSM

Station Officer Ian Fulton received the AFSM for his dedication to enhance road crash rescue (RCR) response for all emergency services.

Ian said it was an honour to help the community alongside a capable and fantastic team.



“I like to think the acknowledgement is not just for me but for all the people I’ve worked with. As a team we’ve achieved great results and when I think back to all the years of service, it’s always the team around you that helps through the challenging times,” Ian said.

Throughout his 20-year career as a Level 2 rescue technician, Ian has received numerous commendations for operations and leadership during ship fires, structural fires, road crashes and swiftwater incidents.

Ian’s career highlight was receiving a Commissioner’s Commendation of Notable Action for rescuing 42 people from floodwater at a caravan park in 2018.

Ian is a well-known and respected ambassador for RCR excellence and was one of the first state senior instructors in RCR. He has participated in many RCR events at a state, national and international level.

He was instrumental in the introduction of STABFAST vehicle stabilisation devices that improve safety for the casualty and responders by immediately isolating any vehicle movement and is passionate about continuous improvement and training new recruits in these methods.

“I love training and the teams I work with. I love the challenges, the camaraderie and the teamwork it takes to achieve a safer community. I’d like to thank everyone I’ve worked with over the years. I’ve learned off them as much as they’ve learnt off me.”

Ian said being a good communicator, being open, honest and transparent, and showing consistent leadership are all qualities it takes to succeed in the service.

“I love the pride in our job and what we represent. It provides challenges, variety and makes you a better person. You never know what the next callout will bring.”

### Alex Johnson ESM

As an SES volunteer for more than 20 years, Alex Johnson has proved his passion, commitment and enthusiasm to the service during his time with the Penrith Unit in New South Wales and Queensland’s Redland Bay Group.



Alex always makes himself available for training activities to coach the next generation of volunteers. During COVID-19 restrictions, he trained new members one-on-one to ensure they would not be disadvantaged and to keep them engaged.

Alex said he was surprised to be awarded the ESM, giving credit to the wonderful volunteers he has worked alongside over the years.

“it’s a real team effort. Everyone just gets in and does their job,” Alex said.

After responding to emergencies in many rural towns, Alex has been inspired by the resilience and spirit of country communities.

“I’ve learned a lot about how country towns operate. When a disaster hits, everybody comes out to help. I love that community spirit and I’ve taken that with me in my career.”

Alex says the teamwork and social aspect is another thing he loves about the job.

“I keep in touch with a lot of people I’ve met through the SES. It’s common for me to run into someone at the shops and stop for a chat. I love that connection to community.”

During his career, Alex has had the support of family to help enable his volunteer service.

“My wife is proud of the award. Credit to her because she’s been with me since day one and there’s been lots of early morning and late nights as well as times away and she’s been always there supporting me.”

Alex thanked the SES volunteers who have trained and supported him.

*“I never expected to receive an AFSM – not now, not ever!”*

– Lesley Brand AFSM

# A close call for Brady

**For two hours, Burpengary Fire and Rescue Station's B Shift crew worked tirelessly to rescue Brady the Border Collie, who was stuck down a two-metre hole.**

Electrical contractors had just finished digging a two-metre deep hole for an electricity pole outside the dog's home.

Just after the digging stopped, Brady went outside for a quick chat with the blue heeler dog next door but didn't recognise the newly created hole and went down headfirst.

"Luckily he tilted his head up a bit as he became wedged at the bottom, mostly by his hips and shoulders in a tight circle, and was able to breathe," B Shift Station Officer Andrew Lundy said.

"The contractors couldn't access Brady due to his depth, so they started to dig the side of the hole with an excavator, however this destabilised the upper surface edges causing earth materials to fall down and cover Brady up to his eyes and snout."

Brady's situation was deteriorating. He was suffocating from the dirt's weight and positional compression and was losing consciousness and mucosal facial skin colour on arrival.

"I spoke with QFES Technical Rescue on access strategies and a plan was formulated using on site resources, while ensuring scene safety and stability," Andrew said.

Brady was given oxygen using an 'oxy viva', also known as an M7 resuscitator, that supplies pure compressed medical oxygen, usually used in CPR events.

"We needed to cover Brady with a blanket to minimise material falling onto him during each excavator dig, but this also reduced his available air, so we installed an extended oxygen therapy supply line to his breathable head space," Andrew said.

"We organised for a wet/dry commercial vacuum cleaner from Burpengary Fire and Rescue Station to be delivered onsite with Acting Inspector Leon Andrews.



*Brady was rescued after two hours of digging.*

"After each excavator evolution of around 200 millimetres, we would remove the blanket, then insert the commercial wet/dry vacuum nozzle into the hole to vacuum further fallen soil off Brady. Several empty outs of the vacuum drum were required.

"Towards the end, Brady had very limited head and air space – it felt like we were burying him each time we covered him."

The crew repeated the process until they were one metre above Brady.

"We then lowered firefighter Karen Clarke, who owns two border collies, into the hole to grasp Brady by the tail, and we hauled Karen and Brady out and into the arms of a very excited owner.

"The owners had very recently lost a long-term dog to illness and were extremely relieved that Brady was recovered in good health.

"The on-site contractors and my crew worked tirelessly together to achieve the rescue and all participants were relieved we had rescued Brady safely.

"I'd also like to thank B Shift FireCom for their help and shared concern – they are often separated from on scene strategies and outcomes beyond the initial dispatch. We all appreciate the expertise that comes from Firecom staff as a part of overall incident management."



*The family wrote a thank you card to the B Shift crew for their efforts.*



# A tour through the stacks

The Queensland Police Service's Library Service hosts a collection of thousands of books and Australian Standards to support QFES members. *Response* caught up with Louise O'Neil, Liaison Librarian for Fire and Emergency Management, to discuss the value of research.

Louise has been with Library Services for 24 years and has been lucky to work in a variety of areas such as counter-terrorism, intellectual property and research and evaluation.

The most rewarding part of her current work is collaborating with people from different areas of QFES, from frontline officers to corporate services.

"I enjoy finding out about the work they do and providing them with information and resource support," Louise said.

"Each query we get is different, from sourcing articles about driver behaviour during floods to providing access to specific Australian Standards.

"Library Services has a collection of more than 7500 books and 300 e-books. We provide access to the full collection of about 1000 Australian Standards, with international standards on demand.

"Specialist databases like GoldFFX provide over six million material safety data sheets, while EBSCOHost includes full-text content from more than 10,000 journals."

Louise receives requests from QFES members to find articles about all manner of subjects, from fires in savannas to HazMat safety and fire engineering.

"Some people also ask about the establishment of regional fire brigades and I search Queensland Government Gazettes on their behalf.

"More complex queries might involve compiling a comprehensive list of resources on a particular aspect of disaster response.

"Early on in our work with QFES, in September 2014, a police officer and four firefighters were among those hospitalised after a truck carrying ammonium nitrate rolled over and exploded near Charleville in south-west Queensland.

"Library Services were asked to compile a reading list of relevant journal articles, books and reports on the topic of



Louise assists QFES personnel to find articles.

ammonium nitrate. This was one of the first requests we received."

Louise said some of the most popular topics recently were organisational culture, diversity and inclusion, social media in disaster management, and first responder mental health.

"I greatly respect the role QFES plays in serving Queensland communities. In these challenging and dynamic times, I value my role in helping QFES members access information services and resources."

Library Services stores their collection in two physical locations and online. They offer postal delivery and provide specialised training for all QFES members, regardless of location.

Discover more about the library, request research assistance or suggest materials to be added to the collection by searching for Library Services on the Gateway.

Library Services publishes a range of information updates and subject alerts, containing the latest ejournals, new book details, full text articles and other relevant information.

Specific resources relevant for QFES members include Fire and Emergency Services Update, Disaster Management Subject Alert and the Management and Leadership Update.

You can subscribe to any of these resources and be notified when new issues are published by contacting [library.services@police.qld.gov.au](mailto:library.services@police.qld.gov.au).

# Sharing our disaster management knowledge

Staff from the Emergency Management and Community Capability Directorate recently travelled throughout Queensland to deliver Geographic Information System (GIS) roadshows to local and district disaster management groups.

*Response* spoke to two QFES members who helped organise and delivered the roadshow. Courtney Russell, Manager of the Emergency Management Planning Unit, said the roadshow was a first for QFES.

“The roadshow was a great way to extend the capabilities of the units and meet operational objectives.”

The road show, supported by each regional QFES Emergency Management Coordinator, provided training for pre-season readiness in several intelligence products including the State Disaster Coordination Centre (SDCC) Situational Awareness Platform (SAP).

The SDCC SAP, which is available to members of the Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements, displays web apps and dashboards across all hazards, providing situational awareness for decision makers within each phase of prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.

The roadshow included a presentation by the Hazard and Risk Unit on the Queensland Risk Information Portal (Q-RIP), which is an integrated online portal that will allow Local Disaster Management Groups, District

Disaster Management Groups, and the state government to capture risk information relevant to their communities.

The platform provides a consistent and persistent record of risks across the state to build more effective risk identification and coordination of resources. Q-RIP is due for release in mid to late 2023.

GIS Risk Analyst Natasha Stanley said Q-RIP is used to display critical infrastructure overlaid with hazard layers.

“Q-RIP is a user-friendly, spatial application that allows users to visualise what infrastructure and assets in their area are at risk of a particular hazards – such as flood, fire and pandemic,” Natasha said.

“Q-RIP collates all that important information into a single database that allows all levels of the Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements to view, update and reassess their risk as needed, and use it to plan and prepare for events.”

Other projects the Hazard and Risk Unit presented on were the Severe Wind Hazard Assessment for Queensland – a report on tropical cyclone risk throughout Queensland that leverages the Tropical

Cyclone Impact Model produced by Geoscience Australia – and the Critical Infrastructure Disaster Risk Assessment, an ongoing report that provides a comprehensive risk assessment for critical infrastructure failure due to multiple hazards across Queensland.

At the conclusion of each event, participants were provided an overview of the QFES-led Disaster Management Data Coordination Initiative (DMDCI), designed to improve disaster management data coordination across all disaster management groups through the completion of Memorandum of Understandings and Information Exchange Schedules.

“The DMDCI forms the basis in which disaster management stakeholders provide appropriate governance for information sharing,” Courtney said.

Examples were provided by the Advanced Capability Support Unit on the importance of information sharing across QFES and whole-of-government, in particular the sharing of local council fire data so we may better provide a coordinated response during whole-of-government activations.



The roadshow was an opportunity for QFES staff to share their disaster management knowledge.



# Empowering culturally diverse community leaders

In December 2021 and June 2022, QFES, in partnership with Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (QPASTT), Multicultural Australia (MA) and Red Cross Australia, engaged Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Leaders in disaster management workshops.

Attendees included Syrian, Ethiopian, Congolese, Eritrean, Sudanese, Rwandan, Korean and Afghan community leaders plus representatives from larger associations such as the Queensland African Community Council and the Islamic Council of Queensland.

In November 2022, a select group of community leaders were invited back to QFES to speak with Commissioner Leach and Deputy Commissioner Wassing.

Habib Jamal, President of the Queensland Muslims Inc. attended all events and said the workshops were a great step forward in working with diverse multicultural communities.

“As a community leader I can say that for many CALD community groups, events such as flooding and fires may be a completely new phenomenon. Depending on where people have migrated from, they may have not experienced such natural disasters,” Habib said.

“I found the meeting to be extremely warm and cordial. The Commissioner came across as a person genuinely concerned and wanted to improve on the current roles that CALD communities play when it comes to facing these disaster situations.

“Every person present was given an opportunity to express their views. This made it feel as if we were now an essential part of the ongoing discussions around these topics.”

The key points discussed were roles of community leaders, dissemination of information through community and religious leaders and earning the trust of CALD community members.

Robert Mukombozi, state-wide community partnerships coordinator for QPASTT and advisor for African Professionals of Australia, said it’s critically important for CALD communities to have a close

relationship with the government to influence decisions, policy and actions and have a voice.

“This relationship is helpful to ensure the community is adequately prepared to effectively respond to disasters and empowered to work collaboratively with relevant agencies in times of emergencies,” Robert said.

“It is also important that the emergency services workforce is representative of the community it serves. A culturally diverse workforce contributes to the agency’s problem-solving strategies, improves cultural competence of organisations, helps create equal opportunities.

“It also promotes social cohesion and a sense of belonging and sharing of different skills, wealth of knowledge, lived experiences and perspectives.

“The Disaster Management Workshops for CALD community leaders and emergency services organisations is a great initiative and will play a key role in giving community a voice and building relationships between emergency services and cultural communities.

“Continued engagement between QFES and CALD leaders has improved success of the community outcomes and will continue to

facilitate effective preparedness activities, response capability and recovery capacity.”

CALD communities face multiple barriers when wanting to volunteer, such as a lack of opportunities and awareness of available opportunities, language barriers, lack of knowledge and awareness of emergency services, and more broadly, minimal involvement of the CALD community in decision making processes and systems.

Awareness about available positions within emergency services and ongoing community-focused training for individual or group volunteers to help during emergencies are some ways to break down barriers.

These engagements were also an opportunity for the community and emergency services to reflect on the early 2022 flooding events; what worked, what could be improved, and learn from each other to support communities to be resilient before, during and after disasters.

While initial discussions focused on early warnings and alerts, active participation through volunteering and greater regional engagement, the ongoing meetings will review potential collaborative opportunities across prevention, preparedness, response and recovery at a strategic level.



Robert Mukombozi (third from left) and Habib Jamal (third from right) found the CALD workshops beneficial.

# Everyday Queenslanders achieving heroic feats



Through bushfires, floods, and now a global pandemic, the resilience of Queenslanders and our emergency services over the past couple of years resembles something of a heroic narrative. Our frontline workers have indeed been community heroes, and among them, QFES staff and volunteers.

Stoic in their service to community, this group operate diligently behind the scenes, insisting that it is all in a day's work.

Bringing their important work to the fore, the annual QFES Australia Day Achievement Awards, proudly supported by QSuper, part of Australian Retirement Trust, looks to recognise and celebrate the individuals who have dedicated themselves to the service of their fellow Queenslanders.

In their 15<sup>th</sup> year supporting the awards, QSuper, part of Australian Retirement Trust, is proud to unearth and share some of the stories of those who dedicate themselves to the wellbeing of others.

With a member base including government, healthcare, and frontline service workers and volunteers, QSuper, part of Australian Retirement Trust, values the role these workers play in our Queensland community and the importance of acknowledging their service.

Among the 100 remarkable Queenslanders recognised in this year's program was kindergarten educator and State Emergency Service (SES) volunteer, Hailey Wetzel, who was recognised for her skill and dedication during a 15-day land search conducted on Magnetic Island in August of last year.

Having grown up on the island, Hailey's involvement in the SES came naturally to her as an extension of her work to educate children in the community.

**"Here, we really do rely on one another and band together in times of crisis," Hailey said.**

"Whenever we have flooding, cyclones, or any natural disaster, we can become cut-off from the rest of the region. Growing up, I recognised that the SES were always present to lend a helping hand."

Hailey joined the SES with her partner a couple of years ago. Since then, their involvement and leadership has only increased.

"When the call came out that a young man had gone missing, my partner and I put our hands up to help in any way we could," Hailey said.

**"I am proud of the work we do, and what we have given back to the community through our service.**

"I would encourage anyone to consider giving their time to the SES or other QFES services. Not only do you receive valuable training and wonderful support, but you really do grow as a person."

Humble in her work as she is in her recognition, Hailey acknowledges the breadth of the team and the services that surrounded her during the land search.

This sense of pride in community that is exhibited by Hailey and her partner is something that is shared among all award recipients, including Senior Firefighter Brendon Hope, who was recognised for his delivery of road crash incident awareness training for the young people of Mackay.

"I am honoured to receive this recognition, and it obviously came as a surprise to me," Brendon said.

"The motivation behind the program was to give back to the community and build knowledge and resilience in young road users. The award acknowledges that work and the impact that it has had and encourages us to continue"

Spanning the seven Queensland regions, nominations in the 2023 award program varied from service to education, initiatives and emergency management.

"These individuals are not only talented, but upstanding members of their diverse communities," Australian Retirement Trust CEO Bernard Reilly said.

"Many of our members live rurally and remotely where QFES operates. Through our support we not only honour those on the frontline, but the networks of people who ensure the ongoing safety and support of Queenslanders in times of crisis or emergency."

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Trainees learnt how to escape a submerged aircraft in simulated training.

# Preparing for the unthinkable

A chopper crash into water is a terrifying scenario where occupants would be strapped in, have limited visibility and are potentially turned upside down. QFES personnel took part in the challenging Helicopter Underwater Escape Training (HUET) exercise to prepare for the worst.

Mitchel Chapman is an Air Observer who provides intelligence on fire behaviour from an aircraft.

He recently completed the training at the Brisbane Airport LifeFlight Academy pool, which has a gantry crane that lowers the training pod – a metallic aircraft – into the pool.

“In real situations there’s going to be disturbed water and vibrations, and the blades are spinning around, being sent off balance and possibly breaking off,” Mitchel said.

“You brace by crossing your arms over your chest and tucking them into your shoulders to stop flailing limbs and to support your head and neck.

“Once the helicopter stops moving, you put your inboard hand (the side of you that stays inside the aircraft) on a known reference point, like a seat, a console or the front dash – a solid thing that won’t move or change.

“With your other hand, keeping it close to your body, you go to the nearest exit, come down to your leg and push it out to the side so it goes against the fuselage and then you can identify the door or window.

“You’d either open the door or the window and check it’s clear to fit through with that same hand. Then you find a new reference point like the edge of the door.

“Once you have that, you can let go of the inboard hand to release your seatbelt, run that hand up over your chest to meet your other hand on the reference point, and pull yourself out.”

Without training, most people would habitually release the seatbelt first.

“I was lowered in on the first go and as soon as my head went underwater, I thought ‘yeah, that’s not right’ and popped the seatbelt. But that’s the last thing you should do.”

The training consisted of three different helicopter-based exercises; upright, upside-down and a blocked exit where you must leave from the opposite side.

“I did it with my eyes closed. With eyes open, there’s bubbles going everywhere,” Mitchel said.

“It messes with you a bit because the water goes up your nose, but you’re turned around, so the bubbles try to go back out again, which creates a bit of a weird feeling.

“The other thing is you tend to want to swim up as you come out, but your sense of up is actually down. Naturally you’ll float up, but at first a few of us went down as we came out.”

Trainees must do at least one exercise blindfolded to simulate silty, dirty or disturbed water that could be found in farm dams and freshwater rivers.

“It’s some of the best training I’ve ever done, hands down. It’s in a controlled environment. You’ve got the LifeFlight trainers in the pool watching you and two people in scuba gear watching for safety as well.

“When you get it wrong, you can see exactly the effect it has and how much harder it is to get out of that aircraft.

“If you ever go down in water, it’s a whole lot different trying to sit there and hold your breath with adrenaline pumping, water flicking up, things shaking and terrible noises.

“I hope we never need this training, but if we ever do, we know what to do in the right order to get ourselves and crew out in the safest possible way.”



The exercises were completed several times to ensure familiarity. Pictured: Station Officer Simon Johnstone.



Helmets were the first safety equipment issued, beginning in 1965.

# A lesson in RFS history: a legacy for the future

**Response spoke with Don and Daphne Greenhalgh, authors of *From Beaters to Bambi Buckets*, a history of the Rural Fire Service (RFS) from 1927 to 1990.**

Don and Daphne have been members of the Samford Rural Fire Brigade for more than 50 years.

Not long after moving to the largely rural area of Samford, Don was persuaded to attend the brigade's annual general meeting and left as Secretary.

Don was the Chairman before becoming First Officer, holding that role for 17 years. He was also founding Chairman of the Rural Fire Brigades Association of Queensland (RFBAQ).

He was later appointed Chairman of the Rural Fires Board and in 1988 was awarded the Australian Fire Service Medal. Don is still active with the brigade but is unable to fight fires because of his age.

Daphne managed phone and radio communications for the brigade and was the Secretary for five years. She also served as RFBAQ Treasurer and was appointed Assistant National Secretary of the National Assemblies of the Australian Assembly of Volunteer Fire Brigades Associations.

In 1998, they travelled around Queensland and visited retired RFS inspectors and fire wardens, gathering oral histories of the RFS and Rural Fires Board, which became the source material for their book.

The book features stories about the formation of the RFS, including the mammoth task of establishing the first fire brigades across the state, through the eyes of those who were there.

"When we were semi-retired in the late 90s, we were travelling in our motorhome, and Commissioner Pam Millican asked if we could collect material for an oral history of the rural brigades. As we'd already met most of the inspectors, we agreed to take on the job," Don said.

"We were given a day's training by the John Oxley Library in how to gather oral history. The RFS purchased microphones and recording equipment and gave us a list of contact data and we were on our way. I think most Inspectors were more than happy to do the recording."

Don said the early inspectors were ex-Forestry employees who knew all about fire in the environment.



“They were dedicated to their jobs, despite the hardships of long days on the roads, usually in vehicles that were unsuitable, and often slept in those vehicles after night meetings so they could get to a meeting the next day,” he said.

“They enjoyed their jobs and were very easy to talk to and enjoyed sharing their stories about their experiences.

“We’ve always had an interest in history and here we had the opportunity to learn about the history from the men and women who made it.”

### A dark day

Perhaps the most poignant story in the book was the November 1954 fire at Narollah Station near Corfield between Winton and Hughenden.

The Halloran family had just finished lunch when a nearby lightning storm set fire to the dry grass. Lance Halloran and his son Rex, along with a young jackeroo, burnt back along fire plough tracks.

The breeze suddenly changed direction and whipped up the fire, surrounding Lance with flames. Rex drove the truck into the flames to rescue his father, putting him out and removing his flaming clothes. The jackeroo tried to run away from the fire, but he too was overcome.

Rex got everyone into the truck and rushed back to the homestead, driving over gates and fences on the way, even though his hands had been burnt to the bone. He tried to call for help, but their phone line had been struck by lightning.

Nurse Jean Jones was summoned from a neighbouring station. She had no real painkillers to give them but did what she could to help, even as Rex’s throat began to swell because he’d breathed superheated gases.

The rescue and treatment were made difficult due to a heavy storm that made the black soil roads impassable and the airfields unusable.

Lance, Rex and the jackeroo were eventually taken to Corfield in cars towed by Land Rovers, slipping on the muddy road, and were then taken by a special ambulance train to Hughenden. Blood plasma was flown in from the Townsville Red Cross, but the men soon passed away.

“We were able to interview the widow of one of the deceased men and the bush nurse who tried to save their lives with what she had available, which was little more than Veganin tablets (similar to aspirin),” Don said.

“Talking to the people involved, we knew they were still upset even 45 years since the incident.”

Rex Halloran received a posthumous award from the Royal Humane Society for his bravery, and Jean Jones became the Community Volunteer Nurse.

It was this incident that led to the formation of the Sesbania Rural Fire Brigade, which Operation Sesbania is named after.

Don said a surprising find during their research was the ingenious machines people designed for firefighting as far back as 1895.

“They used a similar idea to the later Brompton Rat. They also developed the ‘gallop up’ method of fighting on horseback, similar to our ‘step up’ method used to clear breaks today on foot.

“History can teach us a lot – especially that anyone who will not take notice of what happened before is bound to repeat the same mistakes.

“We thoroughly enjoyed the experience and felt privileged to be able to meet the early inspectors who, under the guidance of Rural Fires Board Secretary Dick Healy, formed the brigades of today.”



Firefighters assess a large, dark smoke column.



Don and Daphne have volunteered for the Samford Rural Fire Brigade for more than 50 years.



# CENTRAL REGION

## Car crash survivor's heart-warming visit to rescuers

In June 2022, a Sarina Fire and Rescue Service crew responded to a two-vehicle road traffic crash. The driver, Shannon, was on his way to work when a drink driver swerved into his lane colliding head on, entrapping him.

On arrival, the Sarina crew began removing the two driver's side doors and mid-section to release Shannon. A dash roll was carried out to remove the steering column and dash from Shannon's chest and face. Paramedics on scene confirmed he was in a critical condition. Shannon went into cardiac arrest after being released from the vehicle.

Shannon was flown to Townsville Hospital and was given a four per cent chance of survival. He remained in a coma for nearly four weeks and was told he would probably never walk again.

Much to the delight of the firefighters, just before Christmas, Shannon walked unassisted into the Sarina Fire and Rescue station with his partner Stacey and their baby.

The crew spent time showing the visitors through the road crash rescue equipment that was used to free Shannon and heard all about his recovery. He still has a few surgeries ahead of him, but he is extremely grateful for everyone that helped him get home to his family.

Shannon and Stacey had also been collecting lollies for Sarina's annual emergency services Christmas lolly drop. They brought more than 1500 lollies!

It was an incredibly heart-warming and uplifting experience. Everyone walked away feeling humbled and proud to have been a part of Shannon's story.



## New variance in ARTEP benefits Central Region

In conjunction with the Auxiliary Firefighter Development Unit, Central Region has recently implemented a new variance to the delivery of the Auxiliary Recruit Training & Education Program (ARTEP).

This variance aims to improve cost efficiency, attendance availability, geographical access to training, increased availability of trainers and improved knowledge retention.

The course outline now includes the Auxiliary Firefighter Induction, three weekend training sessions covering foundational skills and concludes with the participants attending a contemporary seven-day face-to-face training program.

An inaugural pilot of this course will be held in Yeppoon, beginning in early 2023.

## Sharing experiences help to shape the future of Central Region

Central Region has embraced the lessons management process to capture and analyse observations from incidents, events and activities to identify what worked well and should be shared, as well as opportunities for improvement.

This requires all services to commit to a culture of learning and capturing insights at regional level. This has been made easy through the use of a QR code to simplify the sharing process. Groups of insights are analysed for trends to inform lessons identified which are then assessed for action. Actions are then implemented and monitored for change and improvement, indicating a lesson has been learned.

Since the inception of this initiative, Central Region have received eight submissions resulting in three case studies.



# NORTH COAST REGION

## Movember – well done North Coast Region

The Movember results are in and NCR claimed multiple spots on the QFES fundraising ladder including a second place for the Kingaroy Firies postie bike run, third place for QFES Maryborough and the Coolum Crew placing sixth!

Kingaroy Firies postie bike run travelled from Kingaroy to Kingsthorpe, Kenilworth, Goomeri then back to Kingaroy. The convoy of 12 riders from FRS and RFS, along with three support people, hailed from Caboolture, Wondai, Kingaroy, Stuart River, Tannum Sands and Walkerston.

QFES Maryborough held a fundraising event at Ululah Park and set a goal to move 60 kilometres as a group, dressed in turnout gear, with some wearing breathing apparatus. In total, they collectively walked more than 115 kilometres.

The Coolum Crew took 60,000 vertical steps (10.2 vertical kilometres) at Third Bay stairs in Coolum. This was achieved by the Coolum Permanents (Ben Walker, Tara Hutcheson, Greg Blunt, Gavin Irwin, Kelvin Graham, and Catherine Duchock) along with a few special efforts by Peter Hadley, Grant Feeney, Colin Dick and Cameron Herbert.

All up, we were able to raise plenty of awareness while smashing fundraising goals in the process.



## Origin joint exercise

Crews from Gympie Fire and Rescue Station attended a multi-agency exercise at the Origin LPG depot. The exercise simulated a large volume of flammable gas spilled, with participants testing their emergency response procedures in real-time to become familiar with the process of reporting incidents like these to emergency services.

Skill development from this exercise included pre-incident planning, implementation of large-scale evacuations/exclusions zones and improvements to site safety.

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

## Meet and greet

Acting Inspector Kevin Bertwistle, Area Commander for Gayndah recently hosted a Captain and Lieutenant meeting for all the Auxiliary Stations within the Gayndah Command, comprising Biggenden, Eidsvold, Gayndah, Goomeri, Kilkivan, Monto and Mundubbera. The meeting was followed by a sausage sizzle lunch, and it was a great opportunity for a meet and greet with Superintendent Andrew Sbrizzi.

Our crews at the QFES trade stand talked about firefighting as a great career option and gave out information about how to apply to become a firefighter.



## Awards and honours outside of QFES

The Brian Prince Awards recognise personnel who go above and beyond the call of duty. Mr Prince was a paramedic who was passionate about issues relating to health and public safety. Mr Prince passed away in 2013 and these awards are held in his honour.

The ninth annual awards, hosted by the Bundaberg Central Rotary Club, were held in January and two North Coast Region QFES people were recognised and honoured.

Senior Firefighter Col Morrow received the Brian Prince Emergency Services – Outstanding Service Award. Col was nominated for his dedication to community education and safety. He is described as the type of person who steps up and does over and above what is required as a firefighter and doesn't hesitate to share his skill set with others. Col has been at the Bundaberg Fire and Rescue Station since 1982.

Leading Field Operations SES Member Wayne Cameron received the Brian Prince Emergency Services – Volunteer of the Year Award. Wayne was nominated for his professionalism during training and incidents. His interaction with new and old members makes volunteers feel included and accepted within the organisation. Wayne has been a member of the Bundaberg SES since 1981.

Congratulations Col and Wayne! Honours well deserved.





# BRISBANE REGION

## Better trucks, better service

Appliances enabled with heavy compressed air foam systems (CAFS) arrived in the Brisbane Region and staff are training on the applications and processes of the new equipment. The workshop has also collaborated with the training team to apply any extra improvements and tweaks.

The appliances are on the road at Wynnum and Beenleigh, with Hendra and Townsville appliances to be in use in the upcoming weeks.

This LIQUIP 1 Type 4 Fire Appliance is similar to the Type 3, with a few notable differences. The split shaft centrifugal pump delivers up to 8550 litres of water per minute, and has a 3000-litre capacity water tank, 100 litres of A-class Foam and 300 litres of B-class Foam. The high-pressure pump is permanently engaged to the normal pressure pump and automatically activates on main pump engagement. Two hose reels are mounted in the rear lockers and rewinds electronically when the engine is running.

Wynnum Fire and Rescue Station's Type 4 was released to operation only minutes before being tasked to its first job – a fully engulfed house at Wynnum Waterfront. According to all attending, it exceeded expectations in every feature.



## Helping kids build strong foundations

Iron Traks is a program that connects young people with emergency services personnel to foster the self-esteem, inspiration and knowledge they need to approach adulthood with confidence.

Through building relationships with members of QFES and other public safety agencies, children, often girls aged 10 - 18, are exposed to strong and successful role models who help to positively influence their perspectives and futures.

The relationship between QFES and Iron Traks is in its early days, with the group's first visit to a fire station occurring in late 2022. The planning for a second station visit is underway, with the program already showing great potential and demonstrating strong interest from those involved.

## Ensuring everyone is prepared

Durack FRS crews and the Brisbane and South Western SES units attended the Inala Multicultural Fair, sharing the message of preparedness and prevention for fire and severe weather with the residents of Inala and surrounding communities.

The aim for this event was to encourage engagement with those who may not have access to fire and emergency services and deliver the important fire safety messages.



## Molten glass leak brought under control

In December 2022, QFES responded to fire at Visy Recycling in West End. On arrival, crews were informed that a glass furnace had split and was leaking molten glass. Multiple crews wearing breathing apparatus used hose lines to cool the infrastructure and contain the molten glass.

The rapid actions of the on-site staff prevented injuries and assisted QFES in shutting down the facility in a controlled manner. Forty-five firefighters and specialist personnel attended and the incident was brought under control with no environmental impact.



# SOUTH EASTERN REGION

## Ripley Tactical Training Facility enhancements

Ripley Fire and Rescue Station has received significant upgrades to the road crash rescue (RCR) training pad in the past six months, such as a seven-metre concrete crash barrier, a galvanised steel guardrail, and prop-use low-voltage power lines.

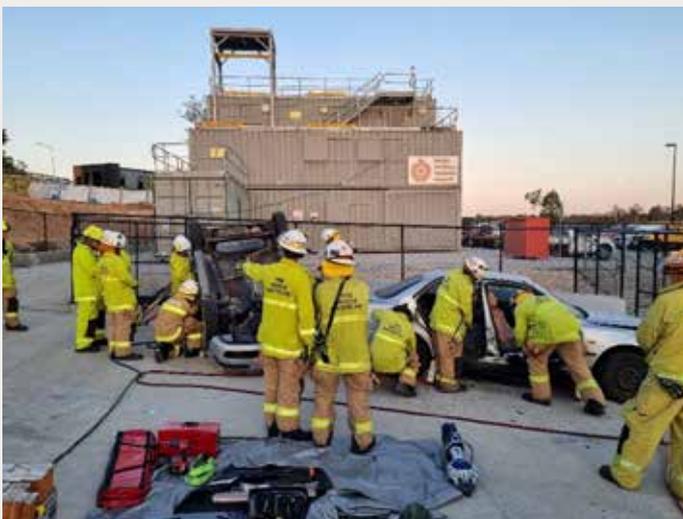
The training area has also been supplied with several vehicles from a local company to ensure crews have plenty to practise and train with.

Crews have used these additions as training props to recreate rescue scenarios by placing the training vehicles next to or partially resting on top of the barriers.

Vehicles have also been placed in different positions such as on their side, roof or wheels for the crews to practise non-destructive techniques.

Ipswich Command recently completed four single-agency major exercises where crews faced several challenges, such as a multi-vehicle car accident with numerous casualties and entrapments.

Several group training sessions have also focused on tasks such as lifting vehicles using the rescue airbags to simulate rescuing a casualty crushed under a vehicle. In the scenario, about 30 Girl Guides and Scout Cubs, along with their parents, were holding a function at the time of the fire. All required evacuation and some had to be rescued.



## Lowood road safety event

Crews from Lowood Fire and Rescue Station, Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS), Queensland Police Service (QPS) and Lowood State Emergency Service (SES) teamed up at the Fernvale Country Markets to highlight road safety in the lead up to the Christmas and New Year holidays.

Emergency services were all hands-on-deck for two demonstrations on the day, with FRS, QAS and QPS narrating the emergency response to a traffic crash.

Supported by Department of Transport and Main Roads, PCYC Fernvale and Queensland Motorcycle Council Inc, static displays provided road safety information to the local community with a focus on raising crucial awareness about the dangers of the Fatal Five – speeding, drink or drug driving, seatbelts, fatigue and distraction.



## Equipment handover energises volunteers

The Energising Queensland SES Equipment Program has delivered a boost in equipment for South Eastern Region SES groups with a handover event in Logan.

Twenty-two SES Groups received \$26,000 in equipment including battery-powered scene lighting, chainsaws, pole saws, storage boxes, power tools and stretchers.

The partnership between the SES, Energy Queensland and Powerlink Queensland has officially been running since 2014 and has delivered more than \$1 million in equipment to SES groups.



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# SOUTH WESTERN REGION



## New RPAS pilots

In November, South Western Region conducted an intensive induction and proficiency training schedule with our future Senior Remote Pilots (SRP) and Deputy Maintenance Controllers (DMC).

Under the guidance and supervision of the State Air Operations Unit, our region now has a regional Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS) capability to support operations at many levels. Our current RPAS capability, based at Toowoomba and Roma, can provide aerial information to ground crews during day and night operations.

The broad use of RPAS can enhance search and rescue functions, fire investigation and aerial intelligence gathering at all incident types, including wildfire, road crash rescue, structure fire and hazardous materials incidents.

We can livestream infrared and thermal footage directly to a person, vehicle or incident control centre, and provide photos if requested.

Congratulations to the following staff who have been deemed successful as check-to-line RPAS pilots: SRPs - Director Region Operations Warren Buckley, Area Controller Ian Phipps, Area Controller Dave Bennett and Area Director Craig Clifford, and DMCs - First Officer Martin Hogg, Auxiliary Firefighter Kristian Bennett and Senior Firefighter Dennis Horne.

We will endeavour to bring this capability to you with an information package to demonstrate its versatility. Incident controllers can call and request RPAS at incidents, training sessions, controlled burns etc.



## Paying their respects

Tara Fire and Rescue crew attended the local memorial service to honour Constables Matthew Arnold, 26, and Rachel McCrow, 29, who were fatally shot during a police incident in December 2022.

## Motor vehicle exercise in Bollon

Auxiliary firefighters from Bollon Fire and Rescue Station, with Acting Inspector Peter Gyory and Acting Lieutenant Michael Nancarrow, joined other Bollon emergency service agencies to undertake a motor vehicle crash exercise in December.

The exercise was hosted by the Bollon Community Clinic and brought together new members from FRS, Queensland Police Service (QPS), Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) as well as their volunteer drivers.

The exercise was designed to be as realistic as possible, with participants investigating a motor vehicle crash and learning first-hand how to extract a patient from a vehicle. It was also an opportunity for participants to refresh and test their patient care and handling techniques.



## Get Ready St George

Firefighters from St George Fire and Rescue Station joined local SES members at the Get Ready Balonne Family Fun Day.

The day, hosted by Balonne Shire Council, combined fun with learning about emergency services and what they do during times of emergency.

Firefighters engaged with local community members to increase their awareness of issues including home fire safety, smoke alarm legislation and floodwater safety.

It was also an opportunity for crews to talk to people about becoming an Auxiliary Firefighter, including what kind of work they do and how to apply. QAS and QPS also participated in the event.





# FAR NORTHERN REGION

## Fish out of water

What started as an “ordinary morning” turned into a “not-so-ordinary” animal rescue for the crew on appliance 711A from Cairns. The sea was at a very high tide peak of around 3 metres and seawater was making its way back up into stormwater drains and onto Shields Street in the Cairns city shopping precinct. By chance during the crew’s early morning patrol, a crew member spotted a stingray attempting to escape from the drain.

With a crowd gathering around, it was deemed that an animal rescue needed to occur. The crew emptied out the PPE decontamination tub from the truck and carefully ushered the stingray into the tub. The stingray was transported on the appliance to Cairns esplanade, where it was released back into the water unharmed.



## Beautiful nature has a deadly undercurrent

Queensland has many inland waterways which may be beautiful to look at, but these mesmerising natural swimming holes can pose safety risks to even the most experienced swimmer. Conditions, geographical remoteness, poor decision making and not wearing a personal flotation device in isolated natural aquatic environments may increase the risk of drowning.

In late December, Queensland Police Service and Level 2 swiftwater rescue technicians and operators, supported by auxiliaries and SES volunteers, responded to a search and recovery incident situated in one of Far Northern Region’s many national parks.

Due to the inaccessibility of the location, Far Northern’s highly trained and skilled SES teams used digital and contour mapping to determine the most suitable entry point to the water. They then had to manually cut a 1700 metres trail through thick rainforest to access the entry point.

The terrain was rugged, steep and muddy, with SES and FRS teams hampered by large patches of wait-a-while (a vining plant with hooked spines), ongoing showers and an abundant number of leeches in humid conditions. Swiftwater technicians were unable to transport any significant equipment due to the narrowness and condition of the trail.

After swiftwater crews gained access to the riverbed, several swim crossings were made, with higher water levels after recent rain. Crews continued to negotiate multiple water features during these crossings while also working at significant heights on large slippery boulders.

FRS senior management would like to acknowledge the assistance provided by the Far Northern SES volunteers during this three-day operation. Their professionalism, flexibility, patience and commitment turned an extremely difficult extrication into a manageable operation.





# NORTHERN REGION

## RFS demonstrates safety to kids

Purono Park Rural Fire Brigade First Officer Zac Holland recently took up an invitation to visit the children and staff at the Milestones Early Learning Centre 'The Lakes'. He talked to the children about fire safety and demonstrated some of the operational gear used by our rural firefighters.

It was a great opportunity for the children to see Purono Park's light attack vehicle up close while Zac demonstrated the use of different equipment such as bowling out hoses.

They also enjoyed the hands-on part of the morning in which the kids got to touch and feel the different parts of the RFS uniform, learning how each part goes together to help protect firefighters out on the fireground.

Allowing the children to have this close up experience with the RFS uniform and equipment helps the next generation to have better awareness and understanding of bushfire safety.



## Congratulations to our Australia Day Award recipients

Seventeen personnel from the Northern Region were awarded Australia Day Achievement Awards for delivering exceptional work above and beyond the normal course of duty during the past 12 months.

The individuals were recognised for varied outstanding contributions to the delivery of emergency services in Queensland. Some of these contributions included diligent training, professionalism and performance in winning the National Disaster Rescue Challenge in Perth 2022, impressive fundraising efforts, and the promotion of mental health among firefighters and emergency service workers.



## Communications skills workshop

In December, RFS staff and volunteers from across Northern Region joined together to participate in a Communication Skills Workshop facilitated by Kevin Ryan from Toastmasters.

The group learnt to speak with confidence, understand their listeners, write to speak, and communicate with a group. The group gave presentations and role-played in presenting the training journey.

## The art of moulage

Moulage, the art of applying mock injuries, increases the realism required to overcome the initial shock factor when responding to a real-life emergency. Moulage enables staff and volunteers to have a relatable reference point and assists in building muscle memory for basic functions.

The Northern Region moulage team has supported scenario training for the SES and FRS recruits for road crash rescue purposes. They have also participated in multi-agency scenarios with the Australian Defence Force and Townsville Airport.





# Bringing laughter and fun to sick kids

They say laughter is the best medicine, so the Round Mountain Rural Fire Brigade took a trip to the Townsville University Hospital to be on Juiced TV — a tv show made by kids in hospital, for kids in hospital.’

Juiced TV is a Queensland Children’s Hospital initiative that gives young patients a break from the hospital environment and the chance to meet their peers and build relationships.

Kids of all ages, abilities and conditions take the reins by anchoring programs, interviewing special guests, participating in workshops or explaining the hospital system via the bedside entertainment system.

Rural firefighter Ursula, Community Education Officer Les, and honorary brigade member Ike the dog, told the young stars what it takes to be a member of the brigade. Even Bushy and Blazer tagged along for some fun.

Les explained to the budding presenter how Ike is specially trained in ‘making people feel better’.

“We also explained that we fight bushfires not building fires, conduct hazard reduction burns and help keep the community safe through community education like encouraging others to keep their yards tidy,” Les said.

Ursula shared the story of her strangest experience during a bushfire, when her and a fellow volunteer carried a carpet python from a burning paddock to safety.

“Being a part of Juiced TV was a really good experience – the volunteers loved it. The eight volunteers turned up early so we could meet the kids beforehand,” Les said.

The children sat inside the truck and used the lights and sirens, as well as the fire hose. By all accounts, everyone had a great time and the volunteers enjoyed having a bit of fun with children from the ward.

“We cold-called the hospital as we wanted to help out and they put us in touch with Juiced TV. We were really lucky with the timing as they had just finished filming in Brisbane and were on the way to Townsville,” Les said.

“We originally started out with what we knew, which was the Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness (P-CEP) program with Guide Dogs Australia. Now we go to nursing homes and the hospital is definitely on our radar to go back to again.”

The brigade has also recently attended multiple fundraising days for Step Up for Down Syndrome, Angel Paws Inc Pet Rescue NQ and routinely visits the local Scouts, Guides, Cubs and Joeys to teach fire safety. The brigade also participated in an abseil to help raise \$50,000 for the Townsville Hospital Foundation.

The Round Mountain brigade is now in the Juiced TV hall-of-fame, along with other Australian icons like Chris Hemsworth and Margot Robbie.



Ursula, Bushy and Blazer show off their firefighting skills for the kids.



Crews from the Mackay Whitsunday Zone and the Hamilton Island Fire Department.

# Joint exercise in tropical paradise

**In late 2022, firefighters from the Mackay Whitsunday Zone and the Hamilton Island Fire Department (HIFD) held a joint exercise that simulated a large fire at a resort.**

The joint training exercise consisted of two multi-level structure fires drills, testing all participants in fire behaviour, search and rescue, hostile door entries and tactical management.

The day allowed two Station Officers from Airlie Beach Fire and Rescue Station to practise incident control of a structure fire with several complexities, while HIFD and QFES crews worked together to combat the incidents.

QFES has a close relationship with the 15 personnel in the HIFD, assisting with training and operational response. Central Region's established stakeholders network enables the region to assist the Hamilton Island volunteers with development programs.

Tom Waterson from the HIFD has been a Leading Firefighter for about 11 months.

"While I recently returned to my position as Senior Station Officer with Fire Rescue Victoria, I'll still stay on in a casual capacity

with the Hamilton Island Fire Department to assist when I'm available," Tom said.

"From an emergency response perspective, Hamilton Island is fairly unique – there is substantial risk on the island, similar to the mainland, but it's crammed into a very small space.

"Luckily, incidents are far less frequent than what is experienced on the mainland. During my time here, the main incidents involve fires from cooking in kitchens, boat fires, assisting Queensland Ambulance Service with patient lifts and removal from walking trails, buggy accidents, and small spills and leaks."

As part of his role, Tom works closely with the Hamilton Island community to ensure work sites and Hamilton Island Enterprises (HIE) premises remain compliant with fire safety regulations and standards.

"The volunteer firefighter group, which is led by a Captain and two Lieutenants, includes a diverse range of backgrounds

and life experience and is a prime example of the close Hamilton Island community," Tom said.

"The relationship with QFES has strengthened this year thanks to Inspector Sven Diga who has been assisting us with our training needs.

"Being a very small service for a busy island we hope to build the relationship further, mainly with securing some much-needed training material. We are currently liaising with the Airlie Beach Fire and Rescue Station to further develop and align our training and co-operability.

"The joint exercise helped to give me a better understanding of how QFES would support us operationally and potential issues we could face, such as different communication equipment and operational procedures and practices.

"All members from QFES were great to work with and very helpful in assisting HIFD throughout the day. We're hoping to make this an annual event."

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# Australian Warning System: the next generation of warnings

**QFES, in partnership with other agencies, is leading the Australian Warning System (AWS) roll-out in Queensland, with full implementation planned for 1 November 2023.**

While Queenslanders have faced their fair share of disasters, this doesn't mean people always know what to do when faced with an emergency.

There is a clear need for consistent, easily understood warnings and public information across the country to ensure no matter where someone is, people can recognise warning levels and calls to action in the event of a disaster.

## Enter the Australian Warning System

The AWS is a national approach to warnings and information during emergencies, improving the warnings landscape by providing clear, standardised warnings.

Previously, different warning systems have been used for different hazard types across Australia.

Currently, there are five nationally agreed upon hazards the AWS will apply to: bushfire, flood, severe weather, cyclone and extreme heat.

Queenslanders will already be familiar with AWS bushfire warnings, which have been used across the state since May 2021.

Some communities may have seen AWS warnings used during the current severe weather season, as some Local Disaster Management Groups (LDMG) have opted to implement these prior to the 2023-24 severe weather season.

Environment and Sustainability Committee Chairperson, Councillor Russell Milligan, said Ipswich LDMG area are already including AWS flood templates in their disaster management toolkit.

"Floods are a part of life in Ipswich, and many residents and businesses have experience in preparing their properties for heavy rain and flood events," Russell said.

"Council uses a variety of systems to warn residents and visitors, including social media, community networks, local radio stations and Emergency Alerts as required.

"The safety of our residents is the priority for council in times of flood and other emergency situations. Through the AWS, everyone in our community will see consistent warnings no matter the hazard or weather event.

"Ipswich City Council trialled AWS flood templates in February 2022 and received positive stakeholder feedback. QFES' updated flood templates drew on the expertise of many individuals and organisations throughout Queensland to provide the most concise and effective language possible.

"Council has updated its warnings to align directly with the sector-developed, QFES-led templates for the most effective approach to notify people in our region who may be in danger."

AWS warnings will not replace or duplicate warnings from the Bureau of Meteorology. The AWS implementation project is working closely with the Bureau to ensure both warning formats complement each other and provide a complete picture for communities to make informed decisions about how to stay safe.

With more severe weather and natural disasters predicted for the 2023-24 season, the implementation of the AWS couldn't come at a better time for Queenslanders.

If you would like to find out more about AWS implementation in Queensland, contact the QFES Public Information and Warnings Unit ([warnings@qfes.qld.gov.au](mailto:warnings@qfes.qld.gov.au)).



The AWS provides clear, consistent messaging during disasters.



Fire and Rescue Service crews from Far Northern Region put their vertical rescue skills to the test by climbing a tower crane at a construction site near Cairns Base Hospital.



QFES joined forces with Queensland Ambulance Service and Queensland Police Service for the fourth annual Logan Emergency Services Santa Run.



QFES crews attended a large landfill fire at Stapylton in December that resembled a lava flow.



QFES and Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) performed a joint rescue at Cedar Creek Falls in January. Photo by QAS.



State Emergency Service members from South Eastern Region completed their Swiftwater Rescue Level 1 course in Lowood.





QFES hosted the final Emergency Volunteers Advisory Forum for 2022 with representatives from volunteer organisations across Queensland to strengthen relationships and promote community resilience.



State Emergency Service volunteers responded to more than 80 calls for assistance overnight when storms hit Moreton Bay in January.



Multiple crews battled a fire burning in inaccessible land at South Ripley near Ipswich by putting in fire breaks and conducting a back burn. Photo by Ripley Valley Rural Fire Brigade.



Townsville State Emergency Service Unit held a barbeque with Suncorp Ambassador Johnathan Thurston and NQ Freemasons to recognise the unit's work during the year.



# Shooting star

**Jackie Brown, a Senior Firefighter at Southport Fire and Rescue Station, is a retired star basketball player who coaches young women to follow in her footsteps.**

After finding success on the national and international stage, Jackie has returned to her roots on the Gold Coast and is coaching the next generation of athletes within the Australian junior program and the Gold Coast Women's National Basketball League (WNBL). She is also the head coach of the Queensland Under 20s team.

"I was originally a barefoot water-skier and represented Queensland and Australia, but my parents separated and had to sell the boat, so I chose basketball instead. From then on, I just loved it," Jackie said.

"I started with the Brisbane WNBL at 16 before moving to Adelaide to play for Adelaide Lightning.

"I later got a scholarship to play for Cal Berkely in San Francisco for six years, and then I played for the Göttingen team in Germany for seven years.

"I loved being overseas. You grow up quickly having to learn new cultures. The first year I was in Germany I really knuckled down and learnt the language so I could immerse myself in the culture.

"My dad always said you don't go over there just for the basketball. You have to learn something else, because basketball can be taken away from you at any stage. While I was in San Francisco I worked for a TV station as a sports journalist.

"The most important thing for me is learning how other people live. There's a big wide world out there, and we're only a small part of it."

After returning to Australia, Jackie worked briefly as a flight attendant before joining QFES about 16 years ago. She's been a basketball coach for about five years.

"I wanted to pay it forward because I had a lot of good role models in basketball. I love working with kids. Being a player myself gives me an advantage because I know what I liked from a coach.

"This year I coached the QFES men's basketball team for the commemorative September 11 sports day. It's the first time I've coached men and I loved it.

"Being a good coach is about creating a relationship with your players. You have to coach the person first, then the player. If you don't have that relationship and trust, you don't get buy-in from the players. It's the same at QFES – you have to get buy-in from your team.

"One of the most rewarding things is seeing improvement in the athletes and giving them the belief they can do what they don't think is possible. I like to watch them develop."

Jackie said the most challenging thing about being a firefighter was the unknown.

"You never know what you're going to face around the corner, so keeping a cool head in a chaotic situation is crucial. It's a very rewarding job.

"I've recently been involved in developing a mentorship program to support new firefighters. In many ways, supporting recruits through mentoring is similar to coaching new athletes. I enjoy helping the recruits face challenges and learn the unwritten rules of our job."



*Jackie Brown empowers the next generation of women in basketball.*

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