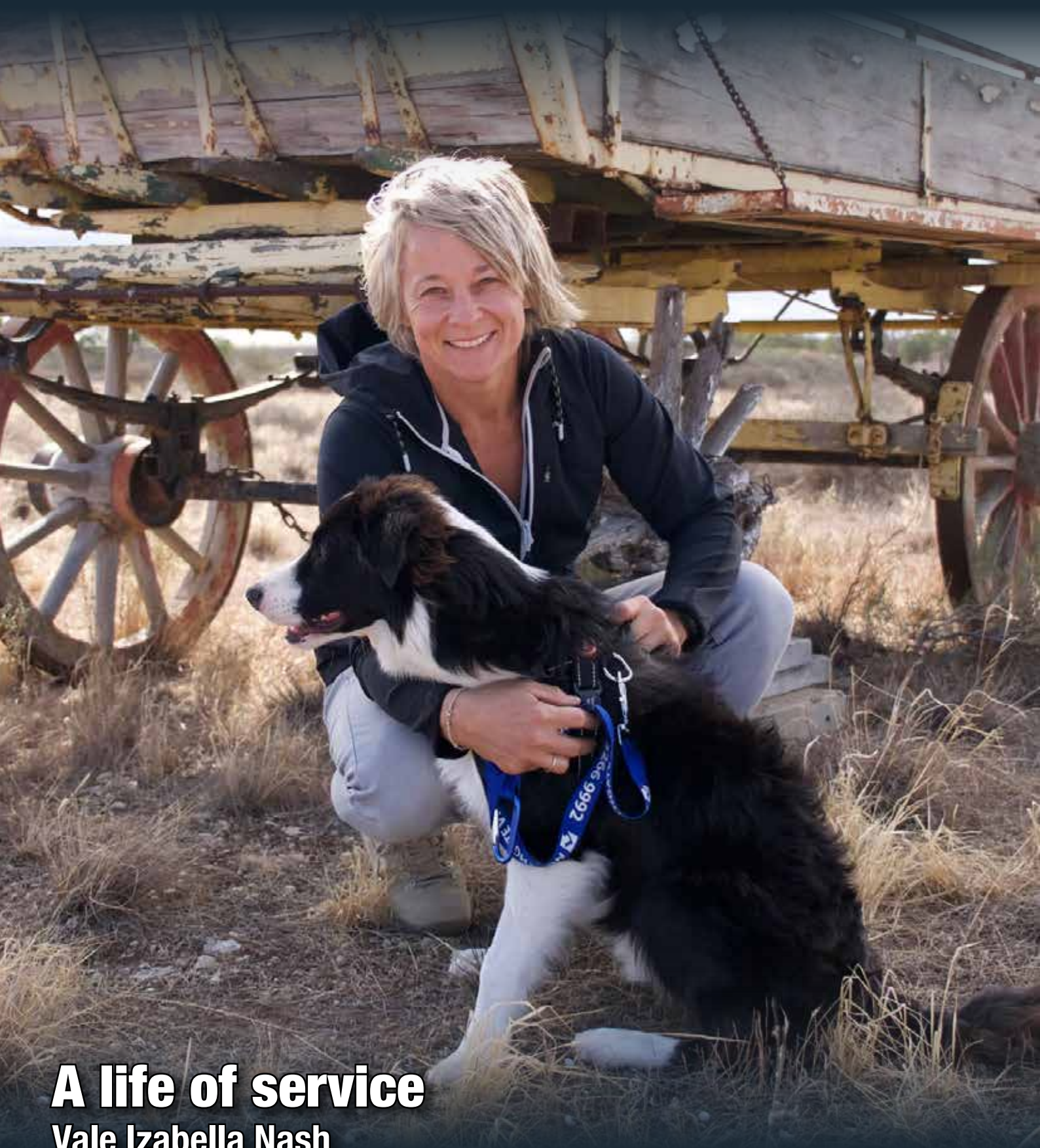


# RESPONSE

RESILIENT AND READY FOR THE PEOPLE OF QUEENSLAND

QUEENSLAND'S OFFICIAL FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES MAGAZINE

JUNE 2023



**A life of service**  
Vale Izabella Nash

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QFES members, partner agencies and community members honoured the life of First Class Firefighter Izabella (Izzy) Nash at a memorial service in May.

**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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*QFES acknowledges and recognises Traditional Owners as custodians of the lands where we work together with the communities of Queensland. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestors of these lands, their spirits and their legacy.*

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# FOREWORDS



**GREG LEACH AFSM**  
Commissioner

## QUEENSLAND FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

I want to start by thanking Deputy Commissioner Mike Wassing for being Acting Commissioner and leading the organisation in what was a very difficult time. I am proud to see that despite the challenges, our people have continued to work together and support each other and the Queensland communities we serve.

We were all devastated by the loss of Firefighter First Class Izabella (Izzy) Nash in the line of duty last month.

Izzy was an outstanding firefighter and a wonderful human being. She will be greatly missed.

Izzy's private funeral and public memorial were held on 22 May. Her family, friends and colleagues shared fond stories of Izzy and recalled her dedication to the fire service, her commitment to the highest standards of work and her loving support of those close to her.

In a small ceremony attended by her partner Bec, her family and her Acacia Ridge Fire Station crew, Izzy was posthumously presented with a Commissioner's Medal for Valour and a QFES Medal. Appliance 510A from Acacia Ridge Fire and Rescue Station was named in her honour.

Senior Firefighter Lia Drew, who was injured at the same incident, is being treated in hospital and we all wish her the best as she recovers. QFES will continue to support all the firefighters involved in the Slacks Creek fire. My thanks again to DC Wassing for supporting Lia, Izzy and Bec's families during a difficult time. As a service we will continue to learn and grow following this tragic incident.

We recently celebrated National Volunteer Week, thanking our volunteers for their dedication to their communities and the difference they make to so many peoples' lives.

The QFES family includes 35,000 volunteers who are an essential part of what we do.

Thank you to every single one of our volunteers – Rural Fire Service, State Emergency Service (SES), Fire and Rescue Service, Research and Scientific Branch, Disaster Assistance Response Team, chaplaincy and peer support officers – for all your hard work and for everything you give up for the greater good.

National Volunteer Week includes Wear Orange Wednesday, a national day to celebrate and thank SES volunteers. QFES members around the state showed their support by wearing orange and joining in each region's WOW celebrations.

May is also Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) Prevention Month when we come together to raise awareness of DFV and its impact. We all have a role to play in erasing the scourge of DFV from our communities. For several years, QFES has taken part in Darkness to Daylight (D2D). Thank you to everyone who ran or walked 110 kilometres in the month of May, with each kilometre symbolising a life lost (on average) to DFV in Australia each year.

Many people took part from across the state and it's great to see a cause we can all come together to support. I am proud of all the participants, particularly those who battled through the cold conditions to come together for the overnight event on 30-31 May, and I encourage everyone to join this initiative next year. Read more about DFV Prevention Month on page 19.

Thank you all for everything you do. Stay safe.



**JOANNE GREENFIELD**  
Acting Deputy Commissioner

## CAPABILITY STATE SERVICES

In May we acknowledged International Firefighters Day, a day where we honour our firefighters for their dedication and sacrifice. This year the day was especially difficult, as it came shortly after the tragic loss of Firefighter First Class Izabella (Izzy) Nash and the significant injuries sustained by Senior Firefighter Lia Drew.

Every day our people selflessly commit to putting their own lives on the line for the good of others. The dangers are very real, and their bravery is an inspiration for us all.

Families also make sacrifices and I know many of your loved ones will also be impacted by this tragic event.

For the first time, Queensland Rural Fire Service (RFS) volunteers have deployed as arduous firefighters to Canada as part of a larger Australian deployment. This incredible group of people have travelled thousand of miles, to protect communities in Alberta in extremely tough and difficult fire conditions.

In other areas, the Marine Rescue Implementation Program (MRIP) has now transitioned to Queensland Police Service. The MRIP is well on the way to setting up a single entity to provide volunteer marine rescue services to Queenslanders. This is a major achievement that will deliver enhanced support to volunteers and the recreational boating community. The vessel replacement program is progressing well with the first boat for the Torres Strait on track to be delivered soon. Read more on page 31.

It was fantastic to see the Queensland Government commit to increased funding for both the RFS and State Emergency Service (SES) in the 2022-23 budget. The government committed an extra \$20 million to enhance the SES' operational capability. This includes 45 additional staff and \$10 million for equipment and facilities, which has supported increased grants to local government to better support SES volunteers, investment in fleet, equipment and additional training. An example of how this uplift funding has been put to good use is in Far Northern Region, who recently graduated 20 young adults from local schools with a Cert II in SES operations. The future is bright for SES with the increased support.

The increased funding for the RFS included an additional \$10 million in 2022-23 for new facilities, to be delivered across two phases. In phase one, nine rural fire brigades across the state will receive a station upgrade to improve facilities. Phase two will include additional station upgrades starting in 2023-24.

Twenty light attacks have been delivered, and there are currently 83 medium attack appliances under contract, with 42 due for completion between August 2023 and June 2024 and the remaining 41 between June 2024 and June 2025. Three tankers are forecast for delivery in June and three heavy tankers are due in September 2023.

The extra investment in both SES and RFS will allow us to better support volunteers and continue to protect communities.



# Vale Izabella Nash

**The tragic loss of First Class Firefighter Izabella (Izzy) Nash has had a profound effect on many of us in QFES and in the community.**

Izzy's passing has reminded us all that firefighters put their lives on the line every day to keep others safe.

On 2 May, Izzy was fatally injured at a factory fire in Slacks Creek, where her crewmate Senior Firefighter Lia Drew also sustained serious injuries.

Tributes poured in from all over Queensland, the nation and the world as people sent flowers, kind words and donations to support Izzy and Lia's families.

Our thoughts remain with Izzy's partner Bec, her family and her colleagues in this difficult time.

Izzy's commitment to the fire service and her sacrifice for her community will always be remembered.

## **An incredible human being**

*A memorial service was held on Monday 22 May at Nissan Arena, attended by QFES members, their families, the Premier, members of Parliament, partner agencies and members of the public to pay their respects and honour Izzy.*

*Izzy's partner Bec, who is also a firefighter with the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS), reflected on their life together and Izzy's love for her family:*

*"We stand before you today with heavy hearts, grieving the loss of an extraordinary individual who meant the world to us – my partner, Izabella Nash.*

*As a family, we would like to express our deepest gratitude for your presence and support during this difficult time. We take solace in knowing we are not alone in our sorrow and that Iz touched the lives of so many. I hope that she looks upon everyone here today to see the impact and the reach that her life has had.*

*To us, Iz was the essence of determination, strength, loyalty and caring. She was passionate and driven in all that she did. The qualities that she embodied was an inspiration to all of us.*

*The fire service provided Iz with a sense of purpose, her dedication to study and training both for herself and others was unwavering. She was an exceptional firefighter who had passion*



*QFES staff and volunteers, their families, partner agencies and members of the public came together to honour Izzy.*



for teaching junior firefighters the complexities of pump operations, firefighting, equipment use and what to do at an incident. The depth of her knowledge and her skills is what I and others admired and looked to her for guidance for.

Beyond this unwavering dedication, Iz was an incredible human being.

Resembling a pillar of strength, she was the matriarch of her family. She was the confidante, the teacher, the mediator, the MacGyver. Her fierce loyalty and caring nature left us feeling protected and nurtured. We marvel at her dedication, and unwavering commitment to giving her all in everything she did. Her steadfast adherence to the highest standards has left an indelible mark on our lives.

For me personally, my life with Iz has been one packed full of adventure and memories. We have explored new countries and camped and travelled our way around Australia. From swimming and fishing the coastlines and islands to nearly being carried away by the flies of the outback where we hiked and explored gorges, rocky outcrops and barren lands; it was here, in the freedom, the vastness and the unexplored lands that she found peace.

From a life of adventures, it was also one of new experiences. She taught me to ride a dirt bike, a jet ski and to snowboard. Our life together was full.

But as truly grateful for all that you have done for me Iz, it's not that which I will miss. I'll miss that you are my rock, the strongest, softest and most determined person I have ever known. I will miss that you used to select a show to watch and fall asleep on me in minutes. I'll miss our conversations, playing our silly games with Billy, planning our future together and exploring with you. I will miss sharing life with you. You are my person and I am yours. I may not have got to spend as long with you as I would have liked but I am blessed for the time that we did share. Until we meet again, I miss you always."



Izzy (left) with her partner Bec (right).

### Remarkable dedication

*Acting Commissioner Mike Wassing paid his respects to Izzy at the memorial service and described the outstanding qualities that defined her life of service:*

"Izzy commenced her Fire and Rescue Service career in August 2014. She graduated from her recruit course and started her first shift at Mount Ommaney Station in December of that year.

In her progression to the rank of Firefighter First Class, Izzy worked with many Brisbane Region firefighters across all shifts, mostly at southside stations.

But ultimately her work home was 10 Station, Acacia Ridge, and her work family were the A shift crew.

Izzy's success and professional ability was supported by her unquestionable commitment to high standards, to her colleagues and to serving the community.

Her life of service was no doubt one her father Phil – a retired police officer – was particularly proud of. For those who knew her best, it is no surprise that Izzy excelled as a firefighter.

A life of service is driven by a sense of purpose and a desire to be there for others in times of emergency. Izzy's drive and desire were clear to everyone who worked with her.

It was her admirable focus on others that meant the fire service was the perfect fit for Izzy, for a firefighting career is more than a job. It's a way of life.



You become part of the firefighter family. A strong family, that is made up of members who share that same commitment and dedication. People who put others ahead of themselves. Extraordinary humans who demonstrate courage beyond all expectations.

They form unique and lasting bonds that are built on having each other's backs during the most challenging of situations. It's a tight-knit family and one that Izzy was, and always will be, a highly valued member of.

During the past weeks, it has been my privilege to spend time with some of her closest colleagues and to listen as they fondly shared their stories of Izzy.

In their time of grief and devastation, they are remembering her as a special person who brought a vibrant energy to the family.

They are mourning the loss of one of their own, the loss of a wonderful colleague, the loss of a dear friend. They are missing her greatly.

As a service and a family, we will continue to support you as you navigate the tough weeks, months and years ahead without her.

Bec, your loss is unimaginable. You are one of us.

And I know the thoughts of every member of our family are especially with you. We hope you find strength in knowing that we will always be here for you.

Beyond Izzy's immediate crew, in fact right across the fire service, kind sentiments have echoed.

People are talking of Izzy's remarkable dedication. Maggie, Phil and Elizabeth – your daughter and sister was an outstanding firefighter and a highly valued member of her crew. You are rightfully proud of her contribution and achievements.

We're hearing every day of Izzy's determination and attention to detail. She was known as a hard and capable worker. She was particularly focused on mentoring and helping new recruits.

Izzy was someone they could rely upon to help and guide them. She was a role model, as I'm sure she was also as an Auntie to you, Taylor and Kory.

Assertive and confident, with strong convictions and uncompromising values, her diligence and perfectionism meant she could be relied upon to complete tasks to the highest standard.



Izzy (far right) with her family.

She took pride in wearing the fire and rescue uniform and was always immaculately presented, from the first day she stepped on to the parade ground as a recruit.

Along with her determination and focus, colleagues are also remembering how much fun Izzy was to be around. Easy to get along with, and always up for a laugh.

Entertaining others as she spoke about her four-wheel drive adventures and love for motorbike riding. A mischievous grin creeping in when she described her slick wheels.

Her passion and enthusiasm for her job was only surpassed by her deep love and care for her family and friends.

She often shared and spoke of her and Bec's dreams for the future and the plans they had for their property, with their adored border collie Billy.

Izzy had a balance of tremendous personal and professional qualities that people admired.

Above all, it is clear that her family and the fire service were very dear to her. And she was very dear to us.

Bec, Maggie and Phil – your Izzy certainly made her mark on this service.

She has left a lasting impression on us all and the positive impact she had on those who worked with her will be her legacy. We will forever be appreciative that she chose to join our family.

The service and sacrifice of Firefighter Izabella Nash will never be forgotten."

## Reach out for help

*The Fire and Emergency Services Support Network (FESSN) team have been working tirelessly to support all those who have been affected, directly or indirectly, by this tragic incident.*

*If you need to talk to someone, please reach out to your own support network or FESSN at [qfes.qld.gov.au/supporting-our-people](http://qfes.qld.gov.au/supporting-our-people)*

*FESSN's free confidential phone counselling service for all QFES members is available on 1800 805 980.*



Izzy's service to the community and her sacrifice will always be remembered.



# Honouring our links with defence

**QFES and the Australian Defence Force (ADF) have a proud history of working hand in hand.**

The ADF and QFES regularly conduct training exercises together so each is ready to answer a call from the other at a moment's notice. This goes some way towards explaining why there's so much mutual respect between the organisations, but there is more to the story.

Among our ranks, there are many former ADF personnel who have sought a new career, so commemorating Anzac Day is important to our members across the state.

Fewer places show the strong link between QFES and ADF more emphatically than Camira Fire and Rescue Station, where five crew members told *Response* about what Anzac Day means to them.

"A lot of (ex-Defence) people are attracted to QFES because of the teamwork and camaraderie," former Army Infantry member Darren Prest said.

"Anzac Day for me is about remembering the sacrifices of the soldiers, sailors and air officers who have served, along with remembering my father who served in Vietnam, and both grandparents," former Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) firefighter Jed Crosby said.

"It's also about seeing mates that I don't see too often and having one or two beers with them at the end of the day."

Those same links with defence are common throughout QFES, with many volunteers from the State Emergency Service and Rural Fire Service taking part in the tradition.

Former New Zealand Navy member Jo Squire is now a long-term member of the Currumbin Valley Rural Fire Brigade, alongside sons Damian and Caleb.

"After the Navy I became an urban firefighter in New Zealand before moving to Australia in 2001," he said.

"Joining the Navy 100 per cent set me up to become a firefighter. I was a troubled youth in Christchurch in the 1970s. I was on track to go to jail. Dad took me down to the recruiter when I was 15 and I was in the military by 16 and never looked back.

"It certainly put me on the right track through my life and I have had a colourful working career due to my experience in the military. I still use the skills I picked up in my younger years and I am a true believer in the core values which I have instilled in my two boys: discipline, honour and respect."

Jo and his sons attend the Currumbin Anzac service every year.

"Every Anzac Day I wear my medals with pride as it's something that is not given but something that is earned. I've lost plenty

of my mates and family members from the military, which I think of and respect on the day."

SES Ipswich member and former RAAF airframe fitter Chris Brandt said his extended family's links to Australia's military history, plus his own daughter's decision to join the Navy, inspired his passion for Anzac Day.

"I like commemorating Anzac Day at the Ipswich Dawn Service at the exact time of the Gallipoli landing. My great uncle was injured there, then later killed in France after recovering and being sent back into the war," he said.

"Now my daughter has joined the Navy. Anzac Day is the number one day of the year for me.

"It's about honouring those who served in all conflicts, especially those who never came back to their loved ones."

Our thoughts are with all past and present service personnel on Anzac Day.

Lest We Forget.



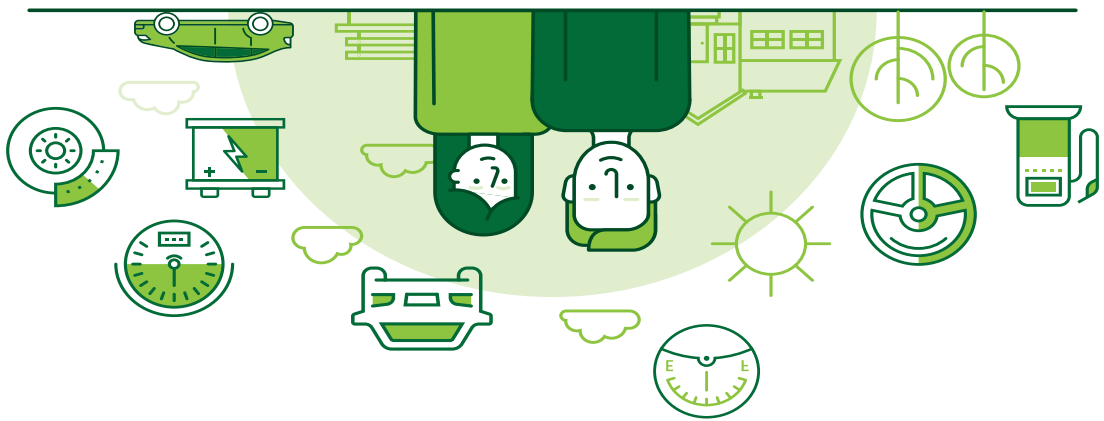
Jo Squire draws on core values instilled by the military.



Chris Brandt participates in the Ipswich Dawn Service every year.



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# A helping hand for Türkiye

**Two QFES firefighters joined a deployment to Türkiye to support rescue efforts in the wake of a massive earthquake.**

On 6 February 2023, a series of earthquakes struck southern Türkiye, including a 7.8 magnitude earthquake at 4.17am.

At 1.23pm on the same day, a 7.5 magnitude earthquake hit about 100 kilometres from the first, causing even more damage and complicating search and rescue operations. About 7000 aftershocks shook the region.

More than 45,000 people lost their lives, 115,000 were injured and an estimated two million were displaced. The Hatay Province was the worst affected – 40 per cent of the nation’s casualties were within its population of 1.6 million people. Hatay also lost more than 55,000 buildings including 23 hospitals and 179 schools.

In the aftermath, the Turkish Government called for international Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams to support rescue efforts.

Australia deployed a 72-person Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) called AUSo2 from NSW, along with two firefighters from QFES and two from the ACT. At the same time, the Queensland DART, AUS-1, was deployed to New Zealand to support the flood recovery.

The two QFES firefighters, Station Officers Jon Fullard and Will Teen, spent a week sorting through rubble in the historic city of Antakya.

## The extent of the destruction

AUSo2 arrived in Türkiye in the early afternoon at Incirlik Military Base in Adana, which was mostly unaffected by the earthquake.

“A few hours later we travelled by bus to the Hatay Province, into the city of Antakya which had been extensively affected,” Jon Fullard said. “We arrived late at night and saw little of the damage enroute.

“We set up a Base of Operations (BoO) about five kilometres out of the CBD, where the 2021 Hatay World Expo was hosted. We were in a valley at the base of snow-capped mountains. Our BoO was one of several – each country had sleeping and operations tents in a fenced-off cluster.

“The next morning we deployed into the city and finally saw the full extent of the destruction.

“Almost all buildings were damaged or collapsed, displaced residents were everywhere and a constant pall of dust hung over the city.”

About a third of the buildings, most of them about five to eight storeys high, had partially or totally collapsed. The rest had significant damage and would need to be demolished.

“There was rubbish, debris and stray dogs everywhere and the population had moved



into every available park and garden space that would fit a tent,” Jon said.

“The streets were half blocked with rubble, if not totally blocked by fallen buildings. Rescue and government vehicles stirred up the thick dust that coated everything.

“We attempted to find deceased family members so they could be returned to grieving relatives who were often still standing vigil at the collapsed building sites. The family members were always very thankful when we could find their relatives and provide closure.

“The main local agency we came into contact with was a government organisation called the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD). They were similar to our State Emergency Service and took over many of the work sites where bodies were known to be missing.

“The language barrier was an issue, but we regularly had an interpreter with our crews to alleviate this problem. If we had no interpreter, it was amazing how much information we could communicate with gestures.

“On our last night in Hatay, we packed up our BoO and were getting ready to sleep at the nearby Swiss BoO. At about 8pm, a 6.1 magnitude earthquake hit the region.

“That earthquake really put the whole situation into perspective because we could hear previously damaged buildings

collapsing in the CBD five kilometres away. It was very difficult to balance or try to stand up. Aftershocks continued throughout the night.

“It was pretty terrifying but was minor compared to the original earthquake that had hit the region. I can only imagine the recurring dread the local population must have felt every time another earthquake or aftershock struck.”

### A humbling experience

Will Teen has been involved with USAR since he completed his Level 2 course in 2007 and was previously deployed to the Christchurch earthquake in 2011 and multiple cyclone and flood events.

“In the past 10 years I have specialised in the logistics portfolio with AUS-1, working out of the State Deployment Centre managing the international deployable cache,” Will said.

“On many occasions I’ve worked closely with AUSo2 logistics technicians from NSW. We have a great working relationship with free sharing of information to enhance both teams’ capabilities.

“NSW needed someone with knowledge of DART logistics, so they gave me the opportunity, for which I am grateful.

“On arrival at the airport I talked to a Turkish USAR operator through Google Translate. He’d been in Antakya for the

week and he was exhausted and pretty overwhelmed with what he’d been through. That was when the reality of how bad it was started to sink in.

“Once we arrived in Antakya and saw for ourselves, it was worse than I’d imagined.

“In Christchurch there were two main building collapses in the city – the CTV and PGC buildings. The rest of the damage was mostly facades and partial collapse. In Antakya the whole city was pretty much devastated. Block after block turned to rubble. Words don’t do it justice.

“It was life changing to see a city founded in 300 years BC destroyed because the buildings from the last 50 to 100 years were so poorly constructed. I have a newfound respect for our building standards. As painful as dealing with compliance can be, it is there for a reason.

“Google Translate was the key to working with local agencies. Everyone involved was 100 per cent committed to helping.

“The army and local excavator operators were excellent and helped us in any way they could by providing and operating machinery.

“Understandably, due to the scale of the disaster a lot of the tasking was vague. The recoveries we carried out were much more on a personal level than in Christchurch because the families of the deceased persons were all camped by the collapsed





structures, waiting for teams to extricate their loved ones. In Christchurch, the areas were closed off to the public.

“The Turkish people were amazed and grateful we had come all the way from Australia, so they helped in any way they could. Sometimes locals who had nothing would offer us food. It was very humbling.

“Any interaction with the Turkish locals was special. They had lost everything but they were so grateful to us for being there.

“I have always loved Türkiye and felt that our Aussie and Kiwi ANZAC relationship was special, and this proved it.”

### Behind the scenes

Superintendent Daryl Rush, as a member of AUS-1, looks after Information Management (IM), establishing and supporting communications systems during deployments.

Daryl is also the Australian representative through the Asia Pacific Region of the International Search and Rescue Advisory

Group (INSARAG) as a member of the Information Management Working Group (IMWG), which includes other global members in countries with established INSARAG USAR and DART capabilities.

“I supported the Türkiye response by remotely coordinating IM tools and systems,” Daryl said.

“I worked in an ‘out-of-hours’ capacity, rostered in a back-office support team. My role was to monitor and assist in-country coordination cell managers by providing IM.

“The biggest challenge initially was understanding and visualising the response efforts through dashboards.

“As the size and scale of the disaster unfolded, we had to identify the geographical sectors and monitor the field reporting of damage assessments and rescues.

“These initial assessments and reporting varied due to connectivity issues caused by damaged infrastructure.

“Although my role was not visible, or in the field, the small fixes or adjustments I made provided a clearer view in the dashboards, which supported the coordination cell managers.

“QFES has a very experienced and credentialed DART capability, which includes employees, volunteers and national representatives.

“The experience gained by the two QFES members in the field, and my personal experience in supporting the IM, has demonstrated some of the diversity AUS-1 can offer.

“As an operational fire officer in Queensland for the past 32 years, the opportunity to engage with other countries’ disaster responders has allowed me to understand coordination tools, systems and processes, and the ways emerging technologies have improved visibility of disaster situations.”

*Photos by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.*



# Babinda Falls rescue

**A stranded bushwalker was rescued after spending 16 hours clinging to a boulder at the top of Babinda Falls.**

Three bushwalkers were crossing the river above the falls when two of them slipped and fell into the rapids, sliding down a chute of water.

One sustained injuries to his knees but escaped to dry land. The other was wedged between two rocks in waist-high water. He held onto a boulder with his arms and legs to stop himself from being swept over the 40-metre falls, but the boulder was too slippery for him to climb up. The third bushwalker ran to find phone reception and called for help.

It was the start of a long ordeal as emergency services struggled to extract the man in the harsh terrain.

Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) and Queensland Police Service (QPS) members walked for about five hours that night through dense rainforest, crossing several creeks, to reach the bushwalkers. State Emergency Service (SES) provided support and delivered vital communication equipment including a digital UHF repeater and Starlink satellite internet.

FRS Area Commander Brad Fleming was a Senior Officer in the Incident Management Team. Along with Acting Inspector Rory Kelliher, he worked from the forward control point at the Babinda Boulders carpark.

“Three swiftwater operators and two QPS officers walked into the rainforest on the Sunday night and established contact with the casualties,” Brad said. “It’s an arduous climb to the falls and at night it’s even more treacherous.

“The QGAIR Rescue 510 helicopter couldn’t winch the stranded bushwalker out because the canopy came right to the edge of the river, and there wasn’t enough ambient light for their night vision goggles to work. The downwash from the helicopter was also too strong.

“The technicians determined it was safer to leave him where he was and wait until morning, so they stayed overnight with him.”

An SES rescue and vertical rescue team were tasked at first light to walk in to deliver equipment the helicopter couldn’t carry, and once there they assisted with retrieving the person.

“In the morning the QGAIR Rescue 510 helicopter brought more personnel and equipment to help. QPS Special Emergency Response Team (SERT) and swiftwater technicians travelled upstream where they traversed the river and came down atop of the casualty.

“They then packaged the casualty into an Inflatable Work Platform and transferred him back across to safety. They walked him downstream to a position where he could be safely winched out.”

The helicopter pilot skilfully landed on a dry flat part of the waterfall and transferred the two people to the waiting ambulance at the local showgrounds. The rescue personnel had anticipated they’d have to make the gruelling walk back, but fortunately the helicopter was able to conduct multiple trips to fly them down as well.

“The teamwork between QPS, SES and FRS and the Queensland Ambulance Service was exceptional,” Brad said.

SES Area Controller Sean McGuinness said the SES played a crucial role in supporting the rescue in the initial phase by providing emergency lighting and setting up a portable UHF repeater.

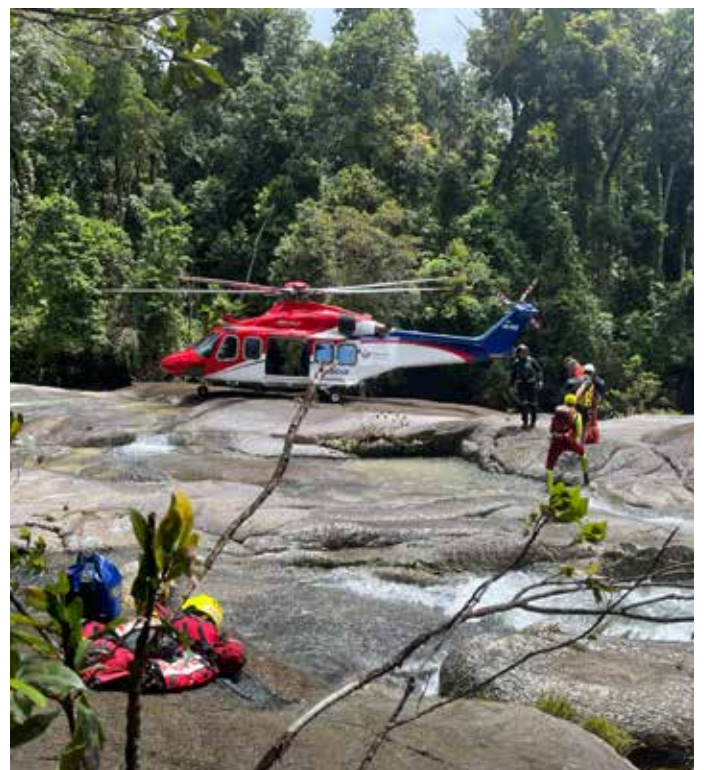
“There is no phone reception at this location, so up until 10.30pm, all services had to drive kilometres up the road to communicate with their communication centres and the outside world,” Sean said.

“When SES got the portable UHF repeater up and running it instantly improved radio communications. The Starlink was a gamechanger for emergency services that usually respond to this area for rescues or recoveries. That will now be part of the process for any future jobs at Babinda Boulders.

“In the debrief, QPS and FRS both agreed that having the emergency services there with the bushwalker overnight was good for his mental wellbeing and helped him forge through.

“The falls is not an actual walking track – it’s a goat track that’s become famous because of Instagram. When it rains you can see the waterfall from the highway and it becomes like a beacon for people.”

QFES performs frequent rescues and some recoveries at Babinda Boulders and the falls because these areas can be so hazardous despite looking tranquil and inviting.



*The Rescue 510 helicopter landed above Babinda Falls. Photo by Dan Ginnaw.*



# Taking a stand against Domestic and Family Violence

During Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) Prevention Month, QFES ran events and initiatives to raise awareness of the impacts of DFV in our communities.

The theme of DFV Prevention Month this year was 'Love≠Control', highlighting that abusive and controlling partners often use 'loving' acts to manipulate and maintain power.

QFES' key event for the month a discussion panel on the topic of 'DFV awareness – why it matters', chaired by A/Commissioner Mike Wassing.

Mr Wassing facilitated the discussion with expert panellists Kaylene Neal, member of QFES DFV Advisory Group and DFV survivor; Nikki Firmin Head of Corporate Partnerships, DV SafePhone; and Inspector Melissa Dwyer, Manager of the State DFV and Vulnerable Persons Unit, Queensland Police Service (QPS).

Inspector Dwyer was instrumental in implementing the DFV specialist courts, the first in Queensland, for which she received a joint agencies Prime Minister's Award.

"When I joined this job, I was straight out of high school and didn't know what DFV was," Inspector Dwyer said.

"I was quickly put into the DFV space with my first of a number of DFV homicides at the age of 19. Attending incidents like that changed my life."

She said conversations about DFV had increased in the last few years at a state and national level.

"What that means is there is an increase in reporting to police. We know 138,871 instances of DFV were reported to QPS last financial year, this year we have surpassed that. We surpass that by 12 to 15 per cent every year.

"We're concerned that any person is a victim of DFV in our society. Just one is one too many. But what that statistic does say is that there is awareness raising. We have a greater understanding, more than we ever have, of what DFV is, and that people have confidence in reporting to police.

"Too often I hear 'men are victims too'. Absolutely. Men are victims. As are LGBTIQ+ victims, as are Culturally and Linguistically Diverse women and men. Our statistics and research indicates DFV is a gendered issue. Police attending DFV calls for service identify that in most cases women are the primary victim."

This does not discredit that men are not victim survivors, but rather provides an insight as to what police are identifying after conducting a holistic investigation that investigates the relationship in the context of a whole, as opposed to a policing response to a singular incident in that relationship.

Kaylene Neal said abuse and coercive control could start well before violence happened in a DFV situation.

"And you don't realise it until you get that yes, ok, I was in a DFV situation," Kaylene said.

"They control you and the next minute they give you the whole world in one hand and rip it out of you from the other, but you don't think anything of it because you love that person and you think they're helping you.

"And the moment the violence hits or they hit you or something, you think, oh ok, now I'm in a DFV situation."

Nikki Firmin said DV SafePhone was set up three years ago to provide secondary safe phones to support women living in or trying to escape from domestic and family violence.

"DV SafePhone essentially asks our community and corporate organisations to gift old working mobile phones to us. And we then rest them, reconfigure them, package them up with brand new chargers, SIM cards, starter cards, wall plugs, car plugs, anything we possibly can, and send them out to DFV agencies and law enforcement agencies across Australia.

"Your phone is your lifeline. If that phone is smashed, monitored, taken, used or coercively controlled, even to try and track you, you need something safe. Our organisation has worked with QFES to ensure that every phone that comes through the department is gifted back to our organisation to support a victim with a lifeline, to call for help.

"We're really proud to state that recently we had our third birthday and gifted our 500th phone."

Visit [www.dvsafephone.org](http://www.dvsafephone.org) to learn more.

*If you or someone you care about is impacted by DFV, free confidential crisis support is available by calling DV Connect on 1800 811 811 or Mensline on 1800 600 636. If you are in immediate danger and need emergency assistance call 000. For non-urgent counselling, reach out to FESSN or call 1800 805 980.*



The DFV panel at Kedron (from left to right): Mike Wassing, Nikki Firmin, Kaylene Neal and Melissa Dwyer.



*Firefighters present the RAAP program to young people between 17 and 24.*

# Road safety for First Nations young people

**QFES is making the Road Attitudes and Action Planning (RAAP) program more inclusive to help young Indigenous Australians stay safe on the road.**

First Nations peoples are six times more likely to be involved in a road crash and three times less likely to wear a seatbelt.

That's one of the reasons why the RAAP program received a Community Road Safety Grant from the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) to create content for a First Nations audience.

The RAAP program is designed by former teachers and youth workers within QFES. Firefighters elect to use their rostered days off to educate 17- to 24-year-olds on what can happen if you make bad choices on the road.

In 2022 alone, the program reached about 30,000 people through more than 300 presentations.

Dr Natalie Watson-Brown from the Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety – Queensland at QUT conducted an evaluation of the RAAP program. She said it was important to increase First Nations inclusion in the program for several reasons.

“For many reasons, including lack of access to culturally safe licensing services, there are high rates of unlicensed driving among First Nations peoples,” Dr Watson-Brown said. “This means they miss out on the low-risk driving environment provided by graduated licensing.”

“There tends to be lower access to mentors and driving instructors, leading to engagement in riskier driving practices over generations.”

“First Nations peoples often learn language as spoken and not written. Therefore, road safety messages delivered verbally are more likely to be understood.”

Chris Clark, Manager Community Engagement Unit, said the unit used the grant to commission First Nations artwork, produce a promotional video and recruit more firefighters to become presenters.



“In July 2021, Clint Pilon, the RAAP State Coordinator at the time, reached out to the National Indigenous Agency of Australia, who put him in contact with Brisbane Indigenous Media Association (now known as Triple A),” Chris said.

Triple A worked with QFES to commission the First Nations artwork and produce a video featuring Cody, a First Nations man from the Northern Territory who got in the back of a mate’s ute when he was leaving a house party in Year 12.

The driver was drunk and lost control trying to drift around a corner. The car bounced up the gutter and wrapped around a power pole.

### Cody’s story

“Cody was ejected from the car, suffering a life-changing spinal injury that resulted in him being diagnosed as a quadriplegic,” Chris said.

“Cody’s story explores the consequences of this one poor choice on him, his family, his friends and his ability to experience life.”

In the video, Cody related how he heard a voice at the scene of the crash telling him, ‘If you close your eyes mate, you’re going to die here.’

“I just remember it kind of shocked me back awake and I was like no I’m not dying on the side of the road in Tennant Creek today, not at this age,” Cody said.

“He saved my life. I don’t think it was someone that was physically there. That sounds wild but, like, I think it was one of the old people looking out for me.

“The bit that really hurts you is when ... you watch your dad cry for the first time or you can’t console your mum. It’s the effect that I didn’t think about, like not just what happened to me but what happened to the rest of my family. That’s where the real pain starts.

“When you’re in these situations there’s always an alternative. You don’t have to do it.”

Cody ultimately adapted to the challenges of being a quadriplegic and went on to win a Gold Medal for Australia at the 2012 Paralympics for Wheelchair Rugby.

### Borree

The program’s artwork was created by Jiman man Duane Doyle, an artist from Carnarvon Gorge country and member of the West End Community House Art Gang.

The artwork is called Borree, which means fire in Ghungalu language. The heart in the centre of the painting represents the life force of country.

A tree grows from the heart and draws water from the artesian basin. The Elders on either side of the artesian basin teach the young children (gundoonoo) in a yarning circle.

The tree is on fire and charred, representing the trauma of road crashes and bushfires, but sap flows and the roots are strong, reminding us we can heal and grow.

The figures in the middle of the painting practise cultural burning, using fire sticks to light small fires and clapping sticks to move the animals to safety and fresh air. At the top of the painting, the community celebrates, safely enjoying a campfire.

### Yarning circles

The RAAP program has also produced a podcast episode with two First Nations firefighters and RAAP presenters – Jay Walters from South Eastern Region and Steve Johnson from Townsville. They shared their experiences with road crashes and their motivations for joining RAAP.

Jay said he became a firefighter because he wanted to give back to the Indigenous community. He’s delivered RAAP sessions for schools, PCYC and youth detention.

“My mob’s the Noonuccal Mob from Minjerribah or North Stradbroke Island and it’s one of the three tribes of the Quandamooka people,” he said.

“I lost a good mate of mine back in 2008 and that was a big motivator to deliver these types of sessions and presentations to young people.

“RAAP is delivered from operational firefighters who have that credibility of going to these types of incidents and seeing the trauma and the consequences involved.

“For an Indigenous community to lose someone is quite traumatic. I know at some of the funerals I’ve been to, there were three or four hundred people ... and that’s how many people it affects just in their immediate family.

“For me the whole purpose of promoting these messages is so three or four hundred people don’t have to go to another funeral.

“I’ve heard a couple of stories of people that have attended our RAAPs ... and they haven’t got in the car and they’ve made that right decision and they’re still living life and can enjoy life.

“Hopefully people make those right choices and it’s potentially one less crash that we may have to go to. Ultimately that’s one less loved one that’s lost in the future.”



The RAAP program commissioned an artwork by Duane Doyle called Borree (fire).

# WEBERRESCUE

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The Burnett River reached a peak of 9.53 metres, bringing record floods to Bundaberg.

# Cyclone Oswald swiftwater rescues

Ten years on, we reflect on two dramatic rescues that took place during Tropical Cyclone Oswald, one of the worst storms to make landfall in northern Australia.

Over seven days in January 2013, Tropical Cyclone Oswald caused widespread heavy rainfall, flooding and tornados. More than 70 roads were underwater from Cairns to Bundaberg, including major highways.

Seqwater released 41,000 megalitres of water from Wivenhoe Dam and 8000 from North Pine Dam to help mitigate the flood risk.

QFES crews carried out rescues across the state, extricating people from flooded homes, cars and waterways.

## Bring them home

On 27 January 2013, firefighters responded to a call for help at Widgee Creek near Lamington.

A family of three had been out celebrating Australia Day and on their way home drove their van across a causeway that was a foot or two underwater. The van stalled in the middle and when they climbed out, the van grew lighter and the water swept it away.

The father dragged his son, who was a quadriplegic, out of his wheelchair and they were swept downriver, but they were separated and the son perished. The parents clung to trees about 30 metres apart.

Firefighters Tony Wildman, Grant Geeney, Denis Donadel and Matthew Foster entered the creek several times, placing their own lives in danger to rescue the parents.

Denis Donadel, a Senior Firefighter with more than 40 years of service, said they arrived at the creek in the middle of the night.

“Rain never stopped pouring, we had no comms, the GPS stopped working on our way there because of the cloud cover and we could barely see the road,” Denis said.

“We dragged our boats 350 metres across a flooded paddock in knee-deep water with barbed-wire fences. By the time we could see the casualties we were already in chest-deep water.

“Our station is an hour and a half from the creek, so the casualties were a long time in the water when we got there. A crew from Gympie Fire and Rescue Station were already there but hadn’t been able to reach the casualties.

“The water flow was horrendous, like a waterfall in the trees. There was only the darkness and the noise of the wind and rain and the screaming of the river. You could shout from 20 metres away and barely hear each other.”

The firefighters tried to reach the husband and wife several times using rafts.

“There were large logs coming down the river and they took our raft out,” Denis said. “It flipped over and we went into survival mode.

“We dragged ourselves up through the trees, from one tree to another. We only had headlamps to see with, but we eventually got to the husband. He wouldn’t stop saying he’d let his boy go.



“We set up a tension line across the water, and with that we got the raft to the husband and hauled him and one of the other firefighters, Matthew Foster, across to the bank. I stayed at the tree. I’d tied the tension line a metre above the water, but by the time they came back to get me, it was already underwater.

“I kept screaming to the wife to hold on and climb the tree, but the water was rising all the time. It funnelled over her head like a wave.”

She originally had her back downriver, but the firefighters told her she had to get her back upstream and lean into the tree instead of holding onto it.

“She wriggled around the tree and that’s one of the things that saved her,” Denis said.

“Then I told her to hook her elbow around a fork in the tree so she didn’t have to hold on with her hands. She was a very strong-willed person to survive that long. The husband shouted encouragement, but I told him not to breathe a word about their son until we got her out.

“I took four throw bags with me in the boat and got in the middle of the stream and threw the ropes into the trees. I used them to pull us toward her, and then I threw one above her and hauled the boat right up beside her.

“I held all those ropes in one hand and dragged her into the boat with the other. She had severe hypothermia and the water

had torn nearly every piece of clothing off her. She was bruised and battered from holding onto the tree with 100 or 200 kilograms of force on her. It was hard to hold onto her so I cradled her between my legs.

“I couldn’t paddle much because I was looking after the casualty and ropes, so a firefighter on the edge threw another throw bag to me and I just managed to catch it in my fingers so they could pull us in. If I’d missed that throw bag, we probably would have been washed downstream.

“When we got her out, we couldn’t get to a hospital because we were cut off by the Glastonbury River. We went to Gladstone Rural Fire Brigade and the ambulance crew put thermal blankets on her and gave her IV fluids. That’s when the husband gave her the news about their son.”

The firefighters returned to the site about 12 hours later. The van was about 40 metres downstream, vertical against a tree. The next day a local farmer found the son’s body.

“I still see the rescue as a great success because we brought the casualties from the water home,” Denis said. “There was nothing we could have done for the son.

“When you’re isolated, rescues become very complicated and difficult, because there’s no help coming to you. When you’re on your own, you’re on your own. But we kept our wits about us. My only thought was, *we bring them home.*”

### The hardest rescue

Senior Firefighter Matthew Foster said when the team arrived at Widgee Creek for the rescue, the water was about 1.5 metres over the causeway.

“Denis and I made our way across in the boat and as we got towards the wife a tree hit the front of our boat and flipped us out,” he said.

“After about 40 minutes we made our way to the husband. We secured ourselves in that tree and managed to extract him using another boat.

“Denis devised a plan to rescue the wife by putting throw bags in the trees. It was out of the box but it worked really well.

“We were in the water for four and a half hours and the water rose four and a half metres. At one point we thought we’d lost her – the water rose over her head and she disappeared, but a tree broke off and fell in front of her and lowered the water level.

“Full-size trees were floating down the creek. I got hit by half a dozen of them and I’m sure the others did too. The adrenaline was running so much I didn’t really notice, but I was definitely battered and bruised.

“When we went back the next day, the water had lifted up the whole road, carried it 20 metres downstream and laid it perfectly flat again.

“It’s the hardest rescue I’ve ever done. We were elated to get them both out. We were exhausted, waterlogged and freezing cold, but the main thing was we got them out.”



Tropical Cyclone Oswald made landfall in Queensland on 21 January 2013.



This map shows the path of Tropical Cyclone Oswald at six-hour intervals.



*Floodwaters in Bundaberg flowed at more than 70 kilometres an hour.*

### Swept under a bridge

Firefighters performed a desperate rescue when a 14-year-old boy was swept into floodwaters and held onto a tree in Frenchman's Creek near Rockhampton.

Station Officer Brett Williams from Yeppoon Fire and Rescue Station was among the rescuers.

"We'd been out since about midnight because 29 swiftwater jobs had been called in during the night," Brett said.

"When the Frenchman's Creek job came in at 7am, we raced straight down to the creek. There was chaos at the scene and people were saying the boy wasn't going to last much longer.

"Our plan was for me to get to the tree while tethered to one side and put a personal flotation device (PFD) on him.

"The boy was among a heap of trees with a lot of debris and rubbish, so it took me several tries to reach him without getting tangled up.

"The others threw a line from the opposite bank with a PFD on it. I put that on him and lowered him into the strong side of the creek."

Brett tried to reach the bank, but a stormwater system underwater kept pushing them away.

"We came to a tree that had fallen in the water. I lifted the boy up, pushed him onto the tree and another firefighter, Nathaniel Dolgner, grabbed him off it.

"I flipped under the tree and Nathaniel tried to pull me up but he couldn't so I let go and released myself from the line.

"I was swept under a bridge. When I'd been holding onto the tree with the boy, I'd looked ahead and noticed the bridge was clear of debris, so I knew I'd be ok if I could get myself to the right side of the river where the current was slower. We always have an exit plan if we can.

"I got to the right side and a downstream safety pulled me in with a throw bag. Once the boy was safe on dry land, it was a huge relief."

### Holding on

Station Officer Nathaniel Dolgner also remembers the rescue at Frenchman's Creek.

"Brett made his way to the boy from the eastern bank while we waited downstream just north of the bridge," Nathaniel said.

"When he and the boy reached the fallen tree, they were right in front of me but I didn't have a life vest. By chance a police officer was walking by with a life vest and I just grabbed it off him and ran toward the tree.

"I got hold of Brett's arm, but the water was too strong to pull him up. I remember looking between Brett, who kept going under the water, and the terrified boy.

"Brett let go because the water kept pushing his head under the water and it was pulling me over the tree as well.

"I knew he wanted me to release him, so I did. His head came up about four metres down the creek and he went under the bridge.

"I watched to make sure he didn't get caught on anything and yelled out to the others.

"I helped the boy get to the bank, and I remember him asking me if Brett would be okay and I think I said something stupid like, 'He's black ops, they can't die' and then I ran off downstream to see if he was okay. I believe Brett should be awarded The Cross of Valour for that rescue."



*Ongoing swiftwater training is crucial for such events.*



# FAR NORTHERN REGION

## The Great Wheelbarrow Race

After a four-year hiatus and under the guidance of Third Class Firefighter and Auxiliary Jared Hohns, the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) team, the Blazers, were back in the running to win the Great Wheelbarrow Race this year. Run over three days, the race covers a total of 140 kilometres.

Jared said the team’s goal was to have as much fun as possible while raising money for a good cause. They raised more than \$3000 for the Mareeba Animal Refuge operated by Friends of the Animals.

“The Animal Refuge was our choice of charity because there is a lot of hard work the team do that does not get noticed,” Jared said. “It is an independent, non-government community-based charity, providing animal care and protection services. The refuge is one of the only ones on the Tablelands that helps our animals as far away as Cooktown and Cairns.”

The team was a mix of newbies and veterans, with Jared and his brother Jordan having 15 years of race experience between them. Other team runners were Dylan Atkinson, Jason Lea, Tracy Marcel and Kyle Rayner, while Megan Hendry, Tommy Daly and Haydan Bonaccorsi ran the race for their first time.

The morning of the race saw the team parade down the main street of Mareeba with Blazer Bear and his twin making an appearance to join in the antics.

The Blazers won the Corporate Services Category and came third overall. They also broke the Corporate Services Category record by over one hour with a time of 07:00:07.



## 23 Yankee Recruit Class success

When the recruit classes were created, a special class was planned that would target young people aged 16 to 18 who were considering a career in emergency services or defence.

The course was run with a slightly different format and included discussions with officers from QFES, Queensland Police Service and Queensland Ambulance Service, who spoke to the group about their careers, day-to-day roles and pathway to entry.

In addition, the volunteers completed all the courses required up to Field Operations Member, graduating with Community Member Rank and their Certificate II in Public Safety (SES).



## Supporting disaster resilience in Indigenous communities

The Torres Cape Indigenous Council Alliance (TCICA) brings together local government authorities from across the Torres Strait, Cape York and Gulf region.

On 11 May, the TCICA hosted the third Indigenous Local Government Disaster Resilience Forum in Cairns. The forum was attended by Inspector-General of Emergency Management Alistair Dawson, CEO Queensland Reconstruction Authority Major General Jake Ellwood, mayors, council representatives, critical service providers and other organisations supporting disaster resilience activities in Queensland’s Indigenous communities.

Forum participants discussed topics including a case study on the Cook Shire resupply for remote communities, disaster resilient solutions from AirBridge Networks, and new technology that generates high-quality drinking water using the sun to extract water from air.

A surprise award presented to Disaster Management Officer Narelle Dukes of Cook Shire Council came as no surprise to those who are aware of her reputation and what she has achieved to improve resilience in her community. Narelle was presented the award for Excellence in Disaster Management by Inspector-General Alistair Dawson, who praised her for her passion in the role and for keeping her communities safe.

The level of participation in the forum was a clear demonstration of the need for practical and focused discussion on disaster preparation, planning and resilience.

The class was honoured to be presented with their certificates by Commissioner Leach during a special barbeque graduation while the Executive Leadership Team was in Cairns. These 20 new members have taken up positions in seven SES groups.



# NORTHERN REGION

## Emergency Services Complex official opening

The Northern Region Emergency Services Complex (NRESC) was officially opened on Wednesday 17 May by Minister for Fire and Emergency Services Mark Ryan and Acting Commissioner Mike Wassing.

The NRESC, at Mount St John in Townsville, is the new home of Northern Region’s Regional Office, Rural Fire Service and State Emergency Service Area Offices, Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) Professional Development Command and FRS Community Safety Command.

Work is still ongoing to finalise the fit-out for FireCom Northern. The Northern Region Workshop will also relocate upon the end of their current lease.

The NRESC is also home to Recruit Course 140. Acting Assistant Commissioner Michael O’Neil, Acting Director of Regional Operations Phil Faint, and Director of Regional Development Kevin Anderson welcomed Recruit Course 140 to QFES on Wednesday 10 May. This is the first course held at the NRESC.



## WOW Day in Northern Region

QFES members across our region celebrated the wonderful dedication of our State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers on Wear Orange Wednesday. From everyone here in Northern Region, a heartfelt thank you to the SES for everything you do. .

## Paluma brigade serving the community for 40 years

The Paluma Rural Fire Brigade celebrated their 40th anniversary in April. At a barbeque lunch, First Officer Ross Hyne thanked those who made the brigade what it is today.

Lynn Hyland provided a historical narrative on the formation of the brigade, which started in April 1983 with a small loan from the Paluma Progress Association to purchase a trailer for housing firefighting equipment.

After cutting a cake to mark the occasion, the brigade acknowledged their longest serving members, including founding member and former First Officer Len Cook, and Les and Lynn Hyland, who have all been active members for 36 years.





# CENTRAL REGION

## Biloela awards

The Biloela Fire and Rescue Command held a special awards night for Biloela and Thangool Fire and Rescue Stations.

The awards night was delayed for several years due to various difficulties, but QFES finally had the opportunity to recognise crew members who attended a road traffic crash involving a car and a fully loaded cattle truck that caught on fire.

The incident occurred in Banana on the Dawson Highway and took just over 16 hours to complete. Unfortunately, the driver of the car passed away as a result of injuries sustained.

The Commissioner's Unit Commendation was awarded to firefighters from Moura, Biloela and Gracemere Fire and Rescue Stations, as well as Banana Rural Fire Brigade.

Captains Matthew Kessler and Patrick Hollands were presented with the ACT Medal for assisting our ACT comrades during the Black Summer bushfires in January 2020. As part of the Remote Area Firefighting Team, they provided fire breaks in terrain that was inaccessible to vehicles.



## Moura's 50-year celebration

The Biloela Fire and Rescue Command honoured their best and brightest at Moura Fire and Rescue Station.

An Assistant Commissioner's Certificate of Appreciation was presented to Auxiliary Firefighter Anthony Watson for his incredible dedication to produce an historical book on the Moura Fire and Rescue Station following a recent celebration of its 50th anniversary.

Anthony spent hours searching the archives and interviewing former and current firefighters to ensure the book was as accurate as possible. Copies of old handwritten documents and correspondence were also included in the book.

Captain Patrick Hollands showed a special painting completed by his late mother, Palma Hollands, a vocal supporter of QFES. Captain Hollands described how his mother wanted to create a memorable keepsake for the station and since her passing, it has become an even more meaningful gift. The painting is proudly displayed in a prominent location in the station's training room.



## Emerald Emergency Services Cadets support ANZAC Day

The Emerald Emergency Services Cadets stepped up and filled a void when the defence forces were unable to supply guards for the Catafalque Party for Emerald's ANZAC Day service.

With only a few hours' notice, the Cadet Unit supplied guards for the morning service. The feedback was extremely positive from both the RSL and the community in general.

Well done to our cadets for their prompt and professional assistance in undertaking such an honoured task.

## Cultural groups celebrate faith, culture and families

The Queensland Police Service in partnership with QFES, Multicultural Australia, the Queensland Human Rights Commission, Central Queensland Multicultural Association and Integreat hosted the sixth annual Multi Faith Dinner at the Frenchville Sports Club in June.

The Multi Faith Dinner allows government and other agency representatives to sit down and share a meal with leaders from our diverse community. Community and religious leaders join together and promote the shared values of all faiths.

In all, 125 guests representing 21 cultures and 11 religions joined in the evening's festivities. Guests were entertained

by Tu-Te Awaroa Maori Culture Group and First Nations People performances by Wuru and Michael Amber. They enjoyed an informative panel discussion with the theme of 'Families'.





# NORTH COAST REGION

## Awards season

International Women's Day is a global celebration held annually on 8 March, celebrating the achievements of women around the world and bringing attention to the benefits of gender equality.

This year's event, led by Queensland Corrective Services, had the theme of 'Courage, Strength, Resilience' and recognised the valuable contributions women in our workforce make.

Three of the award recipients came from North Coast Region:

- SES Outstanding Female Leader – Leonie Corcoran, Group Leader, State Emergency Service (SES) Kawana
- RFS Outstanding Female Leader – Annie Garwood, First Officer, Tirroan Rural Fire Brigade
- QFES Mentor of the Year – Jenny Millers, Area Controller, SES Wide Bay Burnett.

In other awards news, at the recent Senior Leadership Team meeting, Assistant Commissioner Gary McCormack presented a National Emergency Medal for the 2019 Bushfires to Area Controller Patrick Swindells.

Pat recently joined the SES as the Sunshine Coast Area Controller and previously worked for the Queensland Police Service.



## A day to remember

You never know what your day will bring. After two of their fellow workshop mechanics left for greener pastures, our two remaining mechanics, Frank and Anthony, have been working diligently.



Any day can see these two up to their elbows in grease and oils, climbing over an appliance to find that squeak or driving up to five hours to reach an outlying station whose appliance won't start.

Frank was recently traveling from Kingaroy to Murgon when he received a call from Anthony asking him to make a 200-kilometre detour to Gayndah to carry out urgent repairs.

Frank headed back to the coast, but on the way he came across a driver off the side of the road. He stopped to offer help and found her in a serious state, dropping in and out of consciousness, vomiting blood and unable to exit the car.

He started giving her first aid and soon a single-crewed ambulance arrived, followed by two firefighters. They all worked together to extract the patient and put her in the ambulance.

Frank knew the paramedic couldn't look after the patient and drive at the same time, so when the paramedic asked for help, Frank was happy to drive. Making sure the patient was secure and the paramedic safe, Frank turned on the lights and sirens and made it to the hospital in record time.

Superintendent Andrew Bailey presented Frank with a Certificate of Appreciation for going above and beyond to help the woman.



## Clash at Allianz Stadium

On Anzac Day this year, the first ever Australian Firefighter Rugby League Team was established.

The team played against the Australian Defence Force team at Allianz Stadium in Sydney before the Anzac Day Clash between the Sydney Roosters and St George Dragons.

The firefighters went down 26 to 16, but it was a huge honour for the players involved.

The players representing QFES (pictured above from left to right) were Ben Wieczorek, Billy Rogers, Matthew Boyce, Tom Eyles, Jack Battleday, Josh Seage and Adam Marr.



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# BRISBANE REGION



## Chip's dramatic rescue

When A Shift Caboolture and Burpengary responded to a horse that had become trapped after falling through a wooden bridge, they knew they were in for a unique challenge.

There was every chance Chip the horse was going to pass away, but using slings, boards and angle grinders and workshopping ideas with Charlotte the vet, the crew managed to make the impossible possible.

The team worked tirelessly for several hours to extract Chip and manually drag him off the bridge. A crew from Rocksberg Rural Fire Brigade provided support along with Caboolture auxiliary firefighters, Queensland Ambulance Service and Queensland Police Service.

Charlotte did incredible work to keep Chip sedated and then, even more challenging, to bring him out of sedation without him breaking a leg or causing further damage.

Once Chip was back on his feet and enjoying a drink, everyone breathed a massive sigh of relief.

Chip spent seven weeks in hospital and when he recovered, the crews, along with Tarni and Vanessa from FireCom, who were heavily involved on the radio, visited Chip to check on his progress and catch up with Bek, his grateful owner.

It was a heart-warming moment when they saw Chip happy, healthy and playing with his brother. It reminded the crews that being part of QFES isn't just about racing to emergencies and moving onto the next one, it's about making differences in people's lives and that includes our furry friends, great and small.

## Mark Rutter hangs up his helmet

Station Officer Mark Rutter celebrated his retirement after 31 years on the job, with the last 10 years at Caboolture Fire and Rescue Station on B Shift. Mark's commitment to being a well-respected officer is unparalleled, and he is always willing to go above and beyond to ensure the safety of others.

Acting Chief Superintendent Paul Durston presented Mark with a certificate. We thank Mark for his unwavering dedication to this noble profession.



## Firefighters of the future

QFES has a strong presence at careers days across Brisbane, discussing pathways to a career as a firefighter and avenues for volunteering with the State Emergency Service and Rural Fire Service.

Firefighter Bri Ostapovitch (pictured centre) recently shared career information with students at Marist College in Ashgrove.

QFES also attended Earnshaw College with the Blue Edge Program, a state-wide initiative for young people ranging from 12 to 17.

Blue Edge is a physical training program designed to extend young people's minds and physical capabilities. The program also includes career education, motivational speakers and mentoring to encourage young people to realise their potential.



## Woodford Emergency Services Expo

State Emergency Service (SES), Fire and Rescue Service, Rural Fire Service and Marine Rescue Queensland gathered at an emergency services expo at the Woodford Showground.

Several hundred emergency services personnel were joined by thousands of members of the community. QFES members held demonstrations, spoke with community members and handed out brochures on how to mitigate risk ahead of storms, floods, cyclones and bushfires.

A highlight was Moreton 61, a large firefighting tanker operated by Moreton Bay Regional Council's bushfire mitigation team.

Children climbed aboard fire appliances, floodboats and SES all-terrain vehicles, some dressed in cut-down SES uniforms and helmets.





# SOUTH EASTERN REGION

## Northern Exercise NSW

A group of 12 Rural Fire Service (RFS) volunteers and a staff member from South Eastern Region attended the annual Northern Exercise NSW 2023.

The exercise was hosted by RFS NSW in Glenn Innes, where more than 30 appliances, 200 volunteers and a support crew of 100 staff and volunteers came together to refresh their skills in round-robin scenarios.

Exercises included road crash rescue, gas fire, pumping and pump maintenance, first aid, basic skills and an obstacle course.

The crews from South Eastern Region made an impression by taking out several awards, including:

- Best Crew Leader – Kristi Leigh West, West Tamborine Mountain Rural Fire Brigade
- Best Crew Member – Megan Reid, Gilston Advancetown Rural Fire Brigade
- Best Appliance – Coomera Valley 51
- Runner-up Best Strike Team Leader – Wayne Teece, South Coast Area

Crews enjoyed meeting and training with other volunteers from across the border, using NSW appliances and learning the different techniques they use in their operations. The RFS looks forward to next year's exercise and strongly encourages volunteers to attend.



## Confined space exercise

A Shift Ipswich Command conducted a confined space rescue exercise at the Old Telstra Exchange in Ipswich, the perfect venue for the scenario of a trapped worker caught under a collapsed concrete beam.

Crews were required to conduct a deep entry into the confined space under emergency conditions to locate the casualty, conduct first aid, use an air bag to lift the beam and release the casualty, then package him for recovery to fresh air.

The initial entry point was restricted to ensure crews had to remove BA cylinders from their backs, push them through first and replace them once inside. Their next challenge was to search the dark space with torches.

Once they located the casualty, the crew called for equipment to be brought to the entry point. They returned several times to move the equipment to the scene. The Lima crew entered with flight sets and air lines from the BA trolley and helped move the gear to the scene.

## Springbrook Twin Falls rescue

Nerang Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) crews responded to a report of a walker off a track in Springbrook National Park with a suspected broken ankle. They mobilised an additional crew to assist in what was first considered a probable walkout.

On arrival, it quickly became apparent the casualty had life-threatening injuries, so they put a top-belay rope system in place to access them. This became a protracted incident and the Rescue 500 helicopter was notified to assist with a winch-out. FRS and Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) crews were lowered to the casualty by rope and worked together to prepare the casualty for extrication. The Rescue 500 crew showed absolute professionalism in their ability to access the area under challenging conditions.

This was a multi-agency coordinated response with personnel from FRS, QAS, Queensland Police Service, State Emergency Service and Rescue 500 all working to achieve a successful outcome. They worked in difficult conditions in fading light to get the critically injured casualty airlifted to hospital.





# SOUTH WESTERN REGION

## Preparing for fire season

Weather patterns over the past 10 years have seen our region experience everything from drought to significant flooding. This has meant the landscape and bush vegetation have changed considerably.

Since South Western Region covers some of the most diverse and remote areas of Queensland, it's essential we build capability across the region through our partner agencies and organisations.

To help identify these changes in the landscape in anticipation of the upcoming fire season, the Rural Fire Service (RFS) facilitated Overall Fuel Hazard Assessment (OFHA) workshops in Injune and Charleville, with more scheduled for later in the year.

These workshops are targeted at personnel from our partner agencies, including regional councils and shires, the Department of Transport and Main Roads, and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, in collaboration with QFES staff, volunteers and fire wardens.

Francis Hines, who wrote the most recent edition of the OFHA workbook, is delivering the workshops. Francis challenges participants to think like a fire, consider the connectivity of vegetation layers from the ground to the canopies, and identify options to remove rungs of the ladder to reduce a bushfire's magnitude.

A key outcome of these workshops is the local knowledge that has been captured and shared between participants.

Sharing stories on previous bushfires, discussing where issues exist and identifying key organisational capability has all been extremely critical. This sharing of information and development of cooperative partnerships with local agencies will be extremely valuable in the upcoming fire season.



## Safety on our roads

The launch of National Road Safety Week was held at Toowoomba LifeFlight on 15 May, with the theme of 'Pledge to drive so others survive'. This annual initiative highlights the extent of road trauma and ways to reduce it. Each year, about 1200 people are killed on our roads.

Acting Chief Superintendent Warren Buckley, Acting Superintendent Chris Martial and Acting Inspector Kent Barron all attended the launch.

This event was well supported by the Queensland Police Service, Queensland Ambulance Service, Department of Transport and Main Roads, LifeFlight and Toowoomba Regional Council.



## WOW Day

On Wear Orange Wednesday or WOW Day, we encourage communities across Australia to wear orange and thank all State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers who generously give their time to help communities.

These brave individuals dedicate time to training as well as helping strangers in need and responding to emergencies at any time of the day and night.

The team in South Western Region celebrated WOW Day in style and shared some orange cakes and scones for morning tea. Paddy the Platypus came along as well as members from the Queensland Police Service.



# Excellence on display

The Commissioner's Awards for Excellence shone a light on QFES staff and volunteers. *Response* spoke with two of the recipients about their work.

Departmental Liaison Officer (DLO) Cathy Knapp received both the Values Award and the Commissioner's Outstanding Award for her unwavering display of the QFES values.

"I was in complete shock when my name was announced," Cathy said. "I just felt so grateful to be at the awards ceremony itself, surrounded by such incredible people doing great work.

"As the DLO, I facilitate the communication and liaison between the minister's office and QFES. This includes coordinating materials required for Parliament."

Cathy was recognised for her outstanding service delivery, including researching issues to deliver accurate advice to the minister's office, and providing whole-of-department responses to issues.

She also resolves problems arising from conflicting information with government policy and departmental objectives, and resolves enquiries and complaints made to the minister's office.

"The important work our staff and volunteers do for their community is incredibly inspirational," Cathy said.

"The QFES values align with my own personal values, and I believe they are essential for building positive relationships, fostering a sense of community and promoting personal growth.

"QFES is such a unique organisation and one I am proud to say I work for. Whether

it's frontline personnel or those in head office, people go above and beyond to assist each other and are very generous with their time.

"The success of the DLO role is based on all the staff within the department who assist me, often with very short timeframes. While I don't have an official 'team' as such, I work very closely with staff from all over the department, which makes me feel like part of a team.

"Like a lot of people in the department, probably my biggest challenge is juggling my family with three young kids and work!"

## Above and beyond in Woorabinda

Lieutenant Lee Butler from Moura Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) won this year's Capable Communities Award for his work with the Woorabinda Indigenous community, west of Rockhampton.

Woorabinda experienced three house fires in August and September 2022, but there were only four rural firefighters in the community and a limited crew at nearby Baralaba, so Moura also responded.

Lee took the initiative to review pre-incident planning strategies and found that Woorabinda had no electronic hydrant mapping via FireCom. He approached his Area Commander, Acting Inspector Scott Castree and presented a plan to manually map the hydrants.

"I was very surprised to win this award because it's completely unexpected," Lee said. "You don't do this stuff to get an award, but to help your community.

"We live an hour away, but we're often first response for the Woorabinda community. We've had a lot of trouble in the past trying to locate the hydrants, especially at night.

"There are about a hundred hydrants and it took us two days in the middle of summer to map them, clean them out and flush them. We walked every street of Woorabinda and it was a really positive experience.

"Woorabinda has a fairly small population and they're very friendly people. Everyone stops to say hello. We showed a lot of kids around the fire truck and talked to the locals.

"The kids were good little helpers. Two small boys came past on their pushbikes and asked us what we were doing. I showed them how the water goes into the truck from the hydrant and comes out the hose.

"They rode out in front of us, found the next hydrant and pointed it out. It went from two kids to 10.

"Now we can do our job better and it gives people peace of mind, knowing their water services have been maintained."

Lee didn't stop at Woorabinda Shire. Working together with Scott Castree and the Geographic Information System team, he arranged for the hydrants in the Banana Shire, which covers a community of about 15,000 residents, to be loaded onto TOM.



Cathy Knapp received the Values Award and the Commissioner's Outstanding Award.



Lee Butler (centre) received the Capable Communities Award.



The IT Directorate team. Sitting left to right: Acting Executive Manager Business Systems Karolyn Maule, Acting Executive Manager Project Delivery Unit Rose Cudahy and Executive Director Garth Wilshire. Standing left to right: Acting Director ICT Portfolio Management Branch Rob Winchester and Acting Executive Manager Engagement and Partnerships Unit Farah Zavahir.

# IT services level up

Since Garth Wilshire took the helm as Executive Director of the new IT Directorate a year ago, QFES' IT services have gone from strength to strength.

It's not easy setting up a new IT Directorate, but that's exactly the kind of challenge Garth enjoys, and it appears his new role is the perfect fit.

"As a State Emergency Service (SES) volunteer, I have a personal interest in emergency services, so making life easier for firefighters, auxiliary firefighters, volunteers and support staff is very close to my heart," Garth said.

"I also thrive in environments that are going through change and enjoy building strong relationships with stakeholders so I can shape the new environment based on their feedback about IT pain points and expectations."

## A collaborative vision for IT

Historically IT services were provided to QFES by an external provider who serviced several agencies. QFES members felt they weren't a priority and experienced frustrating service delivery.

As a result, the new IT Directorate's vision is to 'Make IT simplified, smarter, connected and user friendly'.

"It was important for us to consult with QFES members to build strong relationships and get their input," Garth said. "This started with 45 workshops throughout the region to inform the ICT strategy.

"Among other items, the strategy details customers' expectations from the IT Directorate in the next five years."

The IT Directorate is undertaking more than 50 projects over the next 12 months to achieve their priorities:

- enabling frontline to improve their IT experience, systems and connectivity
- addressing foundational technology to improve systems reliability
- establishing modern and sustainable ICT to replace aging systems
- providing access to information to unlock data and access where needed
- protecting personal information and privacy
- providing contemporary service delivery.

"Our projects include developing a QFES-wide system to mobilise volunteers, piloting new technologies for operational communications, establishing a data and integration platform, and replacing more end-user devices in a shorter timeframe," Garth said.

Garth encourages his whole team to be more accessible to customers by visiting operational locations in all regions. The team has established an ongoing schedule of monthly visits by their leaders and staff.

"This is not just about listening but turning feedback into action and closing that feedback loop with follow-up."

The team have also done extensive work to create a positive culture for the IT Directorate, carrying out leadership and culture workshops over the past six months, with a focus on values and behaviours.

## Cyber security a focus

"We are taking cyber security very seriously," Garth said. "Keeping people's personal information safe is of utmost importance and we are increasing our focus and investment to achieve that.

"Everyone is a target for cyber security in 2023. Keeping our data secure is everyone's responsibility and we all have our own role to play in ensuring the threat doesn't enter the IT landscape.

"It only takes one click on a suspicious link and our QFES environment is compromised."

To play your part, make sure you don't click on links unless you recognise and trust the sender, and report phishing attempts via Outlook.

For more information on how to keep your personal information safe, visit the Cyber Security section on the Gateway or the Australian Cyber Security Centre at <https://www.cyber.gov.au/>

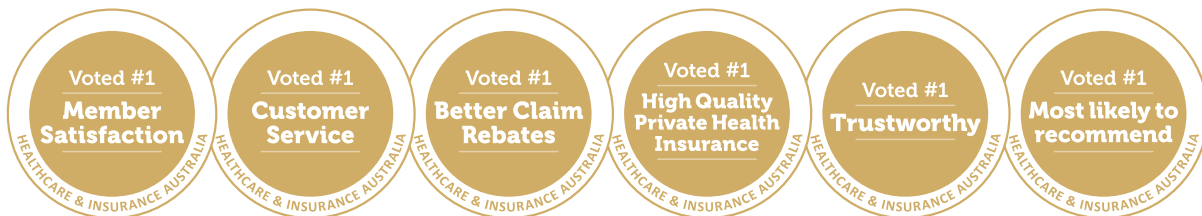


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Representatives of the VMRAQ, AVCGA and Marine Rescue Implementation Team were recognised with Commissioner's Certificates of Appreciation.

# The future of marine rescue

**The creation of Marine Rescue Queensland (MRQ) and its transition to the Queensland Police Service (QPS) is a key milestone in the broader QFES Reform.**

Queensland's marine rescue services are currently delivered by Volunteer Marine Rescue Association Queensland (VMRAQ) and the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association (AVCGA).

The 2018 Blue Water Review into Queensland's volunteer marine rescue services recommended establishing a single service and a single entity.

Acting Executive Director Troy Davies managed QFES' response to the Blue Water Review and the early stages of establishing the new, single service. The establishment of Marine Rescue Queensland is a government commitment that will be completed by 30 June next year.

Troy said the process was all about engagement.

"When I began in the Marine Rescue Implementation Program, known then as the Blue Water Review, my focus was on getting on the ground and talking to people. The existing marine rescue services were eager for the review because they saw opportunities to create efficiencies and secure the future of marine rescue for Queensland.

"The greatest thing about the process was the volunteers. Marine rescue volunteers are passionate, professional and highly trained. They dedicate a large portion of their lives to make sure when called upon they can rescue or support people of the community.

"I am extremely humbled and honoured to have worked with so many hundreds of volunteers who inspired me constantly. They will take marine rescue forward into the future."

The Marine Rescue Implementation Program officially transferred to QPS at the end of April and QFES held a farewell to acknowledge the team's efforts and wish them well in delivering the program. QFES looks forward to continuing to work alongside them. Troy said the transition to QPS was a landmark moment.

"The transition to QPS is a bittersweet thing for me. There's been so much work done by many people within QFES over the years.

"We should all be very proud of the significant and important work that's gone into our collaboration with VMRAQ and AVCGA and the Marine Rescue Implementation Project. We'll be keenly

watching from the sidelines as the program progresses over at QPS," he said.

Matt Thompson, Director of the Marine Rescue Implementation Program, is excited about the program's progress.

"It feels really positive to have reached this point," Matt said. "The future of MRQ under QPS has been very well received by the volunteers and we're excited to continue our work to deliver the most value for volunteers and the boating public.

"There is a natural synergy between MRQ and Queensland Water Police, so our new home within QPS presents an opportunity for us to work more closely together to deliver an even better service to Queenslanders.

"I appreciate the great work that is done every day by marine rescue volunteers across the state. Seeing their tireless dedication to keeping people safe at sea is extraordinary, and it has illuminated just how important MRQ will be."

Matt and his team have learned how challenging it can be for volunteers to deliver consistent and sustainable services in some regional and remote areas, which is an issue a single, integrated and fully funded service will solve.

In the meantime, the Marine Rescue Implementation Program has been able to step in and provide additional funding and support for training programs and delivery to existing units so they can continue to provide marine rescue services.

"For example, we worked with VMRAQ to establish an additional regional and remote training funding agreement to assist with basic marine qualification training for community members and volunteers," Matt said.

"There are also ongoing challenges for service delivery in areas like the Torres Strait, so recently we focused on working with our partners to build capability across the squadrons with additional training, skills coordination and resources. We're also excited that they will receive the first vessel the program will deliver.

"What this process has continued to reaffirm is the value of our volunteers and the extraordinary things ordinary people do to look after their fellow community members."



At an exercise in Woodford, Fire and Rescue Service crews and Rural Fire Service brigades responded to a simulated structure fire with a multi-pump relay.



QFES members across the state participated in marches on Anzac Day. Photo by Pathfinder Photography.



Firefighters underwent Technical Rescue training in scenarios involving a silo and a narrow tunnel.



Emergency Services Cadets from Wolffdene teamed up with Logan City State Emergency Service and Cedar Creek Wolffdene Rural Fire Brigade to host the South Eastern Region Cadet Rescue Challenge.



Two-year-old Natalie, who has a passion for firetrucks, went on a tour of the Laidley Fire and Rescue Station.



Local Rural Fire Service crews worked to contain a large bushfire at Takura near Hervey Bay. Photo by Aldershot Rural Fire Brigade.





The Fire and Rescue Service AFL team took on the South-East Queensland Army team in the ANZAC Cup at the Brisbane Lions' new training facility, Brighton Homes Arena.



Volunteers from the Canine Urban Search and Rescue team spent Easter Sunday practising bark alerts, building searches and working on unstable surfaces.



State Emergency Service volunteers from North Burnett promoted recruitment and community resilience at the Gayndah Orange Festival.



Twenty-eight riders traveled 705 kilometres from Gladstone to Brisbane for this year's Bike for Burns, raising funds for the Children's Hospital Foundation.



Jessica Eadie (far right) traveled to South Africa to practise hazard reduction burns in a unique environment.

# A South African exchange

Jessica Eadie attended a firefighting exchange in South Africa, her home country, to test her skills in a vastly different landscape and be inspired by industry legends.

In March Jess attended the Women in Fire Training Exchange South Africa (WTREX SA), a 12-day exchange focused on prescribed burning in the wildlands and mountainsides of Western Cape.

A Rural Fire Service (RFS) volunteer since September 2010, she also works as a Bushfire Safety Officer in South Eastern Region. She's done remarkable work in her career at QFES, but she never saw herself as a firefighter when she was growing up.

"I studied graphic design and animation in South Africa, so my intention was to follow my animation dreams and do that for a living, but I ended up immigrating to Australia in 2010 with my parents and brother," Jess said.

"We lived in a bushfire-risk area and the local RFS brigade held a bushfire awareness day, which Mum and I decided to attend because we didn't know anything about bushfires.

"There I met one of my good friends and the people who helped spur on my excitement and love for the RFS and QFES. I was significantly depressed from my move, and the people and volunteering helped me assimilate more quickly into Australia.

"My first big incident was the 2010/11 floods. That event changed my view altogether and I decided from that moment I never wanted to leave Australia. The community spirit and the way Australians

help each other out really made such an impact on my world."

When she saw an opportunity to join the first WTREX program outside the US and Canada, Jess went for it.

"I got so much out of the exchange," Jess said. "I fell in love with my old country again. I hate to admit, when I left South Africa in 2010, I was glad to be rid of it and had only been back once since moving to Australia.

"The training team shared so much of their experience and delivered great training packages in fire investigation, prescribed burn planning, mental health in crisis, leadership and so on.

"I was surrounded by so many intelligent, powerful, strong women who, as time went on, became better leaders, more confident – absolute powerhouses!"

Jess was Highly Commended in this year's International Women's Day Awards for her contributions to gender equality at QFES.

"I work extremely hard to empower the women around me and show that just because we are women, it doesn't mean we can be limited in our roles. I take opportunities or make them happen, like the WTREX program."

Participants trained in the South African fynbos – a belt of shrubland that stretches from the west coast to the south-east coast

and is rich in biodiversity, with about 6000 plant species unique to that area.

"Conducting prescribed burns in my home country is something I never thought would happen, but it was wonderful to put into practice the skills I learnt in Australia and South Africa," Jess said.

"The vegetation types we burnt were vastly different. It was also amazing to see how different our fire services are, but similar in our management, Incident Management System structure and paperwork.

"It also made me appreciate how lucky we are in QFES. The simple fact of having FESSN available to all volunteers and staff is huge, in comparison to other countries around the world who do not have support.

"Slip-on units or appliances are not readily available in South Africa. It was a wild concept for me to see every person on the fire line with a rake hoe or beater. We are also extremely fortunate to have PPE provided. Most of the people I met had to buy their own gear.

"I was transformed in so many ways, in terms of understanding who I am, what I need to be happy, what I want from my career and the opportunities I need to be better at my job to better serve my community, because ultimately, that's what my priority is – our community.

"I am exploring some more international firefighting opportunities, especially in British Columbia."

# Queensland's cyclone risk

**A recent report shows that not only will climate change bring more intense tropical cyclones to Queensland, many houses in highly populated areas aren't designed to withstand them.**

The Severe Wind Hazard Assessment for South East Queensland (SEQ) report describes the risks tropical cyclones could pose for the region in the years ahead.

Dr Jane Sexton, Executive Manager, Hazard and Risk, said QFES and partners would use the report's findings to help the community prepare.

"The report helps us understand the emergency management considerations for a tropical cyclone in SEQ," Jane said. "It demonstrates the scale of the impact and what that will mean for evacuation, warnings and recovery.

"We don't know when a tropical cyclone will cross the SEQ coast, but when it does, we need to be prepared. And we can start now."

The most significant tropical cyclones in SEQ were in 1954 and 1974, which resulted in major floods.

In 2017, the State Natural Hazard Assessment ranked tropical cyclones as equal highest priority for Queensland.

"Later that year, Tropical Cyclone Debbie had major impacts on the community and the Queensland economy," Jane said.

"We produced a Severe Wind Hazard Assessment for the whole of Queensland in 2020 and found that SEQ was at greatest risk from tropical cyclones due to the high population and vulnerability of our homes.

"What the science is telling us right now is that we are likely to see fewer tropical cyclones in the future but when they do occur, they will be more intense. As the ocean warms, tropical cyclones can be generated further south."



Many houses in SEQ are at risk because they're not sufficiently designed or constructed to withstand sustained strong winds.

"Our homes are constructed using the wind loading standard from the National Construction Code. This standard defines three regions: A, B and C. Wind Region C is cyclonic, B is intermediate and A is non-cyclonic.

"Wind Region C is applied in places like Cairns, Townsville, Mackay and Gladstone. Wind Region B is for locations south of Bundaberg, including the Gold Coast, Brisbane, Sunshine Coast and Fraser Coast. Places like Toowoomba and Emerald are in Wind Region A.

"Homes in Wind Region B must be designed to resist weakened tropical cyclones, but they're not designed for the effects of internal pressurisation.

"This means if debris damages a window or the door is lost, the roof is likely to be damaged or torn off. This happened in Kalbarri in Western Australia when Tropical Cyclone Seroja crossed the coastline in 2021."

In Kalbarri, about 70 per cent of buildings were significantly damaged, even though the maximum wind speed was only 80 to 90 per cent of that specified for Wind Region B.

"In North Queensland, there has been a program to improve the resilience of homes to tropical cyclones," Jane said.

"The Household Resilience Program, managed through the Department of Energy and Public Works, outlined several options, including replacing external hollow-core doors, upgrading the lockset and reinforcing the door frame, protecting windows with shutters or screens, and upgrading roof tie-downs and replacing the roof."

Find out more about the program at [www.qld.gov.au/housing/buying-owning-home/financial-help-concessions/household-resilience-program](http://www.qld.gov.au/housing/buying-owning-home/financial-help-concessions/household-resilience-program).

"Our report analysed how these options could reduce the risk for SEQ and what the cost-benefit would be, since homeowners would see a reduction in their insurance premiums.

"Reducing risk is not just about the current housing stock but understanding how to reduce the future risk with new houses."

About 70,000 pre-code houses and 120,000 modern houses in SEQ are considered to be in the highest wind hazard areas and could benefit from a resilience program.

The report was published by Geoscience Australia in December 2022. It was a result of a collaboration between six local governments in south-east Queensland, Queensland Government and the insurance and research sector. It is available at <https://pid.geoscience.gov.au/dataset/ga/147446>.



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