

Our performance

This section reports on the objectives and strategies of the QFES Strategic Plan 2022–2026 and is a sample of the department’s performance highlights from 2022–23. It is not representative of all work undertaken during this period.

2026 Objective

1. A strong, collaborative and sustainable **QFES** recognised for contemporary and adaptable fire, emergency and disaster management service delivery.

2022–2026 Strategies

- ❖ Lead and support locally trusted networks to prioritise risk reduction, preparedness and information sharing.
- ❖ Deliver public value and service optimisation through contemporary and sustainable resource management.
- ❖ Lead the development and implementation of future-focused legislation and policy.
- ❖ Connect evidence-based decision-making to operationalise strategy, enhance performance and realise efficiencies.
- ❖ Maintain a commitment to ensure the health and safety of our staff and volunteers.

Volunteerism Strategy

Volunteers are critical to the successful delivery of fire and emergency services in Queensland and are essential in building community capacity and enhancing community resilience.

QFES has approximately 32,000 dedicated volunteers across the state in the RFS, SES, Research and Scientific Branch Volunteer Scientific Officer network and AUS-1 DART, and Auxiliary Support Officers and PSOs.

The QFES Volunteerism Strategy, launched in October 2018, aims to support a robust and flexible contemporary volunteer model which reflects best practice, innovation and social trends across volunteerism and embed these models in the QFES culture and ethos.

The Volunteerism Strategy’s implementation program, established in 2019 and reviewed in 2021, concluded at the end of December 2022. The implementation program contained nine key themes with 27 initiatives aligned with the strategy’s strategic priorities and guiding principles. The key themes were:

- ❖ Recruitment and Onboarding
- ❖ Leadership Development
- ❖ Honours and Awards
- ❖ Training
- ❖ Engagement
- ❖ Sustainability
- ❖ Identity and Communication
- ❖ Wellbeing
- ❖ Consultation.

The implementation program was developed to realise the intention of the Volunteerism Strategy through tangible projects that would strategically and sequentially facilitate improvements identified as priorities for volunteers and volunteering within the department and the Queensland community.

The QFES Volunteerism Strategy will be reviewed in light of the Emergency Services Reform.

During the reporting period, the department:

- ❖ developed a digital solution known as the Volunteer Onboarding Improvement Project as part of the Volunteer Onboarding Project. The Volunteer Onboarding Project aims to achieve shorter timeframes for onboarding completion for volunteers in each of the services (FRS, RFS and SES) and increase consistency and reliability in onboarding systems and processes

- ✧ continued to provide Mindarma (refer page 50) an online evidence-based learning program that supports the psychological wellbeing of QFES' volunteers and is proven to enhance psychological resilience. The program is customised for volunteers from FRS, RFS and SES, ensuring the message resonates with each participant and identifies service specific scenarios
- ✧ continued to support delivery of the Emergency Service Volunteer Pin launched in 2019
- ✧ reviewed the Honours, Awards and Recognition Handbook and developed a quick guide for volunteers.

The QFES Volunteerism Strategy is available at: www.qfes.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-03/Volunteerism-Strategy.pdf

Aerial firefighting capability

The QFES State Air Operations Unit provides support to ground crews during bushfire and other emergency events through the provision of safe aircraft, trained personnel and relevant aviation resources.

Queensland has access to over 150 call-when-needed aircraft and National Aerial Firefighting Centre (NAFC) contracted aircraft capable of performing water-bombing, airborne coordination, line scanning or intelligence gathering functions in support of ground crews during bushfires and other emergency events.

QFES will also use aircraft through these commercial providers during severe weather events to assist with transport of rescue crews and cargo, and resupply within affected communities.

Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) (drones) are also extensively used during these types of events as well as more broadly in search incidents and in support of investigations. The RPAS have demonstrated a solid intelligence gathering capability that is increasingly being applied by QFES.

Commencing 2023–24, additional funding is being provided to enhance Queensland's aerial firefighting capability. This investment will provide enhancements to the response capability for the 2023–24 bushfire season by increasing the number of NAFC contracted aircraft.

During Queensland's bushfire season, a Large Air Tanker (LAT) and lead plane is based at Bundaberg due to the coverage area for an hour's flying time of a typical LAT. Coverage includes from the New South Wales (NSW) border to Proserpine, and West to Tambo, allowing for support to the majority of Queensland communities.

The Queensland contracted LAT service is for 84 days starting September each year, with the possibility of extension dependant on seasonal conditions and fire activity at the time. On completion of the service delivery contract, the LAT is transferred to Victoria during its bushfire season and remains in Victoria between seasons, as part of a co-sharing arrangement.

The LAT is a strategic asset equipped to deliver 10,000 litres of fire retardant or firefighting gel to reinforce fire break activities and protect structural or economic assets during bushfire seasons.

The 2022–23 bushfire season saw very limited aircraft activity from August to mid-December 2022, the main timeframe of the NAFC contracted fleet. The bulk of the 2,013 hours flown by aircraft during bushfire operations was with call-when-needed assets from January to March 2023 and predominantly in South Western Region. The LAT did not conduct any operational responses during the 2022 contracted period.

QFES' Climate Action Plan

In anticipation of a climate-challenged future and following the release of the *Queensland Climate Action Plan 2020–2030* (QCAP), QFES has worked to align its services with future needs and reduce its carbon footprint. The department's aim is to build resilience, manage risk, reduce emissions, and lead the emergency management sector's adaptation efforts in response to the challenges posed by a changing climate.

The *QFES Climate Action Plan 2022–26* was released in April 2022. The plan articulates the department's approach to aligning its climate change transition and adaptation actions with the QCAP and contains 13 actions. The department's action plan is available at www.qfes.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-05/QFES-Climate-Action-Plan-2022-26.pdf

The Queensland State Disaster Risk Report highlights the changing climate's impact on disaster risk in Queensland. It emphasises the need to manage long-term climate-induced changes in hazard events. The Severe Wind Hazard Assessment for South-East Queensland recognises and describes heightened risks across the state, including the population centres in the South-East Queensland region. For further information refer page 49.

In 2022–23, QFES developed its inaugural Infrastructure Resilience Plan. QFES assists communities in understanding their local hazards and ensuring they have the right knowledge, information, and resources to strengthen capability and resilience. These same principles extend to the assets owned or operated by QFES. The QFES Infrastructure Resilience Plan enhances the maturing approach for infrastructure investment for the department as it transitions to the Queensland Fire Department. The department will incorporate key information and guidance from the plan into the capital program to ensure future investment decisions help mitigate future risk factors and are sustainable.

QFES is also exploring emissions reduction with electric vehicles and alternative fuels (refer page 27) while addressing fire safety concerns related to lithium-ion batteries and distributed energy resources.

Pioneering a set of transformative scenarios co-designed by emergency service agencies across Australia and New Zealand, QFES applied socio-geo-political and climate scenarios to assess the adaptability of *Strategy 2030* in a climate-challenged world, facilitating preparedness for future disruptions and confirming alignment of high-level strategy with disaster resilience goals (refer page 6).

QFES had previously established Climate Change as a discrete enterprise risk; growing maturity appreciating climate risk and a review of enterprise risks has seen climate change incorporated as a specific cause into a number of enterprise risks rather than as a stand-alone enterprise risk (refer page 75 for more information regarding enterprise risks).

Capital program

Significant capital works initiatives were delivered or progressed during 2022–23 including:

- ✧ **completion** of the:
 - replacement Maryborough permanent and auxiliary fire and rescue station and regional QFES headquarters
 - replacement permanent Loganlea Fire and Rescue Station
- ✧ **commencing (includes planning) or continuing** the:
 - new permanent fire and rescue stations at:
 - Caloundra South
 - Greater Springfield
 - Moreton Bay Central
 - Mount Cotton Road
 - replacement permanent fire and rescue station at Gympie South

- replacement permanent and auxiliary fire and rescue stations at:
 - Airlie Beach
 - Drayton
- QFES Northern Region Emergency Services Complex
- Maryborough Area rural fire brigade headquarters.

In addition, the *Strategic Asset Management Plan 2022–26* (SAMP) was developed and approved by BoM on 30 September 2022. The SAMP provides a high-level overview of the department's:

- ✧ strategic asset management direction and ensures alignment with QFES' strategic business direction
- ✧ asset lifecycle management approach including a summary of the asset portfolio the department controls and uses to support operational and operational support capability
- ✧ asset investment over the next 10 years providing strategic oversight of the department's capital requirements to support future operational capability.

The SAMP will be reviewed and updated annually as part of the department's strategic business and asset planning processes and the capital investment planning process.

To enable the economic delivery of standardised operational facilities statewide, QFES developed a suite of standard fire and rescue station designs which will provide standardised blueprints of facilities for construction purposes, supporting the contemporary delivery of emergency services now and into the future.

QFES has three FRS Indigenous Projects underway that support the *Queensland Government Building and Construction Training Policy*—Caloundra South, Moreton Bay Central and Mount Cotton Road Fire and Rescue Stations. The policy forms part of the State Government's commitment to Closing the Gap and providing equal opportunities to First Nations people through skill development and employment opportunities in the construction sector. Working on the projects, contractors engage First Nations workers as apprentices, trainees or through other workforce training.

The department also continued the practice of recognising Traditional Owners on QFES naming plaques of QFES newly constructed facilities to recognise and increase knowledge and understanding of First Nations cultures, such as the replacement Maryborough permanent and auxiliary fire and rescue station and regional QFES headquarters recognising the Butchulla People.

Fleet management

During 2021–22, the department implemented a multi-year approach to fleet procurement enabling QFES to plan for, and the market to respond to, global and local supply and resource challenges.

The multi-year build program provided for the delivery of 147 RFS appliances (over two years commencing 2022–23) and 118 FRS appliances (over three years commencing 2022–23) bringing the total program to 265 appliances.

Although QFES awarded contracts for the majority of the program prior to the commencement of 2022–23, suppliers experienced ongoing global and local supply and resource challenges limiting the planned deliveries during 2022–23 with 26 fit-for-purpose appliances delivered—20 RFS appliances and six FRS appliances.

Of the remaining 239 appliances on the multi-year build program (127 RFS and 112 FRS appliances), 130 are scheduled for delivery in 2023–24 (72 RFS and 58 FRS appliances), with 109 rolling over into 2024–25 (55 RFS and 54 FRS appliances).

QFES continues to work proactively with suppliers and body build vendors to streamline program delivery and mitigate risks within their capacity to deliver the appliances.

In addition, QFES is also funding and supporting the Rural Fire Brigades Association Queensland Inc. to build an additional appliance to enable RFS staff and volunteers the opportunity to evaluate alternative fleet options as part of QFES' approach to long-term fleet planning and innovation.

QFES continues to undertake research into fleet emissions reduction and decarbonisation strategies including alternative vehicle technologies and reduced carbon fuel options. This aligns with the QCAP and will inform the identification of opportunities to consider lower carbon emission vehicle and fuel options where appropriate across the entire QFES fleet (pool cars, Emergency Response Vehicles and light, medium and heavy appliances for FRS and RFS).

QFES continued to introduce lower carbon emission vehicles into the department's leased fleet, including a combination of hybrid and electric vehicles and continues to assess replacement options on a case-by-case basis.

In May 2023, QFES placed the first Australian order for an electric Volvo FMX prime mover and an order for a Volvo FMX 6x4 prime mover with the latest 13-litre Euro 6 technology which will be trialling fossil-fuel-free Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) as a drop-in diesel replacement.

The trial of these two prime movers is being conducted in the Logistics Fleet segment which is a non-critical tier for response and operations and will allow QFES to measure the benefits of both fully electric heavy vehicles and the application of alternative fuels such as HVO, with a view to further adoption across the wider QFES fleet.

Working for Queensland and Volunteering for Queensland Surveys

QFES is committed to positive workforce experiences and conducts annual workforce experience surveys, such as the Queensland Government Working for Queensland (WfQ) survey and the Volunteering for Queensland (VfQ) survey to measure and monitor staff and volunteer experiences.

The annual surveys are a confidential forum enabling QFES to gauge its performance collectively and in each division and region, and down to the work unit level.

QFES considers the surveys an opportunity to hear the views of the workforce and understand their lived experiences. The results are used as a key evidence base for decision-making at all levels in the department.

The results are considered and progressed to key actions, strategically and tactically designed to focus on positive work environments and experiences that are centred around shared values.

The results from the 2022 workforce experience surveys demonstrate positive results with some areas for improvement.

More than 3,500 QFES members shared their thoughts in the WfQ and VfQ surveys in September 2022. The survey included new questions about health and wellbeing, fairness, equality and diverse experiences. Some of the most positive results related to social support within work groups and teams, particularly in terms of respect and psychological safety.

Survey results show that over 90 per cent of staff and volunteers understand the importance of aligning behaviour to the QFES values. In addition, more than 90 per cent of staff and volunteers felt QFES has a positive impact on Queenslanders' lives, and more than 80 per cent of staff and volunteers reported contributing to positive workplace experiences over the past 12 months.

The surveys also highlighted some areas where QFES needs to develop including leadership, change management, workload and demands, health and wellbeing, performance management and professional development.

As well as individual teams developing action plans in response to survey feedback, a leader's guide was developed to support supervisors across QFES to practically use the survey results in combination with the QFES values to guide team action-planning and behaviour. This toolkit was published on the QFES Gateway (staff intranet) to support leaders to have conversations about the survey results, as well as reflecting on and discussing how their team has lived up to the expectations created in the *Values in action* developed in 2021 (refer page 43).

A key objective of these conversations is to continue the journey to create positive, respectful and safe environments and provide greater understanding regarding individual accountability when making everyday decisions, how to interact with others and the best ways to approach situations in the workplace.

Other key achievements include:

- ✦ reviewed efficacy of the guiding principles contained within the department's long-term strategy—*Strategy 2030*—utilising transformative scenarios as QFES transitions to the new Queensland Fire Department
- ✦ reviewed the QFES Fiscal Sustainability Strategy with BoM endorsement expected in September 2023. The strategy supports a fiscally responsible culture across the department. The strategy's four pillars focus on: foundations of fiscal sustainability; sustainable business practices; investment planning; and a culture of financial capability and fiscal responsibility. Fiscal sustainability is an ongoing focus for the department and includes business-as-usual activities
- ✦ progressed work to embed capability into the department through the development of a capability review and investment process that articulates three clear portfolios of investment. Capability and its associated activities represent what the department does. The identified investment portfolios include ICT, business and operations, and building, fleet and capital. The process is considerate of the pillars detailed in the QFES Fiscal Sustainability Strategy and best practice in portfolio, program and project management. The process provides a consistent, transparent and repeatable procedure to ensure investment into capability to support improved service delivery and mitigation of risk, is at the forefront of the evidence-based decisions to investment
- ✦ continued to review portfolio legislation and progress legislative amendments to support the ongoing effectiveness of services delivered by QFES including:
 - amendments in the *Police Service Administration and Other Legislation Amendment Act (No. 2) 2022* to clarify that a remote-controlled device can be used for entering premises or opening a receptacle; allow for the suspension of a permit to light a fire; and clarify circumstances in which QFES can share information with the QPS
 - amendments in the *Police Powers and Other Legislation Amendments Act (No. 2) 2023* which included the insertion of a new offence into the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990* relating to assaults on persons performing functions or exercising powers under the Act
 - amendments in the *Fire and Emergency Services (Annual Contributions) Amendment Regulation 2023* to apply annual indexation of fees and charges in accordance with the Queensland Government indexation policy to the *Fire and Emergency Services Regulation 2011*.
- ✦ recruited 243 additional firefighters at 30 June 2023 under the 2020 Government Commitment to provide an additional 357 frontline firefighters over five years (commencing 2020–21), with 98 firefighters appointed in 2022–23. The additional firefighters will enhance crewing numbers in some existing locations and provide the additional resources to implement a new FRS Station Crewing Model to enable more contemporary crewing practices. The additional resourcing is also assisting with specialist operational roles including recruit instructors, firefighter development officers and live fire trainers at the SFEST. In addition, the department commenced planning for an additional 143 firefighter positions to be recruited by 30 June 2026 as an outcome of the Independent Review of QFES. Recruitment of the additional 143 firefighters will commence in 2024–25
- ✦ implemented a strategy and action plan to proactively manage perfluoro/polyfluoro alkyl sulfonates (PFAS) issues associated with legacy use of aqueous film forming foam (AFFF). This includes human perfluorochemical testing, management of outstanding AFFF stocks, appropriate environmental management of QFES sites and communication. QFES is undertaking detailed site/off-site investigations at six fire and rescue stations including Airlie Beach, Ayr, Gladstone, Home Hill, Proserpine and Toowoomba

- ◇ continued development of the RPAS (drone) capability across the department. At 30 June 2023, there are 125 drones in service, with 138 trained pilots and nine authorised Senior Remote Pilots. The RPAS capability was used in departmental operations during the reporting period including bushfires, land search, mountain rescue searches, flood events, compliance and prosecution, fire investigation and damage assessments
- ◇ continued development of the Motorised Swiftwater Rescue Craft (MSRC) capability with the purchase of an additional four MSRC units. This takes the total QFES capability to 35 MSRC units across all regions, with a deployment and training cache at the State Deployment Centre in Brisbane for surge capacity. At 30 June 2023, there are 412 trained swiftwater rescue technicians across Queensland that provide emergency response to affected communities in flood and swiftwater rescue incidents. All regions have the swiftwater rescue capability that is delivered from strategically located stations to provide regional and state level response. Of the 412 trained swiftwater rescue technicians, 126 are also trained in MSRC operations, providing an increased level of response capability to support community need. Queensland is the only state that provides this level of MSRC response to flood and swiftwater rescue incidents
- ◇ continued to develop a place-based capability in Mountain Rescue to address the increasing incidence of rescues from the Glasshouse Mountains area, as a result of the surge in popularity of recreational climbing and hiking. North Coast Region has 19 trained FRS Mountain Rescue operators and one trained SES Mountain Rescue operator. This group is supported by an additional nine trained Mountain Rescue Operators from Brisbane Region
- ◇ continued participation in fire safety research activities with various external stakeholders aimed at increasing the department's knowledge and understanding of innovative and emerging building products, technologies, and methods of construction. This included collaboration, research, and policy development relating to electric vehicles and battery energy storage systems, and fire safety principles
- ◇ continued membership of the Safer Buildings Inter-Departmental Committee and Safer Buildings Taskforce. The inter-departmental committee provides oversight of, and direction to the taskforce. The taskforce builds on the work of the previous Non-Conforming Building Products Audit Taskforce.
- ◇ formed the Alternative Energy Systems Advisory Group within QFES to generate an informed and co-ordinated whole-of-department position on matters relating to alternative energy systems and operational response to infrastructure and vehicle incidents
- ◇ maintained a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Papua New Guinea Fire Service (PNGFS) (commenced in 1992) to assist with development and capacity building in PNGFS. The 2017 MoU expired in September 2022 and has been reviewed and is expected to be finalised by 31 August 2023. The renewal of the MoU will assist further development of capacity building initiatives in PNGFS to build on the success of previous donation activities such as the donation of five ex-service QFES fire appliances in 2020–21
- ◇ continued to support Fire and Emergency New Zealand with the provision of expert advice for the safe management of hazardous materials
- ◇ provided expertise nationally and internationally to improve the preparation and response to hazardous materials and chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) incidents. This included engagement with the CBRN Environments STaR Shot Community Advisory Group and multi-national research projects addressing detection, destruction and decontamination of identified threat agents such as the decontamination and laundry effectiveness of personal protective equipment project led by QFES. These engagements improve QFES' capability more broadly and globally across fire response agencies
- ◇ provided a range of invited presentations to state and international audiences addressing emergency planning and responses to incidents, including the Safe Australasia and Hazardous Material Instructors Conference in the United States. Presentations included responses to ammonium nitrate incidents, preventing and planning for fires at hazardous waste management sites, and emergency planning for incidents involving electric buses and other vehicles
- ◇ continued to maintain the currency of fire investigation training with a cohort of nine candidates from around the state commencing the nationally recognised qualification of Advanced Diploma of Public Safety (Fire Investigation) in July 2022.
- ◇ reduced the risk to firefighters from harmful chemicals and contaminants at incidents through the development of a strategic risk-based action plan by the Firefighters Safety Working Group.

- This included improving processes, delivering enhanced personal protective equipment and behavioural changes including the delivery of an education program to effect cultural change. Furthermore, the recording of hazardous material exposure at incidents was improved and air monitoring of a sample of fire stations was undertaken to understand the risk of exposure to diesel emissions
- ✧ endorsed the reviewed QFES Protective Security Strategy and *QFES Strategic Security Plan 2022/2023* in September 2022 as part of the department’s commitment to embedding the *Queensland Protective Security Framework* and continued the security risk assessment program to ensure that QFES adequately manages security risks to its critical functions and assets. The security risk assessment program will continue into 2023–24
 - ✧ partnered with Blue Card Services within the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the Customer Service Area of the Department of Transport and Main Roads to pilot an initiative to assist regional volunteers with the blue card process, whilst providing clarity on the legislative requirements under the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000*. Further community engagement will be undertaken across regional Queensland to deliver on QFES’ commitment to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children in Queensland in line with the QFES Safety for Children Risk Management Strategy (February 2022)
 - ✧ developed training packages and video content for staff and volunteers on:
 - AFDRS
 - bushfire warnings
 - wire entanglement safety for firefighting breathing apparatus teams involved in structural fires
 - structural firefighting helmet deployment for FRS permanent and auxiliary firefighters
 - the Australian and New Zealand Emergency Response Guide Book for hazardous materials incidents.
 - ✧ purchased 20 flaim extinguishers which immerses trainees in virtual reality, delivering a realistic simulation of a range of fire events to train rural volunteer firefighters in first aid firefighting. The kit comprises two elements—the flaim extinguisher and the video monitor case to support brigades who may not have access to suitable monitors. The use of the flaim extinguisher is supported by an accredited training package
 - ✧ reviewed all Continuous Learning Program sessions to update content and developed new sessions for electric vehicles, lithium-ion batteries, and green energy. The review was aligned to the repositioning of the Continuous Learning Program into aXcelerate—the new Student Management System
 - ✧ acquired an updated software package in response to the increased use of the VR Space tactical incident management software by auxiliary firefighters for incident command training. The updated software package allows for use on head mounted devices, mobile devices and flat screens, and is expected to be implemented by 30 June 2024
 - ✧ increased capability using body worn cameras and live video broadcast solutions enabling the livestreaming and transmission of high-value transmedia content from the field to support Public Information and Intelligence functions
 - ✧ concluded the Field Content Operator Trial in South East and North Coast Regions in October 2022 and rolled out a business-as-usual program for Field Content Operators. The program enabled QFES volunteers within RFS and SES to capture transmedia content from operations on the ground. During the reporting period, Field Content Operators were deployed more than 60 times delivering content to inform intelligence and for use in social and traditional media products, internal communications and training.

A tribute to fallen firefighters

QFES pays tribute to those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

The fourth of May is International Firefighters' Day—a day to remember, thank and honour past and present firefighters from across the world. The day coincides with the feast of Saint Florian, the patron saint of all firefighters.

This year, the day was particularly poignant for us. Only days earlier QFES lost one of our own, Firefighter First Class Izabella (Izzy) Nash, to injuries sustained during a fire at Slacks Creek. Her crewmate, Senior Firefighter Lia Drew, also suffered serious injuries fighting the fire.

Those who are called to serve as firefighters risk their lives each time they answer a call.

On International Firefighters' Day, as well as Firefighters Remembrance Day held on the tenth day of the tenth month, we remember and reflect upon the sacrifices made by firefighters, their families and friends.

Solemn memorial services are held across the state on Firefighters Remembrance Day and one minute's silence is observed to honour those who have made the ultimate sacrifice. As a further sign of respect, all flags are flown at half-mast at Queensland fire stations.

The hard work, dedication and contributions of our fallen firefighters will always be remembered and QFES thanks all those who have and continue to offer comfort and support in the face of the loss suffered by the close-knit Queensland firefighting family this year.

Celebrating our volunteers

QFES and the community recognise and celebrate the contribution of the approximately 32,000 volunteers that play an essential role in helping to build safer, more connected and resilient communities across the state. QFES volunteers train year-round to prepare for any event and to support communities through the difficulties of response and recovery. Many volunteers work 'day jobs' as well as volunteering and the department also acknowledges the support of their employers who release volunteers in times of need.

QFES volunteers include RFS, SES, Research and Scientific Branch Volunteer Scientific Officer network and AUS-1 DART, and Auxiliary Support Officers and PSOs.

During 2022–23, QFES celebrated:

- ✦ National Volunteer Week (15–21 May 2023)—an opportunity to thank volunteers for their important contributions to society and for volunteers to reflect on their experiences in service to the community.
- ✦ SES WOW Day (17 May 2023) (Wear Orange Wednesday)—the national day to celebrate and thank SES volunteers for their hard work and dedication to the community. SES volunteers' orange uniforms have become a symbol of hope and support when times get tough. On WOW Day Queenslanders are encouraged to wear orange in a show of thanks and for SES volunteers to reflect on and recognise their contribution to the Queensland community.
- ✦ Peer Support Week (13–17 March 2023)—to promote and recognise the valuable contributions of PSOs in supporting the mental wellbeing of QFES staff and their families. PSOs play a crucial role in practical and emotional support such as follow-up after critical incidents, providing information sessions on mental health, and assisting colleagues with work or personal challenges. During the week, the statewide QFES Olga Wilson PSO of the Year Award was presented to Station Officer Andrew Vaughn for his extraordinary efforts in supporting local QFES members and the PSO team.
- ✦ Yellow Ribbon Day (13 September 2022)—a statewide celebration of RFS volunteers, first initiated by the Rural Fire Brigades Association Queensland Inc. in 2012. RFS volunteers provide a range of services from frontline firefighting to behind-the-scenes community education and support. Community members show their support by wearing a yellow ribbon or something yellow as a sign of support for, and acknowledgement of, the commitment and dedication of the RFS volunteer workforce.
- ✦ SES Week (3–10 September 2022)—the outstanding efforts of SES staff and volunteers were honoured at awards ceremonies across the state. Award recipients included Inaugural Suncorp Spirit of SES Award—Peter Rice, Townsville SES Group; Commissioner's Cup for Unit of the Year—Townsville/Thuringowa SES Group; and Life Member Awards—Alan Green, Innisfail SES Group and Robert Sutcliffe, Home Hill SES Group.
- ✦ RFS week 2022 (31 July 2022 – 6 August 2022)—activities were held across the state to recognise RFS volunteers while promoting RFS as an ideal volunteering opportunity. RFS week was also an opportunity to formally recognise RFS volunteers who have demonstrated a special contribution to the service through the presentation of awards with seven recipients of the Regional Volunteer of the Year Award and seven recipients of the Regional Young Volunteer of the Year Award. The State Volunteer of the Year Award was presented to Savannah Terrar of the Kuranda Myola Rural Fire Brigade, Kuranda and the State Young Volunteer of the Year award was presented to Caitlyn Simpkins-Field of Branyan Rural Fire Brigade, Bundaberg.

Information and Technology Directorate

Since the establishment of a standalone Information and Technology Directorate within QFES in July 2021 and the appointment of a dedicated Information and Technology Executive Director in May 2022, QFES has continued to stabilise and mature its internal Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) capability across strategy, project delivery, information management and cyber security awareness.

Although ICT service delivery continued to be provided by Frontline and Digital Division within the QPS during the reporting period, QFES put in place robust planning, assurance, investment and governance activities related to QFES led projects and worked with Frontline and Digital Division to develop and deliver projects.

Additionally, the Information and Technology Directorate continued to support core operational systems for frontline personnel and systems within disaster management.

Key achievements during the reporting period include:

- ✦ finalisation of an approved ICT Strategy and five-year technology roadmap for QFES
- ✦ mapping of current state systems and links to the ICT technology roadmap providing critical information on ageing technology replacement to ensure QFES systems are maintained and supported
- ✦ maturing and uplifting project assurance activities in alignment with the Queensland Government Office of Assurance and Investment criteria
- ✦ establishment of ICT portfolio reporting and governance dashboards enabling improved project oversight
- ✦ improved ICT governance for new initiatives in line with the QFES Capabilities Map
- ✦ continued implementation and maturity of the QFES Information Security Management System (ISMS) (refer page 77)
- ✦ development of the QFES Information Asset Register which identifies information assets and assigns custodians to those assets to ensure accountability and transparency of QFES information
- ✦ commenced a review of personal identifiable information across the department and the development of an action plan to strengthen the security posture to prevent a cyber-attack and data breach
- ✦ participated in the whole-of-government Cyber Security Exercise known as Steel Brolga, held in November 2022, leading to several lessons and recommendations for QFES to increase cyber security response
- ✦ drafted a QFES Cyber Security Incident Response Plan which will undergo an exercise test in July 2023 to inform the final plan
- ✦ increased support for disaster and incident management systems, expediting a significant reduction in outstanding issues for users and enabling improved support for critical systems that support operational capability
- ✦ increased vulnerability management to ensure QFES systems remain compliant and fit-for-purpose, and provided improved assessment of automatic patching, back-up and restoration for critical QFES systems such as the Operational Management System and the Operational Coordination System
- ✦ implemented single sign-on for two of the department's key enterprise systems and completed assessment for additional single sign-on implementations
- ✦ established the ICT Engagement and Partnerships Unit to allow improved engagement with ICT stakeholders across QFES
- ✦ improved connectivity for QFES sites in regional and remote locations with the installation of low earth orbit satellite receivers in multiple locations and approved additional sites
- ✦ commenced site visits in all QFES regions to increase engagement with frontline staff about ICT issues and risks.

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ICT Investment Plan

The ICT Investment Plan plays an important role in supporting and enabling operational and business requirements in the PPRR of fires, emergencies and disasters.

The investment process continued to significantly mature during the reporting period enabling the development of a five-year technology roadmap which aligns to the department's strategic direction and Queensland Government priorities.

The 2022–23 program of work under the investment plan had a budget of \$25 million and delivered an increase in capability for cyber security, refresh of technology devices and upgrades to regional communication centres and communications infrastructure. Further initiatives are underway that will deliver on outcomes to enhance firefighter safety and firefighting capabilities including improvements to the mobilisation of firefighting resources in the field.

As at 30 June 2023, key initiatives underway include:

- ✦ Field Mobility for Emergency Services
- ✦ Volunteer Onboarding Improvement Project
- ✦ Modern Field Communications field testing and proof of concept
- ✦ Digital Breathing Apparatus Control Board
- ✦ Computer Aided Dispatch Infrastructure Upgrade
- ✦ Development of the Business Case for Computer Aided Dispatch and Station Alerting.

A total of 23 projects and initiatives were continued or stood up within the reporting period. These projects are multi-year projects with several expected to realise benefits during 2023–24. Significant gains were made in key strategic projects throughout 2022–23.

Information and Technology Directorate Transition Project

Since the disestablishment of the former Public Safety Business Agency (PSBA) effective 1 July 2021, ICT services have largely been provided by Frontline and Digital Division within QPS on behalf of QFES, the Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) and QPS.

In April 2022, a project was stood up to separate these functions from QPS and embed them into the individual agencies (QFES, QAS and QPS) that consume the services. The QFES Information and Technology Directorate's ambition is to transition from a mostly traditional model heavily reliant on one service provider, to a more operations and business aligned, contemporary model. This includes:

- ✦ increasing the strategic value of information technology within QFES
- ✦ aligning a future information technology operating model to the needs of the department's frontline and corporate services
- ✦ focusing information technology to be more customer centric for QFES staff and volunteers
- ✦ greater interaction and partnership with the operations and business to deliver ICT outcomes
- ✦ assessing capability and capacity to deliver the ICT Strategy and five-year technology roadmap
- ✦ introducing agile practices and ways of working, focussing on delivering value earlier through iterations and regular feedback cycles.

An Information Technology Transition Interdepartmental Committee was established in September 2022 with membership from QFES, QAS, QPS and Digital Services within the Department of Transport and Main Roads to provide executive oversight of the separation of ICT functions. Through this committee, agencies have approved principles and will determine the transition approach and timing.

2022–23 Bushfire season—Operation Ochre

QFES' response to the 2022–23 Queensland bushfire season was known as Operation Ochre with the key objective of minimising the impacts of bushfires on Queensland communities. The bushfire season ran from 4 July 2022 to 30 April 2023. The season was extended from December 2022 due to the unseasonal fire risk in Southern Queensland, particularly the Western Downs area. During Operation Ochre, Queensland experienced 4,402 vegetation fires with 636 bushfire warnings issued.

Across the state, bushfires were generally less severe and onerous than the extreme bushfire seasons of 2018–19 and 2019–20 due to the wet conditions created by the La Nina weather pattern. Queensland is a large state however, and the serious fire situation in the Western Downs from January to March 2023 illustrated how conditions can vary. A further indication of the contrasting conditions between different areas of Queensland is that bushfire related air operations were limited until the end of December 2022 however, they played an important role during the Western Downs fires.

The Western Downs fires were the most significant bushfire incidents during Operation Ochre and were driven by very dry conditions in that particular area, especially over the spring and summer months when there would normally be significant rainfall. The Western Downs fires involved 428 vegetation fire incidents and burnt more than 90,000 hectares with 30 structures (including sheds) destroyed or significantly damaged. QFES personnel from across the state were deployed to the Western Downs fires and QFES worked with numerous partner agencies to manage the fires.

The QFES response to the 2023–24 bushfire season will commence on 1 August 2023 and will be known as Operation Melaleuca.

QFES' is preparing for the upcoming bushfire season by:

- ✧ providing training and assessment for more than 100 Warning Officers across the state, to allow bushfire warnings to be issued locally.
- ✧ conducting Intelligence Fundamental courses which will provide Intelligence Officers with the skills and knowledge to produce predictive intelligence products to inform decision-makers for future events, risks and hazards.
- ✧ extending the Incident Management training to Public Information Officers which will significantly improve the capabilities of QFES to deliver frontline incident management across the state.
- ✧ establishing and undertaking multiple exercises and training activities to enhance Incident Management coordination across the state.
- ✧ preparing to undertake the SDCC capability training to support the whole-of-government workforce.

2022–23 Severe weather season—Operation Nimbosus

QFES' response to the 2022–23 Queensland severe weather season was known as Operation Nimbosus. The severe weather season ran from 1 October 2022 to 30 April 2023. Nimbosus is a Latin word for cloudy, stormy, rainy and surrounded by rain clouds.

QFES' approach facilitated preparation, rapid planning, mobilisation, response during events and the reduction of impacts to communities' post event. QFES works closely in partnership with its key stakeholders, including local governments and communities, to improve resilience and enhance operational capacity during times of emergency.

QFES planned for the severe weather season by undertaking high-level initiatives focussed on preparation and connecting with key disaster management stakeholders across Queensland ensuring they were adequately informed and prepared to help protect Queenslanders. This included pre-season briefings with internal and external stakeholders and Queensland Government and Australian Government partners. The briefings provided disaster management stakeholders with information on jurisdictional activities and operational capacity.

Paid and volunteer RFS and SES personnel, along with FRS firefighters, officers and staff, honed their skills, exercising with partner agencies and engaging with communities to prepare for the severe weather season.

The Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements were activated to provide financial assistance and relief to disaster affected Queensland communities on three occasions during the 2022–23 severe weather season:

- ✦ Northern and Central Queensland Monsoon and Flooding (20 December 2022 – 30 April 2023)
- ✦ Whitsunday Rainfall and Flooding (30 November – 1 December 2022)
- ✦ Southern Queensland Severe Weather (18 October – 23 November 2022).

During the severe weather season, the SES received 2,787 tasks and 706 agency support requests for assistance through TAMS (Task and Management System); and FRS swiftwater rescue personnel responded to 71 swiftwater rescue and water rescue incidents.

QFES' State Operations Centre also facilitated requests for assistance from interstate counterparts, including:

- ✦ Western Australia for fire response in January 2023
- ✦ South Australia for river flooding response throughout December 2022 and January 2023
- ✦ Victoria for severe weather response between October and December 2022
- ✦ NSW for severe weather response between October and November 2022.

Media campaigns included *If It's Flooded, Forget It* behaviour change advertising on social media and radio. The advertisements targeted areas experiencing heavy rain to encourage drivers to plan ahead to avoid unnecessary travel when it is wet.

Major deployments

Deployments can be an opportunity to gain personal and professional development including learnings around incident management and resourcing systems, as they often involve an integration of QFES permanent, auxiliary, civilian and volunteer staff and resources. International deployments also provide an opportunity to share knowledge with emergency services professionals and dedicated USAR teams from around the globe.

QFES maintains the AUS-1 DART, which is the Queensland USAR Team, for immediate deployment to international disasters. This team is classified by the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) under the oversight of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance.

Due to protracted or complex national and international operations, QFES may be requested to deploy officers through the National Resource Sharing Centre to participate in interstate or international deployments as a member of a QFES Strike Team or taskforce for the purpose of an emergency.

Depending on the nature of the emergency, an inter-agency response may also be required.

During 2022–23, QFES international deployments included:

- ✦ the deployment of 25 QFES personnel from AUS-1 DART and two FRS NSW personnel from AUS-2 DART to New Zealand following Severe Tropical Cyclone Gabrielle. It was the deadliest system to hit the country since Cyclone Giselle in 1968 and for only the third time in New Zealand's history, the country declared a national state of emergency. The cyclone claimed 11 lives, including two New Zealand firefighters who died after being caught in a landslide in Muriwai. The QFES personnel were deployed to Hawke's Bay—one of the hardest hit areas—from 17 February to 25 February 2023. The AUS-1 DART technicians worked closely with the New Zealand USAR team, the police canine squad and excavators to conduct full coverage searches for missing victims and to clear priority buildings and key points of interest. The AUS-1 DART's swiftwater rescue technicians were integrated into the New Zealand USAR team to provide advice on hydrology—water movement through and around structures and strainers, together with

related swiftwater rescue advice. In addition, the team provided assistance with the coordination of clean up and recovery efforts

- ✦ three separate deployments of QFES personnel to Alberta, Canada, in May and June 2023 to assist with large wildfires, which marked an intense start to the Canadian wildfire season. The three deployments, known as Alpha, Bravo and Charlie, are for a nominal period of 40 days. FRS, RFS, SES and QFES Corporate Services are represented by staff across these deployments. Significantly, this is the first international deployment to include RFS volunteers, who comprise the majority of the Arduous Firefighter positions and a number of other functional roles. Warm temperatures and dry conditions created the perfect storm for powerful fires in the initial stages of the wildfire season. Despite changing weather conditions, including torrential rain and snow, as of 30 June 2023 approximately nine million hectares were burnt, with nearly 400 fires out of control, close to 200 fires under control and just over 100 fires being held.

- The Alpha deployment comprised 14 incident management staff, 20 Arduous Firefighters, two Air Attack Supervisors and one agency representative (Liaison Officer). The deployment departed 26 May 2023 and by 30 June 2023 all employees had returned to Australia.
- The Bravo deployment comprise 13 Incident Management staff. The deployment departed 10 June 2023 and at 30 June 2023 is still in country.
- The Charlie deployment comprise 20 Arduous Firefighters and one Air Attack Supervisor. The deployment departed 24 and 26 June 2023 and at 30 June 2023 are still in country.

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✧ two firefighters joined the FRS NSW AUS-2 DART deployment to Türkiye to support rescue efforts in the wake of a massive earthquake following a series of earthquakes that struck southern Türkiye, on 6 February 2023 including 7.8 and 7.5 magnitude earthquakes. About 7,000 aftershocks shook the region with more than 45,000 people losing their lives, 115,000 people injured and an estimated two million displaced. In the aftermath, the Government of Turkey called for international USAR teams to support rescue efforts. Australia deployed a 72 person DART from NSW including the two QFES firefighters and two from the Australian Capital Territory.

In addition, interstate and intrastate deployments included:

✧ the deployment of resources from Northern Region to assist with flood response and recovery in Burketown and Urundangi Shire in March 2023. This event was a multi-agency response by QFES, QPS and the QRA. QFES assisted with evacuation, resupply and the transport of essential staff and goods into Burketown, Gregory and Doomadgee. Local SES personnel assisted with evacuation and resupply efforts. In addition, FRS conducted damage assessments, and FRS and RFS conducted washouts of houses to enable locals to return to their homes

✧ the deployment of multiple teams to support swiftwater rescue operations in the southern states. This included deployments to NSW, Victoria and South Australia during October 2022 to January 2023. The State Deployment Centre managed deployments of swiftwater rescue teams to Brewarrina, Collarenebri, Gunnedah, Mungindi, Narrabri, Nyngan and Parkes in NSW, provided an interstate liaison officer to the State Control Centre in Melbourne and managed the rotation of FRS swiftwater rescue and MSRC operators to South Australia in support of the slow-moving flood event on the Murray River.

Supporting inclusion and diversity

Queensland has an increasingly diverse population which QFES seeks to consider in the development and delivery of its programs and services to build safe and resilient communities and ensure community preparedness for disaster events. QFES values the inclusion of individuals who contribute to the department through their diverse skills, knowledge and experience.

During the reporting period, initiatives and activities included:

Social Policy

- ◇ Commenced development of a Social Policy Framework and implementation plan to establish an overarching guidance and governance framework to ensure alignment to social responsibilities as a government department, employer of choice, and in the delivery of safety and services to the Queensland community. The framework places social inclusion at the centre of decision-making to foster inclusive behaviours and safe workplaces.

Cultural Capability

- ◇ Publication of the QFES Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Action Plan 2022–2025 in August 2022. The plan supports implementation and delivery of the Queensland Government Cultural Capability Framework, ensuring First Nations perspectives are an inherent part of core business.
- ◇ Attended the First Nations Public Administration conference, held in March 2023, with the theme *First Peoples to All Peoples* which examined the intersection between First Nations knowledge and modern public policy.
- ◇ Continued the First People’s Consultative Group (FPCG) (established in 2021) within Brisbane Region to improve communications between First Nations peoples, QFES and the community. The group meets monthly and supports the department’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander personnel to share their experience and knowledge; and develop personnel’s knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and support and empower regional staff and volunteers to engage with First Nations peoples in the community. In March 2023, the FPCG was awarded the QFES Close the Gap Award for supporting and enhancing engagement between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and cultures in QFES and the community.

- ◇ Continued delivery of the online *Starting the Journey* learning program providing insight into interpreting people’s own culture as well as the lived experiences of First Nations peoples.
- ◇ Partnered with the Department of Resources to deliver its acclaimed cultural agility program *Building on the Strengths of our Stories* on 21 and 22 June 2023 providing an opportunity for the 25 QFES participants to draw on the ancient practice of storytelling to engage in a journey of truth-telling and to challenge thinking beyond rhetoric towards a shared approach to understanding and collaboration.
- ◇ Celebrated NAIDOC week (3–10 July 2022) with the theme *Get Up! Stand Up! Show Up!*—encouraging everyone to continue implementing positive systemic changes and improvements for First Nations peoples.

Gender Equity

- ◇ Continued the Gender Equity Advisory Group. The advisory group, which meets every two months, supports the empowerment, development and retention of women and others within the paid and volunteer workforce who are from under-represented groups. The advisory group achieves this by encouraging and connecting the QFES workforce to support women, providing training and development in relation to gender equity, advocating and advising on issues affecting women and gender equity, and promoting initiatives that support diversity and inclusion. Following a suggestion by the advisory group, a one-stop-shop page on the QFES Gateway was developed for information about pregnancy, birth and babies in the workplace, providing a resource for pregnant people and supervisors to access information about entitlements and obligations.
- ◇ Continued to support Women and Firefighting Australasia (Wafa) with QFES representatives on the Wafa Board and annual corporate membership. In addition, QFES is a host agency for the Wafa conference to be held in Brisbane in August 2023, parallel to AFAC23 (refer page 51).

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- ✦ Celebrated International Women’s Day on 8 March 2023 and International Men’s Day on 19 November 2022 with events across the state. Queensland Corrective Services hosted the International Women’s Day event for the Leading Women’s Network (formerly known as the Queensland Public Safety and Integrity Agencies Women’s Network) including QFES with the theme *Courage, Strength, Resilience*. The event included the Women in Fire and Emergency awards which recognise staff and volunteers who have made outstanding contributions in embracing gender equality and promoting the rights, interests and wellbeing of women in QFES. International Men’s Day provided an opportunity to celebrate men and boys and ask what it means to be a positive male role model in modern society. QFES again supported the Movember campaign, to work towards a world where men take proactive action to be mentally healthy and are supported by those around them.
- ✦ Continued membership and support of the Leading Women’s Network with Executive Sponsor, Change Champion and committee representation including participation in, and hosting and livestreaming of network events. The purpose of the network is to promote a diverse and inclusive work environment through the representation of women at all levels.
- ✦ Continued delivery of the QFES Allies of Inclusion program that builds an internal network of staff and volunteers committed to their workplaces being safe, healthy and inclusive of everyone. The network has grown by 21 per cent since 30 June 2022.
- ✦ Commenced production of a series of recruitment videos and associated social and traditional media content, highlighting the unique qualities of a FRS firefighter for the purposes of building greater diversity within the service, specifically increasing awareness of a career within under-represented groups whilst targeting female school students.
- ✦ Partnered with Women’s National Basketball League team—the Townsville Fire, to help promote women’s sport, a career as a firefighter and volunteering in emergency services. As part of the partnership, QFES will be included as an official off-court activity where academy participants can tour a fire station and have direct access to QFES to

discuss employment or volunteering opportunities. QFES will also engage in off-season community activities with the team in female-focused camps, leadership development and networking opportunities.

- ✦ Celebrated Brisbane PRIDE on 24 September 2023 with QFES representatives attending the PRIDE March and Fair Day to acknowledge and support LGBTIQ+ staff, volunteers and communities.

Culturally and linguistically diverse

- ✦ Conducted three focus groups with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community leaders in the South Eastern Region to better understand the emergency and disaster preparedness information needs of local CALD communities. The project aimed to identify better ways of delivering inclusive preparedness initiatives through tailored engagement approaches. The focus groups were conducted as part of a research project through the University of Southern Queensland. A total of 16 community leaders participated in the focus group discussions which were held in Logan and the Gold Coast in August 2022 and Ipswich in November 2022. Participants represented communities from a broad range of backgrounds including Kenyan, Tongan, Burmese, Qatari, Sudanese, Samoan, Nigerian, South Sudanese, Chinese and Indian. Topics explored in the focus groups included community attitudes toward emergency and disaster preparedness, communication channels and formats, language and cultural considerations, information sources, engagement opportunities and resources. Key themes were identified and shared with internal and external stakeholders.
- ✦ QFES is a founding member of the Ipswich CALD Disaster Management Collaboration Network established in January 2023. The network includes representatives from Multicultural Australia, Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (QPASTT), City of Ipswich, Red Cross Australia, QPS and the Polynesian African Cross-Cultural Advisory Group. The purpose of the network is for disaster management agencies and CALD communities in Ipswich to work together in a collaborative and coordinated way to support and deliver emergency and disaster resilience initiatives.

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- ✦ Hosted a workshop in March 2023 at the Disaster Community Connectors run by Central Queensland Multicultural Association in Rockhampton. Participants from China, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Bangladesh and Brazil, learnt about the roles of QFES, the Australian Warning System (AWS), local risks and about the value and process of volunteering. Workshop discussions provided an understanding of the disaster preparedness information needs of CALD communities.
- ✦ Continued to deliver inclusive community engagement resources to build the resilience of vulnerable community members and published translated public safety and preparation messaging for smoke alarms, home fire escapes, bushfire safety and fire danger ratings in multiple languages including Easy English (www.qfes.qld.gov.au/safety-education/resources).
- ✦ Delivered resources for SES volunteers within the *Get your kit together* range including a visual preparedness guide aimed at supporting CALD communities and those with limited language.
- ✦ Celebrated Multicultural Queensland Month in August 2022 with the theme of *Inclusion in action* which explored the many ways language helps build an inclusive Queensland.
- ✦ Hosted, in partnership with QPS, Multicultural Australia, the Queensland Human Rights Commission and the Rockhampton Regional Council the sixth annual multi-Faith Dinner in June 2023. The dinner enables government and other agency representatives to join together and promote the shared values of all faiths. There were 125 guests representing 21 cultures and 11 religions.
- ✦ Hosted a meeting in November 2022 with community leaders from the Queensland African Communities Council, Queensland Muslims Inc., Islamic Society of Gold Coast, Multicultural Social Network, Future Leaders Advocacy Group, Ethiopian Community Association, Syriac Community Association, Congolese Community, Australian Karen Organisation, QPASTT, Australian Red Cross and Multicultural Australia. Key discussion points included roles of community leaders and training opportunities, dissemination of information through community and religious leaders and earning the trust of CALD community members through grass-roots relationship building.

Supporting people with disability

- ✦ Launched Fire Ed for Children with Neurodiversity as a statewide program on 26 August 2022 following the successful pilot in South Eastern Region. The initiative to modify the Fire Ed program for children with autism was developed by FRS South Eastern Region in partnership with the AEIOU Foundation for Children with Autism. This version of the program is targeted towards working with children with neurodiversity including autism, ADHD, dyslexia and dyspraxia. The program introduces fire safety education to young audiences so they can better understand fire safety and participate in the Fire Ed program when they reach year one schooling. The program is being delivered across the state in AEIOU and other targeted learning facilities by firefighters in partnership with educators, parents and carers.
- ✦ Continued provision of assistance to members of the deaf community and people who have a hearing impairment to install specialised smoke alarms through the Smoke Alarm Subsidy Scheme managed by Deaf Connect (previously Deaf Services Queensland). In 2022–23, a total of 178 deaf and hard of hearing smoke alarms were provided.
- ✦ Supported the Queenslanders with Disability Network and local governments in South Eastern Region to deliver Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction initiatives with a QFES representative on local action groups, participation in community forums and Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness workshops and the provision of disaster preparedness engagement materials.
- ✦ Participated in a disability workshop pilot program with Carers Queensland in Central Region in August 2022. The program aims to build the knowledge and skillsets of emergency services staff and volunteers to be able to support people with disability before, during and after a disaster. The learnings from the program will inform future training requirements within the Rockhampton area, as well as future approaches with other emergency response organisations.
- ✦ Provided Auslan interpreters when broadcasting fire and emergency safety information.
- ✦ Included closed captions in all video content and supported live broadcasting of emergency messaging through Auslan and live captioning functions.

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Seniors

- ◇ Attended the Jimboomba Seniors Expo in February 2023 along with Logan City Council and a range of community services, government departments and healthcare providers, with FRS crews delivering a home fire safety presentation and SES members engaging with attendees about storm and flood preparedness.

Youth

- ◇ Continued delivery of the RAAP program throughout Queensland and into more diverse areas and education settings, with delivery of the program into youth detention centres and in conjunction with youth justice programs such as Transition 2 Success and Project Booyah. RAAP is a practical lifesaving road safety awareness program for young drivers, facilitated by operational firefighters (refer page 52 for more information about the program).

- ◇ Continued a partnership between SES and Girl Guides Australia Queensland to encourage young women to improve general life skills around severe weather preparedness and to consider volunteering with the SES (refer page 54 for further information).
- ◇ Forged strong ties with Iron Traks who deliver a program that encourages young women aged from 14 to 18 years to become empowered, encouraged and inspired to broaden their career pathways, and learn the value of determination to succeed in their choice of career. Since late 2022, QFES has engaged with Iron Traks and arranged presentations with motivational speakers, organised for participants to undertake fire station visits and practical training providing insights into life as a firefighter.

In addition, the department committed to the establishment of the First Nations Strategy and Partnerships Branch within the Strategy Directorate. The branch will lead a comprehensive body of work to embed cultural capability across the department including the development of a First Nations Framework to reframe the relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Queensland's Path to Treaty. The branch is expected to be established by September 2023 and will include an identified Director and an identified Senior Project Officer.

The Commissioner, in his role as Government Champion for the remote Indigenous township of Coen in Cook Shire, undertook four visits to the community. The Commissioner met with stakeholders including the Coen Regional Aboriginal Corporation, Cook Shire Council, Wunthulpu Aboriginal Land Trust, Yintjingga Aboriginal Corporation, Apunipima Health and Wellbeing Centres and other Queensland Government departments. As a result of stakeholder discussions, the Commissioner advocated for the Coen community in a range of social and economic activities including for capital funding for an Indigenous arts centre, increased social housing for the community, increased car parking and safety around the Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy—Coen Campus and support for mental health and suicide prevention services in Coen.

Further initiatives and activities and target group data is included in Strategic workforce planning and performance—refer pages 78–84.

The QFES Charter: how we live our values

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

The QFES values guide the way we behave towards ourselves, our colleagues and others and hold significant meaning across the workforce, with 95 per cent of staff and 94 per cent of volunteers saying they understand the importance of behaving in a manner that aligns to the QFES values.

Building on the 2021 *Values in action* activity, in which over 100 teams across the department identified the *above-the-line* behaviours they expect and those *below-the-line* behaviours they reject, the QFES Charter succinctly reinforces the values-aligned behaviours people want to see in their work environment.

A range of tools were developed to support managers and their teams collaboratively implement the Charter, and continue QFES' values journey. These include a promotional video, resources to support leaders to encourage *above-the-line* behaviours and respond to *below-the-line* behaviours, a leader's guide to assist discussions with their teams, and a number of digital assets to promote the values across the department.

The values also form a core component of the quarterly QFES Corporate Induction Forum and are being progressively introduced into the Leadership Foundation Programs (refer page 82).

Courage	Integrity	Loyalty	Respect	Trust
Call it out Own mistakes Challenge ourselves	Be accountable Be honest Be transparent	Support each other Be committed Work as a team	Embrace diversity Communicate openly Be kind	Empower others Be open Be dependable

2026 Objective

2. Collaboration occurs with communities and partners before, during and after fires, emergencies and disasters

2022–2026 Strategies

- ❖ Work collaboratively with communities and our partners to plan and deliver efficient and effective emergency services across the prevention, preparedness, response and recovery phases of all types of fires, emergencies and disasters.
- ❖ Harness the knowledge, diversity, ability and experience of all our staff and volunteers to improve the scope and quality of the services we deliver.

Queensland Emergency Risk Management Framework

The *Queensland Emergency Risk Management Framework* (QERMF) was endorsed by the Queensland Disaster Management Committee in 2017 as Queensland's approach to current and future disaster and emergency risk management.

The framework allows disaster management stakeholders to identify, assess, manage, and if required, communicate their disaster risks to the state and commonwealth levels of government.

An independent review of the QERMF was delivered in November 2020. An action plan was developed to deliver on the 15 findings and 12 recommendations from the review and improve how the current disaster risk management framework enables the prevention of new disaster risks, reduction of existing risks and management of residual risks. Delivery of the action plan was overseen by the QERMF Review Action Plan Working Group, formed under the State Disaster Coordination Group.

During 2022–23, the QERMF Review Action Plan Working Group met on four occasions. The State Disaster Coordination Group agreed to close the working group in April 2023 noting that the key components of the action plan were delivered. This included the revision of the risk assessment methodology and approach, as well as testing through pilot implementation.

Finalisation of the revised QERMF is pending implementation of recommendations from the review by the Inspector-General Emergency Management (IGEM) into QDMA (refer External Scrutiny page 73). Under the Emergency Services Reform and transition arrangements the QRA will lead state-level hazard and risk functions.

National and international engagement—AUS-1 DART

QFES continues to develop and maintain an internationally recognised Disaster Assistance Response capability through AUS-1 DART. This team is managed through FRS and is made up of full-time and volunteer members, to provide an internationally deployable disaster assistance team that is classified under the United Nations. The responsibility to maintain this capability is a shared initiative by QFES and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

QFES continued an arrangement with DFAT during 2022–23 for the availability of internationally deployable DART personnel and equipment if required for international deployment assistance. An annual grant of \$475,000 to QFES provides assistance for the development and maintenance of AUS-1 DART capability, along with international engagement activities.

QFES also continued to provide personnel for international working groups, team leader engagements and mentor activities for the development of global rescue capability that directly increases the capabilities of the Queensland DART for response activities in Australia and abroad.

AUS-1 DART representatives participated in international engagement opportunities including:

- ❖ the INSARAG Leadership Training course in the Netherlands during June 2023. This training provided Australia with a third qualified Classification Team Leader and Mentor to assist with the development of global USAR teams to INSARAG standards
- ❖ the Humanitarian Networks Partnership Week meeting in Switzerland in April 2023 to progress global engagement and development in international humanitarian and USAR response

- ◇ the annual INSARAG Team Leaders' Meeting and Classifiers' Workshop in Singapore during February 2023 to continue the development of international USAR capability standards
- ◇ the INSARAG External Reclassification of the Japan Disaster Relief Team (JPN-01) in Kobe in November 2022. This reclassification was attended by an AUS-1 DART Classifier and an observer for capability development and training opportunities. The Classifier ensured that all Japanese USAR team logistics requirements were maintained to international standards throughout the re-classification exercise
- ◇ the annual Asia-Pacific regional meeting in South Korea during October 2022 to further develop and maintain the delivery of integrated and coordinated international response to disaster situations. QFES officers also met with representatives from the Gyeonggi Fire and Disaster Department to share strategies for bushfire management and resource allocation, and identify areas for future collaboration
- ◇ the INSARAG Asia-Pacific Regional Earthquake exercise in Indonesia in September 2022. Attendees included four AUS-1 DART participants and two Exercise Controllers to coordinate the exercise.

In addition:

- ◇ an AUS-1 DART leader travelled to South Korea during October 2022 to lead the delivery of the Korean USAR Coordination Cell course. The QFES participant provided and delivered an updated USAR Coordination Cell course to the Korean USAR team to assist in developing and maintaining their international classification
- ◇ an FRS officer undertook the role of INSARAG Classification Team Leader for the INSARAG external Classification of the United Kingdom Light USAR Team in England during September 2022. This leadership role is a key acknowledgement of the skills and capability of the AUS-1 DART team and its standing in the global network.

Exercises

Exercises are integral to training, developing and preparing QFES personnel to carry out functions during an emergency, recognising that exercising is a valuable learning tool and opportunity to practice interoperability and evaluate equipment, techniques and processes.

QFES personnel participate in a variety of exercise types to increase their competency levels—multi-agency exercises, multi-jurisdictional exercises, functional exercises and small discussion style exercises.

Exercises enable the development, practising, assessment, review, validation and demonstration of factors including:

- ◇ interoperability across QFES services
- ◇ liaison and engagement with external agencies
- ◇ appropriate response and operational procedures
- ◇ communication plans
- ◇ response times
- ◇ suitability and effectiveness of equipment and personal protective equipment
- ◇ operational preparedness.

During the reporting period, QFES developed and planned for Exercise Ignis, a bushfire exercise to be conducted under the auspice of the Queensland Bushfire Plan, scheduled for 27 July 2023. The exercise is based on several significant bushfires impacting different areas of Queensland triggering requests for local, district and state support, involving a multi-agency and multi-jurisdictional response. The exercise will include more than 200 representatives from state, local and Australian governments and the private sector. The aim of the exercise is to consider the impacts from a number of concurrent large-scale bushfires on the relationship and communication pathways between stakeholders and the escalation of response arrangements.

In addition, QFES contributed to the development of the 2023 Asia-Pacific Earthquake Response Exercise to be held in Brisbane from 20 to 25 August 2023. The exercise is part of Australia's commitment to host an International Earthquake Response Exercise as a member of INSARAG. QFES and Fire and Rescue NSW partnered with the National Emergency Management Agency and DFAT to develop, facilitate, conduct, and report on the international exercise. INSARAG and domestic partners across each state and territory emergency management agency are invited to participate, along with relevant Australian Government agencies involved in disaster management response. Approximately 290 registered attendees from over 30 countries are participating in the exercise. The aim of the exercise is to strengthen the preparedness and response to a catastrophic earthquake, including concurrent and compounding events, in accordance with local, state, and national plans. It will assess Australia's processes and ability to work with international partners and agencies during the initial response phase of an emergency.

Exercises that QFES led, conducted or participated in include:

- ◇ Exercise Fisherman23—a joint multi-agency exercise held on 6 June 2023 to satisfy the requirements of the *Defence Operations Manual (OPSMAN 1) Visits to Australia by Nuclear-Powered Warships* regarding the need to exercise Port Safety Organisations and to verify the

preparedness and response processes in the Port Safety Plan—Brisbane. The exercise consisted of two components—the validation of agency specific activities under the Port Safety Plan—Brisbane and a deployment exercise at the Port of Brisbane

- ◇ Exercise Luxton—held in Charters Towers in May 2023, this exercise showcased the abilities of the RFS volunteer cohort and recognised the contribution that QFES’ partner agencies make to the department’s ongoing efforts to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from bushfire events. The exercise demonstrated QFES’ ability to provide welfare and support for RFS members in a simulated deployment scenario. Approximately 100 participants attended the exercise which encompassed nine in-field workshops across two days led by RFS staff, volunteers and guest presenters from RFS partner agencies
- ◇ a multi-agency exercise at the Origin LPG depot in Gympie in December 2022. The exercise simulated a spill of a large volume of flammable gas with participants from QFES, QAS, QPS and Gympie Regional Council testing their emergency response procedures in real-time. Skill development included pre-incident planning, implementation of large-scale evacuations and exclusion zones, and site safety
- ◇ a joint exercise between Mackay Whitsunday Zone firefighters and the Hamilton Island Fire Department held in August 2022 that simulated a large fire at a resort. The exercise consisted of two multi-level structure fire drills, testing participants in fire behaviour, search and rescue, hostile door entries and tactical management. The exercise enhanced understanding of how QFES supports the Hamilton Island Fire Department operationally and identified potential areas for improvement related to communication equipment and operational procedures and practices
- ◇ Exercise Bombora—a joint multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional tsunami desktop exercise held on 31 August 2022 in Brisbane. QFES led the exercise which simulated a catastrophic east coast tsunami, triggering requests for state, national and international support. The exercise was attended by 153 participants from 50 agencies, including representatives from NSW government agencies, the Australian Government, non-government organisations, utility providers and state emergency services and police agencies from all states and territories. The exercise was an invaluable learning opportunity for all agencies to test systems and procedures for a reliable tsunami response. The exercise enabled agencies to examine the impact of a tsunami along the east coast of Australia and explore the processes and

challenges associated with this type of event during the response phase

- ◇ Exercise Talisman Sabre—a multinational and multi-military service annual exercise held across Australia in July and August 2022. Over 30,000 military personnel from 13 nations participated in or observed this exercise. FRS partnered with the Australian Defence Force in its safety management activities to plan, prepare and respond to fire and emergencies during the exercise including familiarisation training for new vehicles and aircraft.

In addition, the annual AUS-1 DART exercise was held from 25 to 29 July 2022 at QCESA. This full-field deployment exercise included participants from FRS and QAS, and volunteers including engineers, doctors and canine handlers (and canines) that make up AUS-1 DART. The field exercise involved mobilisation, set up of the Base of Operations, a 36-hour continuous earthquake rescue exercise and team demobilisation to international standards.

The development of the AUS-1 DART capability was further enhanced with a 48-hour full-field exercise delivered as a part of the QFES USAR Level 2 training course. This was a four-week intensive training course, with 24 participants, held between 22 August and 15 September 2022, with the exercise component held at QCESA from 13 to 15 September 2022. The training course included search and rescue in collapsed buildings, cribbing, shoring and tunnelling, concrete cutting and breaching, and the use of search cameras and various battery-operated power tools. The participants' skills were tested during the 48-hour exercise which involved a simulated earthquake. The participants lived in the field as a self-sustained DART. The delivery of the training course and exercise enabled QFES to maintain the number of personnel qualified in USAR across the state.

Community safety advertising campaigns

Community safety advertising campaigns continued to be developed and promoted statewide to build resilience in the community and enable members of the public to better prevent, prepare for, and respond to fire and emergency events.

These campaigns included:

- ◇ ***If It's Flooded, Forget It:*** this campaign targeted drivers who could be tempted to drive on flooded roads, putting themselves and potentially their rescuers at risk. The campaign was launched in late October 2022 and ran throughout the summer wet season, ending in mid-April 2023. The campaign featured the *Back it Up* tagline and used

television, radio, social and digital advertising. Following the campaign, research showed the campaign was successful in reducing the number of Queensland motorists who would potentially drive through floodwater based on self-assessment from 23 per cent in 2022 to 19 per cent in 2023 (www.qld.gov.au/floodwatersafety)

- ◇ **Bushfire Safety** campaign: this campaign ran from late June 2022 to the end of August 2022 and began again in June 2023. The campaign educates Queenslanders about bushfire safety and encourages people, particularly those living close to bushland, to prepare themselves and their properties and complete a bushfire survival plan. The tagline was *What have you got to lose?* and the call-to-action directed viewers to the QFES website where they could access information on how to prepare their household and property, and complete a bushfire survival plan. Research shows those exposed to the campaign were more likely to feel very knowledgeable about what to do in the event of a bushfire emergency and were more likely to feel prepared for a bushfire (bushfire-survival-plan.qfes.qld.gov.au/)
- ◇ **Home Fire Safety**: The 2023 Home Fire Safety Campaign ran from April to June, expanding the target audience to young families with children aged up to 10 years of age and the top 11 CALD audiences across Queensland. The campaign aimed to reduce loss of life in structural fires by encouraging households to discuss, plan and practise their home fire escape plan. The 2023 campaign ran on social media, shopping centre digital display boards, podcasts and online digital and video channels. Campaign advertising linked to the QFES website for tips on how to check, plan and practise home fire safety. The campaign successfully reached CALD communities across Queensland using translated social media videos linked to translated online fact sheets in 11 languages (www.qfes.qld.gov.au/Fire-Escape).
- ◇ **Smoke Alarms**: this campaign ran from 1 February to 30 April 2023 on billboards, radio, YouTube, podcasts, Meta and Google Search. The campaign encouraged all Queensland residential property owners, particularly owner occupiers, to be aware of and comply with legislation mandating the installation of interconnected photoelectric smoke alarms. The legislated deadline for owner-occupiers is 1 January 2027. Research following the campaign indicated an increase in the number of owner-occupiers who have reached full compliance with the legislation from 27 per cent to 33 per cent.

In addition, in support of QFES functions to educate the public:

- ◇ social media and traditional media content was developed and published highlighting:
 - the training and capabilities of swiftwater rescue and SES flood boat teams and to promote community safety during heavy rain and flooding events
 - mitigation and cultural burning practices
 - the introduction of the AWS and AFDRS including internal communications and explainer video content relating to the implementation of AWS in Queensland.
- ◇ a suite of products was created for social media to support Home Fire Safety in late 2022 and early 2023 called *Check. Plan. Practise*. These products documented a Queensland family experiencing the conditions of a house fire at QCESA Live Fire to promote the need for interconnected photoelectric smoke alarms. It also explored what happens when you do not have a practised fire escape plan, and the steps to plan and practise for a house fire. The content was released on Facebook and YouTube and achieved a combined reach of more than 280,000 people.

Social media

QFES disseminates important safety messaging to the Queensland community through its social media channels.

During 2022–23, the QFES Facebook page reached more than 6.4 million people. The Facebook page also received more than 1.2 million visits, a 12 per cent increase on 2021–22, and gained 17,600 new followers to reach a total of 511,500 followers.

Posts from QFES' Twitter page reached more than 3.4 million people and its follower count rose to 87,800 people.

The QFES Instagram page reached more than two million people, more than double the figure from the previous financial year. The total number of visits (39,000) to the Instagram page rose 18 per cent on 2021–22 and gained 2,000 new followers to reach a total of 45,200 followers.

QFES also engages with traditional media outlets (television, newspaper, online and radio) to promote messaging for key safety campaigns including severe weather season, bushfire season and winter fire safety.

During 2022–23, bushfire season messaging received coverage across more than 1,300 print, television, radio and online media items between July and October 2022 and May and June 2023. During these same periods, there were more than 125 proactive social media posts in support of this campaign on

QFES social media channels, which reached more than 3.1 million people and had more than 116,000 engagements.

Between September 2022 and April 2023, storm and cyclone messaging received coverage of more than 2,100 items in traditional media outlets. There were also more than 200 proactive social media posts in support of this campaign on QFES social media channels, which reached more than 7.1 million people and had more than 247,000 engagements.

For the winter home fire safety campaign during July and August 2022, there were 53 media items related to the campaign in traditional media outlets. There were more than 35 proactive social media posts on QFES channels to support this campaign, which reached more than 720,000 people and had more than 4,100 engagements.

Emergency Volunteers Advisory Forum

The Emergency Volunteers Advisory Forum met on four occasions during 2022–23. The aim of the forum is to strengthen the Queensland Government's commitment to engaging with emergency services volunteers and enables representatives to provide advice on issues impacting and emerging on the sector to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services.

Membership of the forum consists of emergency service organisations across government and the not-for-profit sector.

In 2022–23, a volunteer training subgroup was established to share and explore best practice in the emergency services volunteer sector. The inaugural meeting was held in March 2023 to discuss the Terms of Reference and agreed outcomes for the group.

Topics explored by the Emergency Volunteers Advisory Forum during the reporting period included:

- ✧ the National Strategy for Volunteering (2023–2033) project
- ✧ the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Brisbane in September 2022
- ✧ climate change in the Asia-Pacific
- ✧ the Emergency Services Reform and potential impacts on member volunteering organisations
- ✧ empowerment of under-represented groups in emergency volunteering
- ✧ the assessment criteria to determine the feasibility of establishing new PCYC Queensland Emergency Services Cadet Units.

Grants—SES

QFES continued to provide support to SES groups and units to identify, plan, apply for and complete grant applications.

During the reporting period, QFES sponsored 13 successful external grant applications for SES groups and units with successful applicants jointly awarded more than \$429,000. Grants projects include facility upgrades, computer equipment, vehicles, trailers, vehicle shelters, air conditioners, whitegoods, generators and equipment for training and emergency activations.

Refer to Local governments and the SES (below) for information regarding the SES Support Grant Program.

Local governments and the SES

QFES works with local governments across the state to ensure and enable SES unit and group capability. As the SES plays an integral role in supporting local governments' disaster response capability, the development of a MoU between QFES and each local government is a way to clarify the relationship.

The MoUs, developed in collaboration with several local government Disaster Management Officers and the IGEM, establish the collaborative approach between QFES and local governments for the management and support of the SES and detail responsibilities for funding and support arrangements. This ensures the delivery of an effective emergency service that contributes to a safer more resilient community.

The SES Support Grant Program is an annual QFES funded program offered to local governments to receive grant funding towards SES facilities and vehicles. Facility grants are 75 per cent of the total project cost and up to \$75,000, with vehicle grants offered at a dollar-for-dollar basis up to \$30,000.

During the reporting period:

- ✧ thirty local government applications, including the additional eight applications supported through the SES Uplift (refer page 57), were successful under the 2022–23 round of the SES Support Grant Program which contributed more than \$1.01 million towards local government projects in support of SES facility upgrades and vehicles
- ✧ sixty-five local government applications were awarded grants under the subsequent 2023–24 round of the SES Support Grant Program. This funding will provide more than \$2.96 million towards future local government projects for SES facility upgrades and vehicles. Projects for the 2023–24 round will commence from 1 July 2023

- ❖ QFES distributed \$1.65 million across 75 local governments with active SES units or groups as part of the SES annual Local Government Subsidy Program. Funding is provided to assist local governments in defraying administrative and operational costs as a result of supporting their local SES.

Severe weather experienced in Queensland during February 2022 resulted in a significant increase in donations to the SES Gift Fund with more than \$1.3 million received from community members, small businesses and corporate organisations. A total of \$500,000 from flood donations will provide first-aid resources and an all-terrain vehicle for regional use with the balance directed to a program that enables SES groups to apply for communications and technology equipment to improve their training and communications capabilities.

The SES Volunteer Bursary scheme, which supports professional development opportunities for volunteers, was launched in September 2022 with an initial budget of \$327,000 comprised of funding received through two bequests totalling approximately \$227,000 and \$100,000 from the SES Gift Fund flood donations. In 2022–23, 12 bursary applications were approved totalling nearly \$28,000.

In addition, QFES provided one flood boat and five trailers to support six SES groups across Queensland. SES flood boats are purchased and registered by QFES and owned by local governments. SES trailers are purchased and registered by QFES and owned by local governments.

State disaster risk assessments

The *Queensland 2021/22 State Disaster Risk Report* and *Severe Wind Hazard Assessment for Queensland* (SWHA-Q) were published in August 2022. The report and assessment are accessible at www.disaster.qld.gov.au

The State Disaster Risk Report updated the *QUEENSLAND State Natural Hazard Risk Assessment 2017* and assessed a broader range of natural and human-induced hazards at the state and regional planning levels. The report also includes more comprehensive information on climate change for the relevant hazards. The report was a collaborative effort led by QFES that involved 54 disaster management entities including 30 local governments and 24 other government and non-government entities.

The *South East Queensland Rainfall and Flooding February to March 2022 Review Report 1: 2022–2023* (refer External Scrutiny page 73) recommended that QFES review and update the State Disaster Risk Report, including re-evaluating the risk

of flooding by all types and that the updated State Disaster Risk Report should be published by 1 November 2023.

The SWHA-Q provides a comprehensive assessment of tropical cyclone risk for Queensland. The project involved consultation with eight local governments and 35 state, commonwealth and private sector entities.

A collaborative follow-on project to the SWHA-Q, the Severe Wind Hazard Assessment for South East Queensland, was completed in partnership with six local governments in South East Queensland, other Queensland Government departments and the insurance and research sector, to build on the findings from the SWHA-Q and better understand and address the risks from severe wind, including severe thunderstorms and tropical cyclones for South East Queensland. A technical report detailing the wind risk from thunderstorms and tropical cyclones was delivered in December 2022 by a technical team led by Geoscience Australia with the James Cook University Cyclone Testing Station and the University of Queensland.

QFES supported the planning of desktop exercises for the Redland City Council and the Council of the City of Gold Coast Local Disaster Management Groups using one of the five scenarios developed in this project. QFES also delivered presentations at these exercises held on 8 November 2022 and 24 January 2023 respectively.

QFES is undertaking a Critical Infrastructure Disaster Risk Assessment to review and identify the key climate and disaster risks to critical infrastructure in Queensland. As well as identifying risks to critical infrastructure at a state level, the project will analyse the interconnectedness and interdependencies between different types of critical infrastructure through scenario analysis. The assessment is expected to be finalised in 2023–24.

Partnerships

Queensland's emergency services are supported by corporate, community and government stakeholders to establish and strengthen partnerships that deliver valued and sustainable benefit to QFES' workforce and foster community resilience. These stakeholders continued generosity helps to make Queensland a safer place.

During 2022–23, over \$1.4 million of incoming, outgoing, in-kind and non-financial partnerships were managed with a range of stakeholders including:

- ❖ National Australia Bank (NAB) (launched in October 2021) supports the wellbeing of RFS volunteers with practical personal resilience tools

and other supports. The partnership delivered two programs worth more than \$300,000 including the RFS Volunteer Wellbeing Project. This project provided online mindfulness and resilience tools to volunteers that increased the likelihood of early intervention and encouraged help-seeking initiatives. The partnership also continued to support the NAB Community Strategy Challenge with NAB employees working with the RFS to improve the onboarding process for new volunteers. The partnership concluded on 30 June 2023

- ✦ NAB and Suncorp, which resulted in the introduction of Mindarma (as in mind armour) in May 2022. Mindarma is an online learning program that supports the psychological wellbeing of volunteers from FRS, RFS and SES and PSOs. The Mindarma project concluded on 30 June 2023
- ✦ Suncorp, the Principal Community Partner of SES, continued to support a volunteer-led severe weather preparedness initiative—*Get your kit together*. The initiative provided community engagement resources such as household emergency plans, magnets and visual guides to support SES volunteers to engage with communities and deliver emergency preparedness. During SES Week volunteers were provided with waterproof notebooks and a supply of new deployment bags were delivered to volunteers who may be deployed to support communities throughout the state or interstate. Suncorp and SES continued to collaborate on a range of topics including Severe Wind Hazard Assessment and SES volunteers helped support Suncorp's *Resilience Road* campaign as an extension of their award winning *One House* project to increase community flood, storm and cyclone resilience and education
- ✦ Energy Queensland through the brands of Energex and Ergon Energy, renewed the partnership with RFS with research undertaken towards conversion of slip-on modules from fuel to battery power and the provision of an all-terrain vehicle for the service's Remote Area Firefighting Team. Energy Queensland also renewed the partnership with SES (which combines with Powerlink Queensland) to deliver a range of significant small equipment items to SES groups throughout the state
- ✦ Powerlink Queensland partnered with Energy Queensland to continue to sponsor the SES equipment program providing items to SES groups such as battery-powered lighting and chainsaws, rescue items, thermal imagers, and

CPR and water rescue training items, among a range of valuable equipment items. Supply of these items addresses local need and helps SES build capacity that has a direct and positive impact on communities across the state

- ✦ QSuper continued to sponsor the QFES Australia Day Achievement Awards which were delivered in each region throughout the state to recognise the outstanding achievements of QFES staff and volunteers
- ✦ Townsville's women's National Basketball League team, Townsville Fire. This partnership heightened community awareness of QFES and featured firefighting careers and emergency service volunteering in the community, with QFES involved in team games and a community parade when the team won the national season. Involvement in out-of-season events provided an additional opportunity for QFES to connect with the community, engaging with potential future staff and volunteers.

Also featuring firefighting careers and emergency service volunteering, sponsorships and engagement with UniQYou, Her Roar and Girl Guides Queensland (an SES partnership), profiled QFES well within the community.

In addition, an in-kind partnership with Bike4Burns Inc. (a ride from Gladstone to Brisbane over seven days) enabled QFES personnel to again take part in this significant event and raise valuable funds to support the Children's Hospital Foundation and the burns unit.

Predictive services capabilities

The Predictive Services Unit continued the Fire Behaviour Analyst (FBAN) Capability Uplift project in 2022–23, with 36 staff and volunteers receiving initial FBAN training. At 30 June 2023, there are 48 personnel at various stages of development—a 300 per cent increase in staff actively engaged in training since June 2022. Full FBAN qualification takes one to two years.

In conjunction with the introduction of Predictive Services Intelligence Coordinators in each QFES region in 2021–22, the Regional FBAN service delivery model, which is focused on providing operational support at the three levels of operations (tactical, operations and strategic levels), will be activated for the 2023–24 bushfire season. This represents a significant gain in bushfire intelligence resourcing for operational decision makers.

Bushfire Prone Area Mapping

Bushfire Prone Area Mapping is used to inform planning and building decisions across Queensland.

In 2022–23, QFES undertook a review of the methodology used to map bushfire prone areas via a pilot project for South East Queensland, in conjunction with CSIRO and the National Bushfire Intelligence Capability. The review identified new approaches to improve vegetation hazard mapping, which have been found to produce more reliable results than older methodologies. Field calibration for new vegetation hazard mapping was completed for the South East Queensland and the Wide Bay Burnett Planning Regions and the Gladstone Regional Council area in June 2023, with the support of operational staff from local governments, the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, HQ Plantations, RFS and the QFES Predictive Services Unit.

Queensland Disaster Management Training Framework

Disaster management training, education and capability development is a key element of QFES' responsibility and commitment to Queensland disaster management stakeholders. Training for disaster management stakeholders is provided in accordance with the *Queensland Disaster Management Training Framework* (QDMTF). The QDMTF is designed to meet the functions of the Chief Executive under the *Disaster Management Act 2003* (section 16A(c)) to ensure that those with a role in disaster operations are appropriately trained.

Demonstrating QFES' ongoing commitment to ensuring continuity in training delivery to disaster management stakeholders, a total of 12,622 units of QDMTF training were delivered across 2022–23. Reflective of their key role in disaster management, 55 per cent of the total training in 2022–23 was delivered to local government stakeholders.

The Operational Leadership and Crisis Management Masterclass series is a component of the QDMTF and forms a critical element of capability enhancement for key disaster management stakeholders. During 2022–23, two Masterclass sessions were offered:

- ❖ *Coordinating Teams Operating in Disaster Masterclass* focuses on enhancing the capability of team leaders to mobilise and manage high functioning teams to operate effectively in disaster, crisis and adversity
- ❖ *High Consequence Decision Making Masterclass* focuses on making critical decisions in situations of uncertainty, defensible decision-making, and

mitigating the impacts of uncertainty in making evidence-based decisions.

QFES presented the Masterclass sessions face-to-face with 391 participants across 20 sessions conducted in Beenleigh, Brisbane, Bundaberg, Cairns, Gympie, Hervey Bay, Longreach, Mackay, Rockhampton, Roma, Toowoomba and Townsville during August to September 2022 and April to May 2023.

Other key achievements include:

- ❖ planning and preparations for hosting the AFAC annual conference (AFAC23), alongside the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, to be held in Brisbane from 22 to 25 August 2023. The theme for the conference is *Creating a sustainable future: the challenges and opportunities* and will feature presenters and displays from industry leaders. AFAC23 runs in collaboration with the Australian Disaster Resilience Conference, the Institution of Fire Engineers (Australia) National Conference and the Wafa Conference
- ❖ attendance and participation by QFES officers at the AFAC Conference in August 2022, which explored the theme *Connecting Communities. Creating Resilience*. The conference provided a professional development and networking opportunity for QFES staff from operational and corporate divisions. QFES presented on the emerging issue of lithium-ion battery fire safety and unintended consequences associated with the rapid adoption of alternative and distributed energy systems and storage. QFES also presented on Operation Paia Trucks which saw QFES donate five ex-service QFES fire appliances to PNGFS in 2020–21 providing a significant boost to the PNGFS
- ❖ responded to 75,503 incidents including FRS and RFS response (207 incidents per day on average):
 - 2,376 structure fires including 1,621 residential structure fires
 - 5,662 landscape fires
 - 15,698 mobile property crashes
 - 51,767 other incidents (includes other fires and explosions, rescues, hazardous conditions incidents, false alarms and good intent calls, storm and natural disaster response incidents and other situations)
- ❖ continued to deliver timely response times to structure fires including call taking time with 8.2 minutes at the 50th percentile and 12.5 minutes at the 90th percentile
- ❖ received 3,473 SES tasks and 1,191 Agency Support Requests
- ❖ SES volunteers performed approximately 92,600 operational hours and more than 330,600 hours in preparation and training

- ◇ implemented 11 recommendations from IGEM reviews and continued to make progress on all remaining recommendations
- ◇ continued to lead implementation of the Queensland Government's response to the RCNDA Report, including delivery of a further 15 recommendations related to the AFDRS, communication of natural hazard risks to communities, national exercising, vegetation management, downscaled climate projections, supply chains and critical infrastructure, mental health planning, air quality information, building back better, and nationally consistent climate change projections and environmental data. The Queensland Government's implementation progress reports are available at www.disaster.qld.gov.au/publications
- ◇ continued delivery of the Fire Ed Program to year one students to develop an understanding of the dangers of fire, safety around fires and responding to fire emergencies. QFES also launched Fire Ed for Children with Neurodiversity as a statewide program (refer page 41). The Fire Ed program is delivered in the classroom by operational firefighters, supported by continued learning delivered by teachers
- ◇ continued to deliver the FFF program supporting parents and guardians with their efforts to educate children and young people (three to 17 years), who have been involved in at least one concerning fire incident. The program teaches respectful fire behaviours and develops fire safety skills. During the reporting period, 77 FFF cases were received with 14 related to Restorative Justice Conferencing under a working arrangement with the Department of Youth Justice, Employment, Small Business and Training. At 30 June 2023, there are 47 trained FFF practitioners located throughout Queensland who receive ongoing, regular training and support to maintain effective education and engagement skills
- ◇ continued to deliver the RAAP program with the delivery of 389 program presentations to approximately 32,150 young persons across Queensland in mainstream and non-school settings including restorative justice programs, and in partnership with the PCYC and other community youth organisations. RAAP is a practical lifesaving road safety awareness program for young drivers facilitated by operational firefighters. As of 30 June 2023, there are 215 trained RAAP presenters located throughout Queensland. During 2021–22, a Community Road Safety Grant was received from the Department of Transport and Main Roads to create RAAP program content for a First Nations audience. The grant enabled commission of First Nations artwork, the production of a promotional video and the recruitment of more firefighters to become presenters. In addition, funding of \$2.6 million over four years (commencing 2023–24) has been approved to enhance delivery of the RAAP program with the expansion of the program into various youth settings in the community, as well as conducting regional tours to reach young drivers across the state
- ◇ continued to deliver the Safehome program with 245 Safehome visits conducted where firefighters visit households to assist in recognising and eliminating fire and safety hazards in and around the home and provide information and tools to support people in increasing home fire and emergency preparedness measures. QFES also collaborated with the former Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy to provide home fire safety information targeted towards Queensland social housing tenants
- ◇ produced a promotional video for the Safehome program to raise awareness of the service for Queensland homeowners and to help address a business requirement within Fire and Rescue Senior Officer accreditation
- ◇ prepared for and supported major outback Queensland events such as the Birdsville Races (September 2022) and the Big Red Bash (July 2022). To minimise risk to the community, QFES deployed personnel from FRS, RFS and SES to create a surge capacity to manage the increased number of visitors to the community. QFES crews ensure the safety of the community and its visitors and take the opportunity to engage with local stakeholders, conduct recruitment drives, undertake training and conduct building fire safety inspections
- ◇ continued the review of the *Queensland Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery Disaster Management Guideline* and Support Toolkit suite (the guideline) and updated the *Queensland State Disaster Management Plan* (the plan) to reflect machinery-of-government changes. Further work on the guideline and plan is continuing taking into consideration review outcomes including the Independent Review of QFES and the IGEM's *Review of Queensland's Disaster Management Arrangements (QDMA)* (refer External Scrutiny on page 73). The guideline will be updated to reflect the changes to the disaster management arrangements

- ◇ continued to work with the QRA on the development and implementation of the *Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience 2022–2027* (the strategy). The strategy’s purpose is to provide an overarching framework to guide and coordinate the delivery of strategic commitments and actions to improve the resilience of Queensland communities across whole-of-government, with the support of key industry stakeholders. The strategy reflects Queensland’s significant progress in resilience initiatives, and provides strategic commitments and actions to strengthen disaster resilience. QFES continues to work with the QRA and partner agencies to implement the strategy’s actions
- ◇ a collaboration between QFES and Firetech Connect through the Noosa Shire Council’s Peregrian Digital Hub launched in July 2022. Firetech Connect conducted trials to enhance bushfire resilience in regional communities through bushfire prediction and detection, aerial operations and uncrewed firefighting solutions. Trial outcomes are pending
- ◇ a three-day vehicle fire investigation workshop at the SFEST—only the second time the course has been conducted outside of the United States of America. The course was run by the International Association of Arson Investigators in conjunction with the Queensland Association of Fire Investigators Inc. with 34 participants from most state fire services, QPS and private and insurance fire investigators. The course consisted of 24 hours of tested instruction in determining origin and cause of vehicle fires and culminated with a live burn, exposing the participants to the latest investigative techniques for modern vehicles
- ◇ hosted delegations from Laos, and Vietnam and Laos on 7 October 2022 and 16 June 2023 respectively in conjunction with the Queensland University of Technology (QUT). The delegations consisted of senior leaders and executives from government and private sector with discussions relating to emergency response, leadership and social policy. The visits were part of the Leadership in Responsive Public Administration course at QUT. In panel sessions for the delegates, QFES leaders highlighted QFES capabilities and collaborative approaches to response
- ◇ delivered Geographic Information System (GIS) roadshows to local and district disaster management groups. The road show, supported by each regional QFES Emergency Management Coordinator, provided training for pre-season readiness in several intelligence products including the SDCC Situational Awareness Platform, Operation Sesbania Risk Assessment Methodology, and risk products from the QFES Hazard and Risk Unit
- ◇ developed a pilot heatwave impact forecasting capability in partnership with the Department of Environment and Science, Queensland Health, Bureau of Meteorology, Australian Bureau of Statistics and Geoscience Australia. The pilot capability estimates areas of vulnerability to heat based on the Bureau of Meteorology’s heatwave service
- ◇ facilitated the live streaming of press conferences for QFES, QPS and in support of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet across major flooding incidents to relay live public safety updates to Queenslanders and up-to-date disaster and recovery plans from a state level
- ◇ produced 35 livestreams across QFES, the Office of the IGEM and QPS to support internal and external communications relating to the Leading Women’s Network, official event coverage for QFES and QPS such as graduations and ceremonies in Brisbane and Townsville, and full-day livestreams of IGEM disaster management events and *Fire in the Mulga* (refer page 55)
- ◇ designed and delivered over 118 unique video projects to clients across QFES, Office of the IGEM and QPS. These consisted of campaign-oriented web series, social media content, breaking news, live news vision and live event coverage both external and internal
- ◇ produced the long-form documentary for QPS *Policing Youth Offenders*. This documentary explored the current state of play for youth offending in Queensland, highlighting the significant social issues underpinning the behaviour. It also detailed the QPS response to the issue since the creation of the Youth Justice Taskforce which included an interview with a past offender who has been helped by established programs. The production took over nine months to complete and constituted approximately 470 hours of work. The documentary was released at a cinema media event and through social and traditional media channels. The project achieved a total reach of 3.3 million people with an advertising space rate value of over \$1.3 million through organic distribution
- ◇ produced several recruitment videos for QPS social media to highlight the advantages of becoming a police officer including coverage of the QPS Open Day at Wacol and promotional videos for QPS public servants
- ◇ produced internal communications content promoting the Rural Fire Development Framework to RFS volunteers across Queensland as the training program continues to be developed

- ◇ migrated the Disaster Management website to the whole-of-government content management system known as Squiz Matrix. The new site ensures continued access to PPRR disaster management content and includes a more contemporary design and improved end-user experience (www.disaster.qld.gov.au)
- ◇ attended Strategic Planning for Cyclone Resilient Communities Executive Residential Program hosted by Griffith University and James Cook University. QFES representatives joined a group of 30 senior decision-makers to learn and discuss what has and can be done to enable communities to prepare for and withstand future events. Senior academic and industry experts delivered transformative and applicable learning outcomes within the program
- ◇ continued to work with stakeholders including state government agencies and local governments to provide information and education to ensure the highest level of fire safety is achieved in Queensland buildings and deliver targeted emergency preparedness, response and recovery information
- ◇ continued to educate the community to raise awareness about the services provided by QFES and promote action on improving home and personal safety. Methods of education included attendance at displays, schools, presentations and workshops at local community events. QFES personnel provided information to help residents better prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergency events, to help foster a more resilient community by discussing smoke alarm legislation, home fire safety, bushfire safety and severe weather safety
- ◇ continued the partnership with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Department of Tourism, Innovation and Sport to deliver the Shark Control Program, particularly the SharkSmart Campaign. The primary aim of the Shark Control Program is to protect people swimming and recreating at Queensland beaches from negative encounters with sharks. QFES is a member of the SharkSmart Working Group and SharkSmart Steering Committee and plays a role in linking the program up with key marine rescue organisations whilst also providing community engagement and communications input and support
- ◇ continued a partnership, established in December 2021, between SES and Girl Guides Australia Queensland that supports the development of girls now and into the future. The SES is supporting a badge program with Girl Guides Australia Queensland that provides an opportunity for Girl Guides around the state to learn more about volunteering for the SES. The girls complete a skills education program and undertake age-appropriate tasks relevant to SES volunteers. The badge the girls receive is added to their 'blanket badge' collection
- ◇ continued to support whole-of-government disaster management data sharing through the QDMA Data Sharing Group on ArcGIS Online. The group allows data across PPRR phases of disaster management to be shared amongst members. At 30 June 2023, there are more than 270 members from local, state and Australian Government bodies as well as non-government organisations, with more than 550 shared datasets. This data helps inform the SDCC Situational Awareness Platform which is made up of operational situational awareness web maps and dashboards across all hazards. Governance for the QDMA Data Sharing Group is continually managed through the QFES Disaster Management Data Coordination Initiative
- ◇ participated in the National Disaster Rescue Challenge, a biennial event bringing together SES volunteers from all over Australia to test their leadership, casualty care and rescue teamwork against each other and in challenging scenarios. This event, held in October 2022, was the first challenge since 2017 due to the 2019 bushfire season and impacts of COVID-19. More than 60 volunteers participated in the challenge held in Perth. The Queensland team of eight from Townsville/Thuringowa, won all categories including Best First-Aid, Best Team Leader and overall winner of the challenge.

Indigenous land and fire management practices

QFES regionally based staff and volunteers participated in a number of burns with Traditional Owners during 2022–23 enabling increased engagement and learning about traditional fire management practices. This work is supported by broader training of RFS staff in a nationally accredited Cultural Awareness training program which includes competencies such as working with an Aboriginal community or organisation, following Aboriginal cultural protocols, and implementing land and sea management practices.

These activities are part of QFES' commitment to improved understanding of the First Nations fire management practices and knowledge. This aligns with the RFS Blueprint objectives of recognising the importance of traditional knowledge and ensuring the cultural values of the land are respected, and the key initiative of continuing to grow partnerships with Traditional Owners and Indigenous ranger groups.

A specific example of this engagement is the RFS Northern Region's partnership with NQ Dry Tropics (an independent, not-for-profit organisation that is committed to sustaining natural resources for the benefit of current and future generations) to engage Traditional Owners in local planning and burning activities as well as learning traditional burning techniques. These learned techniques were displayed at Northern Region's Exercise Luxton held in May 2023 (refer page 46).

A further example is the *Fire in the Mulga* forum. Upside-down country is becoming all too common across Southern Queensland. Upside-down being where trees with their dead upper branches appear like roots, and the thick scrub layer at the surface acts as the canopy of this upside-down landscape. First Nations people identify this inverted landscape as unhealthy country and is indicative that the country has not been subject to the appropriate fire regime.

The *Fire in the Mulga* forum was held in Charleville in July 2022 and was co-ordinated in partnership between RFS, Southern Queensland Landscapes and Murweh Shire Council. The key purpose was to share knowledge between First Nations custodians and long-term landholders to understand the relationship fire has with the landscape and how proactive fire management can benefit everyone.

A total of 88 people attended the forum including the Traditional Owners, graziers, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service representatives, carbon abatement businesses, tourism companies, local government, rural fire brigade volunteers and other partner agencies. Presenters from Bidjara country (Carnarvon Range), Mardigan/Budjiti country (Yowah Opal fields) and Kooma shared stories about the importance of reading and understanding the country to identify when conditions are most suitable for burning to ensure long-term sustainability.

Following the forum, a range of work continues to take place with traditional burning demonstrations occurring on Bidjara country and Mardigan/Budjiti country.

Applying fire to the ground has provided opportunities for people to reconnect with country and is improving relationships between the stakeholder groups. This ongoing collaboration continues to be pursued to enhance the country for future generations, because *none of us own the land but we all belong to the land*.

Rural Fire Service capability enhancement and uplift

The 2022–23 RFS budget was \$72.4 million, comprising \$46.55 million operating budget and \$25.85 million capital budget. This included a \$10 million budget boost to complete new or upgraded RFS facilities including funding for a new facility for rural fire brigades in the Maryborough region. The uplift will enable a new operational facility in Maryborough which will include brigade facilities, training rooms, storage and an incident control centre.

In addition to the new Maryborough facility funding, the 2022–23 RFS capital budget included:

- ◇ \$16.1 million for replacement and new rural fire appliances
- ◇ \$240,000 for a rural fire brigade shelter and appliance
- ◇ \$1 million for the RFS facilities program
- ◇ \$600,000 for slip on units
- ◇ \$200,000 for land acquisitions for brigade stations.

The RFS facilities program provided funding toward improving existing rural fire stations across the state, including toilets and other hygiene facilities.

Funding delivered a number of new and upgraded rural fire stations to ensure RFS fleet and equipment can be safely stored and to provide facilities for brigade training activities.

A further commitment was made during 2022–23 to commence a \$3 million program to retrofit life-saving cabin deluge systems into existing rural fire appliances. These safety systems increase the chance of survival for crews seeking shelter in their vehicles to escape an oncoming bushfire.

The 2023–24 RFS capital budget totals more than \$35 million and includes a significant investment of \$16.16 million towards new and replacement appliances, in addition to \$2.6 million on new operational equipment, and \$1 million to continue the cabin deluge retrofit program. Further, the 2023–24 State Budget provides an additional \$20 million to continue uplift of the RFS.

As a result of the outcomes of the Independent Review of QFES, on 26 October 2022, it was announced that the RFS will become a separate entity with its own budget under a newly established Queensland Fire Department.

As part of this reform, the RFS will receive a resources enhancement of more than 100 extra positions and funding for new appliances, facilities and equipment.

State Emergency Service Uplift

In 2022–23, the State Budget provided additional funding for the SES Uplift—the SES received a record budget of \$43.8 million including a \$20 million boost to enhance operational capability, risk management, and support frontline volunteers representing a 102 per cent increase on the 2021–22 budget.

The 2022–23 budget included a \$10 million boost to capital projects and initiatives such as:

- ✦ ICT hardware devices to support SES training and operations
- ✦ ICT system enhancements to support volunteer administration and SES tasking management, including the rollout of critical improvements to the dispatch system for the SES 132 500 requests for assistance along with enhanced risk assessments, field safety checklists and enhanced safety incident reporting
- ✦ readiness and response equipment to enhance volunteer and community health and safety such as storm damage tools, CPR manikins, vehicle awnings, communications boosters and thermal imaging cameras
- ✦ road crash rescue equipment to enable improved response to vehicle accidents in rural and remote areas.

The SES also received 40 temporary positions across the state which delivered priority uplift in areas such as local government engagement, training development and delivery, asset management, doctrine and risk management.

This funding also assisted volunteers in gaining formal training including 20 volunteers in the Far Northern Region who graduated in May 2023 with a Certificate II in Public Safety (SES). This recruit class was planned to assist young people aged 16 to 18 years who were considering a career in Emergency Services or Defence. The class, known as the 23 Yankee Recruit Class, was honoured with certificate presentations by the Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner, SES during a graduation and at 30 June 2023, have taken up positions in seven SES groups within the Far Northern Region.

As a result of the outcomes of the Independent Review of QFES, on 26 October 2022, it was announced that the SES is to become a separate entity under the QPS with its own budget. The announced reforms enabled permanent appointment to 45 positions. Thirty of these positions will enhance SES capability in the regions, with five staff each to Far Northern, Northern, North Coast and South Western Regions; six staff for Brisbane Region; and two staff each to Central and South Eastern Regions. Fifteen staff in State Office will enhance the SES's capability in strategy, planning, risk, resourcing, readiness, assurance and corporate support functions.

The funding boost also increased the SES Support Grant program (refer page 48) with a further eight local government 2022–23 SES Support Grant applications awarded with grants totalling over \$173,000; an additional \$1.6 million was added to the 2023–24 SES Support Grant budget; and a \$1 million grant was awarded to the Somerset Regional Council towards facility upgrades and fleet including the Lowood SES Group.

During the reporting period, the SES Capability Assessment Tool was developed to help inform and assist in prioritisation of SES Uplift priorities and identification of risk. Understanding the specific capabilities the SES provides to their respective communities, provided an opportunity to gain a better appreciation and understanding of Queensland SES functions and operations as well as an opportunity to collaborate with SES senior directors and staff.

Australian Warning System

The Australian Warning System (AWS) brings a nationally consistent approach to warnings, including warning levels, icons, colours and action statements, for every community for bushfire, flood, storm, cyclone and extreme heat. The new warnings will focus on clear actions people in the warning area should take to stay safe.

QFES, in partnership with other agencies, is leading the AWS roll-out in Queensland, with implementation, planned for 1 November 2023. The introduction of these new warnings in Queensland will be complemented by a community education campaign including community engagement activities.

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

QFES successfully implemented AWS bushfire warnings for Queensland in May 2021. During 2022–23, QFES piloted three different approaches to creating and publishing bushfire warnings, aligning with the QFES model of *state strategy, regional management, local delivery*. QFES regional and Public Information and Warnings Unit (PIWU) Warnings Officers issued 1,249 bushfire warnings between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023. The PIWU provided operational oversight and support including quality control, coaching and 24 hours, seven days a week state-based Warnings Officer capacity to action warnings when required. PIWU also provided direct assistance to regional Warnings Officers during training, exercising and operations.

Working within the AWS framework, changes to the Queensland bushfire warning calls-to-actions and templates have been implemented following regional feedback and broader AWS warning template development.

AWS flood warning templates were provided to Local Disaster Management Groups in November 2022 and QFES has worked with partner agencies and community members to develop storm and cyclone warning templates.

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

With more severe weather and natural disasters predicated for the 2023–24 season, the implementation of the AWS is timely.

Further information is available at:
www.australianwarningsystem.com.au

Bushfire mitigation and preparedness

Bushfire mitigation and preparedness continues to be a shared responsibility between many partners, especially land management agencies and local government. QFES continues to place a critical priority on maintaining and supporting these partnerships.

On 15 January 2022, QFES and its partners transitioned to a year-round mitigation program known as Operation Sesbania which replaced Operation Cool Burn (a period of heightened mitigation activity generally held from the beginning of April to the end of August each year). This recognises that mitigation activities can be undertaken throughout the year depending on local conditions enabling greater flexibility for land managers and owners to conduct mitigation activities in a changing climate with limited windows for key activities such as hazard reduction burning.

On 2 May 2022, the Operation Sesbania Dashboard went live and 2022–23 was the first full year of its operation. The dashboard is designed as a mitigation, planning and activity management tool to support the prevention and preparation of bushfire safety and the response and recovery phase of operations through real-time situation awareness and hazard identification. The dashboard synchronises and displays one visual platform and provides up-to-date reports.

Operation Sesbania will run for the duration of Program Grass Tree or until advised otherwise. Program Grass Tree is a three-year bushfire mitigation program focused on creating a workable balance between establishing and sustaining a safe living environment for Queensland communities.

During the reporting period, 1,042 mitigation activities were completed within Operation Sesbania. This recording of information helps drive identification of priorities for future mitigation and inform planning and preparedness should a bushfire arise. The information and tools used in Operation Sesbania also feedback to Area Fire Management Groups which fosters coordination and collaboration at key risk locations where multiple landowners may be involved in a mitigation activity. QFES continues to work with its bushfire management partners and continues to prioritise data sharing and collaboration.

2026 Objective

3. Communities are connected and capable in the face of fires, emergencies and disasters

2022–2026 Strategy

- ◇ Use place-based, decentralised service delivery to inform, empower and support our communities, people and partners before, during and after fires, emergencies and disasters.

Australian Fire Danger Rating System

The Australian Fire Danger Rating System (AFDRS) will enhance public safety and reduce the impacts of bushfires by improving the scientific accuracy behind fire danger predictions and improving how fire danger is communicated. The AFDRS is a first of its kind nationally consistent system for communicating fire danger ratings to the community and forecasting fire behaviour for decision-makers.

The AFDRS has four warning levels:

- ◇ Moderate—plan and prepare
- ◇ High—be ready to action
- ◇ Extreme—take action now to protect life and property
- ◇ Catastrophic—for your survival, leave bushfire risk areas.

The AFDRS has delivered on recommendation 13.1 of the RCNDA Report, which called for state and territory governments to expedite the development and implementation of the AFDRS.

The AFDRS went live on 1 September 2022 and is the primary source of fire danger forecasting in use within Queensland. The AFDRS provided operational decision-making support to QFES staff during the January to March 2023 Western Downs bushfire event.

Community engagement resources including brochures, fact sheets, posters and fridge magnets were developed providing information about the AFDRS. In addition, QFES regions provided information to the community through engagement activities in the lead up to the bushfire season.

QFES commenced the installation of 130 new automatic electronic roadside signs in May 2023 providing timely and accurate information to high-risk bushfire locations. The removal and installation of fire danger ratings signs is being undertaken in line with permit requirements of local government and the Department of Transport and Main Roads.

QFES has worked closely with AFAC jurisdictional partners to continue to develop and improve the AFDRS system. New fuel mapping and data have been implemented for 2023–24. This represents the most significant improvement in system accuracy since the original inception of AFDRS as a prototype system. Fire practitioners throughout Queensland will benefit from more accurate fire danger ratings as a result of this work.

PCYC Queensland Emergency Services Cadets

QFES continued to support the Emergency Services Cadets Program (ESCP) aimed at building community resilience through the fostering of the next generation of emergency services personnel. As of 30 June 2023, the program has 411 young Queenslanders (aged 12 to 17 years) supported by 166 adult leaders in 21 cadet units.

During the reporting period:

- ◇ one new cadet unit was established in Somerset and four units ceased operations—Bowen, Cook Shire, Cooroora and South Burnett. Feasibility assessments are underway for Edmonton, Roma and Townsville to establish new units, and Cook Shire to relocate the unit to a different host service (from SES to RFS)
- ◇ the Logan City SES Unit in collaboration with the Wolffdene Emergency Services Cadet Unit and Cedar Creek Wolffdene Rural Fire Brigade hosted the South Eastern Region Cadet Rescue Challenge. The challenge, held in April 2023, consisted of seven cadet teams and one mixed adult emergency services team (comprised of adult SES and RFS members and Cadet Leaders) putting themselves through several emergency related scenarios. Activities included fire break, land search and casualty recovery, staging, communications and team/welfare management
- ◇ the annual Adult Leader Conference was held 9 to 11 December 2022 in Brisbane with a focus on Back to Basics. Sessions were held on PCYC's

Data Management Tools, Incident Reporting and Risk Assessment Processes. Leaders also attended presentations on Youth Mental Health, and the RAAP and FFF programs

- ✦ ESCape Week was held in September 2022 bringing together the top cadets from ESCP across Queensland, with RFS cadets and surf lifesaving cadets, to further develop their leadership skills and learn to work with other cadets
- ✦ the annual PCYC Cadet Games were held in Townsville in August 2022 with 126 cadets in 21 teams including Emergency Services cadets, SLSQ, Australian Navy cadets, Australian Army cadets and Australia Air Force cadets. The games strengthened the relationship between emergency services and defence agencies and was an opportunity for young people to meet mentors and role models across the sector.

A three-year Service Agreement between QFES and PCYC Queensland for the period 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2024 remains in place to continue delivery of the ESCP totalling \$1,869,300 (GST exclusive). For 2022–23, a total of \$623,100 (GST exclusive) was provided to PCYC under the agreement.

Community Insights Survey

Each year, QFES surveys Queensland residents to measure the level of their preparedness for fire and emergency events. The QFES Community Insights Survey explores a range of emergency and disaster events, preparedness activities and service expectations of QFES. The survey helps the department develop community education strategies including smoke alarm testing and legislation awareness, risk awareness and communication preferences.

In September/October 2022, a total of 2,099 Queenslanders were surveyed across the seven QFES regions.

Similar to previous years, survey results indicate that most Queenslanders consider themselves responsible for preparing their household for emergency and disaster events (85 per cent mostly or completely).

For the first time, warnings and alerts were considered the most important service, overtaking fire and hazard response in the top spot compared to 2021.

The number of Queenslanders testing and maintaining their smoke alarms in the past 12 months is significantly higher than 2021, and 46 per cent of Queenslanders have interconnected smoke alarms, significantly up from 2021. Sixty-two per cent of those who do not have them installed say they are likely to install them in the next 12 months.

Fifteen per cent of respondents had experienced a disaster or emergency event in the past year—a significant increase from 2022, and about two-thirds of respondents felt prepared for the events.

Seven in 10 people who had experienced an event felt the experience had improved their preparedness for future events.

For further information refer to www.data.qld.gov.au/dataset/qfes-community-insights-survey

Service Agreements

QFES supports other volunteer groups that provide emergency response to Queenslanders through Service Agreements including:

- ✦ the provision of \$30 million (GST exclusive) over four years through a Service Agreement with SLSQ commencing 2020–21 under a 2020 Government Commitment. A further Service Agreement was entered into with SLSQ for the period 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2024, aligned to the 2020 Government Commitment. Funding supports the operations of 57 surf lifesaving clubs, six branches and the state headquarters for the provision of beach safety services, white water safety programs and community education, and the SLSQ helicopter and RPAS (drones) capabilities
- ✦ the provision of \$425,140 (GST exclusive) in 2022–23 as part of RLSSQ Service Agreement 2022–2024 to support the operations of the Ithaca-Caloundra, Neptune (Palm Beach) and Airlie Beach clubs and the delivery of swim and survive programs, water safety programs and aquatic risk management
- ✦ a three-year Service Agreement between QFES and PCYC Queensland for the period 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2024 to continue delivery of the ESCP (refer to pages 60–61 for further information)
- ✦ Marine Rescue Service Agreements with AVCGA and VMRAQ (including Direct Relief Support Grants) directly supporting over 3,000 volunteers from 47 units (21 flotillas from AVCGA and 26 squadrons from VMRAQ) to conduct over 4,000 activations, serving the Queensland boating public across 11,000 kilometres of coastline and ocean waters.

In addition, QFES has a Service Agreement with the Retired Firefighters Association of Queensland Inc. (RFAQ), a non-profit association that provides wellbeing and related services to retired firefighters. The department provides an in-kind contribution to the RFAQ which supports the publication of its quarterly magazine *The Afterburners*. The RFAQ and QFES partnership provides retired QFES staff an avenue for social connectedness after their career with QFES.

Lessons management

Lessons management plays an important role as part of the overall organisational development process to support continuous improvement.

An internal review of the Rainfall and Flood event of February – March 2022 was conducted leading to a small number of findings where lessons identified have been actioned to support improved delivery of the department's capability.

Additionally, a number of event de-briefs were undertaken with a case study into the bushfires in the South West region of the state. The bushfires ran from early January to mid-March 2023 and work is progressing to identify areas for improvement, as well as areas where good practice was identified.

Other key achievements include:

- ✧ continued to maintain oversight of the phased implementation of the domestic smoke alarm requirements contained in the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990*, which will make Queensland households the safest in Australia
- ✧ continued to promote the critical role that smoke alarms play in alerting dwelling occupants of the presence of smoke and the smoke alarm legislative changes introduced on 1 January 2017 that require dwellings to have interconnected, photoelectric smoke alarms installed in a phased implementation process, with all homes to comply by 1 January 2027. Activities included a targeted community education advertising campaign that shifted focus from the 1 January 2022 second implementation stage for rentals and dwellings being sold, to the final implementation phase that captures all other dwellings which is predominantly owner/occupiers
- ✧ created a decentralised content collateral process designed to be easily adapted across all QFES regions that includes a suite of design templates that enable the development of recruitment material for publication through local channels by local operators using local content.