

Commissioner's message

I am pleased to present the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services' (QFES) 2019-20 annual report.

I was honoured to be appointed as QFES Commissioner in December 2019. In my time leading the department, I have been impressed by the commitment of all QFES staff, volunteers and partner agencies in providing world-class emergency services. This report outlines how we have contributed to safer, more resilient and capable communities during a very challenging year.

In September 2019, fires started in Queensland on an unprecedented scale and continued for many months, with a State of Fire Emergency declared for the first time in November 2019. As 2020 began and the bushfire threat subsided in Queensland, further fires ignited in other states with Australia experiencing one of the worst bushfire seasons in recent history. Despite the ongoing operations in Queensland, our firefighters and incident management specialists were able to provide valuable support to communities in New South Wales, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory.

In February and March 2020, Queensland experienced severe weather and cyclone activity with above average rainfall leading to significant river level rises and flooding in southern and western Queensland communities.

Concurrent to these events, a public health emergency was declared in January 2020 in response to the global outbreak of COVID-19. QFES continues to perform a vital role in the Queensland Government's response to and recovery from the pandemic. Our staff and volunteers have displayed remarkable resilience and agility in an uncertain environment, going above and beyond to implement innovative approaches to service delivery and community engagement.

While 2020 has proved to be an exceptionally busy year operationally, QFES has maintained a strong focus on working with our partners and communities on activities across disaster prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. Over the past 12 months, the Queensland Emergency Risk Management Framework Strategic Workplan was developed with local governments to further improve our shared understanding and management of disaster risk. Queensland's fire management arrangements have been strengthened through the Area Fire Management Groups, providing an integrated, proactive and localised approach to managing bushfire risk in communities. QFES is also contributing to national discussions through the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements with findings due for release later in 2020.

Queensland communities are at the heart of everything we do at QFES. The QFES workforce comes from all walks of life and every corner of Queensland — we are uniquely positioned to ensure that our services are delivered side by side with our communities.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Deputy Commissioner Mike Wassing for his strong leadership as Acting Commissioner prior to my appointment. I would also like to thank the Executive Leadership Team, all QFES staff, volunteers and partners agencies for their continuing dedication and contribution to building safer and more resilient communities.

I look forward to working with you all as we continue to deliver contemporary emergency services into the future.



Greg Leach
Commissioner

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services
9 September 2020