

Our performance

This section reports on the priority areas and strategic initiatives of the QFES Strategic Plan 2019-2023 and is a sample of the department's performance highlights from 2019-20. It is not representative of all work undertaken during this period.

During 2019-20, the delivery of fire and rescue and emergency management programs and services was impacted by the Queensland Government's response to and recovery from the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) which was supported by the department. QFES staff and volunteers were required to be flexible and agile in an ever-changing environment, at times assuming roles that were outside the norm and implementing innovative approaches to service delivery and training.

Priority area

1. Volunteerism, people and culture

2019-2023 Strategic initiatives

- » Empower Queenslanders to contribute and/or volunteer by providing flexible opportunities.
- » Involve volunteers early in decision-making and lessons management processes.
- » Deliver a leadership strategy that builds a pipeline of capability for the future.
- » Promote inclusion and value the diversity of our people.

Volunteerism Strategy

The QFES Volunteerism Strategy aims to create contemporary volunteer models which reflect best practice, innovation and social trends across volunteerism and embed these models in the QFES culture and ethos. The Volunteerism Strategy's implementation program, approved by Board of Management (BoM) on 9 October 2019, was reviewed due to the impact on implementation largely associated with the 2019-20 bushfire season and the planning and response to COVID-19.

The revised implementation program contains nine projects with 23 deliverable activities that align with the strategy's strategic priorities and guiding principles. Key themes include:

- » recruitment and onboarding
- » leadership development
- » honours and awards
- » training
- » communication and engagement
- » capability
- » identity promotion
- » well-being
- » consultation.

The implementation program has been developed to realise the intention of the Volunteerism Strategy through tangible projects that will strategically and sequentially facilitate the improvements that have been identified as priorities for volunteers, volunteering and volunteerism within the department and the Queensland community. The implementation program is expected to be completed by June 2022.

During the reporting period, QFES:

- » continued membership of the AFAC Volunteer Management Technical Group. The group is exploring a number of projects to address volunteering challenges and opportunities across the nation such as youth recruitment and retention and volunteer workforce sustainability
- » distributed more than 11,900 Emergency Service Volunteer Pins to QFES' emergency services volunteer partners including Australian Red Cross (Queensland), AVCGA, RLSSQ, SLSQ, VMRAQ, PCYC and QAS Local Ambulance Committees. The pin acknowledges the commitment and value eligible volunteers bring to the community.

The QFES Volunteerism Strategy is available at www.qfes.qld.gov.au

RFS and SES grants

QFES continued to provide support to SES groups and units and rural fire brigades to identify, plan, apply for and complete grant applications. During the reporting period:

- » RFS sponsored 16 external grant applications for rural fire brigades with 12 brigades successful. These grants totalling \$294,000 provided for facility improvements, support vehicles and brigade equipment.
- » RFS State Office awarded 71 RFS grants to rural fire brigades totalling \$689,000. These grants provided for the supply and installation of security systems; station construction and extensions including bathroom facilities; supply and installation of solar systems, generators, water tanks; and the supply of support/command vehicles.
- » QFES sponsored 51 grant applications for SES groups through external grants programs with 36 successful. These external grants provided equipment for training and emergency activations, trailers and facility upgrades.

Safety for children (Blue cards)

QFES committed to, and commenced, the significant implementation of blue cards in June 2019 for over 30,000 staff and volunteers who were identified as performing functions that fall within 'regulated employment' under the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000* (WWC Act).

The safety of children is of paramount importance to the Queensland Government and blue cards are one of a range of measures in place to protect children in Queensland along with the government's 'No Card, No Start' system which was scheduled to come into effect in early 2020.

At the 31 March 2020 deadline there were over 4,500 members of the QFES workforce who had not applied for a blue card. As a result, a further deadline was announced allowing these remaining members until after the next bushfire season to apply for their blue card.

As at 30 June 2020, 84 per cent (23,196) of the QFES workforce who are required to hold a blue card had applied. This breaks down into 99 per cent (4,244) of the FRS, 95 per cent (5,593) of the SES and 76 per cent (13,359) of the RFS.

QFES is continuing to support staff and volunteers who need to apply for their blue card to be able to continue in their role protecting the community. In 2020-21, QFES will move into managing the

ongoing requirements for blue cards such as renewals.

Supporting the implementation of blue cards is the development of the inaugural *QFES Safety for Children Risk Management Strategy*, which fulfils one of the department's obligations under the WWC Act. Implementation of this strategy will commence in 2020-21.

Supporting inclusion and diversity

Queensland has an increasingly diverse population which QFES considers 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 our organisation through their diverse skills, knowledge and experience.

During the reporting period, QFES:

- » continued to assist members of the deaf community or people who have hearing impairment to install specialised smoke alarms through the Smoke Alarm Subsidy Scheme managed by Deaf Services Queensland, with 219 deaf and hard of hearing smoke alarms provided
- » provided Auslan interpreters when broadcasting fire and emergency safety information
- » developed, in consultation with Multicultural Development Australia Ltd and Moreton Bay Regional Council, a home fire safety pictorial guide for use in culturally and linguistically diverse communities to complement the suite of translated materials (Smoke alarms in Queensland, Fire Safety in Share Housing and Emergency Triple Zero brochures—refer www.qfes.qld.gov.au).
- » translated the Home Fire Safety radio campaign and targeted social media posts to Samoan, Arabic, Mandarin and Indian English. The campaign is timed around winter when there is typically a peak in the number of house fires encouraging residents to prepare their home for a quick escape, and discuss and practice their escape plan
- » provided culture-related training to all users (staff and volunteers) of the QFES Learning Management System (Nexus) and the QFES Learning Cache. The interactive course provides insights into interpreting a person's own culture and an opportunity to gain an understanding of the lived experiences for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland

- » partnered with CareerTrackers Indigenous Internship Program to provide opportunities for Indigenous university students to gain industry experience in a variety of roles. Interns are hosted across a diverse range of QFES business areas working with their peers and participating in activities relating to their field of study and their role with the department. QFES hosted four interns during the summer program and two interns during the winter program
- » connected with its partner agencies and workforce to recognise the skills and knowledge of women and those who support them through the Public Safety and Associated Agencies International Women's Day event held in Brisbane on 6 March 2020. The event's theme for 2020 was 'Be Brave, Be True, Be You'.

Working for Queensland 2019

The WfQ survey (September 2019) results revealed the majority of staff feel positively about their job with 81 per cent strongly agreeing or agreeing that 'my job gives me a sense of personal accomplishment'. Staff are also seeing QFES' values in action with 86 per cent strongly agreeing or agreeing that 'people in my work group are committed to delivering excellent service to customers'.

Effective teamwork is constantly being demonstrated, with 82 per cent strongly agreeing or agreeing that 'people in my work group work effectively with others to deliver services to customers'.

The survey enables QFES to continuously strengthen and improve as an organisation. Forums continue to involve staff in developing actions to respond to the survey results.

PCYC Emergency Services Cadets

QFES continued to support the Emergency Services Cadet Program, aimed at building community resilience through the fostering of the next generation of emergency services personnel.

At 30 June 2020, the program has 375 young Queenslanders (aged 12-17 years) supported by 115 adult leaders and 58 active emergency services personnel in 18 cadet units. During the reporting period, two new Emergency Services Cadet Units were established located at Cook Shire (Cooktown) and Tablelands (Herberton) and the Hervey Bay Unit was put into recess. This unit will be relaunched in 2020-21.

QFES continued the rollout of the Certificate II in Public Safety (SES) to Emergency Services Cadets across the state and established a pathway for the course to be accessed online which is expected to be available during the third school term of 2020.

Other key achievements include:

- » Developed the QFES Leadership Framework which was approved for implementation by BoM on 22 May 2020. Aligned to the human capital lifecycle, the framework will provide a continuum of leadership development from emerging leader through to executive.
- » Appointment of 92 additional firefighters at 30 June 2020 in line with the government's 2017 election commitment providing increased capability in several regions and ensuring communities continue to receive quality services. The recruitment of the remaining eight positions from the 100 additional firefighters commitment and the recruitment of the 12 fire communications officers is expected to be finalised by 30 September 2020.
- » Rolled-out 360-degree video training to new firefighter recruits ensuring the recruits have a good base of knowledge and skills that can be drawn on when they progress to live-fire environments and reducing some of the risks and costs involved in the early stages of recruit development. Additional benefits the technology provides include bridging distances to more-readily educate and train staff and volunteers, particularly those in regional or remote areas. Additional training packages focusing on firefighting aircraft and storm and severe weather event response are being developed.
- » Redeveloped the requirements of the Certificate III in Public Safety (Emergency Communications Centre Operations) to meet the contemporary needs of QFES and the updated National Industry Standards. Delivery of the redeveloped course commenced in February 2020.
- » Finalised the assessment of QFES documentation, such as policies, procedures and templates, against the *Human Rights Act 2019*. Where human rights were limited through operational activities, justification was provided. In addition, an assessment tool was developed to align future documents to the Act with the assessment of QFES documents against the human rights legislation now a business-as-usual activity.

- » Produced a training video on decision-making for human rights in operational scenarios. The video is available on the QFES Gateway (staff intranet).
- » Conducted the 2019 Senior Leaders' Conference in Brisbane for 150 senior leaders from across the department. Conference participants had direct access to the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and senior officers responsible for the delivery of a range of strategic projects. Participants identified a range of opportunities for improvement, including that workforce planning should be more aligned to priorities and capabilities, business processes which could be streamlined and that training should be more demand driven, more flexible and place-based.
- » Conducted the biennial SES Local Controllers' Conference in August 2019 with the theme *Engaging with Purpose*. Conference outcomes included workshopping the development of the SES Executive Leadership Framework. A review of the SES was announced at this conference (refer page 32).
- » Celebrated the 10-year milestone of the delivery of the Certificate II Public Safety (Firefighting Operations) Program. The program provides high school students with credits towards their Queensland Certificate of Education and brigades with new young volunteers to support members and increase youth volunteer firefighter numbers. The program has been delivered to over 650 high school students across all QFES regions since 2010.
- » Transitioned to a new payroll system, Aurion, on 3 February 2020 enabling self-service capabilities for QFES' paid workforce providing greater visibility and control of payroll information. The transition was supported by a range of learning material and face-to-face information sessions delivered around the state.
- » Developed uniform guidelines and standards that balance traditions of dress, diverse community expectations, and operational and environmental factors.
- » Explored options for interoperability, standardisation and continuous improvement of uniform, personal protective equipment (PPE) and equipment as procurement activities were undertaken.
- » Developed and implemented a highly complex site response plan enabling the SFEST Academy Services to mitigate the threat posed by COVID-19. Cleaning, sanitising and reconfiguring of the site, along with minimising access and implementing additional processes, enabled the continuation of essential training of recruit firefighters and recruit fire communications officers and ensured compliance with COVIDSafe measures.
- » Celebrated Peer Support Week in March 2020 with the hosting of a variety of events across the state to recognise the valuable work of QFES' Peer Support Officers. Peer Support Officers provide confidential and informal support to QFES personnel who may be experiencing personal and/or work difficulties.
- » Celebrated RFS Week in September 2019 and June 2020. The celebrations in September 2019 coincided with the RFS' 70th year anniversary, with Glass House Mountains, Lagoon Pocket, Byfields, Kandanga, Thangool and Gordonbrook rural fire brigades celebrating 70 years of dedication to the service. In June 2020, statewide celebrations highlighted the dedication and commitment of the RFS volunteers who keep Queensland communities safe. The inaugural RFS Regional Volunteer of the Year and the Assistant Commissioner RFS State Volunteer of the Year Awards were presented at the RFS Awards Ceremony held in September 2019. These awards recognise volunteers who have demonstrated a special contribution to the service.
- » Celebrated SES week in October 2019 shining the spotlight on the spirit of volunteering. Regional events were held across the state and included award presentations for volunteers and units who have gone above and beyond their duties to support their communities. The State Awards Ceremony held in October 2019 included the inaugural Life Member Award with 16 SES volunteers recognised for their outstanding individual commitment and special contribution to the service.

Priority area

2. Digital transformation

2019-2023 Strategic initiatives

- » Connect systems, information and people for enhanced decision-making.
- » Streamline and digitalise business processes so they are accessible and intuitive.

Common Operating Picture

A scalable Common Operating Picture (COP) was developed, enabled by Geospatial Information Systems (GIS), as a critical tool in the development and maintenance of situation awareness. COP also provides a basis for operational decision support at all tiers within the QFES command, control, coordination, communications and intelligence environment.

Underpinned by an internationally recognised methodology in the determination of decision requirements, a minimal viable COP was trialled by QFES Central Region in December 2019 and subsequently introduced in all QFES regions during 2020.

There are several advantages to the design and methods undertaken:

- » identified realistic task requirements in an operational setting so the data is more meaningful
- » collected and verified data from officers with direct knowledge of the skills needed
- » clearly established the importance of key decisions and planning
- » aided in articulating cognitive elements that are otherwise difficult to articulate
- » provided information about decision-making and cognition from the perspective of the people performing the task
- » identified cognitive elements that are central to expert performance of the task.

Catalyst

Catalyst, a multi-tenure online system created by QFES, was introduced in April 2020. Catalyst is a significant capability enhancement that provides the ability for Area Fire Management Group (AFMG) partners and fire management stakeholders, to contribute to high priority risk reduction activities and report on activities undertaken during Operation Cool Burn (refer page 35).

Catalyst leverages off existing QFES systems such as the Simulation Analysis-Based Risk Evaluation (SABRE) decision support tool, and data held within the GIS, that when combined provides meaningful insights for hazard reduction, risk-based planning activities, recording and longitudinal views on risk management.

Through the provision of up-to-date fire behaviour forecasts, community information, fuel load and fire history information, Catalyst enables improved fire behaviour predictions and demonstrates the collaborative approach to community protection and estate (such as national parks and state forests).

Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements Data Sharing Group

QFES continued to support whole-of-government disaster management data sharing through the Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements Data Sharing Group on ArcGIS Online. The group allows data relevant to disaster PPRR to be shared amongst members. At 30 June 2020, there are more than 210 members from local, state and Australian Government bodies as well as non-government organisations, with over 360 shared datasets. This data powers two interactive webmaps and eight operational situational awareness dashboards.

QFES also created an operational COVID-19 Dashboard in conjunction with Queensland Health to support situational awareness across the Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements.

Emergency Management Spatial Information Network Australia

QFES established and chaired the Queensland chapter of Emergency Management Spatial Information Network Australia. The aim of the group is to bring together GIS practitioners and disaster management subject matter experts to facilitate advice on spatial information to:

- » aid effective decision-making for emergency and disaster management
- » facilitate the sharing of spatial information resources and knowledge for emergency and disaster management
- » encourage robust networks and partnerships between government and industry spatial groups.

Core membership of the group consists of Queensland Government agencies, the Bureau of Meteorology, the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and LGAQ, with support from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Office of the IGEM, Geoscience Australia and other industry partners.

Other key achievements include:

- » Conducted a review of the proposed Digital Transformation Program that proposes a wide-ranging reform agenda for QFES ICT to ensure consolidation and a revised focus. QFES reassessed departmental ICT priorities in line with fiscal sustainability and has prioritised initiatives and projects that were within the program to form the Emergency Response Intelligence Network (ERIN) Program. The program will focus on Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) including Station Turn-Out (STO) and Field Mobility for Emergency Services (FMES).
- » Commenced delivery of the SES Onboarding Project which will enhance operational communications capability through the roll-out of new radio equipment and processes to the SES to improve communications, response and safety.
- » Developed an Asset Management System (AMS) enabling QFES to record, track and report on assets including premises, fleet and PPE providing improved management of assets and equipment.

- » Released a new, scalable Virtual Private Network (VPN) enabling secure connections to QFES workplaces significantly increasing QFES' ability to support remote working arrangements in response to COVID-19. The VPN and other remote working enablers such as Office 365 were supported by new user guides that provided self-help for seven different methods to connect to the workplace enabling QFES members to safely isolate and continue to work productively.
- » Celebrated 10 years' utilisation of the Operations Management System (OMS)—QFES' primary planning, rostering and reporting tool. OMS covers almost all aspects of QFES from vehicle crewing to incident reporting, training and community education. OMS provides strategic information to help QFES meet the operational requirements for frontline operations and large-scale events. Situational awareness in relation to personnel enables QFES to determine capability and capacity during events and can assist in assessing when reinforcements are necessary.
- » Continued implementation of the Information Management Framework with the finalisation of the Information Asset Management, Information Access and Use Management, Records Management and Information Security Policies.
- » Implemented a new Ministerial and Executive Correspondence System (MECS) streamlining business processes for the progression and endorsement of correspondence and enabling QFES to securely register, track and store ministerial and executive correspondence and briefing material. The system has enhanced business performance and decision-making and ensured compliance with relevant privacy, security and recordkeeping regulations.

Priority area

3. Service alignment

2019-2023 Strategic initiatives

- » Design and deliver services according to local risk and community need.
- » Lead locally trusted networks to prioritise risk reduction, preparedness and information sharing.

Queensland Emergency Risk Management Framework

QFES continued to support the implementation of the Queensland Emergency Risk Management Framework (QERMF) risk management process across 14 Local Disaster Management Groups including Cairns, Mareeba, City of Gold Coast, Livingstone and Central Highlands. Implementation of the QERMF supports risk-based planning within Queensland's disaster management arrangements.

In addition, a QERMF Local Government Forum was held in July 2019 on the future direction and maturation of the framework. The forum led to the development of the QERMF Strategic Workplan under which three goals for refreshing the framework were established and delivered:

- » improve training resources and training delivery
- » increase stakeholder engagement and participation
- » enhance risk governance and assurance.

State assessments

The *Queensland State Earthquake Risk Assessment 2019* and *Tsunami Guide for Queensland* were released in July 2019. These reports provide a comprehensive overview of earthquake and tsunami risk in Queensland and are intended to be utilised by all levels of government in conjunction with the QERMF to inform the development of risk-based disaster management.

A series of regional engagements with disaster management stakeholders were held in Cairns, Mackay and Rockhampton to support the development of the State Disaster Risk Report.

In addition, QFES supported the delivery of the Department of Environment and Science's (DES) *State of the Environment 2020* report through the provision of authoritative hazard-based risk information.

Local governments and the SES

An independent review of the SES was undertaken, and consideration of the review is ongoing. In total, 51 local governments were consulted, 34 workshops were undertaken and a further 488 responses were provided to the online questionnaire informing the review.

A new Governance Framework including a Memorandum of Agreement was established between the SES Support Groups and QFES SES. The SES Support Groups assist the Queensland SES by raising funds, which in turn supplies local SES units and groups with resources that enable a better operational response. The new framework respects the independent nature of each support group and also establishes the standards the incorporated association would need to comply with in order to operate and be recognised as an SES Support Group.

In addition, during the reporting period:

- » QFES commenced implementation of the Disaster Management Group Auspice Program. The program offers support and sponsorship of disaster management group grant applications through external grant programs to fund risk mitigation projects identified as an outcome of the QERMF risk assessment process.
- » 31 local government applications were successful under the annual SES Support Grant Program. The available grant funding more than tripled from \$320,000 to \$1 million in 2019-20, in a one-off boost by the Queensland Government, to provide grants to local governments for SES facility upgrades and vehicles.
- » 28 local government grants were awarded for the 2020-21 round of the annual SES Support Grant Program, with projects to commence from 1 July 2020.
- » QFES distributed \$1,654,000 across 75 local governments with active SES units or groups as part of the SES annual local government subsidy. Funding is provided to assist local governments in defraying administrative and operational costs as a result of supporting their local SES.

Blue Water Review

In November 2019, following significant consultation, the QFES Blue Water Review Working Group delivered its response to the *Review into Volunteer Marine Rescue Organisations in Queensland* (January 2019).

The QFES Blue Water Review Team undertook significant stakeholder engagement, visiting volunteers at squadrons and flotillas across Queensland. These engagements provided the opportunity for volunteers to meet the review team and enabled the team to gain valuable insight into blue water operations and needs and to gather input into the future of volunteer marine rescue. The Blue Water Review Team continues to focus on engaging with and providing support to the sector.

QFES also renewed service agreements with the AVCGA and VMRAQ up until 31 December 2020, increasing funding by 26 per cent on the previous agreement, to assist in the delivery of water safety programs, white water rescue, and blue water search and rescue capabilities. The AVCGA and VMRAQ provide QFES with weekly service status reports for awareness of the service availability for all flotillas and squadrons across the state. This oversight assists with response planning for a range of activities in addition to marine search and rescue and public messaging.

Olympic Games Bid

A QFES Olympic Bid project team was established in August 2019 to conduct an evaluation of QFES' resource requirements to inform the Queensland Government bid submission for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The QFES submission involved a comprehensive analysis of QFES' capability to contribute to a successful 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

As part of the QFES submission, a number of value propositions and an economic assessment were included for capability requirements, concept of operations, infrastructure planning (existing versus needed), resource implications and costs for the QFES workforce and equipment, QFES operational deployments as well as exercising, training, policy and legislation, and business-as-usual impact. The QFES submission provided a future focus to align with the department's strategic plan, as well as investing in future legacy.

Other key achievements include:

- » Continued implementation of *Strategy 2030* supported through the delivery of the QFES Strategic Plan 2019-2023
- » Responded to 72,655 incidents including FRS and RFS response:
 - 2,630 structure fires including 1,921 residential structure fires
 - 8,851 landscape fires
 - 13,497 mobile property crashes
 - 47,677 other.
- » Continued to delivery timely response times to structure fires including call taking time with 8.1 minutes at the 50th percentile and 12.5 minutes at the 90th percentile.
- » Continued to reduce the number of false/unwanted automatic fire alarms per Alarm Signalling Equipment connection from 2.3 in 2018-19 to 2.2 in 2019-20 ensuring the department can more effectively manage priority emergency responses and resources.
- » Completed 5,592 SES tasks including 1,289 Agency Support Requests.
- » Hosted the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting in Cairns from 15-16 August 2019. Delegates, including 81 senior heads, diplomatic officials and search and rescue experts from 15 countries along with the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, joined QFES, Fire and Rescue New South Wales (FRNSW) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to discuss the Asia-Pacific's disaster preparedness including advances in search and rescue operations. Participants considered the strategic priorities from the 2019 INSARAG Steering Group meeting, focusing on enhancing preparedness activities and bolstering partnerships. Under Australia's leadership, the meeting sought to advance INSARAG strategic and operational priorities in the region, taking into account broader humanitarian reform efforts, particularly protection, human rights and localisation.
- » Conducted a trial of a Tropical Cyclone Impact Model (TCIM) during the 2019-20 severe weather season. TCIM is a collaborative capability developed by Geoscience Australia in partnership with QFES and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, Western Australia. TCIM will provide operational (forecast) severe wind impact analysis to support prevention, preparedness and response to Tropical Cyclone events. TCIM contributes to the ongoing

development of a nationally consistent approach to tropical cyclone hazard and impact-based forecasting and warning services. The TCIM was endorsed as a nationally consistent tool by the Australian Tropical Cyclone Advisory Group in June 2020. Training is expected to be delivered to SES regional managers on the use of the model prior to the 2020-21 severe weather season.

- » Introduced a new activity within the Fire Suppression capability for fighting bushfires known as Remote Area Firefighting Teams (RAFT). These teams are trained to navigate to remote locations inaccessible by road or track and fight fires with no appliances and limited support, often being dropped off by vehicle at the nearest location accessible by road, or by helicopter, and hiking to the fire. This capability enables a rapid, initial attack by RAFT, with air support key to keeping fires small and manageable. The RAFT project was introduced into the Caboolture, West Moreton and South Coast RFS. A total of 27 volunteers have entered the training program since the project's inception. The training program includes advanced first-aid, RAFT theory training delivered by New South Wales RFS volunteers; and RAFT practical exercises and field assessment. The training program was completed in August 2019, and New South Wales RFS will issue two nationally recognised competencies to successful volunteers. Nine RAFTs were deployed during the 2019-20 bushfire season. A presentation to QFES executives on the effectiveness of the project is scheduled for September 2020 to determine the future of the program.
- » Conducted Operation Community Connect - a multi-agency, state-wide initiative, led by QFES in partnership with the Red Cross, SLSQ, VMRAQ, LGAQ and the QRA. Operation Community Connect was conducted throughout August 2019 and was aimed at raising awareness of the importance of resilience, preparation for hazards, and community connectedness. Thousands of volunteers assisted through engagement at local events, shopping centres and door knocking to build a greater understanding of shared responsibility for disaster preparedness. More than 50,000 tea bags with targeted messages and emergency plans were distributed to encourage people to connect with neighbours and households to build a resilient Queensland in the face of disasters and emergencies.
- » Engaged with the community to raise awareness about the services provided by QFES and inform the community on action they can take to prepare for natural disasters and improve their home and personal safety. Methods of engagement included attendance, displays, presentations and workshops at local community events such as the Brisbane Home Show in September 2019 and March 2020 where QFES personnel discussed smoke alarm legislation, home fire safety and preparing homes for bushfire and storm seasons.
- » Delivered the Fight Fire Fascination (FFF) program supporting parents and guardians with their efforts to educate children and young people (3 to 17 years) about fire safety. There were 114 FFF enquiries received and actioned by QFES with 28 related to Restorative Justice Conferencing under a working arrangement with the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women, and 16 cases referred from young people living in alternative care. There are 33 FFF practitioners located throughout Queensland at 30 June 2020.
- » Delivered 182 Road Attitudes and Action Planning (RAAP) program presentations in Queensland schools and education facilities to approximately 21,600 students. RAAP is a practical lifesaving road safety awareness program for young drivers, facilitated by operational firefighters. Delivery of the program throughout Queensland included RAAP tours to schools in regional areas such as St. George. At 30 June 2020, there are 138 RAAP program presenters located throughout Queensland.
- » Introduced new classifications to the Emergency Management Levy ensuring craft brewers and distillers pay a lower rate than their larger counterparts with the levy assessed on the floor size of breweries and distilleries rather than at a flat rate. The amendments will come into effect on 1 July 2020.

Bushfire prevention and preparedness— Operation Cool Burn

Bushfire prevention and preparedness is a shared responsibility in Queensland, primarily resting with landowners and land managers for hazard reduction. QFES is the primary agency for hazard mapping and the department leads and coordinates bushfire mitigation activities undertaken by a wide range of stakeholders. QFES is also the primary response agency for fires in Queensland.

During Operation Cool Burn, QFES supports its land management agency partners to prepare for the coming bushfire season. This includes the DES (Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service), the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy, HQ Plantations Pty Ltd (Queensland's largest plantation forest company) and local governments as well as landholders across the state.

Operation Cool Burn is a period of heightened mitigation activity, generally held from the beginning of April to the end of August each year, with bushfire mitigation activities focussed on high-risk areas, coordinated across the state, such as:

- » hazard reduction burning to reduce fuel loads
- » fire break or fire trail works
- » targeted community engagement to inform residents in the highest priority areas of actions they can take to better prepare for bushfires.

QFES is continuing to mature its relationship with partners during Operation Cool Burn, enabling recognition that the focus on the protection of life and property in these high-risk areas is a shared responsibility.

Whilst Operation Cool Burn provides a useful focus for bushfire preparation, mitigation activities occur all year-round.

The overall priority for Operation Cool Burn is the protection of Queensland's communities from the impacts of bushfires. Since 2016, priority areas for risk mitigation activities during Operation Cool Burn have been based on an AFMG consensus approach to identify areas of highest bushfire risk to the community. AFMGs are made up of QFES representatives and key stakeholders such as land management agencies and local governments. Planning is based on available evidence including local knowledge, mapping information and predictive analysis. Many of these priority at-risk areas are at the interface between bushland and urban or rural-residential areas and are difficult to burn because of access and other restrictions. In these areas, land parcel sizes are often smaller, the tenure situation is complex and a range of different mitigation activities are often needed, with a higher level of coordination to achieve results.

Through identification of priority areas and risk treatments by AFMGs, education activities have been

targeted to a finer scale. Prioritisation also assists land managers to plan fire trail and firebreak activities, which also helps to facilitate future prescribed burning or fire suppression during the bushfire season.

The early onset of bushfire season hampered efforts to conduct hazard mitigation burns during Operation Cool Burn in 2017 to 2019. However, with the prioritisation process used by AFMGs, attention is given to conducting hazard reduction burns or other risk mitigation activities in areas at greatest risk.

The hazard reduction activities that QFES plans are based around ideal conditions. During Operation Cool Burn, QFES assesses the landscape and conditions to identify the locations where reduction burning is the best strategy to provide the greatest reduction in risk. Sometimes conditions do not remain favourable long enough and alternative mitigation strategies may need to be implemented such as fire breaks and community education.

Operation Cool Burn 2019 commenced on 1 April 2019 and continued through to 31 August 2019. A total of 240 activities were completed out of 329 that had been planned (73 per cent). This is comparable to previous years:

- » 2018—368 were planned and 153 were completed (42 per cent)
- » 2017—468 were planned and 306 were completed (65 per cent)
- » 2016 - 547 activities were planned and 341 were completed (62 per cent).

Operation Cool Burn 2020 commenced on 1 April 2020 and will continue through to 31 August 2020, unless varied for climatic reasons. There has been a strong focus this year on recognising the community as a key partner, sharing messages about local bushfire risks and supporting them to prepare their families and properties. As at 30 June 2020, QFES and its partners conducted more than 300 activities.

Progressively narrower windows of opportunity for carrying out safe and effective hazard reduction burns reinforce the need to consider changing climate conditions when setting mitigation targets, in addition to local trends in bushfire risk.

Bushfire season 2019-20—Operation Redux

In 2019, Queensland experienced record warm days and very dry conditions in the southeast. Large areas of inland southeast Queensland had their driest year on record. Temperatures were more than a degree warmer than average for the mean, maximum and minimum temperatures, with record warm days persisting in the south-eastern quarter of Queensland.

The 2019-20 bushfire season, known as Operation Redux, officially commenced on 1 August 2019 and continued through to 31 January 2020, during which Queensland faced some of the worst bushfires in 130 years. Redux means ‘bring back’ which is the objective for QFES during times of hazard—to bring back normality. QFES faced significant challenges with fires igniting at lower fire danger ratings than expected, drier fuels, steep and difficult terrain and fires burning through the night—with the number of bushfires peaking at close to 100 on a single day.

In early August 2019, the Commissioner’s Intent for the bushfire season was released outlining the strategies and objectives for the season, noting that a key focus was the critical analysis of operational preparedness.

The Bushfire Pre-Season Preparedness Assessment was conducted in August 2019 to determine the organisation’s readiness for the season. Regions critically assessed their preparedness based on regional requirements and evidence.

QFES Regional Assistant Commissioners, supported by their RFS Regional Manager as the bushfire lead and the Regional Leadership Team, determined the regional strategies for achieving the Commissioner’s Intent. They were supported by the SOC and SDCC.

In early September 2019, areas of southeast Queensland had warmer than average daytime temperatures, very low humidity, and gusty winds leading to dangerous fire weather conditions. In spring, very warm temperatures were recorded across most of the state and a very dry landscape led to a continuation of dangerous fire weather conditions right through spring and into December 2019. It was Queensland’s warmest December on record with a mean temperature 2.74 C above average, and the December mean maximum temperature for Queensland was also the highest on record at 3.65 C above average.¹

A State of Fire Emergency was declared for the first time in Queensland on 9 November 2019, applying to 42 Local Government Areas, prohibiting the lighting of all types of outdoor fires and banning certain activities that can cause fires to ignite. The Declaration was lifted from 36 Local Government Areas on 20 November 2019 and revoked on 22 November 2019.

During Operation Redux, QFES provided over 34,000 responses to more than 8,000 incidents from close to 3,000 appliances. More than 7.7 million hectares of land was burnt², with 49 houses, 68 sheds and 33 other structures destroyed.

The severity and duration of the bushfire season pushed more than 35,000 QFES staff and volunteers to respond to and fight fires burning faster, harder and longer than ever before. Support was received from 715 interstate colleagues from Tasmania, Victoria, Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia, and more than 50 international colleagues from New Zealand and the United States of America.

Additional support was also received from the ADF in November 2019, with personnel assisting with clearing land and creating firebreaks, logistics, transport engineering and air observations.

Queenslanders turned to social media for bushfire updates, with the QFES Facebook page increasing by more than 54,000 followers. More than 3,000 Bushfire Community Warnings were issued to residents, with many forced to evacuate as blazes burned near their homes, along with 83 Emergency Alert campaigns to keep communities informed.

¹ Bureau of Meteorology—Annual Climate Summary for Queensland titled *Queensland in 2019: record warm days and very dry in the southeast; flooding in the north and west*.

² Figure of 7.7 million hectares is calculated from a range of data sources and includes a proportion of planned burns in Northern and Far Northern Regions due to limitation of remote sensed burn area data.

Aircraft, including military aircraft, played a major role in supporting firefighters to contain the fires, with 74 utilised across the state with more than 6,680 hours flown (double the hours flown in the 2018-19 bushfire season). SES volunteers contributed to the successful air operations by refueling aircraft enabling them to get back in the air as quickly as possible. A 737 Large Air Tanker was deployed from New South Wales to complete three drops of fire retardant on Pechey State Forest ahead of the fire front. Queensland also became the first emergency services jurisdiction in Australia to contract a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter to boost air response. Based at Toowoomba Aerodrome, it was

converted to carry up to 3,400 litres of water. With a range of 630 kilometres and a cruise speed of 250 kilometres per hour it was able to travel further, faster and deliver more water than the current Helitak aircraft.

Volunteers from the RFS and SES, operation support and corporate staff, along with the ADF and QFES' interstate and international colleagues, united as one in complex and trying conditions ensuring cohesive processes, committed outcomes and connection to the community.

The tireless efforts of all involved resulted in no loss of life and minimal property losses.

Following Operation Redux, an extensive debrief program was undertaken across the state, providing personnel with the opportunity to reflect on performance during the bushfire season, with evidence, data and feedback gathered. Almost 3,000 observations were collected in relation to Operation Redux. Staff and volunteers were also encouraged to submit positive and negative observations to a dedicated email address and inbox. All data was analysed and categorised with 17 broad categories emerging. Across each category, key themes were identified and formed the learnings of what worked well and the positive outcomes achieved, and the opportunities for improvement. The themes have been reviewed in terms of systemic impact and risk and aligned to learnings from the 2018-19 bushfire season (Operation Synergy). The learnings from Operation Redux will be harmonised with the improvement activities progressing from Operation Synergy.

Broad categories

1	Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System (AIIMS)/Roles/Functions	10	Partnerships and Stakeholder Management
2	Command and Control	11	Facilities
3	Aircraft Operations	12	Planning
4	Financial Management	13	Resource Management
5	Information Management/Reporting/Records Management	14	Safety
6	Communications/ICT	15	Emergency Alerts/Warnings and Public Information
7	Interstate Support	16	Data/Intelligence
8	Logistics	17	Lessons/Knowledge
9	Culture		

Source: *Operation Redux Operational Review Report 2019-2020*

COVID-19 planning and response— Operation Exigent

Queensland was the first state to declare a public health emergency on 29 January 2020 in response to the global outbreak of COVID-19.

QFES' planning and response to COVID-19, known as Operation Exigent, recognised the requirement for urgent and immediate action to address the demanding, evolving and significant impacts of the pandemic.

QFES supported the whole-of-government response to and recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 while continuing to provide emergency services support in partnership with the community. A Pandemic Response Taskforce was established to guide all aspects of QFES' response and assist with coordination of internal and external stakeholders. In addition, QFES stood up a Crisis Management Team chaired by the Commissioner and consisting of the Deputy Commissioners and senior QFES officers. The Crisis Management Team was responsible for active oversight, strategic decision-making and ensuring key messaging was delivered to QFES staff and volunteers.

The situation changed so quickly, the QFES workforce had to be flexible by attending incidents and performing roles they would not normally undertake. However, the continuing safety of QFES personnel was the key priority when devising response measures and performing operations.

During this period:

- » the SDCC was activated on 2 February 2020 to support Queensland operations in response to COVID-19, led by the State Health Emergency Coordination Centre, including the provision of logistical support for quarantine accommodation.
- » QFES worked with the QPS to support the Department of Justice and Attorney-General in developing a whole-of-government Compliance, Monitoring and Enforcement Team to support frontline management of quarantined members of the community across Queensland.
- » COVIDSafe measures were implemented to ensure the safety of staff, volunteers and the community.
- » business continuity plans were implemented ensuring continuity of service delivery to the Queensland community.
- » staff were offered a range of flexible work arrangements such as working from home.
- » the most up-to-date information was provided to QFES personnel via the QFES Gateway and regular Commissioner updates.

- » SES with support from RFS and auxiliary firefighters, assisted QPS officers screening nearly 30,000 passengers at Cairns, Brisbane and Gold Coast airports, in support of preventing the virus infecting Queenslanders, especially those living in remote, regional and rural areas.
- » SES volunteers supported border operations at four checkpoints at the Gold Coast, including the Gold Coast Highway and the M1 Pacific Motorway, with a variety of tasks including supporting the QPS in collecting motorist data, supplying and installing marquees, operating hand sanitiser stations and carrying out general duties.

In addition, QFES staff and volunteers implemented innovative ways to enable training and service delivery to continue including:

- » the provision of volunteer training online including videoconferencing enabling RFS and SES recruits to continue with their induction.
- » auxiliary firefighters met regularly via Microsoft Teams working through virtual scenarios such as house fires, car crashes and HazMat incidents.
- » development and implementation of the COVID-19 Disaster Management Training Strategy in March 2020 to ensure a level of continuity in the delivery of QDMTF programs to disaster management stakeholders during the pandemic. The implementation of the strategy includes a transition to alternative delivery methods including distance and remote options in addition to a higher reliance on existing eLearning programs via the Disaster Management Learning Management System.
- » conducted planned burns and mitigation related activities observing COVIDSafe planning and public health directive parameters ensuring RFS member skill sets in such activities were enhanced and maintained in readiness for the 2019-20 bushfire season, as well as reducing the bushfire risk to Queensland communities.
- » the utilisation of social media platforms by rural fire brigades to develop appliance familiarisation videos as training aids to support the theoretical component of their Firefighter Minimum Skills training.

Many of the solutions identified during this period will continue into the future having provided new and effective ways of delivering services.

Severe weather season—Operation Dovetail

The 2019-20 severe weather season, known as Operation Dovetail, meaning ‘to join skillfully to form a whole’, commenced on 1 November 2019 and continued through until 30 April 2020.

Whilst this period overlapped with Operation Redux (bushfire season), all available QFES staff and volunteers worked jointly to protect communities across the state and minimise the consequences and impacts of severe weather conditions.

Severe weather events during this period included:

- » Tropical Cyclone Esther and related flooding 23 February to 9 March 2020
- » South West Queensland Flooding 20-26 February 2020
- » Southern Queensland Heavy Rainfall and Flooding 8-14 February 2020
- » Queensland Monsoonal Flooding 23 January—3 February 2020.

During Operation Dovetail, the SES completed 3,879 tasks and 744 agency support requests including storm damage, floodboat operations and incident management.

Regional operations in preparation for and following events included:

- » the development of seven-day action plans to enable the prioritisation of activities, which in turn enhanced SES capability and capacity
- » the provision of timely and accurate information internally and externally to assist with preparation for and enable effective response and support of community needs
- » response to requests for assistance in impact areas and support to communities affected by severe weather events
- » utilisation of QFES resources to support timely community recovery following disruptive events.

Major Deployments— interstate and international

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

Deployments can be an opportunity to gain personal and professional development including learnings around fire management and resourcing systems, as they often involve an integration of QFES permanent, auxiliary, civilian and volunteer staff and resources. International deployments provide an opportunity to share knowledge with fire service professionals across the globe. Depending on the nature of the emergency, an inter-agency response may also be required.

In addition to deployed staff and volunteers, the QFES SOC remained activated from August 2019 with incident coordination staff working continuously to ensure members were mobilised and demobilised safely and efficiently.

Deployments during 2019-20 included:

Northern New South Wales communities— March 2020

SES crews were deployed to the Northern New South Wales communities to assist with localised floodboat operations, supply and resupply activities and general Incident Management Team duties, coinciding with Operation Dovetail (2019-20 severe weather season) operations.

New South Wales, Victoria and Australian Capital Territory—September 2019— March 2020

More than 1,000 RFS, SES and FRS staff and volunteers were deployed to New South Wales, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory to support prolonged and protracted bushfire operations. QFES staff and volunteers were engaged in frontline firefighting operations, including backburning, asset protection and general incident management duties.

QFES also provided Fire Behaviour Analyst support to Victoria as part of a rotating roster to mitigate fatigue management issues and ongoing continuity of that capability throughout its prolonged bushfire season.

Priority area

4. Stakeholder engagement

2019-2023 Strategic initiatives

- » Connect the community, our partners and our people with skills and knowledge about emergency and disaster risk.
- » Empower our people to lead meaningful engagement with our stakeholders.

Engagement strategy

Implementation of the QFES Engagement Strategy, approved by BoM in June 2019, commenced in 2019-20. The strategy provides a new direction for creating better and more sustainable decisions that result in positive actions for Queensland. The objectives of the strategy and implementation activities include:

- » improving outcomes for our people, partners and communities by increasing stakeholders engagement when important decisions are being made
- » increasing the ability of our people to engage effectively through training
- » increasing the ability of our people to engage effectively by providing useful engagement tools and platforms, which are available on the QFES Gateway.

The strategy is available at: www.qfes.qld.gov.au

Community safety education programs

Community safety education programs continued to be developed and launched aimed at assisting members of the public in preventing, preparing for, and responding to fire and emergency events, including:

- » **Bushfire Safety: Are you in the line of fire?** The aim of the campaign was to raise awareness of and educate communities on the threat of bushfire and drive action to prepare for the bushfire season. QFES developed an interactive map that enabled Queenslanders to search their postcode to gauge their level of bushfire risk based on local conditions such as vegetation type, topography and other indicators (www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au). The new map generated interest and helped double visits to the bushfire safety website to 182,000 people, improved risk awareness in the community by five percentage points and increased the number

of people visiting the site who then prepared a bushfire survival plan from 21 per cent in 2018-19 to 29 per cent in 2019-20.

- » *If it's flooded, forget it:* This campaign told drivers the smartest and bravest thing they could do when faced with floodwater was to 'back it up'. The vehicle types and the actors were chosen for the campaign to represent the people research showed are most likely to attempt to drive through a flooded road.
- » the QFES Open Day, with the theme of *Stronger Together* was held on 28 September 2019 with more than 4,500 people attending approximately 60 FRS and RFS stations and rural fire brigades across the state to learn about bushfire preparedness, smoke alarm requirements, operational capabilities and response procedures.

In addition, a new Home Fire Safety website was developed incorporating home fire safety and escape plan information. The 2020 Home Fire Safety campaign will launch in July 2020 to raise awareness about reducing the risk of accidental home fires and highlight the importance of planning, discussing and practising a home fire-escape. The website features specific tips for parents of young children as well as older Queenslanders and their carers.

Emergency Volunteers Advisory Forum

The Emergency Volunteers Advisory Forum held two meetings on 29 November 2019 and 20 May 2020. 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 Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships.

Topics explored by the forum include flexible volunteering options, transferable volunteer credentials, spontaneous volunteers, volunteer fatigue and psychological first-aid training. Membership of

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

Social media

QFES engaged with Queensland communities via social media platforms, supporting community resilience with the provision of timely safety messages and warnings. This included supporting the response to one of Queensland's busiest bushfire seasons resulting in more than 390 preparedness posts published to the QFES Facebook page between August 2019 and January 2020, reaching more than 23.6 million people and engaging with more than one million people. There were more than 1.6 million visits to the QFES Twitter account during the bushfire season and an increase in Twitter followers from 14,000 to 75,000. In addition, more than 3,000 bushfire community warnings were published to QFES Facebook and Twitter accounts. A notable mention was a bushfire community warning post for an incident at Bundamba in December 2019 which reached 439,200 people and attracted approximately 4,650 reactions, comments or shares.

This level of interest in QFES social media platforms continued throughout 2019-20, with followers of the QFES Facebook page increasing by more than 141,500 to in excess of 457,000 followers, and followers of the QFES Instagram account increasing from 17,500 to 38,300 followers.

Other key achievements include:

- » Contributed to national fire and emergency management policy developments and participated in coordinated decision-making through a range of national forums. Topics included the National Bushfire Recovery Plan, the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework and National Partnership Agreement on Disaster Risk Reduction, mental health support for emergency services workers, the Australasian Arrangement for Interstate Assistance, the Australian Fire Danger Rating System and the National Flood Warning Infrastructure Working Group.
- » Continued to deliver the Safehome program where firefighters visit households to assist in recognising and eliminating fire and safety hazards in and around the home and provide information to support people in increasing fire and general safety measures.

- » Partnered with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Department of State Development, Tourism and Innovation 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.
- » Entered into a Service Agreement with SLSQ in April 2020 for the provision of funds for the Drone Trial Program, a nine-month program established to integrate 'rescue drone' operations within SLSQ's business-as-usual activities. The program will assist SLSQ with its efforts to increase public safety on Queensland beaches, prevent drownings up and down the coast, and effectively mitigate the potential risks of dangerous marine creatures including crocodiles and sharks through the use of artificial intelligence. The program also facilitates reciprocal training opportunities between QFES and SLSQ drone operators for the enhancement of emergency response capabilities.
- » Renewed a one-year partnership between the SES, Energy Queensland and Powerlink Queensland—*Energising Queensland SES equipment program*—providing \$200,000 of crucial equipment such as chainsaws, stretchers, defibrillators, solar power blankets for recharging devices and thermal imaging equipment for distribution to more than 100 SES groups. The equipment supports the SES in providing local communities with the support needed in emergency situations.
- » Signed a renewed one-year agreement with Energy Queensland in May 2020 that delivers \$75,000 in sponsorship to the RFS. This partnership recognises the value of RFS and the skills and knowledge of volunteers facing emergency events.
- » Announced the contribution of NRMA Insurance in the delivery of a multitool for SES volunteers under the final stage of its SES Principal Partnership in June 2020. The multitool is being delivered to Senior Field Operations members of SES as motivation and recognition of the skills and knowledge of the volunteers in achieving that rank and the service they deliver to the community.

Enhancing disaster management stakeholder capability

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 QDMTF. The QDMTF has been designed to meet the requirements of the *Disaster Management Act 2003* (section 16A(c)) to ensure that those with a role in disaster operations are appropriately trained.

During 2019-20, QFES implemented the following key projects and initiatives to support capability development for disaster management stakeholders:

- » a comprehensive refresh process was undertaken to ensure the QDMTF continues to support the legislative intent, remains relevant, contemporary and meets the requirements of disaster management stakeholders. The QDMTF Version 6.0 is the result of the application of two phases of comprehensive consultation with disaster management stakeholders involving the analysis of 50 stakeholder submissions, received from local governments, state government agencies and non-government organisations.
- » two Operational Leadership and Crisis Management Masterclass sessions were delivered—the *High Consequence Decision Making Masterclass* and the *Leadership in Disaster, Crisis and Adversity Masterclass*. The *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; the *Leadership in Disaster, Crisis and Adversity Masterclass* aims to enhance disaster manager capability in building and leveraging networks and relationships; crisis communication and engagement. The target audience are stakeholders with key roles including: Local Disaster Management Group Chairs; Local Disaster Coordinators; Local Recovery Coordinators; and District Disaster Coordinators. Indicative of their critical disaster management role, local government comprised 48 per cent of attendees on Masterclass sessions. The Masterclass sessions were conducted in Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Longreach, Rockhampton, Bundaberg, Gympie, Brisbane, Toowoomba and Roma.
- » the Disaster Management Training Engagement Group was established. The Engagement Group is designed to support QFES' legislative responsibilities for the delivery of training to disaster management stakeholders through the QDMTF and other related education and

capability initiatives for the disaster management sector, more broadly. Chaired by QFES, the group meets quarterly and consists of membership from QFES' key partner agencies: LGAQ; QPS; QRA; and Office of the IGEM.

- » the COVID-19 Disaster Management Training Strategy was developed and implemented in March 2020 to ensure a level of continuity in the delivery of QDMTF programs to disaster management stakeholders during the pandemic. The implementation of this strategy included a transition to alternative delivery methods such as distance and remote options in addition to a higher reliance on existing eLearning programs via the Disaster Management Learning Management System.

A total of 10,588 units of QDMTF training were delivered to disaster management stakeholders. Whilst training numbers were down slightly from 11,906 in 2018-19, this demonstrates QFES has maintained a level of continuity in training delivery despite COVID-19 restrictions.

COVID-19 restrictions on training delivery resulted in a higher reliance on eLearning modules and this is evident with 31 per cent of all training completions undertaken through eLearning, representing an increase in eLearning from 25 per cent in 2018-19.

Reflective of their key role in disaster management, 49 per cent of the total training in 2019-20 was delivered to local government stakeholders. Importantly, local governments have continued to engage in face-to-face delivery with only 14 per cent of local government completions undertaken through eLearning.

The QDMTF, Disaster Management Training Handbook and the COVID-19 Disaster Management Training Strategy are available at www.disaster.qld.gov.au

Priority area

5. Strategic investment

2019-2023 Strategic initiative

- » Invest in sustainable, interoperable systems, equipment and infrastructure that are integral to the delivery of our capability.

Capital program

Most new and ongoing capital initiatives to support QFES' operational capability are delivered by PSBA. This includes fire and emergency services facilities, fire appliances and communications equipment.

Significant capital works initiatives were delivered or progressed during 2019-20 including:

- » **completion of the:**
 - replacement permanent fire and rescue station at Bracken Ridge. The new site accommodates 10 firefighters and includes a multi-purpose building designed to be the Brisbane Region's Technical Rescue Hub. The building features a 40-seat training/function room, a training tower, office spaces and warehouse-style storage
 - replacement QFES facility at Rathdowney. The new facility is shared between FRS and RFS
 - upgrade of the permanent fire and rescue station at West Logan. Upgrade works included the supply and installation of two relocatable buildings on the existing site to enhance capability from the site.
- » **commencing or continuing the:**
 - new permanent fire and rescue stations at Pimpama and Yarrabilba
 - new Weipa QFES emergency and disaster centre
 - replacement auxiliary fire and rescue stations at El Arish, Esk, Gracemere, Longreach, Rainbow Beach, Rosewood, Wooroolin and Yarraman
 - replacement regional QFES headquarters and new permanent fire and rescue station at Charlton
 - replacement permanent fire and rescue station at Loganlea
 - replacement QFES complexes at Kilkivan and Maleny
 - replacement QFES mechanical workshop at Pinkenba
 - replacement composite fire and rescue station at Charters Towers

- relocation and upgrade of the auxiliary fire and rescue station at Mossman
- upgrade of the Cairns QFES communications centre collocated with the QAS
- upgrade of the QFES complex at Mount Isa.

In addition, QFES took delivery of:

- » fit-for-purpose replacement appliances including 61 FRS appliances and 16 RFS appliances and handed over seven state-of-the-art new Combined Aerial Pump Appliances (CAPAs) with cutting-edge technology to bolster operational capability around the state. The CAPAs have a 4,500 litre per-minute pumping capability, with a 32 metre ladder and rescue basket. In addition to firefighting and aerial rescue, these vehicles will support technical rescues, chemical and hazardous incidents and road crash rescue.
- » nine new motorised swiftwater rescue craft (MSRC) bringing the total number of MSRC to 26. These craft were used for training prior to the severe weather season resulting in QFES building its cohort of trained MSRC operators to 114 including 12 fully qualified instructors. Each region has MSRC capability of three craft whilst South West Region has two and the State Deployment Centre has surge capacity of six.

Funding of \$15.3 million has been allocated over a five-year period commencing 2020-21, to secure a contracted Large Air Tanker, following the devastating 2019-20 bushfire season. An incumbent Large Air Tanker provider has been engaged through the National Aerial Firefighting Centre (NAFC) for the 2020-21 bushfire season and an invitation to tender process through NAFC will establish the successful provider for the 2021-2024 contracting period. The Large Air Tanker represents a suppressant delivery capability enhancement, with national use of aircraft this size (10,000 litre capacity) being for fire break building and remote area protection with retardant and gel products considered the most effective use.

Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (drones)

Following a successful trial of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS), QFES commenced implementation of the aircraft into QFES operations in 2019-20. The department achieved the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) requirements for remotely piloted aircraft in February 2020 with the appointment of a Chief Remote Pilot.

Twenty new RPAS devices were procured to progress the development of the RPAS Capability in QFES. At 30 June 2020, these aircraft are with the State Office for registering and field testing before being commissioned into QFES service.

The RPAS Working Group was Highly Commended in the Innovation category of the Commissioner's Awards for Excellence (2019) for the development of innovative and contemporary strategies enabling successful establishment of the QFES RPAS capabilities; and the SES Far Northern Region RPAS Team also received a Highly Commended award for taking an innovative approach to trialling the QFES RPAS to provide a new dimension of reporting, enabling more informed and safer decision-making during emergency events.

Other key achievements include:

- » Commenced the development of Policy Positions which will guide the department towards a sustainable future by providing role clarity for QFES, establishing clear and agreed departmental policy positions, informing opportunities for improvement and evaluating the department's ongoing performance. The Policy Positions will also establish the department's baseline funding position, confirm understanding of national and international learnings and inform the department's position in partnerships and interoperability.
- » Commenced the development of a Decision-Making Model which will implement unified decision-making processes within QFES to ensure the right capability is in the right place at the right time to deliver core services. Some key activities and business processes will be linked so leadership decisions can be made more robustly based on evidence, data, risk and capability, and can be funded and implemented effectively.

- » Improved the QFES capital works management framework through the incorporation of data analytics modelling. This improvement will ensure QFES future-proofs its decision-making for capital investment by delivering investment prioritisation to meet community needs and expectations.

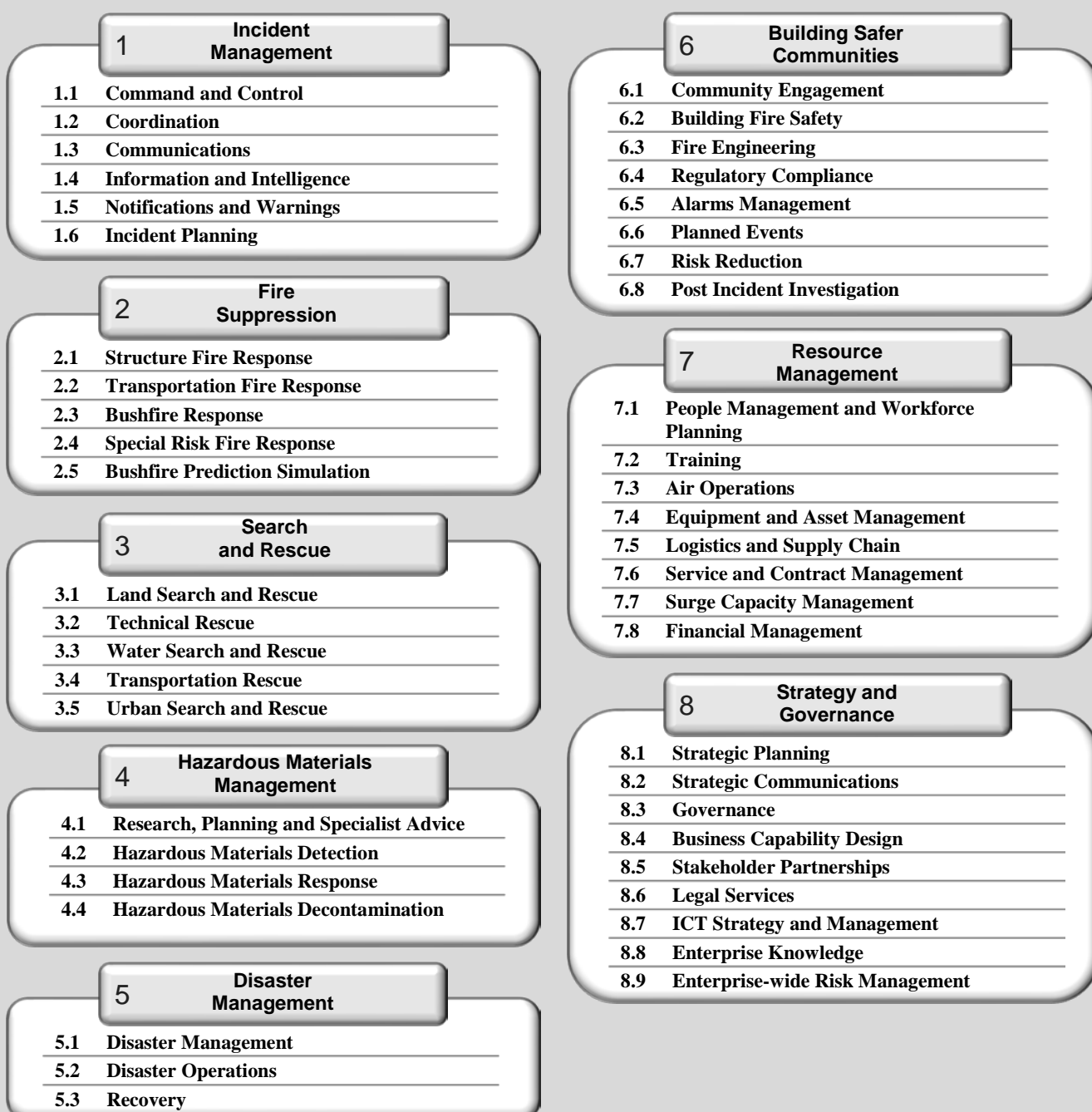
Capability Framework

QFES BoM endorsed the QFES Capability Framework in December 2019. The framework identifies QFES' capabilities, elements and associated activities within and across QFES. The framework aligns to the organisational structure identifying who is accountable and responsible for each capability. The capabilities were determined following a series of workshops and research across similar emergency service organisations.

QFES' capabilities are the foundation of the services we provide, keeping the community as the focal point. Queensland communities are expanding providing new and different risks, combined with changing climatic conditions.

The next step is to understand the future state of QFES' capabilities ensuring analytics, strategy, lessons, governance, projects, finance and decision-making are incorporated into the Capability Framework. This will ensure that QFES can remain an integrated, contemporary and sustainable organisation that can safely and effectively plan, prepare for, respond to and recovery from an event or a disaster.

QFES capabilities and elements



Priority area

6. Knowledge

2019-2023 Strategic initiatives

- » Support informed decision-making by sharing relevant and reliable information assets.
- » Apply lessons management and assurance activities for learning and growth.

Lessons Management Framework

The lessons management process continued to mature and provided QFES with an understanding of the outcomes of the 2019-20 bushfire season, Operation Redux (refer pages 36-37).

An extensive debrief process was undertaken which collected almost 3,000 observations from volunteers and staff across the state. The observations were representative of the many different roles that are performed during operations, and together identify the collective effort of the season.

The learnings from the season are used to inform activities for improvement opportunities and provide valuable input into the assessment of QFES' capabilities.

The QFES Lessons Management Framework Project Team was awarded the Commissioner's Award for Excellence (2019) in the Innovation category for exceptional work in the development and implementation of the QFES Lessons Management Framework utilising innovative techniques to strengthen and enhance the capabilities of QFES.

Other key achievements include:

- » Continued review of portfolio legislation and progression of legislative amendments to support government outcomes.
- » Delivered a research and innovation framework that will ensure the department is positioned to align research findings, partnerships and opportunities across QFES.

Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements

In the spring and summer of 2019-20 Australia experienced one of its worst bushfire seasons in recent history. Fires started in Queensland in September 2019 on an unprecedented scale both in size and intensity. As 2019 drew to a close and the new year began, further bushfires ignited in other states, all of which were on a scale never experienced before.

The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements was established in February 2020 in response to the extreme bushfire season of 2019-20 which resulted in loss of life, property and wildlife and environmental destruction.

Air Chief Marshal Mark Binskin AC (Retired) (Commission Chair), the Honourable Dr Annabelle Bennett AC SC and Professor Andrew Macintosh were appointed as Royal Commissioners.

The commission is examining coordination, preparedness for, response to and recovery from disasters as well as improving resilience and adapting to changing climatic conditions and mitigating the impact of natural disasters. The commission is also considering the legal framework for Commonwealth involvement in responding to national emergencies.

QFES established a taskforce to manage the organisation's response to commission requests for information. The department is required by law to provide information as requested by the commission and must adhere to the strict format and timings outlined.

The QFES Taskforce Commander is leading a team of staff with key roles in data management, inquiry, policy, performance and engagement. The taskforce is operating under the guidance of a taskforce steering group that reports directly to the Commissioner.

The commission commenced public hearings in May 2020 which are expected to continue to September 2020 drawing information from a variety of witnesses.

The commission is expected to deliver a final report by 28 October 2020 which will be considered by the Queensland Government to initiate actions and address recommendations.

Exercises

QFES personnel participate in exercises to increase their competency levels in major, joint agency and small routine incidents through hands-on training.

Exercises enable testing of factors including:

- » interoperability across QFES services
- » ability to liaise with external agencies
- » appropriate response and operational procedures
- » communications plans
- » response times
- » suitability and effectiveness of equipment and PPE
- » operational preparedness.

Exercises conducted by QFES or that QFES participated in include:

- » In June 2020, QFES South Western Region participated in a cross-border multi-agency bushfire mitigation exercise on land near Bald Mountain Road, Wallangarra. The land where the exercise was undertaken borders Queensland and New South Wales and is located within the Southern Downs Regional Council area. This exercise was undertaken in consultation with the council as part of Operation Cool Burn 2020. Other participants included Queensland Rail, multiple FRS and RFS personnel from Wallangarra and Stanthorpe in Queensland, as well as crews from New South Wales FRS and RFS.
- » In February 2020, SES volunteers participated in Exercise Airship Down, a multi-agency land search and mass casualty exercise held at Lenthalls Dam, Fraser Coast Region. The exercise provided SES volunteers from the Fraser Coast Unit an opportunity to carry out SES casualty handling skills to identify the level of operational capability. This was a mass casualty scenario involving 44 patient transfers to and from SES floodboats with members challenged by the enormity of the tasks, knee level water, fit for task issues and the birth of a new baby. The exercise involved QPS, QAS and Emergency Services Cadets.
- » In May 2020, a multi-agency operational exercise was conducted at the new Brisbane airport runway. FRS and SES partnered with QPS, QAS, Air Services Australia, Australian Federal Police, Brisbane City Council and Brisbane Airport Corporation testing the response and preparedness concerning communications, coordination and control in what could be a potentially arduous event that has the potential for high loss of life. Communication systems and command effectiveness were analysed and tested during this exercise. An excellent outcome ensued with a Government Wireless Network (GWN) interoperable channel initiated that allowed Air Services Australia, QPS, QAS and FRS to communicate on a common communication channel. This learning resulted in a dispatch procedure amendment to initiate a common interoperable channel for any incident involving multi-agency response on Brisbane Airport property.
- » In October 2019, FRS senior officers attended a joint agency training exercise and demonstration at the Gold Coast Airport. The training allowed cross border agencies the opportunity to better understand New South Wales counter terrorism legislation, emergency response capabilities to HazMat incidents and associated decontamination processes. The training was conducted at the Australian Federal Police building at the Gold Coast Airport. Participating agencies included QFES, QPS, QAS, FRNSW, New South Wales Police Force, Aviation Rescue and Firefighting and Australian Federal Police. The practical component allowed QFES the opportunity to demonstrate its HazMat capability by having a BA/HazMat vehicle from Southport Fire and Rescue Station and the decontamination trailer attend. The exercise was supported by operational crews from Bilinga Fire and Rescue Station.

» In August 2019, the South Eastern Region RFS conducted Operation Shazam. The exercise included 58 appliances, air operations and 350 volunteers who conducted five hazard reduction burns. The exercise tested operational capabilities in the lead up to the bushfire season and was run as a Level 2 Incident with an Incident Control Centre established at Fernvale Rural Fire Brigade.

In addition, QFES participated in multiple COVID-19 exercises facilitated by the State Disaster Coordination Group (SDCG). These discussion exercises explored the whole-of-government response to potential pandemic scenarios within Queensland and built on the lessons learned from outbreaks in other states. They also examined the scenario of concurrent disaster events, for example, how would disaster management arrangements respond to a cyclone while the COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing. These exercises identified the challenges QFES will face both as an operational lead agency in a fire or HazMat event, and as a support agency during a pandemic. As a result, a working group has been established under the SDCG, chaired by QFES, to work through the challenges identified and develop an action plan to address these matters.

Priority area

7. Climate change

2019-2023 Strategic initiatives

- » Influence land-use planning and building standards for Queensland.
- » Support Queenslanders' understanding of, and ability to respond to, climate-related disaster risks.

Planning for climate change

QFES continued to support the implementation of the *Emergency Management Sector Adaptation Plan for climate change* (EM-SAP) with the establishment of the QFES Climate Change Working Group under the SDCG. The working group supported the strengthening of partnerships in the areas of climate adaptation. This was achieved by working with state and local governments to deliver on key projects such as Climate Hazard Adaptation Plans and state level risk assessments which incorporate climate-related research and science, and the dissemination of key climate change information and coordination action across Queensland's disaster management arrangements

In addition, through the working group, QFES commenced the development of the QFES climate change action plan 2020-21. The working group has been an enabler for climate adaptation opportunities through partnerships with other state government departments and local government resulting in QFES partnering on key projects with the DES and local governments.

QFES also worked in partnership with a number of government and non-government organisations to integrate climate change planning initiatives.

During the reporting period, QFES:

- » played an important role as a core partner of the Queensland Climate Ready (QCR) Program facilitated by Griffith University. The QFES *Strategy 2030* was showcased by QCR to whole-of-government as an example of good climate risk governance.
- » was ranked as one of the top performing departments which considered climate change in its risk governance in the *Queensland Climate Change Adaptation Governance Assessment* finalised in May 2020.
- » presented at key forums including the Queensland Government Climate Risk Symposium sharing the work that has been undertaken to analyse the complexities of climate change related risks and in developing an action plan.
- » continued to incorporate climate projections into the QERMF to support disaster and emergency risk management across Queensland's disaster management arrangements.
- » worked with state government departments including the Department of Housing and Public Works, and the Planning Division of Queensland Treasury to look at changes to land use planning frameworks and building policy as a mechanism for reducing future climate and disaster risk.
- » continued to deliver up-to-date climate and disaster risk information in partnership with the DES under the Joint Climate Change Program. This program is supporting the development of authoritative future risk information and projections through the Queensland Future Climate Dashboard.
- » collaborated with the Planning Division of Queensland Treasury in developing and publishing the *State Planning Policy - state interest guidance material—Natural hazards, risk and resilience—Bushfire* (December 2019) and the *Bushfire Resilient Communities Technical Reference Guide for the State Planning Policy State Interest 'Natural Hazards, Risk and Resilience—Bushfire'* October 2019. These documents are critical in ensuring that increasing bushfire risk is avoided or mitigated when it comes to new or revised local planning schemes.

Building disaster resilience

QFES continued to partner with the QRA to implement the *Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience* (2017). The strategy aims to make Queensland the most disaster resilient state in Australia and is delivered under *Resilient Queensland 2018-2021*, predominantly through the development of resilience action plans for each local government area. The process for developing these action plans was successfully piloted in the Central West (Longreach Disaster District) and Fitzroy River and Mary River catchments. These resilience action plans were endorsed by the local governments in these areas.

Following the pilot programs, QFES collaborated with the QRA to review the pilot programs and has since refined the process of developing resilience action plans. This enhanced process is being utilised in the development of the resilience action plan for the Burdekin/Haughton River catchments.

At the national level, QFES was a member of the working group which developed the Flood Emergency Planning for Disaster Resilience Handbook. The handbook is part of the National Handbook Collection maintained by the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience. The handbook, expected to be published in 2020, provides guidance on national principles and practices in flood planning for disaster resilience in Australia.