



JUNE 2024



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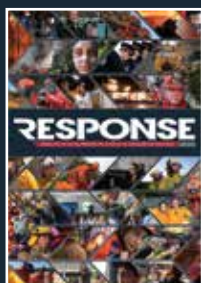
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ON THE COVER

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RESPONSE is a bi-monthly magazine produced by Queensland Fire and Emergency Services. Contributions and feedback are welcome. The Editor reserves the right to edit submissions for brevity and clarity.

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

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FOREWORDS



STEVE SMITH AFSM

Commissioner

QUEENSLAND FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

This is the last edition of *Response* before the State Emergency Service (SES) transitions to the Queensland Police Service. Over the last 10 years our services have worked together through disasters of every kind, with firefighters and SES members alike pitching in to do everything they can.

I look forward to our strong relationship with the SES continuing for many years to come.

From 1 July, we officially become Queensland Fire Department (QFD), incorporating Queensland Fire and Rescue (QFR), Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ), State Operations and Strategy and Corporate Services. The transition towards QFD is well underway, with the commencement of the four-region model from 3 June ahead of the 1 July legislative changes. You can read more about the transition on page 4.

On 2 May, the Australian and New Zealand National Council for Fire and Emergency Services (AFAC) held a National Memorial Service in Canberra to honour the courage and sacrifice of fire and emergency services personnel.

The day marked the one-year anniversary of the tragic passing of Firefighter First Class Izabella 'Izzy' Nash. I travelled to Canberra with Izzy's family for the service, where her name was permanently inscribed into the National Emergency Services Memorial.

It was a moving service and a time for everyone to reflect on the very real dangers firefighters face while keeping their communities safe.

QFES also commemorated the one-year anniversary with a laying of wreaths at Kemp Place Fire and Rescue Station.

At the end of May I was pleased to accept the role of Commissioner. It's a great honour and a privilege to lead a workforce of incredible people doing incredible things every day. As we transition into QFD, my vision is for us to be more engaged and better connected with improved partner relationships. One of the first steps towards that is by investing in senior leadership to create a sound foundation as we step into QFD through workshops and forums to be held in June and July.

Above all, my expectation of QFD members is that everything we do is grounded in respect. Each of us has a contribution to make towards achieving public safety outcomes.

I look forward to visiting brigades and stations and talking to you about your work and how QFD can better support you. My goal is to make QFD a workplace where everyone's skills and contributions are recognised and valued.

Together we will continue to serve our communities as best we can, no matter what challenges we face.



ADAM STEVENSON

Chief Operating Officer

STRATEGY AND CORPORATE SERVICES

I would like to acknowledge the huge amount of work done by our corporate teams to make the transition to the Queensland Fire Department (QFD) a reality.

We recently achieved a major milestone when the legislation amendment bills related to the QFES reform were passed, and I want to thank everyone involved in that work.

This gives us the authorising environment to keep moving quickly towards the establishment of QFD. The legislation will enable us to deliver a more focused and better-connected response to future disasters.

Of course, there is still much to be done, not the least of which is the transition of the State Emergency Service to the Queensland Police Service which began on 3 June. We are busy continuing to work through all the complexities that come with that, from accommodation to ICT.

Under the new structure, Strategy and Corporate Services will retain our six existing areas at a state level that we've had since the disestablishment of PSBA, as well as eight regional hubs.

We've been hard at work establishing the eighth hub on the Sunshine Coast. For each hub we've also been sorting out important details like how both fire services will be adequately serviced and how our people will adjust to the new environment.

Along with Commissioner Steve Smith, Acting Chief Officer Ben Millington and Acting Deputy Commissioner Kevin Walsh, I have been travelling across the state to engage with our members about QFD.

In all, we've held 16 engagement sessions across Queensland, listening to your concerns and taking on your feedback about the new department.

The next 12 months will be an adjustment phase and we will closely monitor the workload and changes affecting people.

I would like to congratulate Jane Houston and Troy Davies on their recent appointments as Executive Director, Strategy Directorate and Executive Director, Assurance, Communications and Engagement Directorate, respectively. I have every confidence in their ability to lead their teams through this period of change and take advantage of the new opportunities it presents.



10 Years of QFES

In June we farewell the SES and take another step toward our future as the Queensland Fire Department.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the formation of QFES – a decade of collaboration between the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS), Rural Fire Service (RFS) and State Emergency Service (SES), with all personnel working together to keep communities safe.

QFES is now undergoing the largest reform of Queensland's emergency services since 1990 to ensure we are best placed to continue delivering exceptional services to all Queenslanders.

On 3 June 2024, SES officially transitioned to the Queensland Police Service (QPS). Along with the move, SES is receiving a significant uplift in funding and resources to focus on supporting the frontline.

Queensland Fire and Rescue (QFR) and Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ) will together form the Queensland Fire Department, with a new state headquarters from 2025.

QFES' 10th anniversary may be bitter-sweet as the SES transitions to QPS, but now is a chance to look back on a decade of SES, RFS and FRS members working side-by-side to help their communities through floods, storms, fires and other emergencies.

The camaraderie fostered between these services will stand them in good stead as they continue to work together to keep Queenslanders safe.

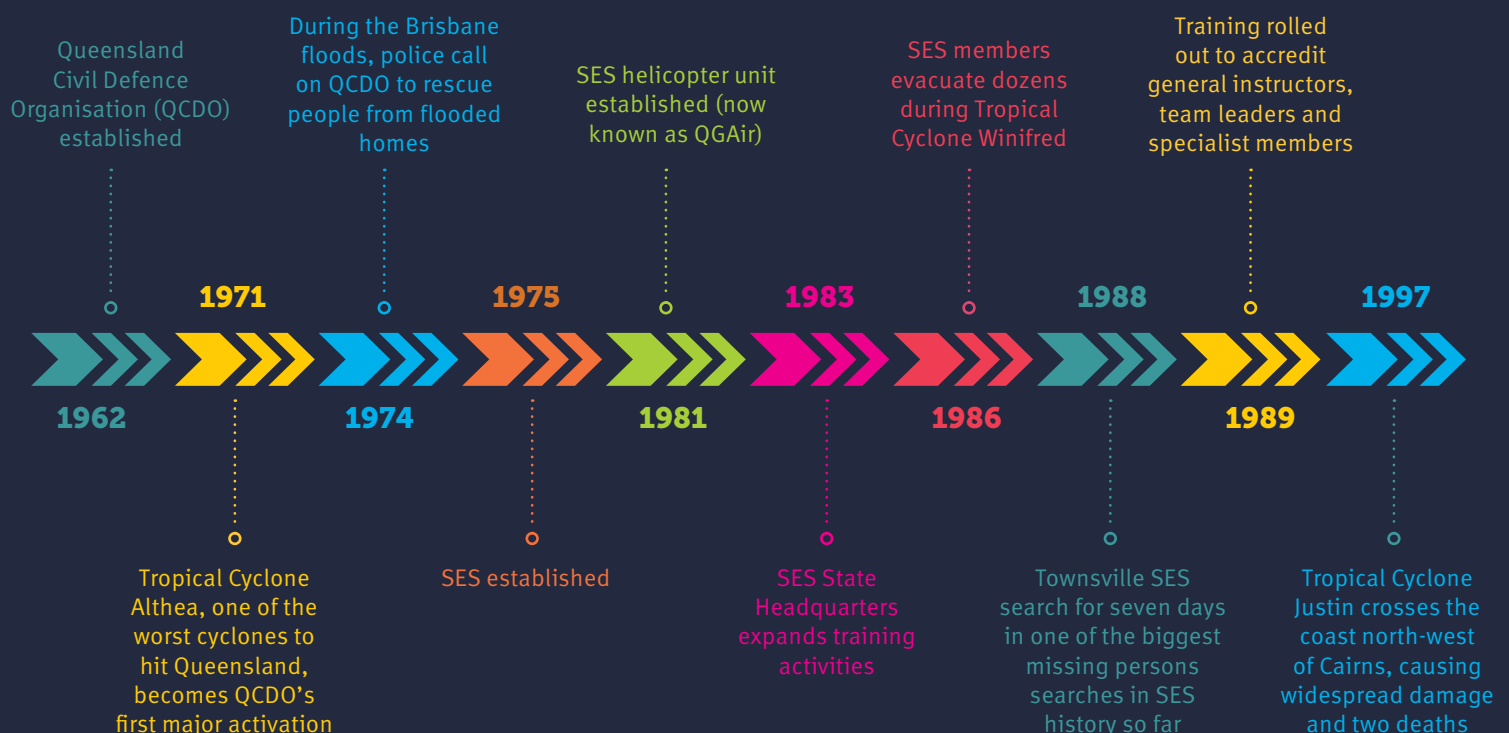
A new partnership

Acting Assistant Commissioner Brian Cox, who joined the SES in 2015 as the Director of Operations, played a major role in the reform process.

"I've been fortunate to be involved in raising the profile of SES, which led to instigating the SES review and in turn the consideration of reforms," Brian said. "The SES review recommendations by Cam Darby were then wrapped up in the KPMG review, and we were pleased to see KPMG endorse most of the recommendations."



SES volunteers helped the community recover from the 2019 Townsville floods.





“The government announcements have now given us the opportunity to build a more solid foundation for SES into the future, with more than double our staff, triple our budget and a stronger partnership with local government.”

Brian said one of the main lessons the SES learnt as part of QFES was the importance of working together on the ground, especially from a community response perspective.

“I’m hoping the positive lessons learnt in partnering between RFS, FRS and SES from our time with QFES will continue. This is not an ending of our formative collegiate environment, it’s the beginning of a new partnership albeit within differing departmental constructs.

“During storms, floods and cyclones, the SES has worked in partnership with local government and hand-in-glove with FRS and RFS on the ground. We also supported RFS and FRS during fires, road crash rescues and bushfires and will continue in our collective interests to support our communities.

“I’m very proud of the way QFES staff and volunteers have worked together in the past and I’m confident that relationship at the state, regional and local level will continue.

“The close connection between local government and the SES must also remain. Through maintaining that close relationship



we better understand local community and local threats, their environment and also their key stakeholders.

“This is a critical foundation of mutual understanding that we can build on to support communities in times of need. In this respect, I believe Queensland really has the right model.”

Humble beginnings

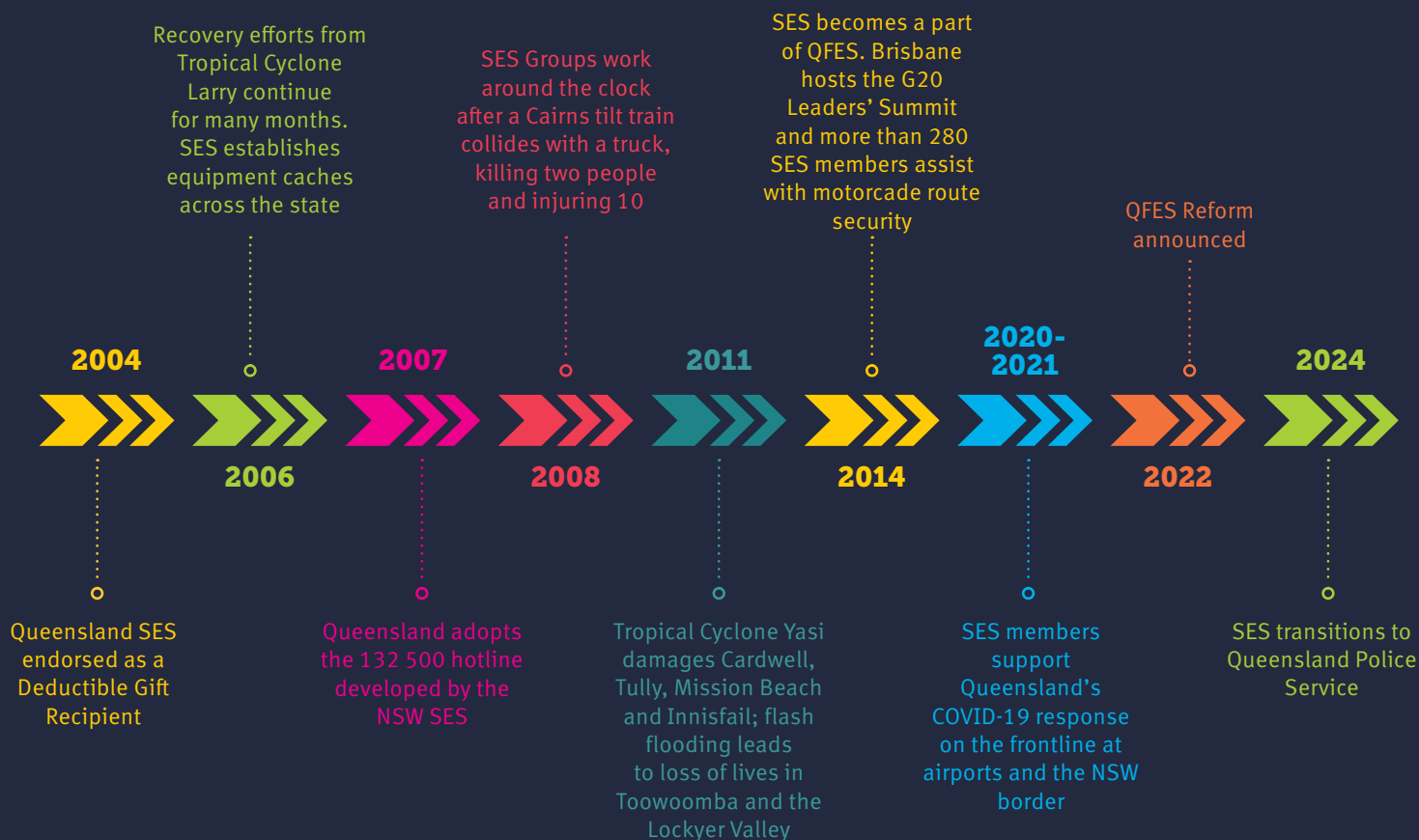
The SES evolved from the former Queensland Civil Defence Organisation (QCDO), which was set up in 1962 to deal with emergencies in the event of a nuclear war.

“Up until the late 1960s there was still a threat of nuclear holocaust and the QCDO was focused on that,” Brian said.

“The QCDO played a major role in response to the 1974 Brisbane floods because they had a good framework for communications and local knowledge. The government saw an opportunity to take that framework and use it to build a volunteer organisation for search and rescue, and that was where the SES was born.”

In 1975, the state government introduced the State Counter Disaster Organisation Act, which established the SES.

“From there we’ve always had a community-based capability and we currently have 75 SES units – one for each council. Within those units are 298 SES groups supporting their communities.”



In the early days, volunteers used surplus WWII supplies and based their headquarters in members' backyards or disused council structures.

"From there we started to develop very specific or bespoke needs for the SES," Brian said. We expanded our storm and flood capability and capacity across the state to include floodboat rescues, vertical rescues and more recently the use of drones to support incidents such as searching for missing children in dense bushland."

Based on community need, the SES evolved their equipment, doctrine and training to support increased response capabilities to the well-known functions they have today.

"We've also adopted a flexible support model in our partnership with local government," Brian said. "In understanding the specific local risks and the environment with local communities, we have tailored SES services to suit that community. Regional and state SES staff then undertake the responsibility to raise, train and sustain the agreed SES functions within that local government area."

"The strength of that is we don't have one-size-fits-all. We can tailor what we need for each local community. That's a real strength and that partnering arrangement really bonds the SES within Queensland, built on the foundation established at the local level – their local community."

Evolution

Brian said Tropical Cyclone Yasi in 2011 was a major challenge that highlighted the SES' interoperability with other states and territories.

"It also emphasised the importance of national forums like AFAC for sharing information," he said.

"AFAC supported our ability to share and receive information that enhances interoperability with other states and territories. During events, initiatives like AFAC's National Resource Sharing

Centre also enhanced sharing of SES resources across state and territorial boundaries that has seen national benefit.

"As we evolved we also saw niche capabilities where SES could contribute during fires. At many large fires, such as Boonah and K'gari, we released our RFS colleagues to work on the fire front while we supported incident management and Air Base Management operations such as refuelling and loading firebombing aircraft.

"During the 2019 floods in Townsville, the FRS and RFS in turn helped us set up the temporary accommodation 'the Habitat' at Reid Park so we could provide accommodation for emergency services personnel.

"This also alleviated pressure on local hotel accommodation that was desperately needed for flood victims and their families. Of course, FRS, RFS and Defence also assisted us with washouts while we carried out floodboat rescues.

"There are many amazing stories of individual bravery, self-sacrifice and dedication during events in all services that I will never forget in my time working with our colleagues in QFES.

"They're all stories of camaraderie, partnership and working together for a common purpose. The strength of the SES is in our ability to connect with community and other response organisations in such a manner.

"I'm in awe of the SES volunteers who serve their communities in times of disaster, who I've seen time and time again leave their own homes and families, in difficult weather conditions, to support others.

"But it's not just when the volunteers turn out for an incident or event, it's their dedication before that which enables them to be ready to respond.

"Each SES group conducts essential training, checks equipment and ensures all teams are ready to go. This includes conducting checks on every single item from charging batteries for rescue



equipment to ensuring floodboat crews are trained and fully prepared.

“All that preparation is critical to the safety and efficient functioning of every SES unit and group, so they can respond to their community in need, yet we often underestimate the amount of work required. SES volunteers dedicate a vast amount of time to invest in community readiness and resilience.”

A mountain of work

Brian said he wanted to thank all local controllers, group leaders and deputies.

“Without those volunteer SES executives stepping up to the plate, we wouldn’t be as effective as an organisation,” he said.

“Their ability to connect with local government during a crisis, while at the same time managing multiple tasking requests, is amazing. We can’t do it without them.



“The reform helps us provide support where we know we can better assist local SES executives. More staff have been recruited to ease their administration and governance burden. This will eventually enhance their ability to focus more on building and maintaining their respective teams, especially during events.

“I also want to acknowledge our SES regional staff, from admin to regional directors, who support those volunteers and empower them every single day. They’ve done a mountain of work over the past few years supporting their regions and their communities.”

Looking ahead, Brian said the reform was an opportunity to build on the rapport between services and strengthen the relationship the SES already has with QPS.

“One thing that will never change is our focus on community and working together with any service on the ground.

“Working collectively with our fellow services and in partnership with local government, we are now postured to better raise, train and sustain our volunteers. We also now have a foundation on which to enhance SES capability delivery to better support the growing Queensland community.”

After nearly a decade, Brian Cox is leaving the SES. His tireless efforts, passion and dedication are appreciated.





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Understanding lost bushwalkers

State Emergency Service (SES) member Steve Schwartz is completing a PhD project exploring the mindset of hikers who get lost in the bush.

In the 10 years he's been with the Gordonvale SES Unit, Steve has been on more than 50 Search and Rescue (SAR) operations.

"I joined the SES so I could do SAR," Steve said. "In Gordonvale it's our main focus, which makes us a bit unique."

Steve has a Masters in Consumer Behaviour. He is completing his doctorate through the Centre of Disaster Studies at James Cook University and contracts to Charles Sturt University and Central Queensland University as a disaster and emergency management academic. His PhD project was inspired by a search he took part in.

"A young Korean woman had been missing for five days at Mount Tyson near Tully," Steve said. "We eventually found her alive but she was in a very bad way and thought she was going to die."

"I wondered how you could go from sitting in an apartment in South Korea to being lost in the Queensland bush waiting to die. A lot of things have to go wrong along the way."

He decided to research lost bushwalkers from a consumer behaviour perspective to determine what happened on their journey and what interventions could be put in place.

"All the existing research comes from a responder's point of view, in terms of how we can be technically proficient at reaching people," Steve said. "My focus is more on what happens before and after."

Steve's research also breaks down the stakeholders involved, such as tourism, telecommunications, hiking equipment and trail providers.

"I want to understand why we have this billion-dollar industry built up around hiking, but we blame the person who uses that industry. You don't sell somebody a house that's poorly wired and then fine them for getting electrocuted."

"Since I was four years old, my earliest memory is being with my parents in the

bush, so it's important to me. I've gotten lost in the bush myself. I even got lost on a trail run during this project. It's happened to everyone."

Steve interviewed more than 30 people who'd gotten lost in the bush.

"The people I talked to were experienced wilderness users who knew what they were doing. They just had something go wrong, and they all thought they were going to die."

"One woman in her 70s saw a rescue helicopter fly over her and she decided it was never coming back. She considered how to perform euthanasia, but luckily another helicopter spotted her."

Steve identified that getting lost happens in distinct phases, starting long before hikers go into the bush and leading into their next wilderness experience: pre-event, trigger, lived lost experience, rescue and recovery.

"In their recovery phase, most people tried to deconstruct what happened," Steve said.

"All of them returned to the place where they got lost. One returned to the peak he'd climbed and found a hat he'd left there. Two now have advisory roles in wilderness safety and one went on to become a SAR operator."

"I'm a huge fan of the SES Volunteer Bursary. It paid for me to attend the annual Inspector General of Emergency Management conference. The moral support from the SES and regional headquarters also meant a lot."

The SES Volunteer Bursary allows SES volunteers to apply for funds toward professional development and study in line with their SES duties. Steve's PhD, titled *Understanding lost wilderness tourists*, is currently in review and was sponsored by the Australian Government Research Training Program.



Steve Schwartz (centre) with the Inspector General of Emergency Management Alistair Dawson (right) and Queensland Police Service Superintendent Rob Graham (left) at a conference Steve attended with support from the SES Volunteer Bursary.



Creating art in detention

QFES firefighters worked with young Indigenous people in detention to create a piece of art exploring the consequences of dangerous road behaviour.

As part of the Road Attitudes and Action Planning (RAAP) program, the firefighters worked with children at the Brisbane Youth Education and Training Centre last year, painting the artwork over several visits.

The training centre is a Department of Education school within the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre at Wacol, which has 162 young people aged 11 to 18 with a catchment south of Rockhampton and out to the Northern Territory border.

Acting Station Officer and RAAP Area Coordinator Simon Joyce and other presenters visited the centre every month to deliver the RAAP program.

Simon said the program helped the young people make better decisions when they were passengers or behind the wheel.

“The kids in these centres have been exposed to more carnage on the roads than most people see in a lifetime,” he said. “All of them have driven cars illegally and more than half have been involved in at least one car crash, some in multiple crashes.

“They often tell us stories of injuries and then it’s ‘show and tell’ for their scars. One boy left detention only to return after having a crash and now must use a walking frame to get around, which he will use for the rest of his life.

“Another child, who’s just been released from detention, killed four of his friends in a crash. He had to move away from where it happened and is now trying to piece his life back together. He wants to work with us to help stop other kids making the same mistakes.

“It’s important for us to reach these kids because they will create the most victims. Most learners and P platers will make every attempt to drive safely and legally, but these kids have little or no regard for the law and are usually in stolen vehicles.

“If I hear a story about a child not getting into a stolen vehicle with someone who drives erratically, I consider that a win.

“I might not be able to stop these kids stealing cars but I hope I can prevent them hurting others. Occasionally we hear stories of kids taking actions to preserve their safety and the safety of others. While these stories are few and far between, I get great pleasure from hearing them.”

The art project

Simon said there were many challenges when presenting in this setting.

“We have a time crunch – a RAAP presentation at a school will go for 90 minutes, but some presentations in detention have been cut down to 20 minutes.

“There are unruly students who have no interest and sometimes there are violent incidents. Presenting in these settings is not for everyone.

“One time we had to move from one classroom to another because the computer wasn’t working. Moving from room to room isn’t simple – it involves radio calls and coordination with the staff. Two groups of children can’t be outside the rooms at the same time because there are conflicts between groups.

“However, when we got to the new room we discovered the power wasn’t working. Since it took so long to move the first time, we decided to press on and still managed to deliver the whole presentation.”

The centre’s art teacher, Megan, told the firefighters she noticed a change in the work the kids created after the RAAP sessions.

“She said their work explored loss, focusing on the loved ones and friends they’d lost during their short lives,” Simon said.

“I felt this indicated our sessions had a lasting effect on the kids, so I suggested a collaborative artwork to Megan. She thought it would be a great way for us to bond with the kids.

“Quite often these kids feel unheard and unseen and think we aren’t invested in the outcome. I wanted to show the kids we do care.

“One of the kids said it didn’t matter what we did in the classroom as no one would ever see what we were doing. I sat next to him and told him the work would be on display in one of our fire stations and would be seen by everyone who visited.

“This project gave us the chance to sit down and connect with these kids, talk to them one-on-one and get their stories.

“I’m blessed as a RAAP coordinator to have such a passionate and hard-working group of presenters. Youth detention is an

incredibly challenging setting and not everyone is suited to it. I'm very fortunate to be surrounded by rockstars."

State Community Education Officer Matthew Skewes, State Coordinator of the RAAP and Fight Fire Fascination programs, said Regional and Area Coordinators contacted the schools and alternate educational facilities to arrange the RAAP program to be delivered.

"Simon is an example of many dedicated Area Coordinators organising our contact with young people in the rapidly expanding alternate settings venues RAAP is presenting to," Matthew said.

"Some examples of these are Bayside Adolescent Boarding Inc Youth and Family Services, Brisbane youth education and training, custodial facilities, English as a second language schools, Indigenous communities, PCYCs, Project Booyah and youth justice or restorative justice conferences.

"Work is underway on a stand-alone presentation and training package for firefighters to present in this demanding and evolving segment of the community. We are very fortunate to have professional and caring staff to contribute to this important road safety message."

If you believe your community would benefit from a RAAP presentation, or if you're interested in becoming a RAAP presenter, email RAAP@qfes.qld.gov.au.



The meaning behind the artwork

The red centre represents a stop sign, layered with the First Nations symbol of stars. There are 52 stars representing the 52 weeks in the year and each star has six black dots, representing the six people who die every week in car accidents.

The journey from the stop sign, with educational meeting places, represents the never-ending journey of learning and growth.

Elders, educators, firefighters and peers hand down knowledge and wisdom around road safety, our choices and how they impact everyone and everything. The hands with dancing people are representatives of a happy, healthy and safe community.

It starts with us

During Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) Prevention Month this May, QFES members did their part to work towards Queensland's goal of removing DFV from our communities.

The QFES Every Step Counts team took part in the annual Darkness to Daylight challenge, walking 110 kilometres to raise funds for DFV prevention. The team quickly surpassed their \$5000 fundraising goal and at time of printing has raised \$8,825.

QFES members also participated in the 2024 Leading Women event hosted by the Queensland Police Service (QPS). The event's keynote speaker was Vanessa Fowler OAM, Chair of the Allison Baden-Clay Foundation, which she founded after her sister Allison was murdered by her husband in 2012.

The Foundation raises awareness about the signs of DFV and coercive control and how to intervene effectively. Vanessa was appointed co-chair of the Queensland Government's DFV Prevention Council in 2021.

"My most treasured title is that I am Allison's sister," Vanessa said. "My sister's case shocked and captivated the nation. And at the time, my family wondered why her story was in the media. We soon realised it was because she was the girl next door.

"She was a kind friend, a loving mother, a colleague. Any one of us could have been that woman behind closed doors being controlled and manipulated.

"Allison, like so many other women, suffered in silence until her death. We as a family now look back and realise there were signs of violence, although not physical.

"And in hindsight, if we'd have known what to look out for – changes in Allison's behaviour and her levels of self-esteem – then our lives and the lives of her three children may have been very different.

"Why is it that we are not recognising that our family and friends and colleagues are experiencing domestic abuse?

"And why are people still dying at the hands of those they love? Every year more than 110 people die from DFV in Australia, even when there's no history of physical violence, as in my sister's case."



QFES members took part in a 10-kilometre walk at the end of Darkness to Daylight.

Last financial year, QPS responded to 171,750 DFV calls – one every three minutes.

"It comes down to equality among all of us and changing our mindsets about this important social issue," Vanessa said. "Now more than ever, it's important for all of us to recognise the signs of a toxic relationship and know the difference between care and control.

"Unless there is an immediate threat to our health or safety, we should all be able to intervene to interrupt any DFV that's occurring around us.

"I'm not saying that having the conversation around DFV is easy. It's a conversation that's complex and very much avoided, but there's a role for all of us to play in prevention.

"These are some small things that we all can do: talk to your children, challenge sexism, look at the language you're using when you talk to young people, like 'don't cry like a girl'.

"By working together, we can change the story and change the ending for the most vulnerable. It starts with us. It starts with you. It starts with all of us working together."

Recognise, Respond, Refer

QFES encourages staff and volunteers to complete Recognise, Respond, Refer (RRR) training.

In the 2023 Working for Queensland survey, 71 people from QFES (7% of respondents) said in the previous 12 months they'd responded to a colleague affected by DFV.

The RRR training takes you through the tools you need to recognise the signs of DFV, understand the best way to respond and refer someone for help.

The training can be done at your own pace and is available through aXcelerate.

Support is available

QFES supports all staff, volunteers and their families who are experiencing DFV and those affected by attending a DFV incident. If you feel you could benefit from support, visit qfes.qld.gov.au/supporting-our-people to locate your preferred counsellor or contact the 24/7 on-call counsellor on 1800 805 980 (calls returned within two hours).

Operations roundup

Firefighters never know when the next call will come in and what it might involve. *Response* spoke with crews who recently attended three very different incidents.

On Easter Sunday, 29 people were stranded by floodwater at Leichardt Dam, 45 kilometres from Mount Isa.

A storm cell went through at 9pm on the Saturday, bringing 33 millimetres of rain and leading to flash flooding that inundated several cars and caravans.

Firefighter Brendan Egan from Mount Isa said the camping area was relatively remote, with no power or mobile reception.

"The campsites are spread over about 3500 square kilometres and are not designated," Brendan said.

"We got the call around 1am. When we arrived, the water had risen roughly two metres in under 90 minutes and we had to cross floodways and creeks.

"We geared up and trekked into the campgrounds with three Queensland Police Service (QPS) officers to confirm how many campers were affected. It was a huge area so we stuck to the main tracks and made two water crossings in deep water. At first we carried an Inflatable Work Platform (IWP)

with us but that was impractical so we left it behind.

"We walked eight kilometres before the waters subsided enough for a QPS 4WD to retrieve us. We found two campers in the scrub who came out with us."

Once daylight broke, QPS tasked a mustering chopper which was able to fly over and account for all the campers.

"We then decided that two mothers, two eight-year-olds and a 12-month-old needed to be retrieved from a campsite across the water, that we had verbally contacted earlier," Brendan said. "We used an IWP and paddled to their location, which had become an island. The remaining campers decided they were safe enough to remain."

Brendan said the most challenging aspects of the operation were communications and resourcing.

"The area falls into one of the large communication black spots in western Queensland," he said. "Communication was exceptionally difficult with limited

fireground communications, no mobile reception and very poor communications with Firecom.

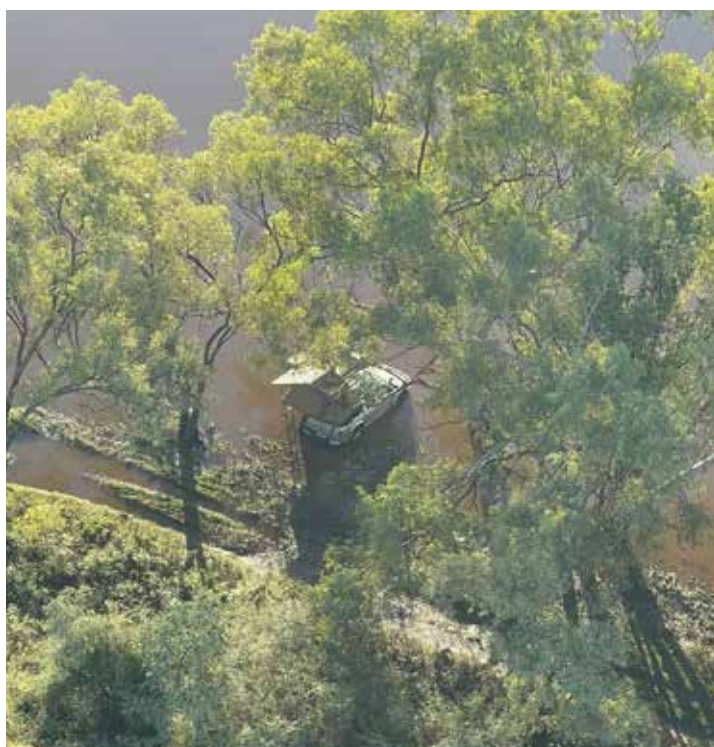
"We don't have a motorised swiftwater rescue craft so we requested SES floodboats and drones but they were unavailable. The rescue chopper was offline so we couldn't use that either."

Brendan said QFES and QPS worked together smoothly and efficiently.

"QPS were critical in accounting for everyone, talking to them and recording their details," he said. "Their local knowledge of the area on top of ours was also beneficial."

After making sure everyone was safe, the firefighters made it back to their station 10 hours later.

"It was a massive effort by the entire technical rescue crew in Mount Isa," Brendan said. "Not a single firefighter or police officer complained about the hike or the water we had to contend with."



Campers were left stranded in waist-deep water.



Flash flooding isolated campers at Cloncurry on Easter Sunday.



“Water rising to those levels in that area is unheard of. It’s extremely fortunate that all campers were doing the right thing and camping in safe areas.”

Mystery sanitiser fire

A truck carrying alcohol-based hand sanitiser and sodium hydrochloride (bleach) caught on fire recently on the Warrego Highway at Columboola.

Acting Inspector Peter McCarron from Toowoomba was assigned as Incident Controller, with Acting Station Officer Darryl Williamson as Operations Officer.

“When we arrived, two appliances from Miles Fire and Rescue Station were using Compressed Air Foam to try to extinguish the fire on the step-up trailer,” Peter said.

“The foam settled down the flames, but the heat soon destroyed the foam blanket and continued burning, with flames about one metre high on the steel tray of the trailer. We stopped using foam at that point.

“Several Rural Fire Service (RFS) appliances were on scene, extinguishing grass fires started by the bottles of hand sanitiser shooting off the trailer. The bottles were building up pressure and exploding. There were melted white pump nozzles everywhere.

“We spoke with the Scientific Unit, who advised us the safest method was to let the fire burn until there was dark smoke and the fire died down. This would burn up most of the alcohol in the bottles.

“We were warned to stay out of the smoke because it was toxic to inhale or get on your skin. Luckily the driver had pulled over on the side of the highway and the wind was in our favour.

“In conjunction with QPS and the Department of Transport and Main Roads, we blocked the highway in both directions, but as the wind blew the smoke away, we re-opened one lane to allow many trucks to pass both ways. We waited several hours for the fire to die down and the trucking company owner to arrive.

“We then cooled the fire with water and a local contractor used a forklift with an extendable bucket to create a bund in the table drain and push the remaining material off the trailer into the drain.

“We then doused and cooled it again. The trucking company owner liaised with the forklift operator to come back in the

morning to clean up the cooled residual material. A 40-foot tow trailer picked up the burnt trailer and took it to Miles.

“We don’t know how the fire started. The driver had carted many loads of sanitiser to a recycling plant in Jackson and never had a problem. Sanitiser is obviously flammable, but it was contained in bottles, so it remains a mystery.”

Gatton Hospital evacuated

Around 2pm on Good Friday, a sulphur smell developed near the Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) room of Gatton Hospital and spread across the whole building.

Firefighter Nathan Culpan was the first officer on site and initiated the Incident Action Plan and established control.

When Captain Steven Soderquist from Gatton Fire and Rescue Station arrived at the scene, he became the Incident Controller.

“After liaising with the Scientific Unit, we sent two firefighters in Breathing Apparatus (BA) with MultiRAE gas detectors and thermal imaging cameras to the UPS room to investigate but they didn’t identify any alarms or abnormal heat signatures,” Steven said.

“The Hospital Manager of Operations told us the isolation procedures for the UPS were unknown and the electrician was 15 minutes away.

“We were starting to evacuate the hospital but we considered delaying because the Acting Nurse Unit Manager advised some of the patients were hard to move: two were oxygen-dependent and two were in the emergency department.

“Our Incident Action Plan was to check the atmosphere further when the Photo-Ionisation Detector (PID) was available to identify the source of the problem. However, when one of the patients in the emergency department reported the smell, I initiated evacuation.

“Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) helped us and the hospital staff to evacuate 21 patients and 15 staff. We relocated five high-risk patients to Laidley and Ipswich because we didn’t know how long the incident would take. Queensland Police Service (QPS) closed the street for safety.

“We completed a primary search to make sure everyone was evacuated. We checked the whole hospital with the PID and a Dräger gas detector but found nothing.

Inspector Tim Burchmann arrived on scene and assumed the role of Incident Controller, with Steven appointed Operations Officer.

“We escorted the hospital electrician into the UPS room to isolate the UPS and identified that one of the lead acid batteries had short circuited at the connection point and was leaking acid,” Tim said.

“We removed all the batteries and stored them safely away from the hospital, then we conducted final atmospheric testing before allowing the patients and staff to return.

“QAS were professional and proactive, caring for all the evacuated patients along with the nursing staff.

“All agencies worked well together in a professional manner which assisted with the safe conclusion of this incident.”



The truck was carrying 16 pallets of expired hand sanitiser and old drums of bleach.

Thursday Island fuel spill

When a fuel spill threatened the safety of patients and staff at Thursday Island Hospital, firefighters faced some tough decisions.

Station Officer Luke Smith said the leak was caused by the mechanical failure of a valve that supplied diesel to the generator's primary fuel tank from an auxiliary tank.

"We were notified it was only a 100-litre diesel spill but then we got another call saying it was more like 1000 or 2000 litres," Luke said.

"When we arrived on scene there was about two inches of diesel in the generator room.

"Five firefighters responded, including one permanent Station Officer, an Auxiliary Captain, Auxiliary Lieutenant and two Auxiliary Firefighters.

"Our initial assessment was to ensure community safety, considering there were people inside receiving medical care, so evacuation would be quite complex."

Located in the island's south-eastern corner, Thursday Island Hospital is the main hospital that services the Torres Strait and Cape York area.

"We conducted a risk assessment of evacuating the whole hospital to ensure the best care for patients," Luke said.

"One of our main considerations was if the power went out on the island, which is a semi-regular occurrence, the generator would kick in. We had to figure out the likelihood of that igniting the fuel.

"However, if we isolated the generator and there was a power outage, the ventilators and other powered machines would be shut down.

"We liaised heavily with the executive office of the hospital, the generator service technicians and our Scientific Unit in Brisbane.

"Given the lower flashpoint of diesel, we decided to evacuate all non-essential workers from the hospital but leave the patients. Our decision was partly because the diesel was contained and the wind was blowing in the opposite direction to the emergency department and wards."

Once the firefighters had given instructions for the evacuation, the Queensland Police Service ensured all the relevant staff had left and there were no sources of ignition. The Queensland Ambulance Service were on standby in case anyone was overcome by fumes.

"The fuel tank held 1000 litres but it had a float inside like in a toilet, and when the float level dropped it kicked in a circuit pumping in diesel from the auxiliary tank," Luke said. "Since the fuel kept leaking,

the float kept dropping and more fuel kept coming in.

"We isolated another valve to stop the spill. Torres Strait Island Regional Council brought two Intermediate Bulk Containers and Maritime Safety Queensland supplied specialised pumps for pumping out oil spills. The pumps operated off an air compressor to eliminate the potential for ignition.

"We liaised with the Scientific Unit about how to avoid creating static electricity while we worked.

"We recovered 1500 litres of diesel, which the council took to their yard. They brought a large supply of sand, which we spread through the whole generator room and left in place for 24 hours.

"When we returned, we conducted atmospheric monitoring to make sure there was no explosive atmosphere and council workers shovelled the dirt back out again.

"Everyone worked together really well. It was an outside-the-box job using the limited resources we have on the island. By using our skills, training, guides and local knowledge, we had it all tied up within two or three hours."



About 1500 litres of diesel leaked into the generator room.



Firefighters covered the floor in sand to soak up the remaining diesel.

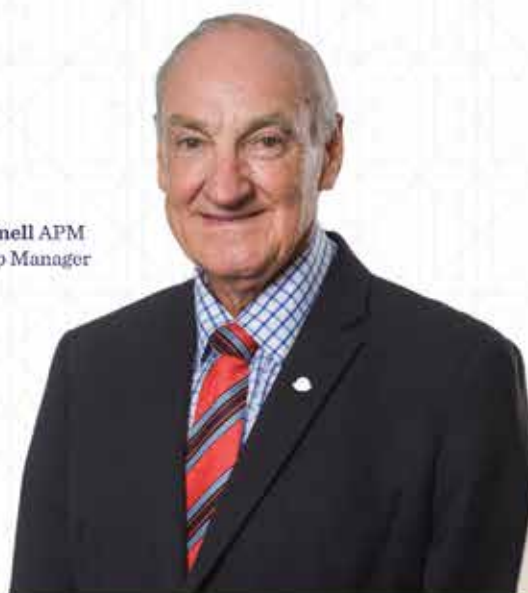
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QFES interns join together

QFES proudly supports the German Interns Alumni Network, a group of German fire and emergency services professionals who completed internships with the Fire and Rescue Service.

The network was started by our most recent intern, Daniel Ansoerge, a student of Rescue Engineering at TH Köln – University of Applied Sciences. After completing his internship in March, Daniel had the idea of creating a platform where past and present interns could connect, share experiences and learn from each other.

The network was coordinated by Station Officer Shan Raffel AFMS shortly before he retired and is now managed by Inspector Brett Finnis.

“The network extends beyond the duration of a traditional internship, fostering long-lasting professional relationships and cultural exchanges,” Brett said. “It bridges the gap between German and Australian emergency services.

“The network helps inspire and develop the younger generation, as well as providing knowledge exchange that is inherent to fire and emergency management.

“The German universities place great emphasis on broadening student experience, which is why they reached out to QFES via the Institution of Fire Engineers.”

To give them a wide range of experiences, interns spend time with many areas of QFES.

“At the mid-term review interns can choose to focus on one specific area of interest that will contribute to formal assessments with their university,” Brett said.

“Before the pandemic, Brisbane Region hosted five German students, making Daniel the sixth. Ben Rind, a student from Luxembourg, has applied to be our seventh intern starting in late 2024, subject to approval.

“These internships couldn’t happen if not for the support of the Commissioner and all the work units across QFES.”

The focus of the network’s inaugural meeting was how to refine the program to provide the best value for students.

“As the students are unpaid and must fully fund their placement, we discussed how we could financially assist them,” Brett said.

“All the interns have risen to the top of their professional tree. I’d like to hope QFES and our people have contributed to their success.

“This network is not just about professional growth but building a future where knowledge and experiences are shared seamlessly across borders, enhancing the capabilities and understanding of emergency services on a global scale.”



Alumni network members

- Daniel Ansoerge, TH Köln – University of Applied Sciences
- Carsten Mohr, Berliner Feuerwehr
- Michael Müller, Frankfurt Fire Brigade
- Lennart Landsberg, TH Köln – University of Applied Sciences and Learn2Rescue
- Adrian Ridder, Duesseldorf Fire Department
- Katharina Schmidt, Pillar Consulting Australia and New Zealand

Respect It or Regret It

QFES has launched a new advertising campaign to raise awareness of bushfire risk and encourage households to prepare a Bushfire Survival Plan.

Research shows many Queenslanders underestimate their bushfire risk and aren't adequately prepared, even those living in higher-risk areas.

With the tagline of 'Bushfire, Respect It or Regret It', QFES' campaign highlights that if you live anywhere near bushland, a fire can land on your doorstep in minutes. The time to prepare your home and make a Bushfire Survival Plan is now, so everyone knows what to do.

The campaign also urges residents to base their seasonal planning around bushfire weather conditions and, if a fire starts, to comply with the advice in bushfire warnings.

Three firefighters put their hands up to be included in the campaign – Justin Hogan, Jasmine Cassell and Alex Robinson.

Jasmine, a Training Resource Officer for the Volunteer Emergency Services Training Command, said it was exciting to be a part of the campaign.

"The production company and everyone involved were great to work with and I now have a huge appreciation for the amount of work that goes into an ad campaign," she said.

Jasmine is a long-serving member of the Samsonvale Rural Fire Brigade.

"When my pop was a teenager, he went to the local sawmill with his dad for a meeting after a large fire in the area, and they ended up forming my brigade.

"I signed up as soon as I turned 16. My pop was the first officer and my mum, stepdad and uncle were all senior firefighters so I have a strong family connection to my brigade.

"I'm really privileged in what I do and I've worked with some incredible volunteers in my time. Being part of this campaign was my way to show that pride, as well as highlight the incredible work our volunteers do for their community."

Jasmine said the bushfire at Tara at the end of last year was one of the hardest fires she'd fought.

"As a strike team leader, it was challenging to step outside of my comfort zone and lead a crew of people I hadn't worked with before," she said.

"While it was a daunting challenge, it was also one of the most rewarding and a career highlight to date. I had such an amazing crew and I will cherish the memories and lessons for the rest of my time with RFS.

"I want to be there for my community and the wider community when they need it most. Being in the RFS is like having another family, which is really special."

To find out more about the campaign or to create a Bushfire Survival Plan visit www.qld.gov.au/bushfires



Firefighters Alex Robinson, Justin Hogan and Jasmine Cassell (front row, left to right) feature in the campaign developed by members of the QFES Communications team Shannon McBride and Kyra Dunstan (back row).



The campaign ads appeared on TV, digital video, billboards, social media, Google, radio and other channels.



BUSHFIRE RESPECT IT OR REGRET IT



Bushfire Survival Plan





NORTHERN REGION

100 years of Bowen Station

Bowen Fire and Rescue Station celebrated their centenary of service in June.

The local community was invited to an open day at the station to celebrate with current and past crew members.

Bowen's old Model T Ford fire truck was brought back to the station to mark the occasion.

Over the years there have been four fire stations in Bowen – Brisbane Street, Gordon Street, Poole Street and the current station back on Gordon Street.



ARTEP graduates

Congratulations to the 13 new auxiliary firefighters who graduated from the Auxiliary Recruit Training and Education Program in Townsville and Mount Isa.

Auxiliary recruitment activities are continuing in Northern Region with a focus on the Burdekin area.

If you have family or friends interested in learning more about this role encourage them to stop by their local station to have a conversation with the crew.





CENTRAL REGION

Ride2School Day

National Ride2School Day, which this year fell on Friday 22 March, encourages children to get physically active on their journey to school.

Clermont Fire and Rescue Station Captain Barry Plate coordinated his team to join local police and ambulance crews to ensure children could safely ride to school.

Barry said the day had grown popular and about 85 students from two parts of Clermont participated this year.

“We also had two representatives from QFES, Queensland Police Service and Queensland Ambulance Service on bikes riding with them,” Barry said.

“It’s important to us that we set an example for our local students of the importance of living a healthy and active lifestyle and we know the children got a real buzz out of riding along with the emergency service vehicles. We look forward to even bigger participant numbers in 2025.”

Emerald Area Commander, Acting Inspector Scott Castree, said community interactions are a common initiative of the Clermont team.

“Barry is always looking for opportunities for his team to support his community in Clermont and is heavily invested in initiatives like Ride2School Day and Blue Light Discos. I’m proud of the engagement the Clermont team have with their community.”



Enhancing driver skills

Emerald Command recently hosted a ‘Drive Vehicles Under Operational Conditions’ course run by local instructors Lieutenant Bill Walker and Acting Lieutenant Troy Bowen.

The course was run at Emerald Airport, which provided a safe area to practise defensive vehicle manoeuvres and other general appliance handling techniques. Bill said participants learnt a lot of valuable skills from the qualities of a good driver through to vehicle dynamics and how to control a vehicle in emergency conditions.

He said participant feedback was encouraging and all felt they’d significantly increased their confidence when driving fire appliances. Emerald Area Commander, Acting Inspector Scott Castree, acknowledged the ongoing support of Central Highlands Regional Council providing a safe location for the course to be run.

“We have a fantastic working relationship with our local council and we will continue to work together to ensure we run more courses like this in the future.”

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Beef fever hits Rockhampton

Rockhampton is the Beef Capital of Australia and plays host to the Beef Australia Expo every three years. The event is the biggest beef expo in the southern hemisphere and is supported by the Queensland Government.

The 2024 event saw about 120,000 people attend from all over Australia and overseas.

Before the event opened its door to the public, the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) provided building fire safety inspections to ensure community safety and the successful response to any fire emergency. The State Emergency Service (SES) provided first aid.

More than 50 representatives from FRS, SES, Rural Fire Service, Firecom and corporate services engaged with eventgoers and stakeholders at the QFES display to provide preparedness information and safety education.

QFES had visits from primary producers discussing their fire mitigation strategies, people enquiring about recruitment, general safety and preparedness, and a host of other engagements.

As part of the Suncorp Schools Partnership Program, seven schools a day with about 1000 students in total visited the QFES display to learn about preparedness and prevention.

The next Beef Australia Expo is set to be held in Rockhampton from 2 to 8 May 2027.





NORTH COAST REGION



Regional recruit course

May was a productive and rewarding month for 41 new State Emergency Service (SES) recruits from across North Coast Region.

The recruits came together to participate in the regional recruit course held over three weekends.

They came away with camaraderie and the qualifications for field operations, thereby building capability for the region.

Bushfire Mitigation Unit activities

The North Coast Region Bushfire Mitigation Team have had a busy start to the year, supporting a range of projects helping the community prepare for bushfire season.

The Sunshine Coast team have been working on multi-agency hazard reduction burns with community stakeholders as well as partnering with Noosa Council to present a Simtable to Southeast Queensland Local Government Area Community Development Officers.

Simtable is a digital sand table that can be used for modelling and data visualisation in relation to bushfires and emergency management.

The Burnett team have been on a community education roadshow across north and south Burnett community shows, emergency services days and the Resilience Expo, while the Fraser Coast and Bundaberg crew have produced a campfire safety video and a dedicated education project on K'gari.

All teams have also been busy hosting Volunteer Community Educator workshops and fire warden training across the region.



Minister tours North Coast Region

In the second week of May, Minister for Fire and Disaster Recovery Nikki Boyd MP visited North Coast Region and met with QFES staff and volunteers.

The Minister visited Hervey Bay, Bidwell Rural Fire Brigade, Maryborough Fire and Rescue Station, Childers Fire and Emergency Services Facility and a community breakfast in Bundaberg.

During the tour the minister met with our personnel, presented a range of medals, handed over some new appliances and even got the opportunity to try out the slide at the Maryborough Fire and Rescue Station.

New station and appliance for Imbil

On 23 April the commissioning of the refurbished Imbil Fire and Rescue Station and a new appliance handover took place.

The commissioning ceremony was attended by Minister Nikki Boyd, Deputy Commissioner Kevin Walsh and Assistant Commissioner Gary McCormack, along with North Coast Region staff.

The ceremony included the unveiling of a plaque and handover of the keys to the new appliance to Imbil Captain Hayley McMachen.

The Imbil crew were incredibly grateful to receive a new appliance in their newly renovated station, something that was a long time in the making.





BRISBANE REGION



Iron Traks

Acting Assistant Commissioner Matthew Bulow presented the Commissioner's Certificate of Appreciation to Tracey and Kirra from the Iron Traks program.

This certificate recognises their dedication and commitment to providing increased opportunities to young women through collaborations with emergency services.

Commemorative events

The Brisbane State Emergency Service (SES) Unit played a vital role in both the Dawn and Anzac Day Parade events in Brisbane City, with over 100 members in attendance at each event. Thank you for your dedication.

On International Firefighters' Day, Brisbane's Story Bridge was lit up in red for our courageous firefighters.



Hanging up their helmets

For 47 years and five months, Paul Klingner has served the community and mentored firefighters. Acting Chief Superintendent Paul Durston had the honour of presenting Paul with his plaque and certificate.

Chris Whiting, Member for Bancroft, attended Paul's sendoff and thanked Paul on behalf of the community. It was a special and emotional day for all.

After 36 years, it was also time for one of Brisbane's finest – Steve Ryan – to hang up the boots. Paul Durston presented Steve with his certificate and plaque. Steve will definitely be missed by many.

Brisbane Region also farewelled Darryl Shelswell to enjoy his retirement. Darryl has served the community of Deception Bay and surrounds since 1996. A large gathering of friends, family and colleagues attended Moreton Bay Central to farewell him.



Russell Island RFS recognised

Russell Island Rural Fire Service (RFS) members received a Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation to recognise their professionalism and bravery at last year's tragic fire on the island.

The certificate was presented by Minister for Fire and Disaster Recovery Nikki Boyd MP, Acting RFS Chief Officer Ben Millington, Acting Superintendent Shaun Toohey, and Kim Richards, Member for Redlands.

UPS Systems & why they need to be maintained

An uninterruptible power supply (UPS) is a type of continual power system that provides automated backup electric power to a load when the input power source or mains power fails. A UPS differs from a traditional auxiliary/emergency power system or standby generator in that it will provide near-instantaneous protection from input power interruptions by switching to energy stored in battery packs.

The on-battery run-times of most UPS's are relatively short (only a few minutes) but sufficient to "buy time" for initiating a standby generator or properly shutting down the protected equipment.

Typically, UPS's use VRLA (valve regulated lead acid) batteries which have a design life of 3-5 years, these batteries over time will lose capacity reducing the runtime of the UPS. If not maintained, these batteries can overheat, swell, leak acid and eventually become a fire hazard.

6 monthly preventative maintenance is recommended on these units to ensure correct operation and to provide ongoing protection to your critical equipment.



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SOUTH EASTERN REGION

Operation Storm the Beach

Operation Storm the Beach, a large-scale multi-agency exercise, was conducted by Wasp Creek Rural Fire Brigade and the South Coast Area Office on South Stradbroke Island.

The exercise involved 99 personnel and nearly 20 vessels from the State Emergency Service, Volunteer Marine Rescue and Coast Guard that transported Rural Fire Service and Fire and Rescue Service crews and equipment from the Gold Coast to the island.

Crews constructed firebreaks using hand tools and blowers, while others used chainsaws to clear trails and portable pumps to combat simulated house and bush fires.

An Incident Management Team was set up at the brigade station, involving support crews and Firecom operators.

The collaborative effort helped crews develop the skills to provide a swift response to protect the island's communities in future.



Five Step Mountain Challenge

Fifty State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers from across the region came together at the 720-metre-high Mount Greville to test their fitness and familiarise themselves with the challenges of mountain rescue in the Scenic Rim.

Mount Greville is the second mountain in the Scenic Rim Unit's Five Step Mountain Challenge. As the challenge progresses, volunteers move onto larger and more challenging mountains, culminating with south-east Queensland's second-highest mountain, Mount Barney (1359 metres).

The Scenic Rim is no stranger to missing, 'geographically embarrassed' and injured hikers, completing more than 50 mountain search and rescues each year.

The Five Step Mountain Challenge was created to develop volunteers' skills for mountain search and rescue.

All South Eastern Region SES volunteers are invited to the challenge each year so they can complete a series of mountain hikes and incrementally test their fitness in a controlled environment, rather than during an operation.

These activities help build relationships and teamwork between units, ensuring they can work together effectively during emergencies.

World's Greatest Shave for Emilea

State Emergency Service (SES) South Eastern Region Area Controller Emilea Daniels got a huge shock late last year when she was diagnosed with lymphoma.

To provide support as her cancer treatment continues, Emilea's SES family held a very special World's Greatest Shave event to honour her fight.

The SES team got together at the regional office to cut, colour and shave, all in the name of showing their support for Emilea and other Australians battling blood cancers across the country.

The team raised \$4,250 in donations for the Leukaemia Foundation, which will help fund research into a cure for blood cancers.





SOUTH WESTERN REGION

Multi-agency training day

The Regional HQ Charlton facility was recently the venue for a multi-agency training day where about 100 staff demonstrated their skills in combating a range of scenarios.

The scenarios involved a hostile entry by the Queensland Police Service with assistance from the Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS), as well as road crash rescue scenarios involving QFES, QAS and LifeFlight and a multi-casualty crash with patient transfers to a mock emergency department onsite.



Taroom Captain retires

Captain Ashley Adcock from Taroom Fire and Rescue Station hung up his helmet on 15 April after 48 years of service.

About 50 staff and community members, along with retired and past members of the station, joined Ashley and his family to celebrate his incredible achievement.

Inspector Leigh Grayson and Inspector Stewart Dundas presented Ashley with plaques and certificates on behalf of QFES.

Ashley began his service in July 1976 and has attended more than 900 callouts, as well as countless hours of training. We wish Ashley all the best with whatever the next chapter looks like.



Cool burn workshops

Adam Osborne, South Western Region's First Nations Bushfire Safety Officer, joined Robbie Williams from Fire Lore and representatives from Southern Queensland Landscapes to hold cool burn workshops in St George and Mitchell.

Day one saw students from the St George High School agricultural program come along, while day two was with local landholders in the St George area.

These workshops allowed landholders to learn about cool burning techniques and how they can be used in the landscape to reduce bushfire risk. The high school students gained a better understanding of how to put these principles into practice and achieve better outcomes.

With the next bushfire season looming, and an ever-increasing fuel load across the landscape, taking these steps to better understand how to mitigate risks while minimising damage will ensure communities are better prepared.



QPS Community and Recruitment Expo

The Toowoomba State Emergency Service (SES) team joined the Queensland Police Service (QPS) at the QPS Community and Recruitment Expo.

Our friendly team chatted to the community about what the SES does, when to call 132 500 and how to become a volunteer.

The kids were kept entertained by dressing up in orange and sitting in an ATV, getting stickers and taking photos in a Paddy cut-out corflute.

Forensic search

State Emergency Service volunteers from Toowoomba and Crow's Nest attended a forensic search with Queensland Police Service (QPS) on 8 May.

The team hiked through dense bushland and searched for skeletal remains in dry creek beds, navigating through rugged paths to reach the search location.

We extend our deepest gratitude to QPS for their valuable support and collaboration.





FAR NORTHERN REGION

Jason's brave stand against November fires

In the small town of Ravenshoe, nestled near the thermal waters of Innot Hot Springs, young Jason Harron is known for his passion for barrel racing and stock car racing, but in November 2023, this remarkable 11-year-old took on a new challenge, one that showcased his bravery to the entire Far North Queensland community.

When fires raged through the region, threatening homes and lives, Jason didn't hesitate to step into the role of an honorary Junior Firefighter.

For three gruelling days, he worked tirelessly alongside his mother, Loretta Snelling, to defend their family home.

Jason's quick thinking to presoak the grounds around their property proved pivotal in stopping the advancing flames from consuming the family's stables.

He could be found holding the hose, dousing down their home and outbuildings and driving the farm watercart to refill at the dam.

His efforts didn't stop there – by Friday afternoon, he was supporting emergency services, working into the early morning hours with his father Harry.

Jason's resolve never wavered. He was a constant presence on the firehose at the washdown pad, safeguarding the stables and their cherished horses.

His resourcefulness shone through as he adapted the farm's segway with a small watertank to douse spot fires, mitigating flare ups around the property.

Jason also provided a fill point for the local fire brigade with the farm's watercart, aided the Queensland Police Service



with navigation and supported the air attack crew and other emergency services with refreshments.

In recognition of his outstanding service and support to his mother, the Ravenshoe community and QFES, Jason was honoured with an Assistant Commissioner's Commendation Certificate.

The certificate was presented by Assistant Commissioner Michael O'Neil in a surprise ceremony at Jason's school.

Mr O'Neil praised Jason's actions, stating, "He went above and beyond in what he did. He was a pillar of help not only to his family but also to his community and the emergency services."

Loretta expressed her gratitude for her son's support during the crisis, describing him as her rock. Jason's actions have left an indelible mark on the community, embodying the spirit of a true, humble country kid with a heart of gold.



Safety drill with Origin Energy

C shift teams from Cairns and Cairns South fire and rescue stations joined forces with Origin Energy at their Draper Street facility for a safety exercise.

Origin Energy invited QFES to partake in the drill to enhance its authenticity. The collaboration allowed QFES personnel to gain insights and experience with a critical infrastructure site, which houses substantial quantities of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) for the Cairns region.

In the scenario, an Origin Energy employee filled an LPG cylinder at the loading dock when an accumulation of static electricity led to a spark, igniting the gas and causing an explosion that left the worker incapacitated and a cylinder ablaze, venting flames from the valve.

The firefighters, who are currently undergoing the Senior Firefighter program, assumed command roles. They managed the incident as Incident Controllers and Acting Station Officers, guiding the response efforts for each fire appliance involved.

The firefighters wore full level 2 personal protective equipment complete with breathing apparatus and used the facility's own water resources.

Origin Energy's team tested their fire suppression systems and evacuation procedures. In a gesture of goodwill and continued partnership, they also gave a tour of the facility, offering a thorough familiarisation with the site post-exercise.



QFES shines in water rescue challenge

A team of eight Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) Swiftwater Rescue Firefighters competed in the inaugural Australasian Water Rescue Challenge at the Penrith Whitewater Park in Sydney.

Hosted by the Australasian Rescue Organisation (ARO), the challenge consisted of 10 scenarios based on real-world incidents with casualties trapped in cars, fences, houses and other obstacles.

The QFES team took out second place and their leader Trent Leis received the prestigious Team Leader Award. They competed against several teams including Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW), NSW State Emergency Service, NSW Ambulance, Volunteer Rescue Association NSW and a mixed team of surf lifesavers and firefighters.

QFES Senior Firefighter Jay Canham said the first scenario was a casualty pinned up against a pool fence on the other side of the waterway.

“Once we reached the casualty, we used battery-operated spreaders to disentangle them,” Jay said.

“Other scenarios included breaking and entering into a house in floodwater to retrieve a casualty, and rescuing a casualty who was playing in floodwater on a surfboard, then fell off their board and hung unconscious from their leg-rope.”

The QFES team performed strongly in the early scenarios but on the third-last scenario lost points from a simple mistake that sent them to the back of the pack.

“We had to gain access to a casualty impaled on a star picket on the opposite side of the waterway,” Jay said. “Three of us tried to reach the casualty in a craft, but we missed the eddy (a small whirlpool) we were aiming for and our tether system, which provided redundancy for that circumstance, returned us safely to the strong side.

“Unfortunately, when the tether brought us back, we went below the allocated operating area, which cost us a lot of points.

“The last activity was an eddy swim. We had to catch eddies on both sides of the waterway – the higher the eddies, the harder to catch, but the more points we received.

“We could only have one swimmer in the water at any time, with a 15-minute time limit. We focused on catching the higher eddies to maximise our points.

“We knew we needed to get a lot of points back, but we had some very strong swimmers like Dev Lahey and Tom Eyles in the team and managed to swim our way back up to second place.

“The most pleasing thing was we operated in the same manner that we would at any swiftwater incident, treating it as a real-life scenario rather than a competition.

“Other teams who were more familiar with the location relied heavily on swimmers to

achieve the objective. We operated as if the real-life hazards of a swiftwater incident were present and aligned our incident action plans to our hierarchy-of-risk techniques, where swimming is often the last option.”

Challenge Coordinator Shannon Crofton said, “QFES entered an extremely competitive team and supported the event with two experienced assessors.

“QFES also used the time to train with FRNSW Water Rescue Instructors, including helicopter rescue techniques, winch rescues and competencies in Helicopter Underwater Escape Training and Emergency Breathing Systems.

“The QFES team, which has a lot of experience in motorised boat rescue, took time to give FRNSW instruction and feedback about their newly acquired rescue boats.”

Jay said it was important for Queenslanders to keep thinking about the risks of driving into floodwaters.

“Our state is the deadliest for swiftwater incidents,” he said. “We lead the nation almost every year for the number of fatalities, many of which are preventable.

“A lot of fatalities come from people driving into the water. With the wet season behind us, it’s easy to forget, but we need everyone to remember, if it’s flooded, forget it.”



The judges said the QFES team set a high standard for the competition.

Helping people heal

Daniel Rasmussen, the Peer Support Officer (PSO) Coordinator for Brisbane Region, has 20 years of experience as a PSO under his belt.

Dan's commitment to supporting his peers was recognised in the 2023 PSO Awards and 2024 Australia Day Awards. He became a PSO because he wanted to learn more about mental health and be able to help people.

"To be a PSO you need to be empathetic and a good listener who understands what people have faced in the job," Daniel said.

Wearing two hats as both a Station Officer and a PSO can be a juggle.

"It's best to be clear about which hat you're wearing when you have a conversation," he said.

"PSOs get approached by all sorts of people for all sorts of reasons: family, kids, work, finance. It's not always critical incidents.

"When we do respond to critical incidents, we provide psychological first aid, making sure the immediate needs of the crew are met, so they know what to expect or where to go if they need help.

"We're the linchpin for them if they need further professional mental health services. The comparison I like to use is if you cut your finger you can let it heal on its own and most of the time it will, but it could also get infected. If you put a Band-Aid on there's a better chance it will heal.

"We don't give advice – it's about active listening and providing a conduit to other things people need. Some people just want to talk."

As the PSO Coordinator, Daniel makes sure his fellow PSOs have everything they need.

"I provide a voice to management and a contact point for issues and queries. Along with our supervision counsellor Michael Johns, I coordinate supervision and training.

"You need to have emotional room in the bank to take the time to listen to someone,

which means you have to take care of yourself."

QFES members who want to become a PSO complete a week-long foundation course before going on probation for six months. They can then choose to do a two-day course if they'd like to support firefighters who have been to a critical incident.

"A lot of PSOs don't do critical incident support because they may be from a corporate background and don't feel like they're in a position to talk to crews about a road crash. However, if you're a firefighter you know what they've been through, and that's the beauty of the PSO program.

"It can be hard to gauge how effective you are as a PSO, but you can't really do anything wrong, as long as you follow the basic principles of psychological first aid. Confidentiality is the biggest part. If you're there to listen to someone, you can only do good, even if you can't measure it."

Confidential counselling services are available to all volunteers, staff and immediate family members. If you feel you could benefit from support, go to qfes.qld.gov.au/supporting-our-people to locate your preferred counsellor or contact the 24/7 on-call counsellor on 1800 805 980 (calls returned within two hours).



Dan Rasmussen (right) received an Australia Day 2024 Achievement Award.

A smiling man with short dark hair, wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt, holding a dark blue mug. The background is a blurred indoor setting.

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Closing the Gap

The Volunteer Capability and Sustainability Unit (VCSU) won a Close the Gap Award for hosting intern Kobi Sax through the CareerTrackers program.

The Close the Gap Awards celebrate the contributions QFES members make towards reducing Indigenous disadvantage in Queensland communities.

Since 2017 QFES has partnered with CareerTrackers, a program that supports First Nations university students to participate in paid internships.

VCSU and the broader Community Capability and Volunteerism Branch (CCV) provided a rich experience for Kobi over 12 weeks, allowing him to explore what a full-time role in QFES might look like.

VCSU Manager Sally Dobromilsky coordinated the internship and supported Kobi as a First Nations role model and mentor. She said his main project was to help deliver the PCYC Emergency Services Cadets Adult Leader Conference.

“He led the audio-visual component for the weekend and supported all the presenters,” she said.

“He also conducted stocktake, validated distribution lists and distributed merchandise for the Partnerships and Sponsorships Unit. He helped create an asset register for CCV and gathered flood map data for the Hazard and Risk Unit.

“Kobi engaged with business units and services across QFES, including a station tour, a day at the Live Fire Campus and a tour of the Research and Scientific Branch.

“He also took the opportunity to meet and yarn with a group of First Nations leaders who work in a diverse array of positions within QFES, including Director of First Nations Partnerships and Strategy Kade Brindell.”

Sally said Kobi brought great energy to the team.

“He had a new perspective on many ways of performing work and was passionate about helping the team to find efficiencies,” she said.



(L to R): Commissioner Steve Smith, Kobi Sax and Acting Assistant Commissioner Rob Boniwell.

“Kobi and I had many deep conversations about contemporary professional life for First Nations people, and we were fortunate to build a connection over shared perspectives and mutual respect.

“As a Kombumerri woman, I jumped at the chance to host a First Nations intern as it’s my duty to advocate for our people, pay back the goodwill my mentors have given me and provide a leg up for our young people aspiring to join the industry.

“It was rewarding to connect Kobi with diverse mentors who all gave him something different. He said many times he couldn’t believe how lucky he was to have so many personnel invested in him. He intends to join the Fire and Rescue Service as a firefighter after his career as a paramedic.”

Sally said programs like CareerTrackers lifted students a step higher in an extremely competitive graduate market.

“CareerTrackers provides a tangible way for us to show our confidence in an aspiring First Nations young person and provide support that can directly impact their career trajectory. I would highly recommend any area of QFES consider hosting an intern.”



(L to R): Kobi Sax with First Nations QFES employees Kade Brindell, Mick Watego, Beau Sinn, Cherie Minniecon and Sally Dobromilsky.

Close the Gap Award winners

Individual:

- Chloe Swiney, First Nations Bushfire Safety Officer
- Kylee Clubb, Rural Firefighter

Team:

- Volunteer Capability and Sustainability Unit and Community Capability and Volunteerism Branch

Partnership:

- QFES Brisbane Region and IronTraks



This year's tenth and final handover for the Energising Queensland partnership was held in Kingaroy, where volunteers also received an ATV and \$10,000 towards upgrades to facilities from Mytilineos.



State Operations coordinated a six-hour re-validation exercise for the Port of Gladstone with more than 40 participants from state, federal and international jurisdictions. The exercise tested Queensland's capability to host visits by nuclear-powered warships.



Local Rural Fire Service crews, State Emergency Service groups, and 518I and 518A from Durack Fire and Rescue Station visited the Somerset PCYC Cadets.



The crew from Enoggera Fire and Rescue Station visited the students at One Tree Defence Childcare to teach them about fire safety.



Rural Fire Service members held meetings with key stakeholders including Queensland Farmers' Federation, Queensland Cane Growers and AgForce Queensland to discuss the Queensland Fire Department reform and bushfire preparation.



QFES staff and volunteers took part in the Run Army event in Brisbane and Townsville, raising funds for the Firefighters Cancer Foundation Australia.



AFAC held a National Memorial Service in Canberra to honour the courage and sacrifice of fire and emergency services personnel. This year, Firefighter First Class Izabella (Izzy) Nash was remembered and recognised with her name inscribed into the National Emergency Services Memorial.



The Fire and Rescue Service women's team celebrated a hard-earned victory at the 2024 Anzac Cup against the Australian Army SEQ.



QFES personnel paid their respects at Anzac Day services across the state.



At Thursday Island's Tagai State College careers day, Captain Richard Muhammad, a proud Torres Strait Island man with 25 years' service with the Fire and Rescue Service, passed on his knowledge to the local Kaurareg Nation youngsters.



A team of riders from QFES cycled more than 600 kilometres in the annual Bike4Burns charity ride to raise money for the Children's Hospital Foundation.

Road crash training for PNG firefighters

Six firefighters from Papua New Guinea Fire Service (PNGFS) travelled to Australia to undergo road crash rescue (RCR) training at the Bracken Ridge Fire and Rescue Station.

The firefighters completed QFES' 40-hour RCR course that will allow them to conduct road crash rescues and instruct other firefighters in Papua New Guinea.

In 2021, QFES donated five ex-service fire trucks with RCR equipment, which the participants can now use to its full potential.

Chief Superintendent Brad Commens said, "QFES continues to assist with capability and capacity development in PNGFS through the AFAC Pacific Partnership Group, and our Memorandum of Understanding that was renewed in 2023.

"These programs build strong ties between Australia and our closest international neighbour, with the benefits extending far past firefighting and rescue development."

Inspector Cornelius Galawe from the PNGFS Training Section said the training was exciting.

"We learnt many new things, especially the technical aspects like how to stabilise the vehicle and extract casualties," Cornelius

said. "These are new things to us and it was great to practise cutting vehicles.

"The instructors explained to us for the first time all the RCR tools and we'll be able to teach these skills to recruits and our operational staff.

"In the past we mostly dealt with structural fires and didn't take part in road crash rescue very much, but after this training we're going to raise awareness back in Papua New Guinea that the fire service is more prepared for road crash rescue.

"It's really exciting to learn new things from the Australian firefighters, who are the most experienced."

Cornelius thanked their Chief Fire Officer Bill Roo for sending them to participate in the training.

"We're really privileged to be here under his leadership. And thank you to QFES for allowing us to undergo this vital RCR training. Thank you very much to Stuart Nivison and Scott Marles for giving their time while they're on holiday. They've given us a lot over these days."

Firefighting in Papua New Guinea is a male-dominated field, but two of the participants, Firefighter Olivia Tony and Station Officer Roselyn Lucian Suto, were among the country's first female firefighters.

Roselyn was the PNGFS' first female recruit in 2014. She estimated the service now had about 15 female firefighters across Papua New Guinea.

"Thank you to QFES for allowing us to undertake this training and go back and implement it and carry on with our work in Papua New Guinea," Roselyn said.

"For female officers, it can be challenging in the fire service because the recruitment is a bit heavy, but we change and adapt so we're able to do what we need to do."

Further training initiatives for PNGFS firefighters are planned for later in the year, including Safety Assessment Officer and Building Approval Officer training in August and September.



The training was delivered by the State Operations Branch and Brisbane Region and was supported by a Memorandum of Understanding between QFES and PNGFS.



The road to Paris 2024

Firefighter and dual Olympian Aly Bull is balancing training and firefighting as she prepares for her third Olympics in Paris.

Aly was part of her local surf club since she was in under 6s, but she switched to kayaking in her teens with the goal of one day reaching the Olympics.

She fulfilled her dream when she represented Australia at Rio in 2016 and Tokyo in 2021, narrowly missing out on a medal in Tokyo. Aly won back-to-back world titles in the K1 1000 in 2022 and 2023.

Since 2018, Aly has also worked hard as part of the crew at Durack Fire and Rescue Station.

“My highlights at work are the little moments – the Christmas days that we come in with family and have cook-ups for lunch with a waterpark in the yard,” Aly said.

“Those moments of joy bring everyone closer together. Just being at the station with this crew is a highlight for me. They’re the best.”

Aly said firefighting ran in her family.

“My auntie and uncle are with Fire and Rescue NSW, so growing up I heard stories about their careers and always found it interesting. Surf lifesaving also ingrained in me the drive to help people on their toughest day.

“When I started the firefighter recruit course, everything was brand new, so I found the theory a bit of a challenge. Putting all those ideas and concepts into practice was really helpful.”

Aly went on to finish as Dux of her course.

“My biggest value is teamwork at the station and in kayaking. It’s the foundation of everything I do and I wouldn’t have it any other way.

“When you go to a job with your crew, you know how everyone works and what’s expected of you and it makes things run smoother.

“When you’re paddling in a K3 with four other people trying to do everything in perfect unison, it’s like poetry in motion. When you’re hurting in the last half of the race, you know you’re hurting as much as everyone else, but you just have to do it together. You can’t paddle the boat by yourself.”

Her crew has rallied behind her as she juggles work and training in the leadup to the Olympics.

“I’m grateful for being able to apply for leave when I need it for international travel and competitions, as opposed to being on the rotating leave roster,” she said.

“I get on the water at about 4.15am to train before my day shift at 7am. I’m lucky we usually get to do a gym session at the station during the day. I also do another training session in the afternoon.

“When I’m on night shift, I train early in the afternoon, head to the station at 5pm and then do a mid-morning weight session. If I’m not at the station I’m generally at our training facility.

“My Station Officer Andy Crane encouraged me to take more time off before the Olympics. His support gave me the confidence to take a step back. I would have tried to do both otherwise, which would have been too hard.

“I appreciate the other firefighters I reach out to for the occasional shift swap who are always more than happy to help. Just the fact that people are behind me doing this outside of work is really awesome and I just hope I can do everyone proud.”





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