

RESPONSE

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE QUEENSLAND FIRE DEPARTMENT

APRIL 2025



PREPARED FOR ANYTHING
Responding to Tropical Cyclone Alfred

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Queensland Fire and Rescue Service swiftwater firefighters wading through floodwaters west of Ingham. Photo by Raymond Wedmaier.

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Address: Response magazine, Media, Communications and Online Branch, Queensland Fire Department, GPO Box 1425, Brisbane, QLD, 4001
Editor: Jarryd Luke
 Phone: 07 3635 3314
 Email: Magazine.Editor@fire.qld.gov.au
Advertising: Martyn Hewett
 Email: mkhewett@bigpond.com
Graphic Design: Dexart Graphic Design
 Email: dexartgraphicdesign@gmail.com

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FOREWORDS



STEVE SMITH AFSM
Commissioner
QUEENSLAND FIRE DEPARTMENT

With severe weather lashing Queensland recently, our people have been working hard to help communities prepare, respond and recover.

In February, QFD personnel worked with communities in North Queensland after they were hit with major floods. Swiftwater firefighters rescued 60 people and our people also helped with resupply, crew transport, intelligence gathering, damage assessments, taking Triple Zero (000) calls and many other roles behind the scenes.

Thank you to everyone who supported this massive response, including those who deployed from elsewhere in Queensland. What a collective effort it has been. These events truly showcase QFD's capabilities and commitment to the community. See page 12 for a full write-up on the floods.

The North Queensland event was closely followed by Tropical Cyclone (TC) Alfred on the south-east coast. The community isn't used to cyclones but took full advantage of the cyclone's slow progress to prepare as best they could before it made landfall.

QFD pre-deployed personnel, equipment and vehicles across the areas TC Alfred was predicted to affect.

Fortunately the cyclone weakened by the time it crossed the coast but the response was still a huge effort, with more than 1300 incidents.

Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) pilots provided an eye in the sky at many of these incidents for the safety of our crews and community members.

We also used our new Swiftwater Predictive Capability for the first time. A new software platform provided data to help us identify swiftwater hazards, and we embedded swiftwater liaison officers within Fire Communications to help decide what swiftwater resources to send to incidents.

The trial was very successful and the new capability proved invaluable for providing greater awareness and safety for our crews and the community. You can read interviews with people involved in the response to TC Alfred on page 4.

As I write this, communities are starting their journey of recovery after record-breaking floods swept through western Queensland, causing flooding on a scale that is hard to imagine.

The cost to rural and remote communities will be huge and recovery will be a long process. Our crews have been out

assisting with washouts and other recovery efforts, which will be documented in the next edition of *Response*.

Our Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ) volunteers and Queensland Fire and Rescue (QFR) auxiliary firefighters were ably supported by staff from both services.

Despite all the rain in Queensland, other parts of Australia were still battling fires. In February, QFD crews deployed to Victoria to fight fires in the Grampians and to Western Australia to support deployment management. QFD air observers and air attack supervisors travelled to Tasmania to help fight three large fires that threatened World Heritage Listed environments such as Cradle Mountain.

Thank you to the QFD personnel who put their hands up to help. Read more about the Tasmanian deployment on page 17.

Training is the backbone of our operational response and in February and early May we held RFSQ training symposiums for volunteers to develop skills and exchange ideas.

RFSQ volunteers will also have the chance to strengthen connections and discuss the future of volunteering with QFD at the upcoming RFSQ Volunteer Summit.

Queenslanders have already been through a lot this year and I want to thank everyone who has supported communities to stay strong and resilient.

BATTEN DOWN THE HATCHES

Tropical Cyclone (TC) Alfred was the first cyclone to cross Queensland's south-east coast in 50 years, but the community and QFD were more than prepared.

Erratic and unpredictable, TC Alfred built up to a category 4 early on but weakened to a tropical low by the time it made landfall on 8 March, significantly later than predicted.

It brought strong winds, heavy rain and flash flooding to densely populated areas as far north as Hervey Bay and down to northern New South Wales.

QFD pre-deployed personnel, equipment and specialist vehicles to support communities, with more than 300 crews and 140 Queensland Fire and Rescue (QFR) swiftwater rescue firefighters along the south-east coast.

Fire and Rescue crews responded to more than 1300 incidents, rescuing 76 people and evacuating 88. Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ) volunteers helped with cleanup and recovery, and QFR firefighters completed more than 4300 damage assessments.

Many staff and volunteers outside of south-east Queensland were deployed to assist, including from far north Queensland, which experienced its own flooding event earlier this year.

Tamborine Mountain pulls together

First Officer Sam Webster from Tamborine Mountain Rural Fire Brigade said his community was still feeling the emotional impact from the powerful storm that struck on Christmas night in 2023.

"Tamborine Mountain copped it pretty hard and lost power for two weeks," Sam said. "When word of a cyclone made the news, it amped up the community and got them nervous because the trauma of Christmas was still fresh."



QFD prepositioned equipment and personnel before TC Alfred made landfall.



Commissioner Steve Smith visited ICCs in Brisbane and Beenleigh as well as the State Deployment Centre in Morningside to discuss expected operations.



RFSQ crews assisted the community with sandbagging.

"Lots of people did their best to prepare, but they were worried about facing the same thing they'd just been through."

"We were definitely more affected by wind than rain. We had some minor localised flooding but there was much more wind damage, with several trees falling on powerlines across the mountain."

"The cyclone wasn't as destructive as the Christmas storm but it was more widespread and we lost power for about eight days."

Tamborine Mountain's roads tend to get cut off during severe weather events, so the brigade pre-positioned their appliances across the mountain.

"It meant we didn't need to find a way to get every person to the station and then spread out. Members only had to get to their closest truck and start working from there. We also preplanned comms and check-in times with radios in the event we lost mobile phones or internet."

"In a situation like this, it's always hard for everyone to figure out where the community needs help, so intelligence gathering was our first step."



Fallen trees caused major damage in Currumbin Valley.

“We drove every single street and mapped out the mountain top to bottom, reporting any damage to the Incident Control Centres (ICC) at Beenleigh and Beaudesert.

“We worked extremely closely with Tamborine Fire and Rescue Station, an auxiliary station co-located with our brigade. From Saturday morning, for two or three days solid, we worked as one team to collect impact notes, open roads and clear them of debris to restore access to elderly and vulnerable people. When the community needs us we work as one team – red and yellow.”

Sam’s brigade calls themselves the Dragons because “sometimes you need to fight fire with fire.

“I don’t remember where the name came from but it’s a fun little thing we’ve adopted. Our team culture is at the forefront of what we do. Training and operations happen more naturally when the team are friends and care about each other.

“Several of our volunteers lost power or had other issues at their own properties, but they’re very selfless and chose to help the community before they helped themselves.

“We had a brigade debrief and the team recognised a lot of areas we did well in and some areas where we can do better. They continually want to push the bar of how professional they can be and find more ways they can assist the community.

“Our teamwork is core to that. We have a beautiful team of volunteers and I’m humbled to be their leader. The Christmas storm really galvanised our team and the cyclone was a chance to put everything we learnt into action.”

New swiftwater capability pays off

Station Officer Marc O’Brien said the cyclone had wide-ranging effects in Greater Brisbane Region (GBR), particularly heavy rain and flash flooding.

“We don’t normally see such strong winds in south-east Queensland, from Hervey Bay out to Toowoomba and down into NSW,” he said.



On 9 March, heavy rain, flooding and strong winds caused significant damage and QFD had more than 300 crews on the ground supporting communities.

Back in 2021 and 2022, Marc helped develop a new Swiftwater Predictive Capability that was used for the first time in a large-scale event during TC Alfred.

“I took up the initiative as part of my role as Technical Rescue Coordinator for Brisbane,” Marc said. “We were tasked with improving QFD’s response to swiftwater incidents and use of swiftwater resources.

“We had to analyse a lot of data. We went back and analysed every swiftwater incident in Brisbane back to the 2010s to work out how it could be done better. We found that a lot of regional councils used rainwater and river gauges for different reasons, so we took those existing systems and adapted them for a completely new use within QFD.

“The data proved to be highly accurate for identifying areas where swiftwater incidents are likely to occur. Our software platform displays that data so we can find the biggest swiftwater hazards and move resources to those areas.

“We saw a need during the 2022 floods, when FireCom needed more support to coordinate specialist swiftwater resources. We decided to embed a swiftwater liaison officer within FireCom to inform the decisions being made about what resources to send.”

During TC Alfred, Marc was among the firefighters who fulfilled this new function in Brisbane FireCom.

“When calls came in to FireCom, they shared the information with us and we determined what resources to send based on the type of incident and what was available,” he said.

“FireCom got an exceptional number of emergency calls – five or 10 times more than usual. Because swiftwater rescue is so dangerous and specialised, the swiftwater liaison officers took the pressure off FireCom by using their intimate knowledge to keep crews and the community safe.

“It’s a brand-new concept but it proved to be an absolutely valuable asset in every aspect. It was really well received by everyone in FireCom and the Regional Fire Control Centre (RFCC) as well as crews on the ground, who said they had the highest level of awareness, safety and oversight of operations they’d ever experienced.

“The most challenging part of the event was the uncertainty associated with the weather. Everyone planned to an appropriate level but then had to maintain that stance for a lot longer than we expected when the predictions didn’t play out.”



“People are always thankful to see emergency services turn up to help, especially when they’re having the worst day of their life. That also goes for the recovery phase, including RFSQ washing out houses and QFR staff doing damage assessments and assisting with logistics. Everyone’s always happy to see us turn up.”

Saving lives with data

Senior Firefighter Jay Canham, from the Intelligence and Predictive Services Unit, has been instrumental in blending data analytics with time-honoured firefighting techniques to improve community safety across Queensland.

Based out of the Brisbane Regional Fire Coordination Centre (RFCC) and FireCom Brisbane for TC Alfred, Jay played a pivotal role in planning and orchestrating swiftwater rescue efforts.

He described how they leveraged the newly developed Swiftwater Predictive Capability to ensure rescue teams were deployed effectively based on real-time environmental data.

“Our goal was straightforward but critical – match the right responders with the right gear to the right location,” Jay said.

The drive to advance their predictive capabilities began in the wake of two fatal swiftwater incidents in early December 2021. In the aftermath, Jay, alongside colleagues Station Officer Marc O’Brien and Senior Firefighter Chris Rankin, started developing the Swiftwater Predictive Capability platform.

“Our analysis pointed to necessary improvements,” Jay said. “We reached out to local councils, identifying existing river



QFR crews conducted many swiftwater rescues during flash flooding in the south-east.

and rainfall tracking systems that could vastly enhance our operational awareness and allow us to be pre-emptive.”

He was inspired by the tutelage of Senior Firefighter Luke Tehan (retired), who became his mentor during ex-TC Debbie in 2017. Amid rapidly rising waters, Luke’s proactive efforts not only averted potential disaster but demonstrated the life-saving impact of proactive risk assessment.

“Luke analysed the risk locations and when the water rose rapidly, he took us to the place of greatest risk and we monitored it,” Jay said. “Luke stopped a motorist from driving through this deep, fast-moving, flooded section of the road. It was a profound moment that underscored the power of proactive intervention.”

Jay said the same proactive spirit was embodied in the Swiftwater Predictive Capability.

“It’s about anticipating risks, not just responding to them,” he said. “We’re elevating our capability to protect the community by predicting and prioritising high-risk areas.”

The intersection of intelligence and predictive services is not just a technical feat – it’s a comprehensive strategy that spans strategic, operational and tactical levels. It equips decision-makers with detailed insights and foresight to optimise the placement of resources not just by region or division/district, but down to localised hazard areas within the community.

“We’re poised to provide exceptional service to the community,” Jay said. “Our confidence in this system is built on its proven effectiveness. This is innovation for the greater good, and it reinforces our commitment to safeguarding lives throughout Queensland.”

Community first

Brett Bain was the RFSQ Operations Officer for Gold Coast Division, coordinating brigade resources for the recovery efforts.

“We had a mixture of impacts across the Gold Coast,” Brett said. “The heavier storm damage was mainly over the southern half and flooding was mainly in the northern portions around Alberton and Jacobs Well.”

Brett said the biggest challenge was operating with limited to no communications.

“We’re so reliant on technology, but there was no mobile phone service, no internet and no Government Wireless Network, and the power backups on Very High Frequency repeaters failed,” he said.

“Having no communications not only hampers operations but escalates anxiety and frustrations in an already emotionally charged and stressful environment.

“It delays the collection of emergency data and feedback, tasking of crews and reporting capabilities up the line. I lost track of how many times I said, ‘Yeah, that’s normal’ to people who hadn’t dealt with this before.”

Brett said the community were grateful when emergency services came to assist.

“Often people just need someone to talk to, explain the circumstances or give advice on the best way to move forward,” he said.



“Of course, those who receive help later than others, often due to being more isolated, are more frustrated and anxious, which is why it’s important for our people to have that level of emotional intelligence to understand that frustration is not necessarily directed at them.

“I’m proud of the way our Gold Coast brigades pull together to assist one another. One of our brigades in particular had a fairly new First Officer and everyone around him came together to provide help and advice.

“Our volunteers always do a tremendous job. Yes, it can be frustrating – there’s the ‘hurry up and wait’ moments, the lack of communication, but at the end of it all, the job gets done.

“Our volunteers help their neighbours, help their community get back on its feet, help their local businesses get back to normal, help restore services, and then go home to sort out their own mess.

“They go out each day not knowing what they’ll face, what time they’ll get fed or what time they’ll get home. They work all day in crappy [weather] conditions, go home to a blacked-out house to have a cold shower and get back up and do it all again the next day, or go to work.

“The dedication of our RFSQ volunteers is always amazing.”

Collaborative spirit

TC Alfred brought unprecedented rainfall to Hervey Bay, with the Bureau of Meteorology recording 261mm of rain on the morning Alfred made landfall.

“The intensity of the downpour was remarkable, but luckily most residents were at home during the worst of the weather,” said Acting Inspector Mark Ferguson.

“Despite extensive damage to homes and businesses, the community demonstrated remarkable resilience. Cleanup efforts started immediately, with crews initiating basement pump-outs by Sunday afternoon.

“Our team conducted over 1300 damage assessments, revealing that about 400 premises were affected.”

As a swiftwater rescue firefighter, Mark was called to the station at about 6am and began responding to incidents with another technician.



As soon as floodwaters receded, RFSQ volunteers were out in force with their SES mates to clear debris.

“The first four hours were particularly intense, with continuous calls for assistance,” he said. “Many incidents were within a 10-kilometre radius, but access was severely restricted due to flooded streets.

“In such cases, we coordinated with FireCom to dispatch additional resources to reach those in need. The team at FireCom Kawana performed exceptionally well, triaging incidents and ensuring the appropriate resources were deployed.

“Their calm and patient communication on the radio was instrumental in maintaining order on the ground.

“A noteworthy incident was at a caravan park where the water levels rose rapidly, surrounding many people in waist-deep water and stranding them in their cabins. In collaboration with the Queensland Police Service (QPS) and local crews, we evacuated up to 20 people to a safer area.”

After completing all the rescues, the team started conducting impact assessments to send back to ICCs and RFCCs.

“The collaboration among all QFD crews was seamless,” Mark said. “On-shift teams from Maryborough and Bundaberg responded to Hervey Bay to assist local crews, and additional swiftwater rescue crews from Gympie and the Sunshine Coast helped with the sheer volume of rescues.

“Auxiliary firefighters from Hervey Bay, Craginsh and Maryborough further enhanced our response. Under the guidance of FireCom, all crews united to prioritise the safety of the community.

“The response to TC Alfred highlighted the dedication and professionalism of our personnel. The collaborative spirit and commitment to community safety are a testament to the capabilities of QFD and our partners.”

A huge task

Station Officer Paul Dunn from Nerang Fire and Rescue Station is an experienced swiftwater rescue firefighter who worked in the Beenleigh ICC, coordinating swiftwater crews and damage assessments.

“In our region, the main impact was the threat of the cyclone and the preparations,” Paul said. “The fact Alfred took so long to cross the coast allowed extra prep time for us and the community, which decreased the cyclone’s impact.”

“There was a lot of preparation and we had a lot of resources – at the peak period we had about 21 extra appliances with about 70 personnel available to respond, over and above the usual trucks on the road.

“There was a fair bit of concern in the community about the threat, partly because of the infrequency of cyclones in this area and people not really having experienced them before.

“Alfred was predicted to cause a significant storm surge and flooding, but QFD responded accordingly and had sufficient resources out in the community to help put people’s minds at ease.”

Paul was part of a Technical Rescue Coordination Cell, a slightly different concept to the standard way that ICCs and Incident Management Teams run.

“We had a dedicated technical rescue team embedded in the ICC and our role was to manage the technical rescue response for swiftwater,” he said.

“Day to day, we coordinated and managed personnel movements, ensuring we had people available for those extra trucks every shift and deciding where those trucks were placed around the region.

“Southern Region is quite extensive – our response area in our division went from Coolangatta out to the base of the range at Toowoomba and up north to Esk.

“The sheer size of the response to Alfred and the extent of resources and coordination required was a massive team effort.

“The crews did a lot of rescues and evacuations and they reported that their presence in the community was extremely well received.



Drone pilots provided a birds-eye view to help keep crews and the community safe.

The ICC got reports from Local Disaster Management Groups and local councils that they were extremely happy with our response.”

Crews completed about 1800 damage assessments in three or four days.

“The challenge was the sporadic nature of where the damage assessments were,” Paul said. “Generally in a flood you go street by street and you can complete many damage assessments in a day. But because the damage was so sparse, it was randomised across the whole region and we had crews conducting them from the Toowoomba ranges up to Esk and down to Coolangatta.

“It was a very big task over a wide area but the numbers could have been a lot worse.”

This was the first time technical rescue used a standard call sign convention for swiftwater rescue teams. While fire trucks have standardised call signs such as ‘6-39-Alpha’, swiftwater rescue teams use multi-use vehicles or senior officer vehicles with random call signs.

Swiftwater rescue callsigns were recently incorporated in ESCAD, allowing FireCom to assign a dedicated callsign.

“We gave swiftwater rescue teams call signs from ESCAD and they kept that with them the whole time, even if they moved to another region,” Paul said.

“Those call signs allowed people to know exactly what kind of crew was coming to assist and what their capability was, such as whether they had a motorised rescue craft.

“It provided a safer environment for our people in the field and a better response to the community. That was an improvement in the way we do business.”

A moving threat

Station Officer Trevor Trembath worked in the Brisbane RFCC as the Operations Officer.

“The ample warning in the leadup to the event, with things closing down and no one on the roads, mitigated a lot of incidents,” Trevor said. “Of course, there was still a significant cleanup and impact to those who lost power.



Swiftwater firefighters evacuated five puppies and their owners who were stranded by floodwaters in Bundamba.

“Part of my role was resourcing the event and making sure we were operationally prepared and had an operational strategy for GBR. I managed resources from Gympie down to the Gold Coast and requested additional resources from other regions. I had to establish good communication with other regions because, depending on where the cyclone went, we needed to be mobilised and flexible.

“It was a very difficult event to predict. The predictions evolved every time we had a weather brief, which showed the importance of a mobile taskforce capable of crossing regional boundaries.

“At one point we were looking to deploy resources to NSW but then we pushed them further west to Dalby because of flooding concerns out there.”

Trevor agreed with Marc and Jay that the Swiftwater Predictive Capability significantly improved the way resources were allocated to incidents.

“Some of the things we trialled during Alfred were very successful in terms of crew accountability and resource placement, and we can carry them over to any severe weather event moving forward,” he said.

“Across the board we improved communications and our oversight of crews to make it a safer working environment. We were very well resourced, but there were still some things we will build on and improve for next time.”

Editor's note

At time of writing, record-breaking rain impacted central and south-west Queensland, bringing severe flooding and taking a huge toll on rural and remote communities, properties, livestock and wildlife.

QFR swiftwater rescue firefighters and incident management staff assisted communities, conducting several rescues and evacuations over a large area. QFR and RFSQ crews supported washouts and other community recovery efforts. A full story on these floods will be included in the next edition of *Response*.



Flooding in Cluden and Hyde Park.



QFR swiftwater firefighters had just returned from south-east Queensland when they were deployed to Ingham to assist with another flooding event.



QFR swiftwater firefighters were pre-deployed to Ingham, Cardwell and Tully.

SUPPORT IS HERE

Have recent disasters affected you? You can find a range of support through the Fire and Emergency Services Support Network (FESSN).

Many QFD members have been involved in prolonged operations and it's not uncommon to experience physical or emotional reactions, from shock and fear to hypervigilance or irritability.

Some people may experience appetite changes, sleep problems, frequent thoughts about the event or difficulty making decisions.

Disaster mental health support

QFD members can take advantage of mental health support before, during and after disasters and deployments.

FESSN will tailor the support to your needs, ranging from phone check-ins, visits to impacted areas, group information sessions, presence at staging areas and so on.

Disaster support resources are available at fire.qld.gov.au/about-us/supporting-our-people/resources.

Critical incident services

The nature of emergency work can expose QFD members to potentially traumatic events.

FESSN co-ordinates the Critical Incident Response Team to support people directly or indirectly exposed to a critical incident.

The Incident Controller and/or Senior Officer is responsible for activating support services for any incident that could be considered traumatic.



Supporting teams through critical incidents involves preventing unnecessary exposure where possible, preparing your team, responding supportively and remaining engaged if a team member is struggling.

Talking to supervisors or crewmates is the most used mental health and wellbeing support for Australian first responders and is also rated as one of the most effective.

Operational leaders and line managers have an ongoing duty of care to monitor, provide support and check in on their teams before, during and after critical incidents. This is separate from the support a PSO provides and will often occur simultaneously.

Counselling

All QFD staff, volunteers and their immediate family can access confidential and professional counselling through the FESSN network of external counsellors.

The counsellors are experienced in supporting emergency services and can provide at least four free sessions each year, which can be extended when required.

If you need assistance outside business hours, you can contact the free confidential phone counselling service on 1800 805 980 (calls returned within two hours).

Peer support

Looking after each other is a longstanding tradition within emergency services. About 150 Peer Support Officers (PSOs) across the state volunteer to support colleagues through work or personal challenges.

PSOs can provide confidential and informal assistance and connect you with counsellors or other services if needed.

Training, education and resources

FESSN can provide highly experienced facilitators to deliver training on a range of mental health topics, such as disaster mental health awareness, self-care, stress management, communication skills and psychological first aid. Training can be requested via FESSN@qfes.qld.gov.au.

Regional mental health services

FESSN has Regional Mental Health Managers working in regional hubs across the state who can provide mental health support including station or brigade visits, mental health consultations, education and resources, wellbeing check-ins and leadership support. They can also co-ordinate support for critical incidents and disasters.

You can access all the above support services at fire.qld.gov.au/about-us/supporting-our-people.

WATER BOMBING IN THE TASMANIAN WILDERNESS

While rain dominated the headlines in Queensland, fires raged down south and a small team of QFD air operations task specialists travelled to Tasmania to help out.

February was a busy time for interstate operations, with QFD crews also deploying to Victoria to fight fires in the Grampians and to Western Australia to support deployment management.

On Tasmania's west coast, Air Observer Chris Thompson and Air Attack Supervisors Ben Sutherland and Jeff King helped fight three large fires that threatened World Heritage Listed environments such as Cradle Mountain.

"Tasmania lodged a request through the National Resource Sharing Centre for the assistance of two additional air attack supervisors," Jeff said.

"Our State Air Operations Unit received the request and sent the call out to all QFD air attack supervisors for availability.

"I flew to Brisbane from Rockhampton and then to Launceston, where I stayed overnight. Early the next morning we were transported via helicopter to Zeehan on the west coast, where we were briefed on the current fire situations and allocated to our respective fires."

Jeff was allocated to two major fires and one smaller fire north and northeast of Zeehan.

"The main fire was the Yellowband fire, which covered about 80,000 hectares in Tasmania's true wilderness areas. The Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service wanted

to protect three stands of 3000-year-old Huon pine trees near the fire.

"The second fire was the Mount Donaldson fire, which covered about 35,000 hectares west of the Yellowband fire.

"On a typical day we were at the airbase around 8am for an 8.30 departure to the fire grounds to conduct water bombing and mapping, flying on average 9 to 11 hours per day.

"There was one moment when the Yellowband fire was making a run to the northeast, which placed one of the stands of Huon pine directly in its path. We took immediate action with water-bombing aircraft to steer the fire around the pines and saved them from any damage.

"The Mount Donaldson fire made a significant run to the southwest and

crossed the Pieman River where it meets the west coast, threatening a small settlement of about 20 houses. Once again, we managed to steer the fire around the settlement with no loss of structures."

The team worked closely with the Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service, Tasmania Fire Service, Tasmania SES and aviation contractors.

"These types of incidents show there is great interoperability between services from all states of Australia," said Jeff. "We always work closely with interstate agencies in times of need and support each other when required.

"It shows the importance of training to a national standard across all disciplines to enable a safe inter-agency integration on major incidents."



NQ STANDS STRONG

QFD personnel worked around the clock to support communities in North Queensland during February's major floods.

When Townsville and surrounding areas were hit with record-breaking rain, hundreds of roads were cut off, thousands of homes flooded and two lives lost.

QFD members responded to more than 700 incidents over several weeks, rescuing about 60 people from life-threatening situations.

Everyone pitched in where needed, from resupplying locals and transporting crews to gathering intelligence, conducting damage assessments and answering Triple Zero (000) calls. At the peak of the floods, more than 500 QFD members from across the state were supporting the community.

Doing our best work

Chief Superintendent Phil Faint was the Regional Fire Control Centre (RFCC) Coordinator for most of the event.

"The community had been through significant flooding in the last few years, which saw thousands without homes in Townsville and surrounding areas," Phil said.

"The communities at risk were very anxious homes would be destroyed and lives turned upside-down once again, so they were very attentive to warnings and advice from councils and local agencies such as QFD.

"As RFCC Coordinator, I regularly engaged with the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM), local stakeholders and key service providers to ensure we had a clear and accurate understanding of the possible impacts.

"We had the planning in place to strategically respond to emergency situations regardless of location. This also involved logistics management to grow our response to suit the event by leaning on our department's resources from across the state.

"We supported those in the field through our structured command and control while ensuring QFD's response was integrated with the much larger team of responders and providers to all North Queenslanders.

"At the same time we made sure our people were safe and could go home knowing their professional skills had helped save lives and helped people start getting back on their feet."

As part of a trial, several swiftwater rescue technicians were issued with body cameras to record their work during rescues and evacuations.

"The footage captured everyone's attention and highlighted the risk of these activities, as well as the skills needed to conduct a rescue in swiftwater," Phil said.



Flash flooding between Innisfail and Bowen.



QFD's drone teams provided situational awareness and intelligence in areas such as Townsville, Bowen, Airlie Beach and Eungella.





A crew of 20 QFR swiftwater firefighters touched down in Townsville to assist with recovery efforts.

“This was extremely helpful in raising the profile of Queensland Fire and Rescue (QFR) and the services we provide. I would suggest this be rolled out across the state.”

Phil said a key challenge was focusing on the common picture communicated so all were working toward the same achievements.

“This is difficult in a high-energy, fast-paced environment, while not losing track of the impacts to our people either by fatigue and stressors or direct impact to their families, home and property by the event itself.

“The other challenge was my personal isolation from my own home where my wife was managing our rural property. The floods affected us heavily with no access in or out for almost one week, but resilience kept things managed well and good communications kept us supporting each other, like many hundreds of others who were stranded.

“We worked with every agency you could think of, along with many local government councils that were impacted by the event across about 700 kilometres of coastline and about 450 kilometres inland.

“This was the result of good relationships built over time. There were moments where services were strained and QFD stood in and assisted to ensure our communities received the best possible support.

“Events like this are where our people shine. All our staff and volunteers come ready to work and are ready to give until they can’t.

“Many community members thanked me personally for the work we were all doing, which was very humbling and a little embarrassing, but made me proud of our work. It showed the high importance our community places on our people.

“In an emergency we do our best work and all come together despite differences in opinions, skill levels, knowledge or experience – uniformed, non-uniformed, paid and unpaid. Everyone has a place and jumps straight to it. Our community hopefully understands this and appreciates our people as they are what makes it work and are what I’m most proud of.”

Ready to respond

Overseeing swiftwater rescue operations in Townsville was Technical Rescue Coordinator Kris Maguire.

“A tropical low with a lot of rain just sat over the top of us for quite some time,” Kris said. “We have these weather events yearly, but they’re still quite significant and have an impact on communities.

“The impact was very significant in Ingham, but it ranged from the top of Cairns all the way down to Airlie Beach and Mackay. Ingham was fully inundated and there was a lot of flash flooding and river rising in the Burdekin catchment areas right through to Ayr.”

In the lead-up to the event, QFD strategically positioned crews in locations that were expected to flood.

“We pre-deployed people and resources into those locations, where they familiarised themselves with the area,” Kris said.

“In Townsville, we had about 40 specialised swiftwater technicians who performed a dozen or so rescues and evacuations, including people who’d driven through floodwater or needed to be evacuated from inundated homes.

“Our swiftwater crews did a fantastic effort, working long hours, always ready to respond. They worked anything up to seven days straight, away from their families in tough conditions.”



QFR swiftwater firefighters were strategically positioned and prepared to respond.



QFD transported supplies and specialised equipment to flood-affected communities.

Through the bucketing rain

Swiftwater rescue technician Matt Dillon was deployed from Brisbane to Charters Towers, where he led a crew that conducted several rescues.

“Everyone said they’d never seen rain like that in Charters Towers before,” Matt said. “The Burdekin River has come up a lot over previous years, but that much rain in a short time, with small creeks turning into rivers, caught a lot of people by surprise.

“It’s a mining town with a rich heritage, so the community is pretty resilient and strong-minded. There was no panic buying and people seemed to think, ‘It is what it is, we’ll deal with it’.”

Matt’s crew was the only swiftwater team in Charters Towers, where they worked for seven days.

“To make sure we had a variety of skillsets, our crew had two technicians from Ipswich, one from Toowoomba and one from the Gold Coast,” he said.

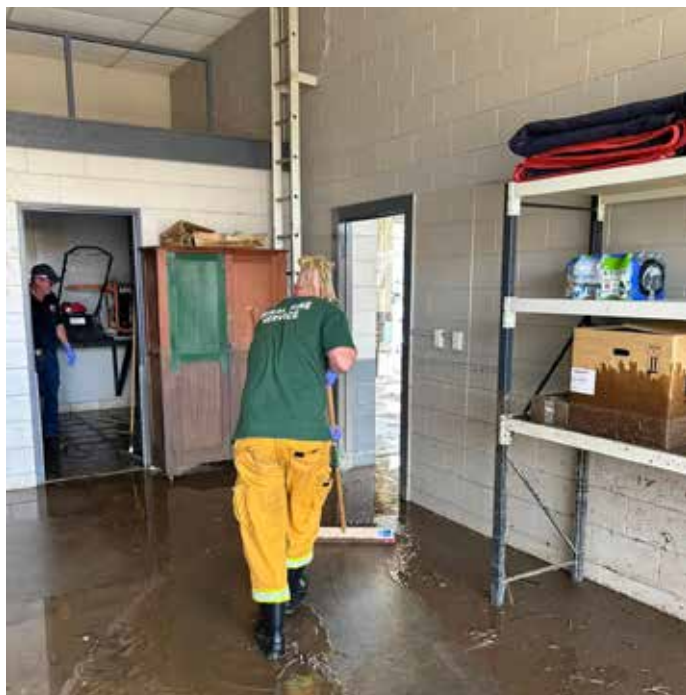
“We did more than 20 rescues and evacuations, day and night. We evacuated people who were cut off or had medical conditions, and we conducted two food and water drops with our motorised craft.”

Matt said one of the major challenges was getting calls to incidents where the crew couldn’t access the person due to the distance or river crossings.

“Queensland is huge and we literally can’t be everywhere at once,” he said. “Saying ‘No, we can’t be there’ is the hardest call I’ve had to make. We did everything we could before we said no.

“We’d get our boat across a river crossing and then knock on people’s doors to see if they could tow us across several kilometres of dry land to the next river crossing. We’d be doorknocking at 1am to ask for help while it was bucketing rain and wind.

“For one rescue we got to a section where the next river crossing was 17 kilometres away and there were another four river crossings after that and no one lived between them, so we



RFSQ crews washed out properties inundated by floodwater.



Crews remained on the ground while rain continued across North Queensland.



QFR firefighters arrived in Charters Towers to assist with the ongoing flood response.

couldn’t physically get the boat there. Fortunately those calls we couldn’t make it to turned out ok.”

Matt recalled one rescue where a man was stuck on the roof of his ute in a raging river about 100 metres from the shore.

“We responded as the closest motorised swiftwater team, along with a senior firefighter from the area who gave us local knowledge and a drone pilot for crew safety,” Matt said.

“I called the man and told him to use low power mode on his phone and exit all apps to save battery. I asked him to send me some photos so I could understand the situation, what the scene looked like and how fast the water was moving.

“He was about 200 kilometres south of Charters Towers so we had almost two hours of travel ahead of us. The water was rising so FireCom, in liaison with North Queensland Incident Control Centre (ICC), responded a helicopter with a motorised capability as a backup. I contacted the casualty every 30 minutes to check on water height and make sure he was ok.

“The helicopter was called off due to bad weather so it was only us responding. We arrived about 5pm. The man sent me a phone ping of his location and we had to traverse a creek that had turned into a river.

“There was just enough water on the other side that we could drag our craft a few hundred metres to the river he was caught in.

“The pilot flew the drone so we could have eyes in the sky in case anything happened to the casualty or one of us fell in the water.

“We launched our craft, went upstream of the ute and made verbal contact with the casualty. We asked him to sit down and

stay in the middle of the roof and then we put a life vest on him and got him in our craft.

“We transported him to the other side of the river where the Queensland Police Service were waiting – they’d made arrangement for him that night.

“I asked him what happened and he said he didn’t think the water would be that deep. At every rescue we make, people say they won’t drive into floodwater again, but we shouldn’t get to the point where they have to say that.”

Part of the reason the rescue was so successful was because it mirrored a training scenario that motorised rescue craft operators complete in Tasmania.

“We complete four weeks of intense training, including a week on the River Derwent, which has real hazard features and strong water flow,” Matt said. “This rescue was an exact scenario we use in that training.

“The training has literally saved people’s lives. It’s great to have that level of training within QFD to maintain high standards and keep us primed and ready to respond on Queensland’s worst days.”

Answering the call

FireCom Officer Monique Di Prima deployed from Townsville FireCom to the Forward Control Point in Ingham to provide localised communications support.

“I was the primary point of contact, providing critical information to Firecom Townsville, operational crews on the ground, the Local Disaster Management Group and RFCC,” Monique said.

“Firecom received a high volume of calls from the public. Due to the extended power outage in Ingham, many residents lost

contact with their loved ones, leading to an influx of calls from distressed family members seeking information and welfare checks.

“While these calls can be challenging, Firecom Townsville did an outstanding job providing reassurance and giving the community the support they needed.

“On a typical day, I compiled a breakdown of resource requirements for sustaining response efforts. This included assessing current capabilities, identifying gaps and forecasting future needs based on real-time data collected from the field. This informed decisions that ensured continuity of emergency operations to meet the evolving needs of affected communities.

“The deployment to Ingham was particularly challenging for me, as it is my hometown. Witnessing the extent of the damage and the impact on the community was deeply emotional. My family was among those affected by the floods, which made the experience even more personal and profound.

“One FireCom request that stood out was from a caller asking to be evacuated from their home and dropped off at the local pub – a reminder that not every call was life-threatening!

“A highlight of the deployment was meeting the dedicated crews who travelled from across the state to assist. Their commitment and teamwork were truly inspiring and made me proud to be a part of the QFD family.”



QFD set up flexible habitats in Ingham and Townsville.



Matt Dillon and his crew rescued a man stranded in fast-flowing water.



FireCom answered thousands of calls for help during the floods.



QFD personnel faced a confronting aftermath to the flooding.



Flooding in the town of Giru in the Burdekin.

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FIREFIGHTER HONoured FOR SAVING A LIFE

Station Officer Luke Giudicatti received one of Australia's highest awards for bravery after saving a woman's life while off-duty.

Luke, who was one of only five people awarded the Bravery Medal this year, was on holiday with his wife at Pacific Hotel Cairns in November 2019 when he saw a young woman threatening to jump off her balcony.

"I was staying on the sixth floor and I heard a commotion coming from the pool below at about 6.15pm. I walked onto the balcony to see people yelling at a young woman standing on the outside of her balcony's handrail on the seventh floor.

"I immediately rang Triple Zero (000) to request QFD and the Queensland Police Service (QPS) to attend.

"The woman slipped off the seventh floor, landed on her back on the handrail of the sixth floor and bounced onto the balcony. She struggled to her feet and climbed over the handrail again.

"I was three rooms away and I jumped across several balconies to reach her. I managed to grab her and wrestle her back onto the balcony."

Luke was helped by a good Samaritan who climbed up from the balcony below.

"Once safe she was quite fatigued and overwhelmed," Luke said. "Not long after, QPS arrived and took over.

"My firefighter training definitely helped with making decisions quickly and not overthinking the situation. I didn't give it much

further thought to be honest. We went out to tea as planned and then came home.

"The award was very humbling and the nomination, although unexpected, was much appreciated."

Based at Ingham Fire and Rescue Station, Luke first joined QFD in 2007.

"I was fairly young at the time and looking for an exciting job where I could keep fit and help people," he said.

"I recently completed the Officer Development Program, which was very demanding yet rewarding. I feel like it's the hardest thing I've had to do in my career but I'm a better operator for it."



Support is available

Confidential counselling services are available to all volunteers, staff and immediate family members. If you feel you could benefit from support, go to fire.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).





From left to right: Peter Sneath, Ben Brown-Graham, Maverick Robbins and Brett Rathbone. Photo by Josh Thies (LifeFlight).

QFD AND LIFEFLIGHT JOIN FORCES ON MIRACLE RESCUE

Three firefighters who helped rescue a paraglider stranded on a cliff face at Rainbow Beach have been praised by the LifeFlight crew who winched him to safety.

Rainbow Beach auxiliary firefighter Ben Brown-Graham and Tin Can Bay firefighters Peter Sneath and Brett Rathbone scampered 80 metres down a 100-metre sand cliff in the dark last October.

The trio then used a rope to secure Gold Coast university student Maverick Robbins so they could pull him up from the unstable, sandy ledge he was slumped over.

At one point, Brett even dug out a 15-metre pathway with his hands so the three firefighters and three LifeFlight crew could safely carry Maverick to the winch site.

Reaching the casualty

A 100-metre rope thrown into QFD's vehicle at the last minute was crucial to the mission's success.

"We threw in some extra equipment at the station just quickly before we left," Ben said. "One of the things we threw in was a 100-metre rope, which proved integral to getting down to Maverick."

"First, we tied the rope to a tree at the top of the cliff and shimmied down. Maverick was stuck halfway on a ridgeline. We needed to get him up over that ridge, so we cut off the last 10 metres of the rope and tied it onto the harness he already had on from his parasail."

"We were able to brace him from there, and we basically tug-of-war-ed him up the cliff."

"This was my first major call with a LifeFlight helicopter and it was really impressive to see them come in with their assets and drop into this really remote, difficult location so quickly and easily."

"The crew were very professional and we basically supported them as they packaged him up and got him out of there, and he was in Sunshine Coast Hospital before we'd even got back to the station."

"If LifeFlight weren't there, it would have been a really arduous recovery and probably would have taken most of the night. And it wouldn't have been very

comfortable for him. There could have been more damage done as we bumped him over rocks, ledges and shrubs to get him back up to the ridgeline."

"Seeing LifeFlight for the first time up close was really impressive. We all know they're there. You see them fly over occasionally, but to see what they do and how professional they are up close, it gives you an extra appreciation and makes you thankful those guys and those assets are there if you need them."

"There was a great collaboration between us and LifeFlight. They were so professional and I like to think they feel the same way about us."

Peter agreed the LifeFlight crew were amazing.

"Winching down would have been a major challenge for them because Maverick was hanging over a slope on a sand cliff," Peter said.

"The LifeFlight crew were on their bellies over the edge of the sand, giving him drugs and helping him out as best they could. It was amazing to watch.

"They were unbelievable. It would have been a nightmare for us to have to stabilise him and get him up without doing more damage to him. He came out of it fantastically because of their work."

Forging a path

When it was time to winch Maverick out, Brett got down on his knees and used his hands to dig away a 15-metre-long pathway so all six rescuers could safely carry Maverick to the flattened winch site.

"Basically, I had no tools," Brett said. "I had to get on my hands and knees and just grab the sand, push it down and compact it.

"Without LifeFlight the rescue most probably wouldn't have been possible. Seeing them come in and drop the rope down was a relief. We got halfway back up and watched them winch Maverick all the way up. It was pretty spectacular."

LifeFlight Rescue Crew Officer Callum Good worked alongside Brett.

"Having the extra set of hands was great and to be able to ask the firefighters, 'Hey, can you do this?' and they did it," Callum said.

"Some of the firefighters were just head down, feet and hands in the sand, and they just cleared it out.

"They were unreal. Without them, it would have taken a lot more time and would have fatigued us more."



The Rainbow Beach cliff Maverick crashed into. Photo by Josh Thies (LifeFlight).

Exceptional teamwork

LifeFlight Critical Care Doctor Carly Silvester said the three firefighters played a pivotal role in Maverick's rescue.

"This mission was such a good example of how LifeFlight and the firefighters work together," Dr Silvester said.

"They bring decades of experience to situations like that and are very helpful in organising our thoughts into what's possible.

"When we had to extract and lift him, it was just one brief discussion and then their team followed through really quickly and efficiently.

"We had to drag him up and off the cliff and the firefighters were integral in providing that manpower and were really slow and efficient, which is what you want in that situation. There were no sudden movements.

"Then we had to lift him into our basket and walk him back over to an extraction point. All of which is really dangerous for people on a sand cliff, and the firefighters were so great in their communications with everyone, working as a team together.

"We do some training with firefighters here at the Sunshine Coast base, so we do have a good understanding of what they're able to do and what they bring to a situation, and we were really reliant on them providing excellent skills to our team. We really think of them as part of our team."



QAS flight paramedic Santosh Broom reached over to get an IV line into Maverick for pain relief. Photo by Josh Thies (LifeFlight).

Forever grateful

Three months after his crash, Maverick was reunited with his LifeFlight and QFD rescuers and enjoyed his first post-accident paraglide.

Peter said, "Maverick is as fit as a mallee bull. It was good to see there's no permanent injuries. He's going back to flying, so yeah, it all worked out well."

Maverick said he didn't have enough words to thank his rescuers.

"I am so grateful for the firefighters who gave the LifeFlight crew a helping hand and were critical in my rescue," Maverick said.

"They brought critical equipment like the rope they used to pull me up. They collaborated so well with the LifeFlight crew to help me get to a safer situation."

He plans to fulfil a childhood dream and learn how to fly rescue helicopters himself.



Maverick's paragliding mate Vinny Brazier supported Maverick before he was winched into the chopper. Photo by Josh Thies (LifeFlight).



The LifeFlight winch rescue of Maverick was at 200 feet, twice the normal height. Photo by Josh Thies (LifeFlight).

CLOSING THE GAP TOGETHER

This year's Closing the Gap Awards recognised QFD members for helping reduce Indigenous disadvantage through community presentations, internships and cultural burning workshops.

The awards coincide with National Close the Gap Day and acknowledge the ongoing resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in sustaining the world's oldest living cultures.

Amie Taylor

Amie started as an auxiliary firefighter in 2016, inspired by her work alongside the fire department in British Columbia, where she lived before moving to the Sunshine Coast.

"My husband was a volunteer with Squamish Search and Rescue, and I became good friends with a couple of Squamish firefighters, who encouraged me to apply," she said.

"I was an avid rock climber and lover of the outdoors, and I was inspired by the variety in the job of a firefighter and the requirement to adjust to changing environments, to be fit, strong and take on challenges with a positive attitude."

While acting in the Predictive Services Unit, Amie delivered a presentation on K'Gari that aimed at rebuilding trust and communications between departments and the Butchulla people of K'Gari to help rebuild their trust in QFD following tensions from the 2019-20 bushfire.

"The 2019-20 fire left relationships a bit strained and some trust had been broken," she said. "I understood some of what had taken place and saw the opportunity to do something different."

"After the fire, key stakeholders committed to joining a Local Fire Management Group (LFMG) meeting every six months."



Emily McInnes has helped improve bushfire mitigation in collaboration with traditional owners.

"Representatives from many groups including RFSQ, Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, Queensland Police Service, Queensland Ambulance Service, Sealink, local council and Kingfisher Resort come together to discuss their concerns, risks identified in the landscape, projects and ideas with the goal of protecting the island."

"There is a commitment to protecting K'Gari and having everyone at the table. I knew I had to speak to the Butchulla people while respecting their sacred secrets."

Amie's colleague, Fire Behaviour Analyst Russell Stephens Peacock, had firsthand experience of the 2019-20 fire and a passion for K'Gari and its people.

"Russell saw that the Butchulla people's knowledge and wisdom were not sought out during operations," she said. "He witnessed the heartbreak when the Butchulla people were not permitted to welcome crews to the island as they needed to for their people, spirits and beliefs."

"Russell's insights suggested the importance of fostering strong, unified relationships among all areas of the community to ensure we're prepared for future fire events."

"I worked with Russell to finetune my language for the presentation and acknowledge sacred sites. I was nervous because it was an opportunity to say we hear you and respect you to the Butchulla people. I did not want to mess it up."

Amie's presentation acknowledged the Butchulla people's perspectives by navigating sensitivities around cultural knowledge, integrating sacred locations, aligning fire management tactics with cultural respect and referring to K'Gari as 'her'.

"It was rewarding to see the discussion during my presentation and to contribute to the amazing work everyone is doing," she said.

"The biggest outcome I never would have expected was how the presentation was received by the Butchulla representative, who handed me a phone and asked me to put my number in it."

"The Butchulla people invited me and an acting inspector to travel the island with them to conduct fuel hazard assessments."

"For us to be a valued and trusted partner during fires like that, it's important for us to listen to everyone represented in the community."

"The community on K'Gari is complex. By listening, trust grows and the lines of communication open and knowledge and wisdom flow. We can use that knowledge to make the best decisions to protect the community's people, property and environment."

“It has been a privilege to work with the different agencies on K’Gari. They are a unique group of people – passionate, dedicated and professional. I really enjoyed the challenge.”

Emily McInnes

After joining Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ) as a volunteer at age 16, Emily took on the role of First Nations Bushfire Mitigation Officer for the Brisbane Valley District in 2022.

She received a Closing the Gap Award for her work on strengthening bushfire mitigation efforts in collaboration with traditional owners, rangers, brigades and other key partners.

One of her priorities is supporting and coordinating bushfire mitigation activities led by Indigenous communities. She works directly with traditional owners to ensure their fire management techniques are recognised and integrated into broader strategies.

In 2024, she delivered several cultural burning workshops to impart valuable knowledge and bridge gaps between different communities.

This year, she’s helping traditional owner groups within her district navigate the permit-to-light system, and restructuring the Volunteer Community Educator program to make it more contemporary and strategic.

Emily maintains strong connections with grassland field observers and is planning more cultural burning workshops for the future. She is also a dedicated volunteer and spends her spare time training fellow brigade members.

Emily remains dedicated to ensuring cultural fire knowledge is not only preserved but actively applied for the benefit of people and the environment.

“I am speechless and so grateful to receive this award,” Emily said. “I love my role in RFSQ and the team that is around me.”

Strategic Content Services

The Strategic Content Services (SCONS) team supported two interns over the last six years as part of Career Trackers, a national initiative that links First Nations university students with employers for paid, multi-year internships.

The program builds cultural capability and gives First Nations students the real-world skills and experience to secure jobs. Thanks to strong mentorship and coaching from SCONS, interns Robert Wolski and Chris Breen advanced their creative and project management skills in the disaster sector.

Director Shona Cox initiated the team’s work with Career Trackers.

“Janine Taylor from the Workforce Development team helped us connect with students who were aligned to the creative aspects of our work,” Shona said.

“Rob was our initial intern and came to us with an interest in photography and video, but very little experience. He immediately showed technical nous and began to reveal his creative eye. While working with the team he learnt from some experts in the technical craft of storytelling.”

Rob was awarded the 2019 National Project Excellence Award and Shona received the National Manager’s Award for Project Excellence.

“Rob has since launched a highly successful digital creative agency, Half-Tone Digital, and is now a highly successful digital entrepreneur,” Shona said.

Lead Production Manager Brendan Bowen said the team were humbled to receive a Closing the Gap Award.

“We foster an inclusive culture here in the team where everyone has a voice and everyone lends a hand to support each other,” Brendan said.

“We like being able to spread that culture out to the wider organisation and beyond. It was great to see Rob and Chris’s skills and confidence progress over time.

“Chris came from a technical background and helped us migrate online systems in the thick of disaster season. He also worked on social media videos and helped us film one of our larger projects for the year, a counter-terrorism video for the Queensland Police Service.

“His skills progressed to the point where he could setup and operate cameras, mics and livestream broadcast systems by himself – complicated and stressful tasks that he handled incredibly.

“Both Rob and Chris provided a different cultural perspective on the work we did and helped us see things in new ways.

“QFD is part of the community and welcoming community into our culture should be second nature to us. Having people come in from different backgrounds, cultures and experiences changes the way we think, act and do our work.”

Reflecting on his experience, Rob said, “That internship was legitimately pivotal for my career.

“The most valuable thing I took from my time with the team was understanding that you’re able to do pretty much anything if you want to learn it.

“Only a year and a half before working at QFD, I was living in Wadeye, and I had grown up in so many small communities across far north Queensland, the Northern Territory, and northern Western Australia. Going from living there to being able to run a business in Brisbane is still pretty crazy!”



The SCONS team took part in Career Trackers to help Close the Gap.



FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

During recent celebrations for the 50th anniversary of Cleveland Fire and Rescue Station, retired firefighter Don Bertram shared his memories of building the station from the ground up.

Don reflected on how he and a small group of volunteers, starting with nothing, managed to acquire their first vehicles, uniforms, fuel and station.

“Back in 1960 or 61, three of us from the Redland Shire Council got together and decided we needed to help the population with fires,” Don said.

“The Head Mechanic of the shire and my brother Len and I held a meeting and decided we needed to have some vehicles. The only thing available at low cost was an ex-RAAF Blitz from Amberley.

“It was almost donated – we only had to pay a few dollars for the rights to drive it on the road.

“Then the mechanic, Len and I rigged it out, put all the pumps and water tanks on it and eventually got it painted.”

The trio met with the Redland Shire Chairman, who agreed that if they did all the work, the council would supply the fuel.

“So every time we came back from a fire, we got all the fuel we needed,” Don said.

“That went on for about four or five years, and then the mechanic, on a trip to Brisbane to buy parts for the Blitz, visited the Metropolitan Fire Brigade at Kemp Place and asked if they had any second-hand uniforms. So thanks to him, we got uniforms.

“Then it came that there was an old vehicle they didn’t want anymore, so we got that at a very cheap price. It was a 1942 Dodge which just happened to be a proper fire engine, with ladders and hoses and all the other stuff we needed.

“We had to modify it for our situation and put more water in as there was no reticulated water in the Redlands at the time, so we had to carry water with us.

“About eight to 10 years later the whole place was taken over by the South Coast Fire Brigade and they gave us an office in Cleveland, so we used to do auxiliary fire training on a Friday afternoon and night with their wagon until we got used to that. Then they posted a Station Officer, Joe Edwards, here on day work from Southport.”

The firefighters had been operating out of a shed near the centre of Cleveland but their workload increased because they looked after the whole of Redland Shire.

“They decided they’d build the station where it is now,” Don said. “This was all vacant land, part of the cemetery reserve, so the station was the first building on this block.

“Joe instigated measuring it up, getting it all laid out and getting the groundwork done. He and I planted all the trees out the back and eventually we went on shift.

“Joe and I were the first night shift here. A lot of our friends from the council also joined the auxiliary brigade – they knew the region so that’s how we built the crew up from there.”

Cleveland Fire and Rescue Station is now also home to Cleveland Area Command and services the areas of Cleveland, Wellington Point, Birkdale, Alex Hills and Ormiston.



Don Bertram with his wife at the 50th anniversary celebration.

RECOGNISING EXCELLENCE

The Commissioner's Awards for Excellence recognised outstanding achievements by QFD staff and volunteers, with more than 60 nominations received across eight categories.

Glen Bailey – Commissioner's Outstanding Award

Breathing Apparatus (BA) Safety Specialist Glen Bailey was recognised for improving safety in South Eastern Region.

"I was honoured people thought enough of what I did to nominate me and that the Commissioner decided I was deserving of the award," Glen said. "I joined the fire service in 1984 – my father was also a firefighter and it was all I ever wanted to do."

In 1998, Glen established South Eastern Region's first BA HazMat facility at Southport. He developed maintenance protocols and schedules for replacing safety equipment across the region and trialled new equipment.

"I had no previous experience in this area and worked closely with the state BA department at Roma Street to understand all required procedures and protocols," he said. "I was the region's BA HazMat Manager until recently."

"Before my appointment, BA maintenance was carried out by individual commands. I had to inventory all the BA equipment in the commands, establish a service schedule and maintain it."

"For the first few years, I did this on my own. Later there were two of us, and over the years the amount of equipment has grown and so has the BA facility."

Glen continues to advise on best practice and help resolve issues associated with safety equipment.

"It's rewarding to know every piece of operational equipment in the region that I am responsible for is serviced correctly and is ready to use," Glen said.

"The amount and diversity of equipment regional BA managers are responsible for is challenging, because of the range of response requirements."

"I'm proud of what the Southern Region BA HazMat has evolved into. I couldn't have done it without the people at our facility, as well as the other regional BA HazMat managers and QFD state BA HazMat."

Russell Stephens-Peacock – Innovation and Adaption Award

As a Predictive Services Senior Systems Officer and Fire Behaviour Analyst (FBAN), Russell Stephens-Peacock has helped transform fire behaviour analysis and predictive services.

"This award really shines a light on the important work being done by FBANs across the board," Russell said. "I'm proud to represent such a committed and capable group of professionals."

Russell first joined QFD in 2007 in the Training and Emergency Management team, where he worked on evacuation plans and software.

In 2014, he joined the newly formed Predictive Services Unit, integrating advanced weather and predictive tools to improve data-driven decision-making during complex bushfire events.

"I focused on enhancing access, usability and functionality to ensure FBANs had the tools they needed to deliver accurate and timely advice," he said.

"This included integrating Bureau of Meteorology weather grid data into QFD systems and processing bushfire simulation outputs directly into predictive models."

Russell's work extends beyond technology, championing culturally informed adaptation by embedding First Nations knowledge into predictive services.

"My journey with embedding First Nations knowledge began during the K'gari fires, when I had the privilege of working alongside the Butchulla Rangers. It was an eye-opening experience that deepened my understanding of Country and the values that are important to First Nations people during a fire."

"I was approached several times to provide advice on timing and potential fire impacts on culturally significant sites – places with deep spiritual meaning."

"For example, there was concern about fire approaching a sand blow believed to be one of the footprints left by the great goddess K'gari as she walked across the island."

"What struck me most was the connection the Butchulla people have with Country – it's not just land, it's a living story. While I've been privileged to hear some of these stories, they're not mine to share. I encourage everyone to take the time to listen when the opportunity arises."

"This experience has stayed with me, and it's reinforced the importance of ensuring our predictive services reflect and respect the knowledge that has been passed down for thousands of years."



2025 Commissioner's Awards for Excellence

- *Safety Champion*
Andrew Anastasi, WHS Wellness ITD
- *Operational Excellence (Everyday Response)*
Southern Region South Coast Zone Team
- *Outstanding Team or Unit*
Girls' Firefighter Experience Camp Team
 - Highly Commended: RFS Pathways Team
- *Interoperable*
Amie Taylor, State Operations
- *Values*
Sharon Small, Finance, Procurement and Levy
 - Highly Commended: Garth Wilshire, IT
- *Everyday Respect*
Robyn Kirby, People and Culture
- *Innovation and Adaption*
Russell Stephens-Peacock, State Operations
 - Highly Commended: QCESA Tactical Training Unit
- *Commissioner's Outstanding Award*
Glen Bailey, Southern Region QFR



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MAKING CONNECTIONS

Scott Cross has been named the Olga Wilson Peer Support Officer of the Year for his commitment to mental health awareness, particularly during and after emergency incidents.

Scott, who is also an Acting Station Officer and Fire Investigator, was acknowledged during Peer Support Week, when QFD celebrated all the Peer Support Officers (PSO) who volunteer their time to assist colleagues through work or personal challenges.

In 2024, 147 PSOs provided individual support to more than 1200 QFD members, including in response to 773 critical incidents.

Scott is especially dedicated to the wellbeing of his peers in the high-stress environment of emergency response.

“In 2019, my crew had a run of jobs that met the criteria for critical incidents, but we weren’t contacted by a PSO,” Scott said. “I looked into why and found there were only about three Queensland Fire and Rescue staff undertaking the role in Northern Region, so I decided to apply.

“I find it rewarding to assist my peers and colleagues to overcome difficulties in their lives. I’ve met people I never would have and I’ve made friends and had positive impacts on their lives.

“Initially I found it very challenging making phone calls to people I didn’t know. I sometimes still find it difficult to make connections with people, in which case I stress I’m fine if they don’t wish to talk to me.

“I mention other PSOs who may be able to better connect with them and I don’t get offended if they wish to talk to someone else.

“I think a good PSO is somebody who listens more than they talk. They can make meaningful connections with people and are non-judgemental and empathetic. They like to get involved in other activities outside of work, like rec clubs or sporting teams.”

Scott said it was extremely important to advocate for mental health in QFD and the community as a whole.

“One in five Australians between 16 to 85 have experienced a mental health disorder and emergency service workers are twice as likely to, in large part due to the high risk of trauma exposure at work, according to the Black Dog Institute.

“That means we have a one-in-three chance of experiencing a mental health disorder. Considering that, I believe it’s important to break down barriers and any stigma that prevents our staff and volunteers from acknowledging problems and seeking assistance.

“In my opinion we need more PSOs. The more people and different personalities that get involved in the program can only make it better and easier to make good quality connections and assist colleagues.

“If you believe you should have been contacted by a PSO and you haven’t, please reach out and ask why. There’s a chance we’re not aware, and we can’t help if we don’t know.

“If it wasn’t for the other members of the PSO team in Northern Region I would not be the PSO I am. We continue to challenge and learn from each other through our experiences. I’d also like to acknowledge my family who are more understanding than they should be.”

With a large and diverse area, QFD is in need of more specially trained PSOs. Find out more about the role at fire.qld.gov.au/about-us/supporting-our-people/peer-support.

The next PSO course will be delivered in Brisbane from 14 to 19 September 2025. If you’re interested in becoming a PSO, please email FESSN@qfes.qld.gov.au.



PSO award winners

Six PSOs from across the state were acknowledged for their outstanding service in supporting their colleagues:

- Scott Cross, Senior Firefighter - Kirwan
- Tristan Giles, Station Officer - Kirwan
- Ashley Bawden, Senior Firefighter and Auxiliary Firefighter - Hendra Station
- Leisa Wagstaff, Rural Firefighter - Gowrie Little Plains Brigade
- Mellissa Webb, Rural Fire Support Officer - Greater Brisbane Region
- Jodie Krammer, FireCom Officer - Greater Brisbane Region



MORANBAH'S CADET PROGRAM AT FULL CAPACITY

A new cadet program in Moranbah is a raging success.

Auxiliary firefighters Chris McMaster and Timothy Davis didn't expect the Emergency Services Cadets program to have such an impact in their community.

Chris said one of the most important aspects of the free program – for children aged 12 to 17 – was teaching the next generation about the important role volunteers play in regional communities.

"We have a lot of parents working 70 hours on different volunteer rosters, so we thought these kids could use a different perspective and guidance outside of the school system," Chris said.

"Whatever career pathway they take, they might be required to move out to rural communities that rely on volunteers to step up. So even if they don't go into the emergency services sector, they can still chip in to help their community.

"There seems to be a shortage of volunteers across the state in rural communities

for things like auxiliary firefighters, SES volunteers, social and support workers and even football coaches – leadership roles people aren't putting their hand up to do."

Tim and Chris thought a few children would sign up for the program when it started in January and were surprised when they had to cap it at 26 cadets.

"It was great seeing the kids come out of their shell and work as a team," Tim said.

"We've got some kids who are home schooled, and we've got some kids with autism and ADHD, but they all work together very well.

"We've had our captain say all the feedback is amazing. My wife's a teacher out here and she said the parents have said the kids are really upbeat when they come home and they can't wait for next week."

Tim and Chris worked over six months, liaising with other emergency services in the area to set up the program.

"Our mayor's been amazing," Tim said.

"We just had our first working group meeting and a lot of mining industry bodies attended. Anglo American Australia mine donated 26 new steel-capped boots for the kids.

"Our open night will stick with me for a long time. I didn't sleep for two days. The PCYC director was coming out and there were a few politicians.

"So, there were a lot of people showing up. I was thinking to myself, I really hope kids show up and there ended up being a shed full of kids and parents."

Every Wednesday from 5.30pm to 7pm, people from emergency services such as Queensland Police Service and Queensland Ambulance Service will take the children through activities.

Tim explained communication, teamwork and leadership skills were at the forefront of these activities.

"We had a search and rescue at one point where they had to use five pieces of equipment to find a dummy," he said.

"Luke our paramedic taught them how to do spinal care and carry a patient on a board. The kids had to communicate who was lifting and work as a team to carry the patient back. The goal is these kids will cut a car up. That's the plan."

Chris said support from the community and the members of the station led to the program's success.

"Tim and I aren't teachers but we're hands on and practical and can't thank the station enough for getting behind us and supporting us," Chris said.

"We've got adult leaders who are really helping out with administration and putting things together.

"We're learning from the kids every week. It has been just as beneficial for us and the adults, as well as the kids."



A FUN RUN TO FIGHT CANCER

QFD staff and volunteers took part in Run Army fun runs alongside other first responders in Brisbane and Townsville to raise funds for the Firefighter Cancer Foundation Australia (FCFA).

QFD's ambassador for Run Army is firefighter and Olympic racewalker Dane Bird-Smith, who won bronze at the 2016 Rio Olympics and gold at the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

Dane said he jumped at the chance to raise funds and awareness for firefighter cancer.

"An opportunity to use my old life to benefit a great cause like the FCFA is a real honour," he said.

"When the tragedy of cancer strikes in our service, as it all too often does, the ripples are felt throughout the entire organisation."

Dane started racewalking at a high school athletics competition when a teacher made him a deal where he could get out of detention if he participated in all the events and scored some points for the school.

"I finished third in my first ever racewalk (there were three people in the race). I was overlapped, but it qualified me for regionals. I was extremely competitive so I trained before the next race, where I finished third again but this time out of nine.

"I continued scraping through each level until the national championships where, following a rule of training every day a bit harder than the day before, I won. The rest of my story was as simple as following that rule.

"I wanted to take it as far as I could, all the way to the Rio Olympics, where I was ranked 17th on paper and given 22:1 odds of a medal. That was plenty of motivation to prove myself worthy of my bronze that day."

After 12 years of competitive racewalking, Dane retired from the sport in 2022 and went on to join QFD.

"I was weighing up starting a QFD recruit course or pursuing the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham," Dane said. "Becoming a firefighter was definitely a childhood dream, but it wasn't until I had my first daughter, Astrid, that I felt my heart and passions shift from athletics to creating a stable home for her.

"Then, when our second daughter, Arabella, was just a bun in the oven, I was given the opportunity to join the fire service to become an asset to the community and do a job my girls could be proud of.

"When I stepped into the ranks of Queensland Fire and Rescue I immediately felt welcomed to a huge network of dependable and trustworthy people who are always willing to go out of their way to help others.

"Athletics gave me a huge spread of experience that has shaped my approach to working in QFD. Travelling the world, I have lived alongside athletes of all cultures and backgrounds. This gave me skills to communicate and empathise, which ties in well as much of our job is simply supporting people on the worst days of their life.

"Competing against the best in the world and maintaining composure during intense races under the highest levels of fatigue and body stress prepared me for how physically hard we have to work under an insane amount of pressure to potentially save a life.

"Discipline, dedication and openness to set aside ego and learn – this is what I hope to bring with me throughout my career as a firefighter."

Dane no longer follows his Olympic-level training regime of 150 kilometres every week plus four gym sessions.

"Now with two kids I get most of my kilometres just chasing them around the house and I've totally switched up my gym program to suit a firefighter's strength and functional fitness," he said.

"My closest support has joined the fire service family too. My wife Katy took on the role of Fire Communications Officer this year. I'm really proud of her decision to join the organisation and I have an enormous respect for the support they provide."



Australian runner Karlie Swanson and Olympic racewalker Dane Bird-Smith supported Run Army in Brisbane.



About 7000 participants walked or ran in the Brisbane Run Army and 3000 in Townsville. More than 30 QFD personnel completed five kilometres in full turnout gear.



+ CRASH SURVIVOR VISITS CRAIGNISH STATION

The crew at Craignish Fire and Rescue Station had a special visit from road crash survivor Tim and his family.

In October 2024, the Craignish firefighters, along with crews from Torquay and Maryborough Heavy Rescue, responded to a serious road traffic crash involving a truck and a tree. It took a coordinated effort to free Tim from his work ute before he was transported for urgent medical care.

He spent nine days in a coma and underwent multiple surgeries, including the amputation of his lower right leg.

Now on the road to recovery and preparing to be fitted for a prosthetic leg, Tim and his family visited the station to personally thank the firefighters. The reunion was a powerful reminder of the lifesaving work emergency responders do every day and the impact they have on those they help.

We wish Tim all the best with his recovery and appreciate the time he and his family took to visit the crew.



+ CHEMICAL DETECTION TRAINING IN MARYBOROUGH

Firefighters across Maryborough Division are enhancing their skills through specialised chemical detection training. This training provides both new learning and refresher opportunities on using equipment to identify hazardous substances in emergency situations.

By engaging in hands-on practice, firefighters are ensuring they can quickly assess and respond to chemical threats, safeguarding both themselves and the wider community.

Ongoing training like this is vital in maintaining the highest standards of emergency response and public safety.



+ MEET ELI AND THEO COLLYER

At Dulacca Rural Fire Brigade's general meeting, firefighters had the pleasure of meeting two exceptional local brothers, Eli and Theo Collyer. These young boys developed a unique system to manage their pocket money, allocating it into three distinct jars: smile, splurge and give.

In early 2023, Eli and Theo made a heartwarming decision to save up the funds in their give jar until the year's end to make a more significant donation. With thoughtful guidance from their parents, they carefully contemplated where to bestow their hard-earned savings.

Their choice included the Dulacca Rural Fire Brigade, who had experienced an extremely demanding year, battling numerous fires in the local area and neighbouring properties. The boys, along with their parents, witnessed the brigade's invaluable work and dedication firsthand.

In gratitude for the brigade's tireless efforts in keeping their community safe, Eli and Theo made their generous donation. This has since become an annual tradition for the Collyer family, as the brothers continue to show their appreciation and support for the brigade.

A huge thank you to these young community heroes and their remarkable generosity.



+ MAKING FRIENDS AT THE STRAND

The crew from Wulguru Fire and Rescue Station made time to stop by the Townsville Strand and make some new friends.

After a busy start to the year in the north, it was great to have the time to get back out and engage with the community – a perfect Townsville day to be out of the office.

+ GLADSTONE AREA FIREFIGHTERS RECOGNISED



Congratulations to our outstanding firefighters who received recognition for their hard work and diligence to the community:

- Station Officer Dale Iwanicki was awarded the National Emergency Medal for Tropical Cyclone Debbie 2017 and the National Medal.
- National Emergency Medals for the Bushfires 2019-20 were awarded to Captain Scott Wilson, Station Officer Joshua Harrison, Station Officer Mark Erridge, Station Officer Gavin Thomas and Firefighter Nick Bailey.
- Station Officer Jonathon Farmer was awarded a Clasp for the Bushfires 2019-20 and the Disaster Resilience Champions pin recognising individuals who assisted with the disasters that took place over December and January 2023-24.
- Station Officer Chris Sullivan was awarded the Diligent and Ethical Service Medal, 1st Clasp.

Thank you all for your service to your community.

+ ROCKY VOLUNTEER EXPO

QFD participated in the inaugural CQ Volunteer Connect Expo in Rockhampton this March. A great day was had by all, with attendees showing strong interest in volunteering.

CapRescue presented the idea to the Capricornia Community Engagement Working group, who saw its potential and committed to supporting the concept of connecting passionate individuals with vital community organisations.

Some organisations also used the event as a personnel development day for staff and volunteers, taking advantage of guest speakers, a public speaking workshop and panel discussion, as well as discussing volunteering with more than 20 organisations on display.



+ WESTERN DOWNS SWIFTWATER TRAINING

Roma Command's swiftwater rescue capabilities continue to rise, much to the community's relief. Crews from Roma, Surat, Injune and St George participated in a one-day L1 Swiftwater Rescue course in Roma.

The training focused on equipping firefighters with the skills and knowledge needed to handle swiftwater rescue operations effectively.

Participants honed their abilities to navigate and respond to dangerous water rescue scenarios, ensuring they're well-prepared to protect and serve their communities during emergencies.



+ NEW SIGNAGE HONOURS MUNUNJALI COUNTRY

QFD was proud to unveil new signage at the Beaudesert Fire and Rescue Station, located on Mununjali Country.

The new signage not only enhances the station's visibility but reflects QFD's commitment to acknowledging and respecting the traditional custodians of the land on which we serve.

The Mununjali people have a deep and enduring connection to the region and QFD recognises their ongoing cultural heritage and contributions to the community.

The updated signage is part of broader efforts to ensure stations and facilities reflect the communities we serve while reinforcing QFD's commitment to inclusivity and reconciliation.

QFD thanks the local community and traditional custodians for their support and looks forward to continuing to work together to keep Beaudesert and surrounding areas safe.

+ QFD SUPPORTS WELCOME EXPO

Defence Member and Family Support North Queensland hosted their annual Welcome and Information Expo at the Townsville Stadium, with support from the Wulguru Queensland Fire and Rescue crew and Rangewood Rural Fire Service Queensland volunteers.

The annual event provides information to new Townsville Defence members and their families about the various organisations and services available to them. The event attracted more than 1000 attendees and included entertainment by the Band of the 1st Battalion, along with display vehicles, activities and interactive displays.



+ FIRE MAPPING WORKSHOP

In February, the Ravensbourne-Perseverance Rural Fire Brigade extended a warm welcome to the community for an insightful Fire Mapping Workshop. First Officer Andrew Summerville, along with Community Engagement Volunteer Dr Barb Ryan, spearheaded the event, which brought together landholders and various agencies to collaborate on planning and preparedness activities for the next bushfire season.

This workshop marked the first engagement of the year and the information gathered will play a crucial role in shaping the brigade's bushfire management plan and burn schedule. Throughout the year, the community and external stakeholders will have multiple opportunities to participate in activities designed to enhance preparedness and prevention.

Upcoming events include a Get Ready workshop, permit burns and working with fire workshop, bushfire season launch information session and an online session on accessing information during active bushfires. These initiatives aim to bolster the community's readiness and resilience in the face of potential bushfire threats.

+ ROAD CRASH RESCUE TRAINING IN WESTERN QUEENSLAND

Queensland Fire and Rescue crews from the Western Queensland towns of Mitchell, Meandarra and Roma recently participated in road crash rescue refresher training.

This specialised training is vital because road crash rescues remain the most frequent incidents teams respond to in the Maranoa and Western Downs regions.

The training ensures the crews' skills are consistently up-to-date and sharp, enabling them to effectively manage and respond to emergencies.



By participating in ongoing training, these dedicated teams can continue to safeguard their communities.

+ LOOKING AFTER MAROOCHYDORE'S TURTLES

When Sunshine Coast Regional Council's Environmental Wildlife Conservation Division needed a hand protecting endangered loggerhead turtles, Maroochydore Fire and Rescue Station reached out to help. Working alongside Turtlecare volunteers led by Kate Hofmeister, who patrol beaches from Coolum to Bribie Island to monitor turtle nesting and hatchling activity, the team quickly noticed a problem: moving heavy plastic containers, each carrying a turtle weighing more than 100 kilograms, across a 500-metre stretch was not only exhausting but risky.

That's when a Turtlecare volunteer and Station Officer Scott Daly suggested a safer option to relocate the turtles using Queensland Fire and Rescue's Big Wheel.

With approval from all parties, the Maroochydore crew put the plan into action. Their innovative solution meant less physical strain for everyone involved and ensured the turtles were handled with the utmost care. They even returned on their days off to help bring the containers back so the turtles could be released back into the ocean safely the next day.

In the end, Maroochydore Fire and Rescue Station's hands-on approach made a real difference. They successfully helped relocate four large turtles, allowing the council and Turtlecare to attach satellite trackers to study the turtles' habits.

The community appreciated the crew's spirit and dedication, and the partnership became an example of how interagency collaboration and teamwork can support vital conservation efforts on the Sunshine Coast.





+ NEW AUXILIARY FIREFIGHTERS IN DIRRANBANDI

Six eager participants from Dirranbandi, Bollon, Goondiwindi and Roma embarked on their mandatory operational firefighter training in February, stepping into their roles as auxiliary firefighters with Queensland Fire and Rescue.

The comprehensive training program, which includes modules on safe working practices, skills foundations, communication equipment and practical equipment maintenance, was inaugurated by Inspector Stewart Dundas, Manager of Professional Development.

Stewart's opening remarks set the tone for the course, emphasising the importance of professionalism and dedication in their new roles.

Throughout the five weekends of practical training, the recruits maintained a prominent presence within the Dirranbandi township. Their aim was not only to complete their training but raise awareness and generate interest for future recruitment at Dirranbandi Fire and Rescue Station.

This initiative highlights the community's commitment to building a robust, well-prepared firefighting force, ready to tackle emergencies and ensure the safety of their region.



+ ENGAGING WITH MACLEAY ISLAND

Rural Fire Service Queensland members, along with Redlands City Council and Community Champions, held a collaborative engagement on Macleay Island in February to demonstrate to the community that they are not alone in the event of a disaster.



LAST-MINUTE HOME FIRE SAFETY PRESENTATION

Station Officer Ken Duncan and Firefighter Rhyce Coleman stepped up at the last minute to deliver an essential home fire safety presentation to the Ozcare Community Care Social Group.

Despite the impromptu nature of the call, Ken and Rhyce rose to the occasion, providing invaluable safety tips and guidance.

Their presentation underscored the importance of fire safety measures in the home, offering practical advice and strategies to prevent fires and ensure the safety of residents.

The group expressed their heartfelt gratitude for Ken and Rhyce's efforts. A big thank you to Ken and Rhyce for their swift response and commitment to community safety.



EMPOWERING VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY EDUCATORS IN SOUTH BURNETT

A successful Volunteer Community Educator (VCE) induction was held in Kingaroy, bringing together passionate volunteers eager to make a difference in their communities.

The session covered essential topics such as engagement strategies, disaster preparedness education and practical workshops. Volunteers also took part in hands-on activities including a bushfire simulator demonstration, which provided valuable insights into bushfire behaviour and response strategies.

These brand-new VCEs will have a lasting impact on the Burnett Region and beyond.



+ NEW ARTWORK AT POINT LOOKOUT

Point Lookout Fire and Rescue Station has been painted in colours representative of the beautiful Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island) by local Quandamooka artists. The artwork provides an eye-catching addition to a spectacular part of the world.



1. Ipswich firefighters were on standby at the country music festival CMC Rocks to ensure festivalgoers stayed safe.
2. Hervey Bay Emergency Services Cadets completed a round of training with Marine Rescue Queensland, including a tour of two vessels and the Hervey Bay marina facility.
3. Horseshoe Bay Rural Fire Brigade member, Darren Hall, Bowen Firefighter Denver Cross and Auxiliary Firefighter and paramedic Jack Frey recently shaved their heads for the Leukaemia Foundations World's Greatest Shave.
4. Two aspiring firefighters got the full experience when they visited D shift at Kirwan Fire and Rescue Station, getting a close look at the truck and equipment.
5. A team from Cairns Queensland Fire and Rescue spent 12 hours on a treadmill in full firefighting gear to raise awareness for PTSD as part of an Australia-wide 'Stand Tall 4 PTS' challenge.





6. When hazardous cannisters containing aluminium phosphate washed up on a beach, Queensland Fire and Rescue crews from Thursday Island quickly rendered them safe and disposed of them.
7. Two rural fire brigades on the Gold Coast have celebrated big milestones, with Coomera Valley reaching 35 years and Wasp Creek reaching 30.
8. Geoff Henderson received the 5th Clasp National Medal in honour of his more than 70 years of service as a volunteer firefighter. He's been an invaluable member of Samsonvale Rural Fire Brigade since 1954 and many of his family members have followed in his footsteps.

9. Queensland Fire and Rescue and Rural Fire Service Queensland crews responded to a rubbish fire on the Gore Highway in Yandilla with a large amount of smoke.
10. The next crop of Queensland Fire and Rescue station officers have tested their skills with virtual reality, working through incident simulations and practical fire scenarios as part of the Officer Development Program.

TEENAGER'S BRAVE ACT

Seventeen-year-old Jack Daw never thought a trip into town for lunch would result in saving someone from a burning car.

Jack and his father Steven, both Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ) volunteers, were driving into Gin Gin in October 2024 when they noticed a car had flipped on its side and was engulfed in flames.

A man had escaped the car and told them someone else was trapped inside.

"We drove a bit more and saw his arms sticking out of the windshield, because the glass had fallen off the car when he crashed it," Jack said.

Without hesitation they sprang into action, put on the gear they had in the back of their car and headed straight toward the flames.

"I walked through the broken glass on the ground and saw the guy was unconscious," Jack said.

"So, I grabbed his arms and tried to pull him out of the vehicle, but he woke up halfway out of the windshield and started yelling out that his legs were stuck. I was thinking worst things worst, the dash has rolled and crushed his legs or feet.

"I thought to myself, I'm going to have to watch a man burn to death at 16 years of age – that doesn't sound like a fun way to start my life.

"So, we were a bit more incentivised to pull harder and eventually he popped out, covered in blood. We put him in the back of our car and the police and paramedics arrived minutes later."

Jack received the Young Citizen of the Year Award at Bundaberg's Australia Day Awards ceremony in January for his efforts.

"No one does it for the recognition or achievement, you do it to give back to the community and to leave a mark," he said. "I hope anyone in our situation would have done the same."

Jack said volunteering with RFSQ prepared him for the incident – he'd only completed extraction training with Queensland Fire and Rescue a few months prior.



"Being with RFSQ for about a year was a big part of it because I'm used to working around fire and not scared of it. You must have respect for it and you don't run away when you see it," Jack said.

"Being a firefighter is about knowing fire and how it behaves. Knowing what's safe and what's not."

Despite being only 17, Jack has volunteered for two rural fire brigades and is also a volunteer for the State Emergency Service (SES).

He said it was important for young people to get involved with emergency services, especially with the number of brigades led by older volunteers with significant expertise to pass onto the next generation.

"The life skills you get out of it are amazing and the people you meet," he said. "They're really struggling for mentors and leaders, so if there are brigades in the area, I strongly suggest young people volunteer, because it's such a great thing.

"Most brigades are run by older members and it's great because they have experience, but they need to pass that experience on to someone before they leave the brigade, otherwise it's just going to fall to the ground and collapse."

He encouraged younger people to get involved in the PCYC Emergency Services Cadets program.

"That's how I started and then I moved on from that and joined the services themselves," he said.

"The program gives a taste of what it's like and I have lots of friends now applying for emergency services, such as police, paramedics and firefighters."

Jack's volunteering experience has sparked future career ambitions in QFD and he is interested in working in the media team or Fire Communications.



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