

RESPONSE

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE QUEENSLAND FIRE DEPARTMENT

AUGUST 2025



BACKBONE OF THE BUSH

CONTENTS

HIGHLIGHTS

COMMUNITIES OF INCLUSION



KING'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS



NAIDOC WEEK



ON THE COVER

Rural Fire Service Queensland crews from Amby Town, Muckadilla and Orange Hill conducted a hazard reduction burn at Muckadilla, burning about 80 hectares to protect the small town from bushfire. Photo by Tim Bateup from Orange Hill Rural Fire Brigade.

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

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

» Volunteers connect at summits	4
» Communities of Inclusion promote everyday respect	6
» Six of our best and brightest	10
» Natural Hazards Research Forum	13
» Toxic chemical cleanup in Cambodia	14
» Spotlight on safety	15
» Engaging with the community about warnings	17
» Celebrating strength this NAIDOC Week	18
» Ready for bushfires	20
» Recognising volunteers for RFSQ Week	22
» Best mates make a top team	25
» Battling the elements on the Great Trek	26
» A pillar of the community	27
» Working together for community	29
» Around the state	30
» Gallery	34

SPOTLIGHT

STEPHEN MALONE: WORKING TOGETHER FOR COMMUNITY

PAGE 29



FOREWORDS



STEVE SMITH AFSM
Commissioner

QUEENSLAND FIRE DEPARTMENT

With heightened bushfire risk around the corner, we have boots on the ground across the state conducting mitigation activities to keep Queenslanders safe.

Thank you to all our Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ) volunteers and brigades who have acted early to protect communities while the cool weather holds out.

Partnerships play a crucial role in our mitigation work. Staff and volunteers have worked closely with local councils, mayors, land managers and other government agencies across the state to focus on and conduct the full range of mitigation activities including hazard reduction burns.

Sadly, another major operational focus has been on our roads – we have seen many tragic road traffic crashes in Queensland. Last year alone, 302 people lost their lives and thousands more were seriously injured.

Every one of these tragedies takes a huge toll on families, first responders and the community. QFD is committed to making Queensland roads safer and I encourage you all to look after each other and be safe.

While we currently have a strong operational focus, investing in our people remains as vital as ever.

The RFSQ Volunteer Summits were a fantastic opportunity for volunteers to network and explore new ideas. They discussed the issues that affected their brigades and the steps toward building a stronger future.

The Queensland Fire and Rescue Firefighter Safety Symposium was a similar opportunity for personnel to explore new ways of thinking about firefighter safety, including technologies, emerging hazards, and risks for frontline operations.

Across the department, our personnel strive for excellence, and we recently took the time to celebrate the contributions of RFSQ volunteers and staff during RFSQ Week.

I was delighted to attend the launch at Prenzlau Rural Fire Brigade, present awards and hand over appliances to seven brigades. We have so much experience and strength across RFSQ, and I would like to congratulate the award winners – and all our volunteers – for their outstanding work.

Promoting a more respectful and inclusive culture in QFD is crucial to serving the diverse communities we protect. Our new Communities of Inclusion – gender, First Nations, living with a disability, and regional and remote – are made up of QFD employees with lived experience who will foster a culture of respect.

The Communities are now holding their first meetings, and I look forward to seeing their contributions to raising awareness and championing the groups they represent.

As always, look out for each other, and stay safe.



KAYLENE JONES
Chief Officer

RURAL FIRE SERVICE QUEENSLAND

It was fantastic to recognise the selfless dedication of our more than 27,600 volunteers during Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ) Week.

Year-round, rain or shine, our volunteers do the jobs that need to be done to engage with their communities and keep them safe. Across the state we took the time to celebrate their contribution to building local resilience through response, engagement and education.

Throughout the reform process over the last year, our volunteers have continued to work tirelessly, keeping their focus firmly on preparing for bushfires and responding when disaster strikes.

That is truly something to celebrate and it was wonderful to honour some of our outstanding volunteers with the RFSQ Week Awards, including our Volunteer of the Year David Beil and Young Volunteer of the Year Isaac Brailsford.

This year, the Thargomindah Rural Fire Brigade received the inaugural Brigade of the Year Award for their dedication in responding to incidents and maintaining community spirit, particularly during the recent floods.

Our 1400 brigades across the state have collaborated with partners and stakeholders ahead of the heightened bushfire risk period to complete bushfire mitigation activities.

Average fire conditions are expected for the rest of the cooler months and we have taken advantage of this to mitigate risk and build resilience by reducing fuel loads and managing vegetation.

RFSQ staff and volunteers will continue this work with the community in the lead-up to spring and summer, particularly around the most high-risk locations.

Please stay safe during this higher risk bushfire period and always remain mindful of critical procedures such as the operation of appliances, hazardous trees, burnover, fireground safety, dynamic risk assessments, emergency incident protocols and personal protective clothing.

The Training and Development Unit's Digital Resource Hub is a good source of training and information to assist all RFSQ members in preparing for bushfires.

Since I joined QFD five months ago, it has been a privilege to meet many RFSQ staff and volunteers and learn more about their outstanding work in the community. Thank you for everything you do to keep Queensland communities safe.

VOLUNTEERS CONNECT AT SUMMITS

Volunteers gathered at the 2025 Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ) Volunteer Summits in Cairns and the Gold Coast to share ideas and build connections.

Over two days, participants took part in professional development sessions, keynote presentations, Q&As and workshops.

Acting Director Rachel Meszaros, who coordinated the summits with the Volunteering and Culture team, said about 220 volunteers attended from rural and regional areas.

“Some travelled impressive distances like the team from Willows Rural Fire Brigade in Central Region, who journeyed more than 990 kilometres,” Rachel said. “It was wonderful to see such strong representation from across the state and it was a fantastic opportunity to connect with volunteers.”

“The theme this year was ‘Embracing Change and Strengthening the Future’, highlighting the importance of adapting to change and building resilience for the challenges ahead,” Rachel said.

“We encouraged participants to reflect on how to navigate change effectively and collaboratively to secure a stronger future.”

“Key topics included recruitment and retention strategies, the Australian Fire Danger Rating System, and practical guidance on navigating brigade finances.”

Shane Fitzsimmons, former Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service, delivered a powerful keynote address on leadership in times of crisis and change.

QFD Volunteer Strategy workshops allowed volunteers to explore how key priorities translate into tangible benefits for brigades, while a senior leaders Q&A allowed volunteers to take the floor and ask questions directly to leadership.

“There was a strong sense of teamwork and shared purpose,” Rachel said. “People loved the chance to connect and learn from each other.”



“These events are vital for connection, collaboration and recognition. They allow us to share knowledge, strengthen relationships and celebrate the incredible work of our volunteers, all while ensuring we’re prepared for future challenges.”

“A heartfelt thank you to everyone who made the summit possible – organisers, presenters and every single attendee. Events like this strengthen our community and reaffirm our shared purpose. I’m already excited for the next one.”

“A standout was the Volunteer Spotlights sessions where volunteers shared their stories. It was deeply moving and a wonderful reminder of the heart and commitment that drive our volunteers. They were truly inspirational.”

Creating a positive culture

Among the volunteers who shared their stories was Sam Webster, First Officer of Tamborine Mountain Rural Fire Brigade, who talked about transforming his brigade’s culture after being inspired by a mentor.

“If you see negativity, don’t feed it,” Sam said. “If you see a situation starting to degrade, own it and turn it into something positive.”

“I was feeling negatively about things because it’s easy to fall into a rut within the brigade culture, but I had a lightbulb moment and saw how we could turn things around.”



“The biggest sign of negativity in a brigade – and in ours – was cliques, where the brigade is divided into little groups with an us and them attitude. It can lead to complaining, elitist attitudes and even misogynistic behaviour.

“Some of the people who’d been around longer thought they had a rite of passage because of seniority. There was a lack of transparency because committee meetings were separate to brigade meetings, which were separate to ‘special’ committee meetings. When decisions were made and money was spent, the majority of members felt like they were the last to know.

“My approach is much more transparent and democratic. If I have a conversation with the Area Manager I tell the brigade straight away. There are no closed doors or secrets.

“I like to ask, who do you trust that keeps information from you? I’m yet to meet a single person who says they really trust and respect someone who gatekeeps information.

“I think some brigades suffer from favouritism, where members who have been around a long time get preferential treatment. The power dynamic is problematic. The equality and fairness are not always there.



“The lightbulb moment for me was with my mentor Mark. We were on a stack burn one night standing around with not much to do, when I saw Mark grab four or five members and show them how to do a Case Four out of a creek.

“It was a small thing but it stuck with me how instead of complaining about being bored, Mark got some gear out and turned an average night into something positive and worthwhile.

“I realised you can turn things around and make positive change no matter where you sit. You don’t have to be the First Officer or Incident Controller. If we want to stop negativity, we have to be the change.

“From there, the first thing we did was get rid of any separate committees. Now we have open meetings with everyone present. We’re all in the room at the same time whenever we make decisions – we make them as one brigade, one team.

“Part of a healthy functioning brigade is one rule for all. We all follow the rules, from the First Officer to trainees. Everyone trains to the same standard and benchmark. There is no special treatment.

“We gave ourselves a team name – the Dragons. It’s one of those little things that’s become part of our culture.”

Sam talked about how learning soft skills was just as important as technical ones.

“Soft skills are really important because when you’re faced with a stressful situation and you’re trying to make decisions, I think we underestimate the amount of mental load it puts you under.

“It means nothing if you turn up to a fire with the best equipment and technical skills if the person leading crumbles under pressure and can’t make a decision.

“We’re very good at developing our technical skills, but at debriefs I often find the number-one issue is non-technical, lack of communication, or vague instructions, so soft skills are the Achilles’ heel in my view.

“My mantra at the moment is ‘just help’. At jobs you can get wrapped up in negativity and drama, but at the end of the day, the public don’t care, they just want help.

“If you see another crew struggling with hoses, just help. If you see the IC drowning in T-cards, just help, if you see a landowner worried for their property, just help. It’s important to humble ourselves and remember we’re not here to serve our egos, we’re here to serve the community – we’re here to help.”



COMMUNITIES OF INCLUSION PROMOTE EVERYDAY RESPECT

Our Communities of Inclusion officially launched in July and *Response* sat down with their leaders to discuss how the Communities will promote a respectful and inclusive culture across QFD.

In early 2025, QFD developed the Everyday Respect Framework to strengthen respect, inclusion and diversity across the organisation. A key enabler of this new approach is the new Everyday Respect Council.

The Communities of Inclusion will support the Everyday Respect Council to provide strategic direction on inclusion policies and programs, fostering a culture of respect for the entire workforce.

The Communities bring together employees and volunteers who share a common identity and lived experience. Each Community will have five members, an executive sponsor and an external mentor.

At an induction workshop, the Community members built connections and discussed how they will work together to drive everyday respect initiatives informed by their diverse perspectives.

The Communities will now meet regularly to design and lead targeted workplans, build capacity and foster awareness, bringing forward the voice of those with lived experience.

To find out more about the Communities, search for 'Communities of Inclusion' on the Gateway or email ERC@fire.qld.gov.au.

Shifting perceptions

Senior Consultant Marie Bledsoe chairs the Community for People with Disability.

"I'm a professional woman with lived and living experience of disability, both personally and as a carer," Marie said.

"Representation isn't just important – it's essential. Visibility helps break down stigma. When we see people with disability leading, speaking up and being recognised for their contributions, it shifts perceptions."

– Marie Bledsoe

"I've spent over 20 years working across the public, corporate and not-for-profit sectors to improve access and inclusion, but joining this Community felt personal.

"This is about using lived experience to drive practical, meaningful change within QFD. With 2.7 million Australians of working age living with disability — and only 60% participating in the labour market — we're overlooking a skilled, educated and capable segment of the population.

"This is an untapped talent pool of people who are often just looking for the right (inclusive) opportunity and a workplace culture to thrive.

"I wanted to be part of something that gives voice to others and helps ensure no one feels like they have to 'mask' or 'manage' their disability alone at work."

Marie said it had been affirming to start working with her fellow Community members.

"There's something really powerful about being in a room — real or virtual — where people come together with a shared purpose and mutual respect," she said.

"Everyone brings different insights and experiences, but there's a real commitment to listening, learning and collaborating.



“Representation isn’t just important — it’s essential. Visibility helps break down stigma. When we see people with disability leading, speaking up and being recognised for their contributions, it shifts perceptions.

“At QFD, we’re in the business of community service. That means we need to reflect the diversity of the community we serve — and that includes people with disability.

“My personal hope is that this Community becomes a trusted, solutions-focused space — one that amplifies lived experience, influences inclusive policies and supports leaders and teams to better understand and remove barriers to participation.

“Whether it’s improving physical, digital or attitudinal accessibility, I’d love to see us drive change that is practical, respectful and aligned with QFD’s values.

“I’m really grateful to be part of this journey. My hope is that this Community becomes not just an advisory group, but a source of momentum, action and change — where people feel heard, empowered and valued for all they bring.”

The Community’s SLT Sponsor, Executive Director Adam Green, said he joined the Community because he wanted to help create a workplace where everyone felt respected and empowered to contribute fully.

“I wanted to be part of a group that actively champions accessibility, inclusion and representation, and where real change can be driven from the inside out,” Adam said.

“There’s a shared commitment among members, whether they bring lived experience, allyship or professional insight. It’s powerful to be part of a group where diverse voices are not only welcomed but central to the conversation.

“When people with disability are represented in organisational conversations, policies and decision-making, it helps ensure the structures we create are equitable and accessible by design, not as an afterthought.

“For QFD, having this representation strengthens our values, enhances our service to the community and builds a more inclusive and responsive organisation.

“Our Community will advocate for a workplace that is not only accessible but proactively inclusive. That means identifying and breaking down systemic barriers, improving recruitment and retention of people with disability,

fostering disability confidence across the organisation, and building awareness through lived experience stories and education.

“Ultimately, our vision is to make inclusion part of the everyday culture at QFD — not something extra, but something expected.”

Driving meaningful change

Station Officer Julie Smith, Chair of the Community for First Nations, has previously worked with the Gender Equity Advisory Group (GEAG).

“I have always sought opportunities to champion change and this Community seemed the perfect opportunity to continue providing a voice to the department,” Julie said.

“I am excited to represent a community close to my heart and find ways to improve our relationship with our First Nations people and communities.

“The launch was an excellent opportunity to connect with our Community members and network with the other Communities. A lot of work will align with all the Communities and feeling the passion within the group



Communities of Inclusion members

Gender

Uplifting women and other under-represented genders across QFD

Paula Douglas (Chair), Acting Superintendent, Toowoomba
Peta Miller-Rose (Secretariat), Assistant Chief Officer, Training and Capability
Katrina MacDonald, Director, Governance and Reporting
Samantha Stream, Director, Business Performance and Support
Vanessa Madge, Acting Superintendent, Sunshine Coast
John Cawcutt (SLT Sponsor), Chief Fire Officer
Prue Gilbert (External Coach)

Regional and Remote

Supporting people in regional and remote areas, specifically those geographically removed from south-east Queensland

Shakira Westdorp (Chair), Station Officer, Beenleigh
Denicka Danaher (Secretariat), Business Support Officer, Savanna
Scott Castree, Area Commander, Rockhampton
Tamzin Hasani, Senior HR Advisor
Cherilyn Bickers, District Business Coordinator, Warrego
Michael O’Neil (SLT Sponsor), Assistant Commissioner, Northern Region
Liz Schmidt (External Coach)

People with Disability

Championing and supporting people who identify as living with a disability, both visible and non-visible

Marie Bledsoe (Chair), Senior Consultant, Talent Acquisition
Emma Christensen (Secretariat), Program Manager, Cabinet, Executive and Ministerial Services
Nesha Saunders, Senior Program Officer (Olympic Games), Strategic and Operational Planning
Annette Gilmore, Support Officer (Systems), Enterprise IT Solutions and Service
Selena Stanley, Principal Analyst (Data), Strategic Intelligence and Planning
Adam Green (SLT Sponsor), Executive Director, Asset Services Directorate
Dr Dinesh Palipana (External Coach)

First Nations

Deepening cultural awareness by collaborating with First Nations and non-First Nations staff

Julie Smith (Chair), Station Officer, Beenleigh
Steele Davies (Secretariat), Manager Planning and Performance, Regional Operations
Eane Watson, Firefighter, Metro
Rose Kapaith, Executive Manager, Media, Communications and Online
Glory Zimani, Senior Project Officer, Strategy and Services
Peter Hollier (SLT Sponsor), Deputy Chief Officer, Strategic Capability Division
Tammy Pope (External Coach)



gives me great pride and confidence we will realise the change we seek.

“Queensland has such a rich cultural significance and a diverse First Nations population. It’s so important we build meaningful relationships with our First Nations communities and employees to ensure we are acting in a way that supports our people.

“As an organisation with so many touch points across the state, it’s critical to understand how we can preserve our Indigenous communities’ connection to culture, implement Indigenous land management practices and create a service that supports generations to come.”

Deputy Chief Officer Peter Hollier, the Community’s SLT sponsor, said many of the members had lived experience in rural and regional Queensland and firsthand understanding of the challenges faced by First Nations peoples.

“Our Community members bring deep personal experiences, cultural knowledge and life learnings shaped by their service and connection to community,” Peter said.

“In future the membership will expand to include community leaders and those with skills in advocacy, cultural safety, education and reconciliation. What connects them is a strong commitment to making QFD a more respectful, inclusive and culturally aware service.

“There’s a strong sense of shared purpose and pride in being part of something bigger than any individual.

“People feel heard – many for the first time in a formal setting – and that in itself is a powerful foundation for what’s to come.

“Representation matters. For QFD to truly serve and reflect the communities we protect, we must understand and respect their diversity – especially the voices of First Nations peoples.

“First Nations communities bring a wealth of knowledge in land, fire and cultural practices. Including these voices not only strengthens our service – it builds trust, relationships and better outcomes for community safety. This Community aims to be a guiding voice for inclusive practice across QFD.

“There is great representation across QFR, RFSQ and corporate staff, which brings diversity and different perspectives.”

– Paula Douglas

“Our priorities include supporting culturally safe work environments, increasing First Nations participation across roles, embedding cultural knowledge into training and service delivery, strengthening relationships with community and Elders, and providing feedback on policy, programs and communications through a culturally informed lens.

“Long term, we want to ensure inclusion is not a project but part of the DNA of how QFD operates. Respect means creating space for all voices – particularly those that haven’t always been at the table – and ensuring those voices help shape our future.

“This Community is a step forward, but lasting change will come when cultural respect, equity and inclusion are embedded in every level of our organisation.

“We are proud to contribute to that journey and we encourage others to join us, to listen, to learn and to lead in their own spaces.”

Creating an inclusive culture

Acting Superintendent Paula Douglas, Chair of the Community for Gender, draws on her connections as Chair of the QFR Frontline Women’s Network (FWN).

“I saw the value of using my experience with the FWN and the networks I’ve built to support the Community,” Paula said.

“FWN engages with a lot of women in Queensland Fire and Rescue (QFR) and the knowledge they share with us will contribute to the Community and even some of the other Communities. There are many intersections between all the Communities and a lot of potential to work holistically.

“Parts of the organisation have lacked in processes and systems that include everyone. The Communities will help bring QFD into line with how society views our commitment to our service.

“The Communities will identify where the gaps are in terms of including people and help bridge some of those gaps in line with what is equitable.

“Equality means everyone has access to the same thing, but sometimes the same thing doesn’t necessarily fit everyone, so equity is about tailoring it to individual needs.

“Our Community plans to find out what the problem is, which means engaging with a lot of different research and data to find out where we can provide the best input.

“I’ve worked with a lot of the Community members in the past and been mentored by some of them. There is great representation across QFR, Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ) and corporate staff, which brings diversity and different perspectives.”

The Community’s SLT Sponsor, Chief Fire Officer John Cawcutt, said the members would co-design actions to drive a cultural shift.

“They bring a diverse range of skills and experiences across policy development, governance, marketing and communications, community engagement, event coordination and project work,” he said.

“We have subject matter experts from all three services and I am proud to be on this journey with such an exceptional team.



Community of Inclusion members came together at the launch event in Brisbane.

“At the launch event, the Community started sharing their stories and experiences and developing their 12-month work plan.

“Our vision is to provide a structured and sustainable mechanism to lead programs of work that advance gender equity. The Community will provide leadership, strategic direction and oversight of gender equity policies, programs and initiatives across QFD.

“It’s important for QFD to create an inclusive organisational culture that supports and uplifts under-represented groups.”

Positive change

Acting Inspector Roma Command Shakira Westdorp, Chair of the Community for Regional and Remote, is no stranger to working in remote areas.

“I have seen firsthand the opportunities and challenges presented to staff and volunteers in regional and remote areas,” Shakira said.

“I hope our Community can advocate for improvement in policy, training, recruitment and retention for people who live and work in remote communities. I would like to see all QFD personnel given equal opportunities regardless of their location.

“It has been great to connect with passionate staff and volunteers who are working hard to create positive change.

“I would like to see all QFD personnel given equal opportunities regardless of their location.”

– Shakira Westdorp

“This Community is important to ensure the challenges that regional and remote personnel face are being heard and valued. We will enable decision makers to better understand the diverse nature of the workload and workforce and create or amend policy and procedure to provide better support and opportunities.

“Our priorities moving forward are attracting personnel to regional and remote roles with contemporary incentives, providing better support and access to training and development, and enhancing auxiliary recruitment and retention.”

The Community’s SLT Sponsor, Assistant Commissioner Michael O’Neil, said the group came from remote communities across Queensland and covered all three services.

“They all bring a wealth of lived experiences and want to see change for the better,” Michael said.

“Our coach is the Mayor of Charters Towers, Liz Schmidt. Liz has a long history of working and living in rural and remote communities and through her current role has some great connections.

“Many of our staff and volunteers work and live remotely and it’s important for us as an organisation to better understand the challenges they face.

“Like all government departments we are struggling to attract and retain staff and volunteers in rural and remote communities. This group will hopefully identify areas of concern and develop practical solutions.

“In most rural and remote communities it’s difficult to attract people to fill roles and when we do it’s only temporary or for short stints. Quite often people in rural and remote communities feel quite isolated and unsupported.

“These are difficult and long-standing problems and hopefully we can shift the dial on some solutions.”

Everyday Respect Framework

People & Culture Committee

Everyday Respect Council

Members

- Commissioner - Chair
- Chief Operating Officer
- Chief Human Resource Officer
- Director - Strategy and Services Branch
- Director - First Nations Strategy & Partnership Branch
- COI SLT Sponsors
- COI Chairs

Gender

John Cawcutt

COI Chair +
4 members

First Nations

Peter Hollier

COI Chair +
4 members

Regional & Remote

Michael O’Neil

COI Chair +
4 members

People with Disability

Adam Green

COI Chair +
4 members

External Coaches (Equity & Inclusion)

Note: Workforce resource groups, allies and networks of inclusion will work to support the COI initiatives.

SIX OF OUR BEST AND BRIGHTEST

In the 2025 King's Birthday Honours, six QFD personnel were recognised for their outstanding commitment, collectively dedicating more than a century to protecting Queensland communities.

Five personnel received the Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM), the highest award for a member of an Australian fire service, and one received the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM).

Commissioner Steve Smith said this year's recipients embodied the values of QFD.

"While they bring different skills and experience, they have in common a desire to go above and beyond the call of duty," Commissioner Smith said.

"They have shown their commitment to operational and organisational excellence, making a unique and invaluable contribution to QFD and our work in keeping Queensland communities safe."

Acting Superintendent Paula Douglas AFSM

Since joining Queensland Fire and Rescue (QFR) in 2007, Paula Douglas has demonstrated strong leadership and mentorship.

"In my substantive role of Inspector I get to work with frontline staff and support them in their duties in serving the community," Paula said.

"Success to me is seeing someone else doing well in their job, performing it safely and effectively while feeling accepted and included in the workplace. It's rewarding to know I may have played a small part in them achieving that."

As the first permanent female firefighter in South Western Region, Paula helped break new ground for women in QFD, including by developing the Frontline Women's Network (FWN) to support female firefighters.

"The FWN provides a consistent platform of connection for permanent and auxiliary firefighters, FireCom women, and FWN Allies," Paula said. "We meet quarterly to discuss current issues and how to create change."



"People within the FWN can connect with each other, provide peer-to-peer advice and support, or highlight experiences that may be affecting their roles."

"The network is administered by a mix of member groups from both metropolitan and regional areas, which provides a diverse group of voices and experiences to guide the network."

"Through our connections, the FWN has supported a new FWN for Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ) and I am proud to see their success in supporting RFSQ staff and volunteers."

Paula also helped coordinate the inaugural Girls Firefighter Experience Camp last year.

"The camp empowered young girls to see what a career as a firefighter looked like," she said. "To see them accomplish something new or walk away from a task with a sense of achievement gave us a sense of pride."

Paula has also worked with partner organisations to support young people and LGBTQI+ people in the community.

"We have a lot of different services in our community and they all offer the same things but differently, so the trick is how to bring all those people together and have a conversation about what the problems are and how we can all help," she said.

"QFD can provide SafeHome visits for disadvantaged families, or reach young people through the Fight Fire Fascination (FFF) or Roads, Attitudes and Action Planning (RAAP) programs."

"This work is ongoing every day across the state through our community engagement activities. Locally, I've continued to support local community groups and education facilities in promoting the fire service and collaborating on QFD safety initiatives."

"Having these strong community connections has demonstrated the effectiveness of collaboration for solving local issues."

"Success to me is seeing someone else doing well in their job, performing it safely and effectively while feeling accepted and included in the workplace."

– Paula Douglas AFSM

Deputy Chief Officer Matt Inwood AFSM

Matt Inwood joined the NSW Rural Fire Service in 1997 and was involved in many operations over the next 22 years, from the district level to the state operations centre, before joining RFSQ in 2019.

“This award was very humbling and completely unexpected,” Matt said.

“I’ve always found the most rewarding part of the job is helping people in their time of need – having the privilege to lead a wonderful group of people, both staff and volunteers, and supporting their growth through training, development and mentoring.

“Major fires were burning at Cooroibah when I started with RFSQ,” he said. “It was literally baptism by fire – straight into the hotseat in the Incident Control Centre (ICC).

“NSW works on a different legislative system so in my first 72 hours I had to learn vastly different policy, procedure and process while keeping the community safe.

“In some ways it was a good way to learn because I had to work fast and build rapport with people very quickly, which was a good footing for taking on the role of Area Director at the Sunshine Coast.

“I’ve always found the most rewarding part of the job is helping people in their time of need.”

– Matt Inwood AFSM

“It was a privilege working with a fantastic team who were passionate about making a difference in the community.

“To me, leadership is the privilege of being able to lead a group of people, creating a bond and connection to achieve a common outcome, supporting all those people along the journey and owning the accountability for that.”

Matt was also an incident controller at one of the fires that threatened the community of Peregrine.

“It was a very hot and windy day,” he said. “Staff had been asked to be prepared and we had an ICC at lean forward and from the moment the initial incident came in we had staff activated in the ICC and multiple crews on route.

“The threat grew exponentially over the next few hours and QFR and RFSQ crews did an excellent job getting it quickly held within containment lines, ensuring there was no loss of property.

“As part of this job I’ve got to see some of the most amazing things in life, with people welcoming you into their life while they’re facing emergency situations.

“While you see the best of humanity in the adversity they’re facing, I’ve also had a front row seat at some of the most tragic incidents that 99% of the population will never see. They can be some of the most challenging moments, dealing with families who have faced tragic loss.

“It’s a very humbling experience to assist people in their ultimate time of need and I consider it a privilege.”



Superintendent Ricky May AFSM

A professional firefighter since 1986, Ricky May was recognised for his commitment to developing realistic training, particularly through QFD’s live-fire training facilities and mobile gas fire simulators.

“It was very humbling to be recognised,” Ricky said. “It wasn’t something I thought I would ever achieve.

“I started with QFD in 1986 and it was like winning lotto. I became a Station Officer in 1998 and that gave me the opportunity to do many things, including as a training officer for Brisbane Region.

“I did a lot of work in incident management, particularly in the Queensland floods in 2010-11, where I was the incident controller for the southern division. It was a sad time but a really defining moment for me to grow as a leader by learning skills from more talented people around me.

“I’ve been deployed all over Australia for fire, flood, and severe weather events, undertaking various incident management roles including Incident Controller. I was fortunate enough to manage and coordinate many large-scale multi-agency exercises for QFD from this experience.

“One of my more unusual roles included Planning Officer for the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry during the White Spot Disease outbreak affecting the fishing and prawning industry.

“There are so many people who have great talents in different fields, and if you listen and learn you can do so much.”

– Ricky May AFSM

“One of the great things about the fire service is you don’t know who you’re beside. There are so many people who have great talents in different fields, and if you listen and learn you can do so much.

“QFD has so many people like that. When things turn pear-shaped they all rally together and work ridiculously hard to get the job done.”

Since 2011 Ricky has been in senior officer roles, which he finds rewarding in different ways.

“Once you get into senior officer roles, you have a more strategic focus, delving into the world of governance and the political side of things. It takes years and years to develop. It was a real paradigm shift.

“I was surrounded by great mentors – too many to mention. They helped me understand governance and how to think strategically and get things done collectively. Those roles gave me the chance to make some meaningful change.”

One of his most significant achievements was leading the eight-year development of mobile gas fire simulators.



"Firefighters could only do live fire at the Academy so it was nearly impossible for firefighters in regional or remote areas to get regular and consistent training," Ricky said.

"We explored a lot of options and tried different types of simulators but they were never robust enough.

"The simulators were built and designed by firefighters for firefighters. It was a collective work by a lot of great instructors and managers. I was just lucky enough to be at the helm.

"Now there are five simulators around the state and there's been a lot of good feedback. I'm very grateful for the award but it's shared with all the people involved."

First Officer Errol Noye AFSM

Errol Noye's commitment to the Turkey Beach Rural Fire Brigade comes in many forms, from maintaining equipment to fostering collaboration between brigades and providing leadership during major incidents such as the Deep Water, Gaythorne and Lowmead fires.



He has led significant infrastructure projects, including the construction of a new appliance shed and renovated facilities at his station. He trains landowners in fire preparedness and works with the Gladstone Regional Council to ensure community safety through hazard reduction burns.

"I was very surprised when I heard about the award," Errol said.

"In 2004 I retired from running my own business in Bundaberg, came up here and the brigade said they were looking for members. I thought I'd better do something because you can't go fishing every day. I worked my way up to First Officer and my current role as Group Officer for Miriam Vale.

"We've had several big fires. The Deepwater fire went for a few weeks and brigades from different regions and even interstate came up to relieve us after a week of being hammered.

"We had windy dry conditions and the fire was crowning and very hard to control. You'd put a fire break in and the fire would go right across.

"A few structures and a dozer were lost but no lives were lost. We kept extending fire breaks until we got it under control. It was pretty horrific. It had its moments, put it that way."

Errol went on several deployments during the 2019/20 fires in NSW.

"I took a crew down to Glen Innes for about five days helping local brigades with a couple of big fires. We protected the community there and when I came home they sent me down to Nowra.

"I don't do anything without consulting with the brigade members. Everybody has a say as far as I'm concerned."

– Errol Noye AFSM

"We stayed at the naval base down there and the fire was up in the hills, and then we came back and went down to Bermagui about a week later and stopped the fire from reaching the community down there. The NSW firefighters really looked after us and it was a good experience.

"I don't do anything without consulting with the brigade members. Everybody has a say as far as I'm concerned. By communicating and getting each other's thoughts you come up with the best solution. We all look after each other's back."

Senior Firefighter Greg Toman AFSM

Greg Toman has dedicated 27 years to firefighting within the Greater Brisbane Region. He was recognised for creating and leading mountain rescue as a new technical rescue discipline in QFD, steering it to an international standard.



"I felt privileged to receive this award and extremely proud of the way I contributed to establishing the mountain rescue capability," Greg said.

"Before becoming a firefighter, I owned and operated an outdoor adventure training company and in the mid-1990s an increasing number of emergency services personnel came to my courses.

"In 1996, two Queensland firefighters who joined my swiftwater rescue course in NSW said QFR needed people like me. I took their advice and began my career with QFR in 1998.

"It was great to see the impact of our swiftwater flood rescue, motorised boat rescue and mountain rescue capabilities in safeguarding our communities, knowing that directly and indirectly I contributed to developing these capabilities.

"I have the greatest sense of pride from the many rescue jobs where the team excelled in very arduous and challenging conditions."

– Greg Toman AFSM

"I have the greatest sense of pride from the many rescue jobs where the team excelled in very arduous and challenging conditions, in some cases for more than 12 hours, in difficult terrain with only the equipment they carried on their harness and backpack."

In 2019, Greg completed a Churchill Fellowship to enhance safety during mountain rescues. He then successfully applied for QFD to become a member of the International Commission of Alpine Rescue (ICAR), the peak body for rescues performed in alpine terrain, caves, canyons, cliffs and backcountry environments.

"Being a member of ICAR allows us to tap into the accumulated knowledge and experience of elite rescue organisations from Europe and America that have been operating for up to a century," Greg said.

"To me leadership is about inspiring, encouraging and supporting a group of people to perform as a team at the highest level. The unconditional sharing of information and knowledge, respect for team members' ideas and views, encouraging team ownership of its capability and achievements, and prioritising the safety and welfare of the team are a vital part of this leadership."

Rural Firefighter Donald Davey OAM

Donald Davey from Ballogie Rural Fire Brigade near Kingaroy received the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the General Division.

Since joining the brigade in 2002, he has taken on roles such as Brigade Training Officer and Crew Leader. He is also passionate about supporting veterans and their families through RSL, Vietnam Veterans Association and Legacy Queensland.

"This was as much a surprise to me as anybody," Donald said. "You don't do what you do for the rewards. You do it because it's the right thing to do."



He joined the brigade after retiring and moving to Queensland from Western Australia.

"As I see it, I'm a member of the community and I want to give back as much as I can," he said. "We were on a 40-acre block and always conscious we, along with everyone around us, would have a problem if a fire occurred."

"As I see it, I'm a member of the community and I want to give back as much as I can."

– Donald Davey AFSM

"All through my military career I was involved in training and I had a lot of knowledge in areas that could benefit the brigade, and I ended up being part of the training team for the whole district."

"A lot of the trainees I worked with had no idea whatsoever about living in the country or the danger of fire. As soon as I turned 15, I joined the fire brigade in the Dandenongs in Victoria and we saw too often the effects of fire in the community."

"It was satisfying to impart some of that knowledge to new members and see them go away with the basic skills to look after themselves and those around them."

"I enjoyed my time with the brigade and I see it as a way for people to become part of their community."

NATURAL HAZARDS RESEARCH FORUM

QFD participated in the fourth annual Natural Hazards Research Forum in Adelaide, hosted by Natural Hazards Research Australia (NHRA).

QFD was represented by four experts – Dr Jane Sexton; Helen McGarry and Natalie Oliver from the State Intelligence, Predictions and Planning Branch; and Dr Michael Carroll from the Strategic Intelligence and Planning Branch.

The Forum is an opportunity to further QFD's understanding of NHRA's research portfolio, support our partnership with NHRA, and strengthen our stakeholder relationships with emergency services and researchers.

QFD experts chaired sessions, supported the development of NHRA's annual Disaster Challenge and presented on projects such as managing the risk of heat stress for first responders and understanding the role of diverse heat sources and environments.

Other topics included an update to the Australian Disaster Resilience Index, the Extreme Fire Behaviour Knowledge Modules and lessons learnt from Tropical Cyclone Alfred.

Participants also discussed the Transformative Scenarios in a Climate Challenged World project. QFD was an early adopter of this research, with the transformative scenarios used to develop QFD's vision, purpose and objectives in the inaugural QFD Strategic Plan and Beyond the Smoke.

NHRA have now developed a resource toolkit to make the research more accessible and useable. QFD intends to test this toolkit in a higher-degree student placement project called "Imagining the future of recovery operations for the emergency services in a climate-challenged world."

The project aims to provide insight and practical recommendations for QFD's hazard and risk profiling, preparedness programs and strategic planning, strengthening the department's disaster resilience and operational effectiveness.

As NHRA's sole Queensland agency partner, QFD is in a pivotal position to drive emergency sector research for the state. QFD has successfully submitted several project concepts to be funded by NHRA, including in collaboration with other agencies.

To stay up-to-date with NHRA's activities, including publications, upcoming research webinars and advance notice of next year's Forum, visit naturalhazards.com.au and subscribe to their newsletter.



TOXIC CHEMICAL CLEANUP IN CAMBODIA

Scientific Inspector Dr Damien Reid deployed to Cambodia to clean up 200 tonnes of chemicals linked to a massive drug lab.

Several Southeast Asian countries have been exploited by organised crime groups as a base for producing illicit drugs. In Cambodia, the legacy of these clandestine operations is hundreds of tonnes of hazardous chemicals stored in makeshift warehouses.

When the Government of Cambodia requested support, Damien was deployed as part of a multidisciplinary, multinational team under the command of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

The mission took place over five weeks, funded by donors including the Australian Government and the Republic of Korea. The team also trained the Cambodian National Authority for Combating Drugs and the National Authority for Chemical Weapons to mitigate future risks.

QFD supported the mission by loaning UNODC key response resources, including gas monitoring equipment, spill containment pallets, chemical transfer pumps, self-contained breathing apparatus sets and a mobile breathing air compressor.

Damien, a subject matter expert in hazardous materials mitigation and forensic chemistry, said their objective was to perform render safe operations at three high-risk storage sites in Phnom Penh.

“Supporting the Cambodians with their response to these chemicals was a humbling and inspiring experience,” Damien said.

“The scale of the illicit operations we observed was far beyond anything encountered in Western countries. The chemical techniques allegedly being carried out were very advanced and presented significant risks to responders and the surrounding community.

“The sites held significant quantities of chemicals and we had to manage several hazard classes, including compressed toxic gas cylinders and flammable, oxidising, toxic and corrosive substances, some of them potentially explosive.

“The operation required the full spectrum of hazmat response strategies and tactics. We performed chemical testing in the hot zone to identify unlabelled or mislabelled chemicals. We then separated them into compatible groupings for transport to the drug lab, which we used as a triage site.

“Some hazard classes react violently when mixed and an explosion was reported some time ago in one of the other storage locations, so we had to proceed with great caution.”

Many of the containers were damaged and started leaking when the team tried to move them, which required a rapid response to plug the leak and transfer the chemicals to a salvage container.

“The chemicals had been in place for many years in high temperatures and humidity so they were significantly degraded,” Damien said.

“We used innovative tactical solutions and improvised where necessary. For example, we had to mitigate the risk of seven tonnes of bromine, a highly toxic and corrosive liquid, stored in leaking three-kilogram glass bottles.

“I suggested encapsulating the bottles in 20-litre plastic buckets, surrounded by sand, but we had difficulty getting lids and wanted the buckets to withstand a drop without losing their contents.

“Scene Safety Officer Jeff Maher suggested we try capping the sand-filled buckets with polyurethane expanding foam and it worked.

“That will be one of my enduring memories of the deployment, the way the whole team worked together to overcome challenges – operational, diplomatic and political.

“The other will be the Cambodian people – our NACD and NACW colleagues who were so grateful for the support, and the community who feared their neighbourhoods would never be freed from the scourge of these chemicals.

“I am also grateful for the renewed perspective the deployment has given me for our hazmat capabilities here in QFD. Our crews can confidently respond to any class of hazmat emergency and that is something we should all be proud of.

“These capabilities were built over many decades but are easily taken for granted. When you see jurisdictions respond without such capabilities, you realise how lucky we are.”



The alleged clandestine drug lab linked to the three high-risk storage sites.



After testing mislabelled drums the team transferred the chemicals to new containers.



Damien (left) with Heng Lika from the NACD.



SPOTLIGHT ON SAFETY

The Queensland Fire and Rescue (QFR) Safety Symposium brought together 149 personnel over two days to shine a light on firefighter safety.

Participants from QFR operational frontline crews, Strategy and Corporate Services and interstate fire and rescue jurisdictions came together to discuss enabling technologies, emerging hazards and risks for frontline operations.

A highlight was compartment firefighter training with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Breathing Apparatus (BA) – a rare opportunity to experience the situations our firefighters train for, emphasising how crucial safety is to how we operate.

Other demonstrations included Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS), electric vehicles and hazard awareness, a force entry prop, a new 501T Command and Control Vehicle and a decontamination trailer.

Acting Chief Superintendent Bevan Moore was the Event Coordinator responsible for organising the symposium.

“The Safety Symposium enabled us to dive deeper into hazards and issues confronting firefighters today and tomorrow,” Bevan said.

“It enabled a multi-jurisdictional exchange of information and lessons learnt on the challenges confronting fire and rescue crews.

“We wanted attendees to be engaged in formal presentations in the morning sessions and then experience practical demonstrations and workshops in the afternoon.

“Throughout, attendees were able to network and re-connect with career-long colleagues and share their experiences.

“It was rewarding to see firefighters enjoy and engage with all areas of the Safety Symposium.

“A highlight for me was gaining a better understanding of the hazards associated with lithium-ion batteries in portable equipment and mobility devices.

“The content, including video footage of actual events, gave an excellent insight into real emergencies that confronted the community and responding crews.

“It was great to recognise our Master of Ceremony, Superintendent Steven Bates. This was Steve’s last event for his career as he transitioned into retirement after 36 years of service in June.”



In a survey at the end of the symposium, 94% of participants rated it highly.

“They gave us feedback on the relaxed atmosphere, the presenters’ expertise and the consistent focus on firefighter safety. Firefighters enjoyed the focus on their core business and sponsors were glad to be a part of such an important initiative.

“Our interstate guests were highly encouraging of QFR’s initiative and welcomed the concept on a national level.

“We believe this is the first event of its kind for Australia and New Zealand Fire and Rescue agencies and firefighters are keen to see this type of event continue.

“Safety is the number one priority for all of us, and I ask everyone to continue to work together to improve safety outcomes and uphold our strong reputation for safety.”





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ENGAGING WITH THE COMMUNITY ABOUT WARNINGS

QFD has collaborated with under-represented communities to help them better understand the Australian Warning System (AWS) and redistribute warnings.

The Public Information and Warnings Unit (PIWU) and Regional Community Engagement Coordinators (RCEC) delivered tailored education and engagement activities and resources to local communities.

Through nine pilot programs across Queensland, the team engaged with young people, seniors, Aboriginal communities, people living with disability, and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups.

QFD received the Emergency Management Public Affairs (EMPA) Australia Award for Excellence in Emergency Communication for these pilot programs.

Each session was shaped by the hosting community's preferences, ensuring conversations were inclusive and relevant.

"We received feedback from the community that warning systems often felt inaccessible or overly technical," said Public Information Officer Justin Fowler who coordinated the program for PIWU. "Teneille Sweedman from the AWS Project Team originally developed the pilot programs in response to this feedback."

Justin said the pilot programs' success depended on relationship building and community empowerment.

"Bespoke tools like cattle tags with QR codes, backpacks with emergency kits, and multilingual videos were novel and effective, especially where they enabled communities to take the lead in passing on the AWS message," Justin said. "Even though the tags were intended as keyrings, some have ended up out in the field on real cattle!"

"The success of peer-to-peer models, particularly among seniors and CALD communities, reinforced the importance of bottom-up communication strategies.

"Being able to communicate quickly and clearly with diverse communities is critical during emergencies. By integrating community-led approaches into how we deliver public information we can prioritise local knowledge and lived experience.

"Ultimately, this will allow QFD to not only improve AWS awareness but set a precedent for authentic, community-centric public information.

"A highlight of this project was seeing community-led ideas come to life and hearing the great stories from across Queensland about how different communities took ownership of the warnings system in ways that were practical and meaningful for them."

The pilot programs are part of an ongoing commitment to refine and localise the way QFD delivers public information to Queenslanders. Next steps include looking for ways to scale up the most promising

approaches and continuing to collaborate where possible.

"Our priorities include looking for ways to incorporate AWS awareness into school visits and strengthening support for QFD to deliver public information and warnings using culturally appropriate tools," Justin said.

For more information, scan the QR code to watch the national webinar hosted by the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC):



Rockhampton – people with disabilities

In Rockhampton, Julianne Webster-Scott from QFD worked with our Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements partners to hold a series of workshops with the Queenslanders with Disability Network (QDN) and Central Queensland Multicultural Association (CQMA). QFD collaborated with these communities to develop meaningful resources such as emergency kits, Easy English and screen-reader-friendly materials. A huge achievement from these sessions was the recruitment of a new SES Volunteer.



Mount Isa – First Nations community

In Mount Isa, QFD delivered a pilot with Mithangkaya Nguli (Young People Ahead), beginning with a culturally grounded conversation with Kalkadoon Elders, followed by a youth-led workshop with local young people. One outcome was the proposal to design warning-themed memory cards that incorporate AWS icons alongside imagery from Country – a practical, intergenerational learning tool.





CELEBRATING STRENGTH THIS NAIDOC WEEK

This year marked 50 years of NAIDOC Week and QFD members took part in celebrations around the state, including a discussion hosted by the charity Red Dust.

NAIDOC Week is an opportunity for all Australians to learn about First Nations cultures and histories and celebrate the oldest, continuous living cultures on earth.

QFD is committed to supporting First Nations and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Our Community Engagement team organised staff and volunteers to attend a variety of events and show support alongside local partners and groups.

Many QFD members tuned into an online panel discussion hosted by Red Dust, a charity whose mission is working together to enrich lives, improve health and strengthen the future of Indigenous youth and families.

Panelists Mikaela Simpson, Jonathan Hermawan, Kira Bain and Kirby Bentley discussed the theme of NAIDOC Week – ‘The Next Generation: Strength, Vision and Legacy’.

Pride and empowerment

Kirby Bentley is an Australian rules footballer who played for Fremantle and Carlton football clubs and later appeared on *Australian Survivor*. She is a Noongar-Yamatji woman from Western Australia.

Reflecting on the theme of strength, Kirby said, “I think we’ve always had that strength and I feel like now because of our uncles and aunties and our older brothers and sisters, we’re able to walk with a different sense of pride and empowerment.”

Kirby also spoke about the resilience of Indigenous women.

“People don’t see us as somebody that can add value to a lot of things [but] I think we’re the life givers and the glue to our families... that resilience really has set me up in my life and I’m so grateful for the women I’ve been surrounded by. Everything I do is for our future kids.

“In a corporate setting, if we don’t have representation in director roles, management roles, on boards, as leaders throughout the entire process, and if that organisation doesn’t put people first... we’re expected to conform and fall into the old way of doing things and it really doesn’t work. You lose a lot of great people.

“If people come first, you can speak to that person, understand them and have the right team around them to support them.”

When asked how non-Indigenous people can celebrate Indigenous culture respectfully, Kirby replied, “Education is key

– having conversations and knowing the real facts, because our history is a very uncomfortable truth.

“Only we can change it moving forward and a lot of what we’re doing and having conversations about and the way we’re living our lives is trying to do that, but we need people to walk with us.”

Strength

Jonathan Hermawan, a Loritja man from the Northern Territory and Director of Programs at Red Dust, said NAIDOC Week was a time to celebrate the strengths of First Nations cultures and hear all the voices in the room.

“I would love NAIDOC to be all year,” Jonathan said. “I’d like it even more where NAIDOC isn’t even said, it’s just that we celebrate First Nations cultures across the board and we embrace what that means for us as a nation.

“It’s the foundation of the spirit of this country – the physical country as well as our hope for what it really means to be reconciled, work together and walk alongside – to be a family and call ourselves that, regardless of which colour we are.

“The strength I’m seeing in our young people, particularly to not be held back by cultural and racial stereotypes... I see strength where young people have been given a platform because of our older people.

“The strength for me is them breaking those shackles to become the best of the worlds they live in and not at the expense of their culture, where they come from and who they belong to.”

Jonathan said organisations had to be willing to change the way things had always been done.

“If you have poor uptake of First Nations or marginalised people in your workforce... you might need to say, ‘We need to change what we’ve been doing, and fundamentally it could be in our approach to how we run our business’.

“That might be throwing out an old policy and saying we’re going to start again with this mob in mind. That also requires you to

reevaluate your company values – what is it you really value if you’re saying you’re an inclusive workforce?”

Space to flourish

Kira Bain is a Ngarrindjeri woman who was born and raised on Kurna land and teaches Kurna language at Tauondi Aboriginal College.

“In some ways I think [the world] is better than how it was but also worse,” Kira said. “I’m worried to put my kids in childcare or kindy because traditionally we’d look after our own kids, but we’re torn now between working and staying home and looking after our kids.

“I get worried about what it’s going to be like for my kids because they’re going to have the same guilt and be torn between looking after their own kids and going to work, and it’s really difficult.

“Obviously that’s no comparison to what a lot of our old people used to go through. My Nanas were with Aboriginal men and had babies with them and then were forced to marry white men.

“I worry about my kids in terms of white Australia and how they’re going to walk between the two worlds.”

Mikaela Simpson, Communications Coordinator at Red Dust, summed up the conversation by saying, “You want to provide a space for mob to exist and flourish without feeling like a tick in a box or a diversity pat on the back.

“It’s a journey and I think if people are patient on that journey they can continue to make sure those spaces do exist.

“There’s a lot of conversation about us but not a lot of conversation with us.

“Show up for NAIDOC Week, show up for mob, learn about the country you’re on, learn about the people whose country you’re on and celebrate our history and our legacy moving forward.”

To find out more about Red Dust’s work in the community visit www.reddust.org.au.



During NAIDOC Week, QFD members on the Sunshine Coast enjoyed connecting with community while listening to songs and stories from Indigenous dance troupes.



READY FOR BUSHFIRES

Queensland has entered a period of heightened bushfire risk, but our Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ) brigades and their communities are well prepared.

Average fire conditions are likely across most of the state for the remainder of the cooler months, and RFSQ brigades have taken advantage of favourable conditions to undertake bushfire mitigation activities to reduce fuel load and manage vegetation.

Earlier this year, RFSQ identified 165 high-risk locations where mitigation activities were needed to protect communities and critical infrastructure.

RFSQ volunteers and state land managers acted early to build resilience and reduce risks ahead of spring and summer and by July they completed more than 535 mitigation activities in high-risk locations. This includes hazard reduction burns and community engagement activities.

For instance, in early July RFSQ partnered with Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service to conduct a mitigation burn in Girraween Nature Reserve, Noosa. This location was one of the top 20 highest-risk areas due to extensive flammable vegetation, proximity to built-up areas and strong community interest in protecting it.

In mid-July, an RFSQ strike team consisting of six trucks, 13 crew members and one team leader carried out five hazard reduction burns across the North Burnett Local Government Area at the request of the council.

RFSQ issued more than 7000 permits for private landowners to undertake burns between January and May 2025, through its network of volunteer fire wardens. Permit holders have enacted more than 1700 burns and RFSQ assisted with more than 520 of them.



RFSQ crews conducted a hazard reduction burn at Muckadilla. Photo by Tim Bateup from Orange Hill Rural Fire Brigade.

Bushfire Safety campaign

QFD's annual Bushfire Safety advertising campaign is raising awareness of bushfire risk and encouraging Queenslanders in high-risk areas to prepare themselves and their properties.

The campaign will run until October on billboards, online video, digital display, radio and social media to reach a diverse audience across high-risk areas of the state.

It complements the education work done by RFSQ brigades and community engagement teams in their local communities.

If you'd like to share this important public safety message with your community, you can find campaign resources on the Gateway by searching for 'Bushfire safety' or contact your local Regional Community Engagement Coordinator.

Thank you to Justin Hogan from Narangba Rural Fire Brigade and Jasmine Cassell from Samsonvale Rural Fire Brigade who are once again the faces of the campaign.



RFSQ volunteers on the Sunshine Coast took part in exercises focused on pumping, 4WDing, working around high voltage power lines and first aid.



Crews completed a hazard reduction burn in St George with support from a Darling Downs mitigation strike team.

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RECOGNISING VOLUNTEERS FOR RFSQ WEEK

During Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ) Week, we honoured the tireless efforts of our RFSQ staff and volunteers.

Year-round, volunteers and staff do incredibly important work to strengthen community resilience, from planning and preparation to bushfire response and community education and engagement. It all makes Queensland and Queenslanders safer.

With the heightened bushfire risk period approaching, brigades across the state have been conducting mitigation activities with partner agencies and stakeholders.

This year, we introduced new awards for RFSQ State Brigade and Regional Brigade of the Year to recognise brigades that have demonstrated outstanding performance, innovation and dedication.

Thargomindah Rural Fire Brigade from south-west Queensland was named State Brigade of the Year for their dedication in responding to incidents and protecting their community.

This was never more evident than in their response to the recent floods. Their efforts in maintaining community spirit and providing support through challenging periods reflects the true values of the RFSQ.

Volunteer of the Year

David Beil from Doomadgee Rural Fire Brigade was recognised for his unwavering dedication to supporting the community while navigating the complexities of rural and remote boundaries. He has shown an innovative spirit, initiating positive change within the community.

“Receiving the award was incredibly humbling,” he said. “It’s an honour to be recognised at that level, but I truly see this as a reflection of the whole brigade and the community we serve.”

“The support and teamwork behind the scenes are what make our efforts possible, so I feel very proud to share this with them.”

“I first joined RFSQ in 2003 when I was living in Woodstock near Townsville. I’ve always had a passion for volunteering and before joining RFSQ, I volunteered with St John Ambulance in Townsville for several years. That experience really sparked my drive to help others.”

“One day, I saw the yellow fire trucks driving past my home and something just clicked – it was a bit of a reckoning. I knew then that I wanted to be part of that team and contribute to protecting and supporting my community.”

“The most rewarding part is seeing the positive impact we can have, not just in emergencies, but through building relationships and being a trusted support. Knowing people feel safer and more connected because of our presence means a lot.”

David was recognised for organising community initiatives and events.

“A big part of our work in Doomadgee involves connecting with the community in everyday, practical ways,” he said. “We visit the school to raise fire safety awareness and we’re always having yarns with locals.”

“Recently, we took on a project to clean and mark fire hydrants around the community. Some might say that’s a council responsibility, but in a remote place like Doomadgee, I see it as a ‘let’s all get in and help’ situation.”

“It was also a great opportunity to talk with locals about the brigade, encourage potential new members, and show we’re out there actively working alongside the Doomadgee Aboriginal Shire Council to keep our community as prepared and safe as possible.”

David and his brigade have also provided support to locals facing hardship.

“In a remote community like Doomadgee, hardship comes in many forms,” he said. “Sometimes it’s supporting families after a house fire or checking in on vulnerable residents during extreme weather.”

“Our brigade’s role goes beyond just responding to fires – we aim to be a trusted support network when people need it most. Being visible, approachable and ready to help is part of how we look after our community.”



“We work closely with Queensland Police Service, ERGON Energy, the council, Queensland Ambulance Service and the school to name a few. Our relationships are based on mutual respect and a shared goal of supporting the community. In small, remote places, collaboration isn’t just helpful, it’s essential.

“I’d like to acknowledge the amazing people in Doomadgee who support our brigade, from our volunteers to their families, the council and community members who step up every day.

“Volunteering here is about heart and connection, and I’m grateful to be part of something that makes a real difference.”

Young Volunteer of the Year

Isaac Brailsford from North Stradbroke Island Rural Fire Brigade regularly travels to the island from the mainland to attend training, hazard reduction burns and incidents.

He has increased recruitment through social media and strengthened the brigade’s connection with the island community.

“I was over the moon to be nominated and then I got the phone call on my 18th birthday,” Isaac said.

“I joined RFSQ just after I turned 16. I’d been in the Emergency Services Cadets for a few years and that led me into RFSQ. Our brigade is quite small, with about 20 active firefighters and support officers.

“The thing I find most rewarding is the community – not just the volunteers you work with, but when you go out and do a burn and the community say thank you, it makes you feel good, like you’re achieving something.”

He has demonstrated outstanding commitment as a young volunteer, including by leading the brigade’s social media and digital engagement.



“My brigade didn’t have any social media and they were struggling with recruiting members, so we got together at an AGM and decided to make a social media page,” Isaac said.

“I created it and I post regularly, as well as promoting engagement and recruitment at community events like NAIDOC Week celebrations and the island’s annual triathlon.”

A recent highlight was a hazard reduction burn the brigade completed over four days.

“The burn covered more than 800 acres and it was nice to be involved in something that big and see the community so appreciative of what we did. We worked with Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation (QYAC), the Indigenous firefighting group who ran the burn with support from Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, SEQWater and auxiliary firefighters on the island.”

Celebrating our award winners

Recipient	Region	Award
David Beil Doomadgee RFB	Northern	State Volunteer of the Year
Carey Mitchell Burnett Heads RFB	Central	Regional Volunteer of the Year
Jesse Radatti Birnam RFB	South Eastern	Regional Volunteer of the Year
John Archer Cambooya RFB	South Western	Regional Volunteer of the Year
Isaac Brailsford North Stradbroke Island RFB	South Eastern	State Young Volunteer of the Year
Andrew Hepburn Belmont RFB	Central	Regional Young Volunteer of the Year
Haylee Haynes Tumoulin RFB	Northern	Regional Young Volunteer of the Year
Thargomindah RFB	South Western	State Brigade of the Year
Hattonvale Summerholm RFB	South Eastern	Regional Brigade of the Year
Childers RFB	Central	Regional Brigade of the Year
Tinaroo RFB	Northern	Regional Brigade of the Year

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BEST MATES MAKE A TOP TEAM

Volunteer canine handler Bron Mullins and her dog Jaeger recently passed their Canine Urban Search and Rescue (K9 USAR) assessments to become a qualified team.

As a volunteer canine handler, Bron's unique background, experience and skills have been put to use in the demanding training undertaken by QFD's K9 USAR team.

"I serve in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), which has given me valuable experience with deployments, operating in challenging environments and adapting quickly to new situations," Bron said.

"My background has helped develop my teamwork, leadership and coaching skills, which I now use to support and mentor newer K9 teams. I also bring knowledge of planning and logistics to the USAR team."

Driven by the desire to give back and her love of working with dogs, Bron has volunteered with the team for 11 years. She adopted her 'best mate' Jaeger, her third dog to qualify, from the RAAF in 2023.

"Jaeger is laid-back and easy-going when he's off duty, but once it's time to work he becomes incredibly focused and driven," Bron said. "He's highly task-oriented, and his absolute favourite reward is a tennis ball. Jaeger loves the search work, which makes him a great fit for USAR."

"My journey started with my first USAR canine, Zacc, who had a natural talent for

finding people. We discovered this when we tried man-trailing just for fun. When I moved to Queensland, I learned about QFD's K9 USAR team and jumped at the chance to get involved.

"I'm passionate about making a difference and working alongside my best mate – it's incredibly rewarding. I also enjoy helping the team grow by mentoring newer members."

Bron explained that being a canine handler involved planning, focus and dedication, but the rewards were many.

"Of course, our dogs eventually retire, so succession planning is always on my mind. It took about 18 months to qualify my second dog Ryker, and for a time, I had two qualified dogs until I retired Zacc in April last year due to cancer. Sadly, I lost him in October, but he was the reason I started this journey.

"Zacc and Ryker, both kelpie cross beagles, are very independent and naturally love searching. Jaeger, a Belgian Malinois, is more task-focused and responds well to direction from me. Each dog has their own search style, and I've learnt to work with their individual strengths."

Bron also highlighted the ongoing training requirements of the role, and the importance of being prepared for anything.

"Being a USAR canine handler is truly a lifelong commitment. It requires daily training to continually develop the dog's skills, especially for the wide variety of complex situations we may encounter. You also need to think creatively and adapt your approach, ensuring your dog is prepared for anything."

"A standout moment was deploying to Indiana in the US for Exercise Shaken Fury. Working alongside the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) K9 teams was an incredible learning experience."

"Many USAR teams from all over the US, Canada and Australia took part and it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience that allowed me to bring back knowledge to our team."

Bron is proud of her achievements and the expertise of the team.

"We now have the largest qualified K9 USAR team in the country and it could not have happened without the ongoing dedication of our experienced handlers and QFD."



BATTLING THE ELEMENTS ON THE GREAT TREK

Three brave QFD members ran 370 kilometres in six days for the Great Trek 2025.

The trio trekked from Blackbutt to Killarney on the Bicentennial National Trail to support the work of the Firefighter Cancer Foundation Australia (FCFA), running 60 to 75 kilometres each day from sunrise to sunset.

Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ) volunteer and auxiliary firefighter Stephen 'Macca' McDermott, RFSQ staff member and volunteer Emma Richardson and QFD staff member Tanya Langhorne took on the challenge from 30 June to 5 July.

After completing a charity stair climb on the Gold Coast last year, Macca, Emma and Tanya were inspired to do more.

"We all agreed to climb the 41 floors three times with a 20-kilogram weight vest," Tanya said. "We wanted to do something for FCFA because we all believed in it."

"For me personally, my mom died of cancer and it's a really big thing in my genes, so I understand cancer's impact on a family."

"The trail went through some amazing rural brigades and we thought it was a great opportunity to connect with our rural community as well."

Along the way they stopped at rural fire brigades in Toogoolawah, Murphy's Creek, Fordsdale, Mulgowie, Aratula and Killarney, giving education sessions on cancer prevention.

However, the trek got off to a rough start with 10 hours of solid rain.

"After that, we battled winds stronger than Tropical Cyclone Alfred," Tanya said. "We were getting blown off mountains into barbed wire fences. It got down to minus five degrees."

"Most of the trail was unpaved, unkept fire trails. We climbed up and down epic mountains where we literally held on for dear life and rolled down the other side. I still have splinters all through my arms and legs. We ended up doing about 8000 vertical metres."



Emma said the trek had many highs and lows.

"Our motto came to be TEaM: Tanya, Emma and Macca," she said. "Tanya and Macca are ultra-marathon runners, I just like to lift weights and run much shorter distances. To do such long distances, we had to have each other's backs and push the limits."

"It hurt, every day. We would arrive at our location for the end of the day, plaster up the blisters, nourish ourselves, go to bed and do it all over again. We originally planned to camp in swags but luckily Jayco Brisbane Camperland sponsored us with a motorhome. It was priceless, to be able to sit on a bed, have a shower and get off our feet."

"When we spoke with each brigade, we encouraged them to adopt a different approach to decontamination and take steps to reduce exposure to carcinogens."

"The longer you spend in a brigade or at work, the more people you find out have a cancer diagnosis."

"At the end of last year, my close work colleague was diagnosed with terminal cancer and given a couple of hours to live. He's now doing well and he was my reason to join the trek."

Tanya recalled an especially perilous night at Fordsdale.

"Some rural firefighters rescued us about two kilometres before our finish line for the day," she said. "They decided our location was too dangerous – there were wild dogs and the terrain was horrible. We piled into the back of their truck and then the wind kicked in at 80 kilometres an hour."

"No matter how tired we were, no matter how much our feet were covered in disgusting blisters, we had to shove our sausage-sized toes back into our shoes and start walking again the next day. I had to cut my shoes to make them fit."

Emma said the last day was the longest.

"We got up at 1am and didn't finish until 5.30pm," she said. "We were at our wit's end and living in each other's pockets. It's absolutely incredible what you can put your body through. I would absolutely do it again."

Tanya agreed day six was hard because of the accumulated damage to their bodies.

"Luckily some amazing rural and auxiliary firefighters walked with us for the last 11 kilometres and really helped us through," she said. "I couldn't thank them enough."

"All the RFSQ volunteers we worked with were incredible. They went above and beyond, like putting out fresh towels for us in their bathrooms. They are honestly just incredible humans."

You can donate to the FCFA at fcfa-limited.grassrootz.com/the-great-trek

A PILLAR OF THE COMMUNITY

More than 160 people celebrated the retirement of Captain Wayne 'Cookie' Jeffrey after 45 years of dedicated service.

As an auxiliary firefighter, Cookie attended incidents of all kinds – natural disasters, search and rescues, road crash rescues, chemical spills, structure fires – while balancing his role as a branch manager in the stockfeed industry and his commitments as a husband and devoted father.

"It all started in 1979 in the small town of Proston when I became an auxiliary firefighter under the board system," Cookie shared while reminiscing. "We got hand-me-down equipment – the captain gave me a pair of overalls my mother had to take-up. Training was very basic, and we just putted along under our own steam.

"In 1990 the government stepped in and brought a lot of changes. It really helped little stations like Proston, providing better equipment and more structured training to make the job more professional."

Cookie moved to Wondai in 1994 and remained an active firefighter, later becoming Captain at the station. This role was more than just fires and rescues in Cookie's eyes.

"We pride ourselves on helping the community and charities," he said. "We have run a charity golf day over the last 16 years to raise money for Relay for Life, LifeFlight and Movember.

"I am very passionate about Movember because I personally used the Fire and Emergency Services Support Network (FESSN) a few times to get through difficult jobs. FESSN is a great asset for the service.

"There were some terrible times! When I went to accidents or structural fires involving people I knew.

"Back in 1994 we had a bad electrocution out in Proston with three fatalities and two young fellas who were lucky enough to survive. It was very much to my heart because one person who died was my employee and I had dealings with the other two.

"Since I've retired, the little black box has opened up and I've reflected on jobs and situations over the years. I try to remind myself I never caused any of the incidents, I only went there to try and make things better.

"We made the situation safer and no one else got hurt, but we later realised we weren't trained correctly and nowadays I wouldn't have gone in the way we did. That was the first time I used counsellors and they got me through.

"We need people like the fire service to get out there and protect the community and it's a very strong institution to belong to. You're not individuals in the fire service, you do it as a team. It's been a great career and I will miss it but I've got a full agenda ahead of me."

Cookie's daughter Skye said the celebration of her dad's career was 'an overwhelming and deeply meaningful experience'.

"For many years, I did not fully grasp the immense responsibility and sacrifice that came with Dad's role," Skye said.

"I now realise being a firefighter is far more than a job; it is a profound act of service and courage. The knowledge that Dad has risked his life multiple times – whether fighting bushfires, responding to accidents, or entering burning buildings – leaves me in awe.

"Growing up, Dad was seen as a pillar of the community, always involved in local events and proudly wearing a shirt with the QFD logo. At annual fire education events, he was a familiar face, leading safety presentations at my school.

"His passion for educating others not only shaped my understanding of responsibility and service but also inspired my own path as a teacher.

"One of the most vivid memories I have is the sound of his pager. It is forever etched in my mind – the instant he would stop whatever he was doing and drop everything at that familiar buzz. No matter where we were or what we were doing, that call to action was immediate and unwavering.

"Despite the tough times that have presented themselves on occasion, I am immensely proud to call Cookie Jeffrey my father, and to know what he has given to this role as a fireman across the last 45 years."

Cookie is now travelling around north Queensland in his caravan, then heading to Africa. On his return, Cookie will continue to travel Australia with the hope of finding the perfect place to park up the van more permanently.





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WORKING TOGETHER FOR COMMUNITY

Auxiliary Captain Stephen Malone has gone above and beyond to ensure the safety of his community, working with partner agencies on a range of innovative projects.

Throughout his 30 years of service with Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ) and 10 years with QFD and the State Emergency Service (SES), Stephen has built strong connections with other agencies.

He hails from Julia Creek, a small town in north-west Queensland about halfway between Mount Isa and Hughenden.

"There are about 380 people in town, and we only have two auxiliary firefighters, which is always a struggle for us," Stephen said.

"We have good relationships with all our partner agencies. We all make sure we get on, work together and train together.

"A lot of our close working relationships or partnerships have stemmed from 2019, when I started our First Responders Group with our local QFD, Queensland Police Service (QPS), Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) and State Emergency Service (SES). This lets us at a grassroots level discuss past jobs and if we encountered a problem or saw a limitation, we try to get everyone together, talk it through, find a solution and make it happen.

"Our first big partnership was with the shire council. We only have two motels and one pub in town, so we always struggle with accommodation for visiting instructors. It took us 14 months to do a road crash rescue course because there was no accommodation for the instructors.

"The council had some buildings they weren't using with showers, toilets and a training room, so I approached them about using those. Council came forward and donated the buildings to Queensland Fire and Rescue (QFR). We now have our own autonomy to train when we need to."

Stephen also worked with LifeFlight to increase the range of their rescue helicopter.

"Our response area extends 200 kilometres north and south and 80 kilometres east and west, but the helicopter is in Mount Isa and due to distance and fuel range they can't reach a lot of our response area up north.

"We partnered with the council and LifeFlight to place extra drums of fuel around our response area so the helicopter can refuel and travel farther, enabling them to retrieve critical or inaccessible patients.

"Recently, a young guy was mustering on a cattle station when his motorbike hit a termite mound and he came off. We responded with QAS from Julia Creek 160km on dirt road where a cattle mustering helicopter met us and guided us a further 7km off road through thick wattle scrub to our patient.

"He was in the middle of swamp land with suspected spinal injuries. Via sat phone QAS requested the LifeFlight helicopter, not wanting to risk the rough drive out. The new pilot declined the job at first as it was way out of their flight range but his flight crew made him aware of the fuel we'd placed at a cattle station in the area. Having the extra fuel was the only reason the helicopter got there, giving the patient the fastest and safest medical retrieval possible.

"We also partnered with six government agencies and one non-government agency to fit an SES trailer with fuel drums so the SES can deliver more fuel to the helicopter.

"I did all the planning and mapping, QAS and QPS gave input on locations, the council supplied the steel and a workshop where Queensland Corrective Services did the fabricating, and LifeFlight supplied the fuel.

"Soon after we finished the trailer, a man crashed his truck south of Kynuna and had critical internal injuries needing emergency surgery. The SES delivered fuel to the accident site so the helicopter could fly direct, saving more than an hour of flight time. It was the first time we used the trailer, and it literally saved the bloke's life."

Another major issue was getting accurate directions from patients on cattle stations.

"There are a lot of backpackers and new staff who don't know where they are so they can't direct us to them," Stephen said.

"We sat down with FireCom and made a template of the questions to ask in an emergency Triple Zero (000) call to narrow down accurate details of a given location.

"I'm helping the station owners fill in the emergency sheet with the correct crossroads, phone numbers, UHF radio channels, and latitude and longitude. Once we agree all their details are true and correct, I verify them off our TOMS mapping program.

"The 000 Emergency Sheet is then printed out and given to the station owner to place in a prominent location so their kids and workers can all be taught how and when to use it.

"The key to a successful rescue is having those clear and accurate details at the start. Although this is a massive job, hopefully this will make our FireCom colleagues' job a little easier. I take my hat off to them on how they make sense of some of the 000 calls.

"One of the benefits of being a small auxiliary station is there aren't any career politics or egos among us. We all have the same goal of taking care of the patient and the community."

+ OPERATION ICEBREAKER

Dozens of RFSQ and QFR firefighters converged on Kilcoy Showgrounds for the training exercise Operation Icebreaker.

It was a fantastic opportunity to tackle tough scenarios, test equipment and sharpen their skills in bushfire response.



+ HOSPITAL VISIT FOR BURNS AWARENESS MONTH

To recognise Burns Awareness Month, crews from Roma Street Fire and Rescue Station visited the Queensland Children's Hospital, bringing plenty of smiles to young patients.

Their visit brightened the day for many children and helped raise awareness about burn prevention and safety.



+ PUTTING ON A SHOW AT RACQ MOTORFEST

A road crash rescue (RCR) instructor crew from Caboolture, Wishart, Chermide and Bracken Ridge fire and rescue stations performed an RCR demonstration for an enthusiastic crowd at this year's RACQ Motorfest at Brisbane Showgrounds.

The crew demonstrated safety-conscious skills to release a complex entrapment in under 27 minutes, receiving a large round of applause from the public.

The crew were privileged to be the first in Australia to be invited by Tesla to thoroughly assess the Cybertruck from an RCR perspective.



+ RECOGNISING OUR FRONTLINE PERSONNEL

On Thank a First Responder Day, Federal Member for Fisher Andrew Wallace MP and Fortem Australia co-hosted a barbecue at Caloundra South Fire and Rescue Station.

First responders from QFR, RFSQ, SES, QPS, QAS and Surf Life Saving Queensland all came together to enjoy a snag or two.



+ CELEBRATING A LONG CAREER

More than 60 friends, colleagues and family gathered to celebrate the incredible career of Station Officer Steve Horvath and wish him well in retirement.



+ COLLABORATION IN ACTION

Working together to make a difference – that's what true collaboration looks like. RFSQ recently supported workshops facilitated by AgForce in Millmerran and Mitchell.

Around 100 landowners came along to hear from fire and land management experts, diving into vital topics like the permit-to-light system, communication on the ground, coordination with FireCom and the Australian Fire Danger Rating System.

It's through collaborations like these that we build safer, smarter communities.





+ KOREAN DELEGATION VISITS QFD

A Korean delegation from Brisbane's sister city Daejeon visited QFD to learn more about the department's role in bushfire arrangements and disaster management, in conjunction with Brisbane City Council.

The visit also highlighted the symbiotic relationship between Queensland Fire and Rescue and Rural Fire Service Queensland and how the department as a whole works together to pre-empt, prevent, mitigate and manage the consequences of fires and other emergencies.

The delegation also took the opportunity to visit Roma Street Fire and Rescue Station and learn about the capability of Queensland Fire and Rescue.

+ HAZMAT EXERCISE

Permanent and auxiliary staff from Tablelands Command conducted a multi-agency Hazmat response exercise at Bega's Malanda Milk Factory.

QFD, QAS and QPS units responded to a simulated forklift accident into pipework containing liquid anhydrous ammonia, resulting in a leak of unknown quantity.

Crews assisted factory staff to evacuate the premises and rescued two injured casualties inside. After conducting atmospheric monitoring and liaising with Scientific Unit crews, they undertook emergency patching of the pipe to manage the leak.

QFD teams from Malanda, Yungaburra, Atherton, Mareeba and Innisfail participated in the exercise, as did FireCom, QAS, QPS and members of Tablelands Regional Council Local Disaster Management Group.



+ NOEL HANGS UP HIS HELMET

After more than 37 years of dedicated service, Noel King hung up his helmet in August. From his early days as an auxiliary firefighter in Thangool, he rose through the ranks to become an Area Commander and left a lasting mark on the department.



Starting as a permanent firefighter in Rockhampton in 1990, Noel's leadership journey began with his promotion to Station Officer in 1999, and later to Inspector in Gladstone in 2018.

His passion for the job extended well beyond the station. He was a proud member of the Central Queensland Road Crash Rescue team that represented Australia in Canada and the US in the 1990s. He also participated in an international firefighter exchange in Saskatoon, Canada, bringing home valuable insights and building global connections.

Noel has contributed to the organisation in so many ways, from shaping future crews through state recruitment, to supporting Bike for Burns and countless other efforts that exemplify what it means to serve.

We thank Noel for his unwavering commitment, leadership and the legacy he leaves behind.

+ A SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Chief Superintendent Jason Lawler attended a special morning tea at the Toowoomba Fire Brigade Historical Society Museum to posthumously honour the incredible service of Sub Station Officer Lloyd Sutton.

Jason had the privilege of presenting the Diligent and Ethical Medal (2nd Clasp) to Lloyd's family, with his daughters Kerri Gunther, Maree Smith and granddaughter Katie Gunther proudly receiving the medal in his memory.



+ FRONTLINE INCLUSIVE RESCUE EXPERIENCE

Charlton Hub welcomed Year 10 students Ava, Bella and Adela for a Frontline Inclusive Rescue Experience (FIRE).



The two-day program included learning about all the different career pathways offered by QFD. The girls are boarders – their home is the bush and they have seen firsthand the importance of emergency services staff and volunteers in community.

All three girls hope to have a career helping their community and can't wait to start volunteering.



+ CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY ON HOME FIRE SAFETY

Fifteen volunteers from the Central Queensland Multicultural Association's Disaster Community Connectors visited Rockhampton Fire and Rescue Station and FireCom to learn all about how to recognise fire risks in the home.

The Disaster Community Connectors play an important role as peer educators and are a key QFD partner for building more capable communities.

The group, hailing from the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, China, Colombia, Germany and Brazil, also got hands-on experience in calling in a house fire to Triple Zero (000) and saw behind the scenes as a fire crew responded to a house fire call.

They learnt how to avoid fires in the home and how to prepare their home and themselves, along with important messages to take back to their communities.

FireCom also gave a session on what to expect when calling Triple Zero (000). Firefighters from the station then talked about what to expect when the firefighters arrive on the scene of a house fire and what questions may be asked.

Participants did a practical exercise where they called FireCom and saw what happens behind the scenes. The group were amazed at how quickly the firefighters were dressed and in the truck. The firefighters then demonstrated taking a hose line into a structure.

It was a great engagement activity supporting the Home Fire Safety advertising campaign and Triple Zero (000).

The group later attended a pre-season bushfire safety presentation during RFSQ Week to learn key bushfire safety messages to take back to their communities.

+ TALKING HOME FIRE SAFETY

The National Seniors Gardy City branch welcomed Queensland Fire and Rescue to their monthly meetup to talk all things home fire safety.

The group chatted about prevention, staying prepared, escape plans and the latest on smoke alarm legislation. There were lots of great questions and the spoons were a big hit.



+ JOINING THE RANKS

Congratulations to the newest auxiliary firefighters from Course 50/25 on completing their training. Queensland Fire and Rescue's Northern Region welcomes them to their Townsville Division stations.



+ RPAS DEMONSTRATION

RFSQ volunteer Al Cooney delivered a Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) demonstration to Northern Beaches State High School's Year 11 and 12 aviation class.

The class is currently completing their Certificate III in aviation where they will also receive their Remote Pilots Licence. This event allowed QFD to share industry experience with the students to help reinforce what they are learning in the classroom.



+ A PRESENTATION FOR ROTARY

QFR Acting Station Officer Scott Cross delivered a presentation on lithium-ion batteries to the members of Mundingburra Rotary.



+ ROMA STREET OPENS ITS DOORS

Brisbane Open House is a free annual event giving people the rare opportunity to discover the hidden wealth of architecture, engineering and history in buildings and places around Brisbane city.

Selected buildings are open to the public, encouraging visitors to explore and engage with Brisbane's built environment.

Roma Street Fire and Rescue Station was the standout performer of the event, with more than a thousand people through the doors. Guests received personalised tours through the station and were lucky to see the crews respond to multiple incidents.

The next generation of firefighters were well represented, with many cute miniature firefighters attending.



+ CLERMONT COMMUNITY CHALLENGE

QFR firefighters came along to show their support for the Clermont Community Challenge, a combined event bringing together 'Lily's Mission' and 'In the Dark'.

The event raised awareness for the need to assist local people with mental health struggles and navigating the healthcare system, particularly when faced with a cancer diagnosis.



+ BURNING FOR OUTCOMES

RFSQ held a Burning for Outcomes workshop in Collinsville, in partnership with NQ Dry Tropics and supported by AgForce.

The workshop focused on fire management practices for mitigation, production, conservation and bushfire response.

About 30 people attended including graziers, primary industry groups, land managers and RFSQ partner agencies.

Participants gained insights into using fire as a tool for grazing, weed management, cultural and conservation outcomes, and bushfire incident and safety planning.

A practical demonstration of low-intensity burning techniques provided hands-on learning opportunities around the management of fire intensity by ignition patterns.

The event fostered greater engagement and interoperability between graziers, RFSQ and land management agencies, particularly in bushfire response scenarios.



+ SPARKING CONVERSATIONS AT REGIONAL EXPOS

As part of the Home Fire Safety campaign, QFD Central Region hit the road in July with interactive displays at the Rockhampton and Maryborough Adventure, Lifestyle and Home Expos, connecting with more than 1200 community members.



Visitors explored caravan fire safety, smoke alarm compliance, bushfire preparedness and escape planning. Stand-out features included a caravan safety interactive wall, doll house and emergency kit setups.

Engagement was high, with hundreds of conversations about compliance deadlines, alarm types and fire safety planning. QFD members also spoke to local stakeholders to uncover knowledge gaps in the community.

The events proved the power of face-to-face engagement, with many attendees leaving better informed and motivated to act. The team will use these insights to refine future outreach, simplify messaging and extend sector-specific engagement.



1. QFR and RFSQ joined other first responders in the 2025 Emergency Services Blood Drive.
2. QFR crews from Atherton and Mareeba completed a simulated fire exercise alongside Queensland Corrective Services at far north Queensland's Lotus Glen Correctional Centre.
3. RFSQ worked with partner agencies to conduct hazard mitigation burns in the Cooktown area.
4. Firefighters supported the Ronald McDonald House charity by covering five kilometres in full turnout gear at the Townsville Running Festival.



5. The community came along to an open day for the Habana and Calen Cameron's Pocket rural fire brigades.
6. QFR crews joined their colleagues from QPS and QAS for a training day where they took the lead with a casualty trapped under a car and another pinned under a forklift.
7. Colleagues, family, friends and a guard of honour at Cairns Fire and Rescue Station farewelled Station Officer Brian Jewell after his 26-and-a-half-year firefighting career.
8. QFR firefighters and scientific officers joined QPS to hear from technical specialists about responding to electric vehicles.
9. QFR firefighters from Kooralbyn Auxiliary Fire and Rescue Station visited a local school to teach kids about fire safety and being a firefighter.
10. About 50 RFSQ volunteers from South Western Region gave up their Sunday to sharpen their skills at an exercise in Toowoomba.

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