

RESPONSE

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE QUEENSLAND FIRE DEPARTMENT OCTOBER 2025



ON THE FIRE LINE

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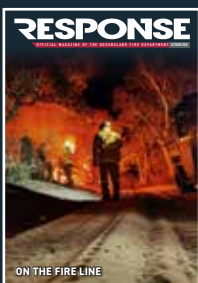
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ON THE COVER

Tamborine Mountain Rural Fire Brigade deployed to Moreton Island to fight a large bushfire. Photo by Sam Webster, Tamborine Mountain Rural Fire Brigade.

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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.

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SPOTLIGHT

A RURAL TRAILBLAZER - CAMDEN SCHOLZ

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FOREWORDS



STEVE SMITH AFSM
Commissioner

QUEENSLAND FIRE DEPARTMENT

We are well into the heightened bushfire period, and we've experienced moderate fire activity across much of the state but QFD is well prepared.

Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ) volunteers and staff have been working long hours to keep communities safe from bushfires. Thank you for your valuable work and readily giving your time to protect communities.

RFSQ staff and volunteers, with support from Queensland Fire and Rescue, have undertaken mitigation activities across the state, including in several areas that haven't been burnt before. We will continue mitigation activities by conducting burns year-round.

Aircraft and Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) have played a major role in bushfire mitigation and response. RPAS have conducted ecological surveys before mitigation burns and aircraft have assisted with waterbombing, particularly at high-risk burns.

We're likely to see fire activity continue until the onset of the severe weather season.

Preparing for storms and the severe weather season is key and we're making sure our crews and resources are ready to respond. We're also encouraging everyone to do their bit – check your emergency plans, prepare your homes and stay informed. By working together and staying prepared, we can help keep our communities safe.

I would like to congratulate the AUS-1 Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) for being successfully recertified. The team of 75 people worked on a 24-hour roster over three days to rescue survivors from a simulated earthquake.

The exercise tested their ability to deploy at short notice to international disasters. An assessment team from 10 different nations evaluated the team's response and judged that they met the standards for recertification. Congratulations again to all the dedicated staff and volunteers of AUS-1 DART.

Another significant milestone was the first promotional ceremony for our new Station Officer Program.

Our first 14 participants completed six months of intensive training that gave them the skills to become station officers. It was fantastic to see them celebrate their achievements with friends and family. Thank you to everyone who was involved in developing the program.

On Firefighters Remembrance Day we paid our respects to firefighters who have lost their lives in the line of duty. Firefighters are often required to navigate difficult and hazardous situations, but they do this without hesitation.

At 10am on the 10th day of the 10th month, we gathered to pay tribute to them and the sacrifices they made. It is always a solemn occasion and a reminder of the risks our people face at incidents every day.

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



JOHN CAWCUTT AFSM
Chief Fire Officer

FIRE INSPECTORATE

Reflecting on the past year since I commenced in my role as Chief Fire Officer, there has been a significant amount of change, both within my office and across the department. These changes have been deliberately considered to position our department in the best possible way to further support the continuation of our exceptional operational service delivery.

Formerly the Office of the Chief Fire Officer, we have become the Fire Inspectorate which includes the Office of the Chief Fire Officer, Internal Audit and recently welcomed Legal Services and Lessons Management.

Bringing together these specialist advisory services will help the Commissioner to continue to deliver efficient and effective fire services through providing independent advice that shapes decision-making for continuous operational improvement strategies.

Legal Services and Lessons Management are new additions to the Fire Inspectorate and are settling into their new structure. They continue to provide expert advice and deliver key programs of work that strengthen and support our broader organisation.

The Office of the Chief Fire Officer is fully established and working through the 2025-26 Work Plan.

This includes a range of products, including operational assurance and review activities to analyse the effectiveness and/or efficiency of an operational service deliver issue or set of arrangements. The Work Plan also consists of research and analysis activities that consider external drivers of change and other sector approaches, including best practice, research and innovation.

Fire and emergency services are inherently complex and external drivers continue to challenge our operating environment. The Fire Inspectorate's intent is to provide future-focused advice that helps position our department for success through continued operational excellence.

Our Internal Audit team continues to work through their 2025-26 Work Plan, which includes four in-depth audits and two advisory engagements to strengthen QFD's control environment, enhance governance and drive continuous improvement.

As with the other functions within the Inspectorate, Internal Audit is all about assurance and improvement, providing confidence within the organisation that key processes are working as intended and highlighting opportunities to strengthen them. The approach is simple: plan, review, share findings and follow up. The focus is on constructive feedback and practical solutions, not fault-finding.

A key component of all the work we deliver is the information, advice and support you provide across the organisation. In working with so many of you, I am continuously impressed by the incredible work across all levels. It is an absolute privilege to showcase the many areas of innovation and best practice you deliver.



BATTLING THE BUSHFIRES

QFD members have been out in force to keep Queenslanders safe this higher risk bushfire period.

QFD has engaged with partners more than ever this year to complete mitigation activities and protect communities from bushfires.

At the time of writing, Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ) brigades and partner agencies had completed more than 1027 hazard reduction burns. Private landowners with permits from volunteer fire wardens had conducted another 909 burns.

Assistant Chief Officer Joel Gordon said most of the bushfires were across southern and central Queensland, particularly coastal areas.

“After several years of significant rainfall we saw dryer conditions return,” Joel said.

“While we had some early winter rain, the late winter and spring dry weather pattern led to moderate levels of fire activity across much of Queensland.

“That’s likely to continue until the onset of the wet season and storm activity later in the year.

“The biggest difference compared to the 2019-20 bushfires is that while vegetation has dried out, we don’t have drought stress or soil moisture deficiencies. As a result, the fires are running for several days but they’re reacting well to suppression.”

RFSQ mitigation units and volunteers, with support from Queensland Fire and Rescue (QFR), engaged with land management partners and private landholders to complete hazard reduction burns, including in several areas that had never been burnt before.

“RFSQ volunteers have been working tirelessly around the clock with staff to protect their communities,” Joel said.

“RFSQ crews, Area Fire Management Groups and local wardens connected with communities to help brigades and land management partners undertake large-scale proactive burning.”

A key change to RFSQ’s mitigation work this year was the move away from the traditional mitigation season.

“In years gone by, the mitigation season ran from May to July before the higher risk period,” Joel said. “Now we look at mitigation as a year-round activity.

“At times we reduce the level of mitigation activity due to high risk or elevated conditions, but we keep planning for when conditions are favourable.”

RFSQ is putting Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) to great use during mitigation burns this year.

“They help us prepare for burns by conducting ecological and animal surveys,” Joel said.

“At Girraween National Park near Noosa, the RPAS team used thermal imaging to identify trees where sugar gliders lived, allowing brigades to steer the fire around those sensitive habitats. They achieved the same thing on Stradbroke Island for koalas.”

QFD’s aerial fleet is also supporting crews on the ground, including the Large Air Tanker and 14 contracted aircraft, with 200 more aircraft available on a call-when-needed basis.

“The aircraft are invaluable, particularly in high-risk burns,” Joel said. “On Stradbroke Island, crews used a waterbombing aircraft to help strengthen the control line and execute the high-risk element of the burn while suppressing the fire enough to contain it.

“Thank you to all the RFSQ volunteers who have worked very long hours on complex fires, managing many jobs through to completion with minimal impact to community.”

Putting in 100 per cent

Guanaba Rural Fire Brigade attended fires in their own area and further afield, including at Springbrook and Lamington National Park.

Daniel Barba said in the last few years the landscape was green and wet from rain, but this year was different.

“We had all the rain in the first half of the year and then it just stopped and everything is cured and brown and burning very easily,” Daniel said.

“The wind drove the flames in some areas, creating extra height, but in other areas the fires were quite slow-moving.

“Two years ago a tornado ripped through the Gold Coast and created a lot of fuel loading. Tropical Cyclone Alfred also knocked down many tree limbs so there’s a lot of fuel to burn but not a lot of space for us to work.

“Usually we have space to walk around on the forest floor but with all the dropped limbs it’s harder to get through. Plants grow through the limbs and make it treacherous.

“I’m a fire warden and at the moment we’re writing permits cautiously due to these conditions.”



RFSQ crews conducted a hazard reduction burn at Mount Rose.



RFSQ volunteers battled vegetation fires at Springbrook.

Helicopters conducted waterbombing at several of the fires.

“It was quite unreal, especially if you haven’t seen helicopters at a fire before. It’s great to see them because they get to areas we can’t reach with vehicles or on foot.”

Daniel recalled the moment when he and another firefighter were the first to arrive at the scene of a fire in Guanaba.

“The flames were coming up the hill and everything was quite dry – it was a bad place to be in,” he said. “But a few appliances followed close behind us and I jumped straight into an Incident Controller position. It was my first time running a fire.

“It was quite surreal, running five crews. Luckily our Area Manager watched me and made sure I did the right things. I felt I did well and got good feedback.

“That’s the path I want to take as I get further through my career as a volunteer firefighter – incident control. I like being on the fire ground but it’s a completely different ball game when you’re trying to organise 10 or 20 or 30 firefighters in different vehicles.”

The Guanaba brigade is a tight-knit group.

“Recently an officer was going through medical issues and everyone came together and sent cards to friends and family and that’s what I love about Guanaba – it’s not just firefighters, it’s a second family,” Daniel said.

“We all put in absolutely everything we’ve got. And sometimes when we’re finishing up in an area you see the look on everyone’s faces – they’re all sweating, tired, ready to go home.

“The sheer commitment my fellow firefighters put in to help save the native fauna and flora and people’s properties – it’s rewarding to be a part of it all. It’s an awesome organisation.



Working into the night at Springbrook.

“The training I’ve received with my brigade has taken me a long way and I can’t wait to see how far it gets me.”

Eyes in the sky

Dean West mapped out several fires in south-east Queensland as part of the RPAS team.

“For 17 days straight we went to fires in places such as Springbrook, Canungra, Camp Mountain, Toorbul, Donnybrook, Stony Creek, Kilcoy, Murgon and Mount Mee,” Dean said.

“Some days we had to map three different fires, finding all the assets and marking out the fire line. Every hour or two we remap the fire to show its spread so Predictive Services and Incident Control know how fast it’s travelling. At big fires like the one at Mount Mee, we map every half hour.

“In the evenings we can use thermal imaging to look for tracks you can’t see during the day, which crews can burn off to contain the fire.

“In between the fires, we assisted Queensland Police Service with searches and helped them find a missing eight-year-old child at Burpengary.”

The south-east Queensland RPAS team has 15 volunteers from a variety of backgrounds, from pilots and aeronautical engineers to doctors.

“I use drones for humanitarian work in my day job,” Dean said. “Some of our RPAS pilots also fly for Surf Life Saving Queensland. It’s a good mix.

“When we can’t fill positions, QFR help us out and vice-versa. We have a really supportive relationship. The skillset is more important than where you come from.

“RPAS is an interesting field because the technology advances so quickly – new drones, better cameras. The more the technology advances, the more kinds of work we can do.

“The work is data heavy so remote locations are a challenge.



QFR and RFSQ crews worked with Murweh Shire Council to conduct three days of hazard reduction burns around Charleville.

When there’s no internet in the area, we have to download offline maps to the drone controllers, map the fire, then drive back into internet areas to upload the information.”

When the RPAS team arrives at a fire, crews are sometimes unsure what they can do.

“If a crew hasn’t seen drones at a fire ground before, we show them what we’re capable of – find the fire, zoom in on the flame heights so the Incident Controller can watch the fire behaviour, show them the fire edge with thermals, and map it to take the pressure off them.

“After that they start giving us tasks and directing us around the fire ground, which is great to see. When we go back to fires that have had drones before, we’re welcomed because we provide good intelligence.

“We handle all the technology – we bring in our flight plans, get flights approved and set everything up.”

Dean said QFD members and partner agencies worked really well with the RPAS team.

“We did a lot of work with Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) and councils to survey for animals before hazard reduction burns,” he said.

“We also do a lot of work with State Air Operations to coordinate with helicopters. There’s a lot of communication between RPAS and the crewed aviation to make sure it’s safe.

“At one fire there were three or four helicopters and we communicated with them and waited on the ground until they refueled.



Gympie South Rural Fire Brigade worked with nearby brigades to respond to fires in the area. Photo by Gympie South Rural Fire Brigade.



Mount Mee Rural Fire Brigade was called out to a grass fire started by a spark from a whipper snipper.

“We do a lot of training and there are a lot of checkpoints we have to hit before we launch. Even if waterbombing is being conducted at the fire, we’re professional and draw on our experience.”

Working in steep country

Ian Caleo said Palmwoods Rural Fire Brigade was flat out responding to fires as soon as conditions dried out.

“In one month we had 17 callouts, five hazard reduction burns and went away on strike teams to several fires including a big one at Mount Mee,” Ian said.

“In some areas there were continuous fires where we just didn’t get a break. I’m self-employed so I’m lucky to take time off when I need to, although I have to put customers to one side.

“This year the fires have been very intense because there’s so much buildup of fuel from prolonged wet seasons. We’re in hilly areas so the fires are fast-moving. The biggest challenge was the steep country and the heat.”

Ian’s brigade worked closely with QPWS and HQ Plantations, as well as other brigades.

“We don’t just stick in our own area, we work all over the Sunshine Coast,” he said. “We get on very well with our neighbouring brigades.

“We are a very close brigade and one of my highlights in the last two years was having my daughter join.”

Thankfully the brigade didn’t have to make any difficult decisions at this year’s fires, but they have in the past.

“I remember two years ago in the Tara fires we had to go around and decide which structures to save and which ones not to save,” Ian said. “We had to act fast and it was hard because one person’s home is not necessarily another person’s idea of a home. And a lot of homes were lost.”



Alongside partner agencies, RFSQ crews conducted a hazard reduction burn in the Lockyer Valley.



Highfields firefighters band together

A great example of QFD members working together to prepare for bushfires was a bushfire awareness meeting hosted by Highfields QFR crews with volunteer firefighters from Cabarlah, Gowrie Little Plain and Murphys Creek brigades.

The day further strengthened the partnerships between permanent, auxiliary and rural firefighters while preparing for bushfires.

Station Officer Mark Haddow led the morning showcasing the role air operations and RPAS can play in modern firefighting. The presentation was capped off with a live demonstration of an RPAS unit in action.

Firefighter David Lethbridge, a Fire Behaviour Analyst, delivered a briefing on fire behaviour predictions. His analysis helped crews understand how fires were likely to move and behave under local conditions, ensuring crews could plan, task and respond effectively.

The attendees also shared their appliance capabilities. QFR crews showcased their urban appliances while rural brigades demonstrated their specialist equipment and local knowledge of the landscapes they protect.

This exchange highlighted the importance of knowing each other’s strengths so resources can be deployed swiftly when emergencies strike.

The rural firefighters brought deep knowledge of their local terrain, community contacts and access to machinery and support networks that are invaluable when combating bushfires.

Captain Emily Becker organised the day, coordinating with multiple agencies to ensure all crews were represented. Lieutenant Peter Thornton kept the program running smoothly, initiating discussions and appliance familiarisations.

Emily said, “The event has highlighted the exceptional service and coverage provided across the region, thanks to the combined efforts of all fire services.”

In the face of bushfires, Highfields and surrounding communities are in safe hands.



CYCLONE ALFRED: HOW COOCHIEMUDLO HELD THE LINE

When Tropical Cyclone Alfred tore across Moreton Bay earlier this year, Coochiemudlo Island, a quiet community of 850 people, was suddenly cut off.

Ferries stopped running, power lines went down and the Telstra tower failed, leaving locals without communication or external support. But there was one group who stayed visible, the island's auxiliary firefighters.

The 10 firefighters, most of them locals with families and jobs outside of QFD, suddenly became the island's only permanent emergency responders.

Working alongside two Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) paramedics, they shouldered the responsibility of keeping an isolated community safe through days of rain, wind and silence.

Auxiliary Firefighter Christine Foley remembers the moment clearly.

"I had my 90-year-old mother with me, plus three dogs," she said. "We'd prepared the house as best we could, tying things down, stocking fuel and getting kerosene lamps ready."

"We knew once the ferries stopped help wouldn't arrive for days. It was just us and the two paramedics on the island. We were on our own."



Christine Foley

Planning and preparation

Days before Alfred made landfall, the auxiliary firefighters had been preparing themselves and their community.

Under the leadership of Captain David Nolan and Lieutenant Ben Simpson-Thoulliss, the crew ran through an exhaustive storm checklist: sharpening chainsaws, testing generators, fuelling appliances and distributing storm preparedness booklets to locals.

But their job wasn't just about preparing their gear, it was about preparing people. The crew went door-to-door across the island, checking in on residents, helping them secure boats, tie down trampolines and move outdoor furniture, particularly the elderly and those living alone.

"One lady in her eighties kept apologising for asking us to move her outdoor furniture," Christine said. "I told her that's what we're here for, we'd rather move them now than come back later when they've smashed a window."

At the fire station, piles of sand delivered by the council quickly became a hub for

sandbagging. Families filled bags, kids carried shovels and neighbours helped neighbours, but many older residents struggled with the heavy loads.

"We ended up filling and delivering them ourselves," Christine said. "We'd drop sandbags at people's doorways and make sure they were secure. For a lot of people it wasn't just about physical help, it was about peace of mind and reassurance."

The auxiliary firefighters also worked with QAS to plan for worst-case scenarios.

"We had to assume that we'd lose comms, so we sat down with the paramedics and worked through each issue: how do we handle multiple casualties? What happens if a house collapses? We couldn't leave anything to chance."

Cut off from communication

When Alfred hit, the island's vulnerabilities showed themselves quickly. Power failed almost immediately and the comms tower went down before midnight.

"People didn't realise how completely they relied on their phones until the signal vanished," Christine said. "They couldn't



call their kids, they couldn't check the news, for a lot of them it was like losing a lifeline."

With no reliable communications, the auxiliary firefighters improvised. Turnouts were called by driving the appliance past members' homes and sounding the horn.

The fire station's generator recharged radios, ran lights and charged residents' phones. When fuel began to dwindle, locals donated jerry cans. Christine herself contributed 80 litres from her own reserves.

Word spread that a faint signal could be picked up at the barge ramp or community hall. Firefighters quietly facilitated trips for vulnerable residents to make quick welfare calls.

"We'd drive people down just so they could tell their families they were safe."

Immediate response

At first light, the crew switched into response mode. The damage was widespread, with trees blocking roads, live powerlines twisted across driveways and debris scattered everywhere.

David led a crew of five, cutting their way through fallen trees to open up the roads again. Residents lined the streets to watch.

"Everywhere we went people came out just to see us working," Christine said. "It gave them confidence. Even though they were cut off, they knew they weren't alone,"

But the storm wasn't finished. The second night proved even more challenging, with winds surging in destructive bursts. When David was pulled away by a family emergency, Ben stepped up to the plate.

"Ben did a fantastic job keeping the crew steady and focussed. By the next day we had more auxiliaries on deck and we threw everything into the clean up."

By now, more auxiliaries had joined the effort, with the crew working to clear blocked roads, tape off dangerous powerlines and document property damage for Energex and SES who wouldn't reach the island for days.

As much as the work was about chainsaws and powerlines, it was about people.

The fire station became a hub for residents to get updates, reassurance or just charge their phone. Firefighters extended power to the neighbouring recreation club to give locals a light at night.

Some requests were practical. An elderly woman needed help checking on her roof, while a couple begged the crew to help them brew a coffee, desperate for some



normalcy. Others were more serious – urgent welfare checks, medical support or transport for people with mobility issues.

"We cleared trees and drove the truck, but we also spent a lot of time just talking to people," Christine said. "For some that mattered more than anything else we did."

The personal cost

For the auxiliary firefighters, Alfred was unique in that it was happening in their own backyards.

Christine sheltered her 90-year-old mother at home for eight days, keeping her safe while running operational shifts. Her own house took damage, but she secured her belongings to make sure she could focus on the wider community.

David bore the heaviest blow. While he was leading the first night's operations, his mother was dying on the mainland. By staying, he missed his chance to say goodbye to her while she was conscious.

"That was devastating, it was the hardest moment for him and for the crew," Christine said.

Lessons learned

When outside help finally arrived, the auxiliary firefighters had already cleared roads, stabilised hazards and mapped

priority sites for Energex and SES. Their detailed logs meant reinforcements could get to work immediately.

But Cyclone Alfred highlighted weaknesses in the island's preparedness that needed addressing. The Telstra tower failing and the ageing generator struggling to keep up with demand highlighted the need for a redundancy plan.

These lessons are now feeding into future planning. The crew is advocating for stronger comms backup and a higher capacity generator, while also leading community education ahead of the next storm season.

At this year's Christmas markets, they'll host an all-agency display to remind residents preparation is everyone's responsibility.

Looking ahead

Alfred was both a trial and a vindication for the Coochiemudlo crew. When the island was cut off they became more than firefighters.

"As auxiliaries, we don't just serve this community, we're part of it," Christine said. "We're protecting our neighbours, our friends and our families. When the island was cut off, we were the lifeline, and if it happens again, we'll be ready."



Concept art for the new Redland Whitewater Centre. Image from the Games Independent Infrastructure and Coordination Authority.

GETTING READY FOR THE 2032 OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES

With only seven years until the Olympic and Paralympic Games come to Brisbane, QFD is getting prepared to ensure people remain safe during the Games.



In July 2021, the International Olympic Committee announced Brisbane as the host city of the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Principal Program Officer Simon Cook said the Games would be the largest coordinated response ever undertaken by QFD, spanning multiple cities and regions.

“The Games will involve a significantly larger scale of operations than previous events such as the 2018 Commonwealth Games,” Simon said.

“Key challenges include managing resources across a geographically dispersed area and ensuring fire safety compliance for new and existing venues.

“The fixed timeline for the Games and limited early funding require meticulous planning and prioritisation.”

The Brisbane 2032 team is responsible for ensuring public safety during the Games through fire and rescue services, bushfire

mitigation, building fire safety compliance and emergency response planning.

“This includes developing a strategic framework, operational plans and stakeholder engagement strategies,” he said.

“Our role is to ensure QFD is prepared to meet the unique challenges of this event while maintaining continuity of service for Queensland communities.”

Potential threats include fire incidents, hazardous materials spills and structural emergencies at venues.

“Bushfires are a significant concern, particularly for outdoor venues and distance events like the marathon, racewalking and cycling,” Simon said.

“We’re also considering the possibility of cyber-attacks that could disrupt critical infrastructure, as well as natural disasters such as severe storms.

“Each of these scenarios requires tailored response plans, specialised training and close collaboration with other agencies.”

Next steps

The team currently has three members but will expand as funding becomes available from 2027. By 2031, the team is expected to reach full capacity with more than 35 staff.

“This will include specialised roles across six functional project streams, such as Operations Capability, Community Safety, Fire Communications and Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ),” Simon said.

So far the team has focused on the Strategic Planning Phase, which runs until the end of 2025.

“Key activities include developing the program plan, budget, Concept of Operations, risk and issues registers, and stakeholder engagement plans,” Simon said.

“We’ve also been planning venue assessment and collaborating with stakeholders like the Queensland Police Service (QPS) and the Games Independent Infrastructure and Coordination Authority (GIICA).”

The team will transition into the Operational Planning Phase from 2026 to 2028.

“This will involve scaling up our workforce, conducting training needs analyses, developing deployment rosters and developing detailed operational, transport and logistics plans,” Simon said.

“These steps will ensure we are well-prepared for the Readiness and Deployment phases closer to the Games.



Concept art for the new Moreton Bay Indoor Sports Centre.



The Brisbane SX International BMX Centre.

“We’re collaborating extensively with various QFD units, including RFSQ for bushfire mitigation, State Capability for venue fire safety compliance and Games-related capabilities, and Strategy and Corporate Services for workforce planning, budget and government engagement.

“Leveraging the expertise and resources of different units ensures a unified approach to planning and response, minimising risks and enhancing our capability to deliver a safe and successful Games.

“Key stakeholders will include local councils, venue operators, the Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (OCOG) and representatives from previous Olympic host cities to incorporate best practices into our planning.”

Simon said the Games were an opportunity for QFD to demonstrate its world-class capabilities.

“By applying lessons learnt from past events like the 2018 Commonwealth Games and the G20 Summit, we are building a legacy of enhanced planning, innovation and collaboration,” he said.

“Our commitment is to ensure the safety of everyone involved while leaving a lasting impact on Queensland’s emergency response capabilities.

“If something comes across people’s desks that is Olympics related, it’s essential they engage with the Brisbane 2032 Program team so we can ensure the work is coordinated across QFD and there’s no duplication of effort. This will be even more important as planning progresses and more parts QFD become involved.”

QFD staff and volunteers are encouraged to get involved both in the lead up to and during the Games. Opportunities will be advertised through internal and external channels.



The Anna Meares Velodrome.



Brisbane 2032 fast facts

- Four weeks of competition:
 - Olympic Games from 23 July to 8 August
 - Paralympic Games from 24 August to 5 September
- Thousands of athletes, dignitaries, officials and support personnel
- Broadcast to about 200 nations
- Global reach of more than five billion people



QFD WOMEN LEAD THE WAY

Three QFD members were honoured with national awards for their contributions to the fire and emergency sector.

Claire Case, Kylee Clubb and Paula Douglas were all recognised in this year's Women and Firefighting Australasia (WAFA) Awards.

WAFA received a record number of nominations and Claire, Kylee and Paula were selected from almost 70 outstanding submissions.

True leadership

Claire Case received the Youth Leadership Award for her work with QFD and the PCYC Emergency Services Cadets.

She started her journey as a cadet in 2021 and now serves as a rural firefighter with Cabarlah Rural Fire Brigade and Auxiliary Firefighter at Highfields Fire and Rescue Station.

"The award came as a surprise and I feel very grateful for both the award and everyone who has supported me along the way!" Claire said.

"I joined the cadets because I was interested in emergency services, particularly the fire service, and I saw it as an opportunity to learn more about the services and gain valuable skills along the way.

"I viewed it as a chance to challenge myself, be part of a team and become more involved in my local community."

Claire took on leadership roles with the cadets and then a full-time job, supporting cadets and opening new cadet units across the state.

"The whole experience has been one of learning and personal growth," she said.

"I've really enjoyed picking up new skills and knowledge and being able to apply the learning in new contexts.

"I've also really liked watching others discover and harness their own potential through the cadets just like I have. Being able to help them through that journey is very special.

"A lot of the skills I learnt in the cadet program have been transferable to my roles in the fire service. Everything from rolling and bowling hoses to first aid, communication, teamwork and resilience has assisted in my transition from cadet to firefighter. It gave me a solid foundation of skills to build on."

Claire said the most rewarding part of her work was helping people when they needed it most.

"Being able to step in during challenging or unexpected situations and provide support, reassurance or practical assistance gives a real sense of purpose," she said.

"It's empowering to know our training, teamwork and dedication can make a tangible difference in people's lives and enable us to provide the best possible service to the community.

"To me, leadership means taking responsibility not just for the outcome but the people you're leading.



Claire Case

It's about being dependable, making tough decisions and ensuring others feel supported and confident in their role.

"I believe true leadership is about service, putting the team and mission before yourself, and realising you're part of something much bigger than yourself."

Claire's old cadet unit operates out of the fire station where she currently works. She recalled the moment when a fire call came in while the cadets were training.

"I remember putting my gear in the truck, climbing into the cab and driving out of the station in front of the kids I'd been a cadet with and the adult mentors who'd supported me," she said.

"It was such a special moment not only because of the immense pride I felt in how far I'd come, but being able to show the cadets and adult leaders you can achieve anything, as long as you want it enough and are willing to work for it!"

Driving change

Acting Superintendent Paula Douglas AFSM received the Champion of Change Award for going above and beyond to create opportunities, advocate for equity and lead meaningful change.

She is a hands-on leader who inspires participation and supports her crews. Through her work with the QFR Frontline Women's Network, leading the Girls Firefighter Experience Camp in 2024, and driving a recruitment engagement strategy at the recent Queensland-based Matildas soccer games, Paula has consistently championed inclusion and respect for women in QFD.

Paula has been recognised with a string of awards this year, including another Champion of Change Award for International Women's Day.

Most recently she received the Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM) for the King's Birthday Honours in June. You can read more about her achievements in the August 2025 edition of *Response*.

Creating opportunities

The Outstanding Female in the Fire Sector Award went to RFSQ Bushfire Mitigation Officer and volunteer Kylee Clubb for exceptional commitment, leadership and service.

Kylee has been a tireless advocate for First Nations cultural values, gender diversity and equality in fire and land management.



Paula Douglas AFSM (right)



Kylee Clubb

Through her leadership, mentoring and cultural training work, she has created opportunities for women and First Nations people.

Kylee joined the Tinaroo Rural Fire Brigade in 2017 because she wanted to help motivate young people in her small town of Malanda on the Atherton Tablelands.

Kylee is also a director with Gambir Yidinji Cultural Heritage and Protection Aboriginal Corporations and the Queensland Director of the Firesticks Alliance. She completed a cultural burn alongside Buluwai Elders and Djabugay Rangers in Buluwai Country as part of the ABC documentary series *Big Weather*.

Her work as a cultural fire practitioner complements her role with RFSQ and her brigade takes a holistic approach to cultural burns.

Recently, Kylee helped bring the Women-in-Fire Training Exchange (WTREX) to Australia for the first time. Thirty-eight international fire practitioners, most of whom were First Nations women, gathered in Cairns for a 12-day training exchange.

The program integrated Indigenous fire practices that have been used for tens of thousands of years. Attendees learnt about flora and fauna identification, traditional weaving, women in leadership and the incident command system.

They participated in live fire training in Undara Volcanic National Park, the Tablelands and Yarrabah.

You can read more about Kylee's work for the WTREX program in the June 2025 edition of *Response*.

AUS-1 DART PASSES THE TEST

Working under pressure at a simulated earthquake, the AUS-1 Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) has been successfully recertified.

The team worked around the clock for three days to rescue survivors trapped in collapsed buildings after the simulated earthquake.

AUS-1 DART provides rapid early response to international disasters. They are assessed under the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) External Classification process and must reclassify every five years.

Inspector Mark Crowe said the team consisted of 75 people including firefighters, Queensland Ambulance Service paramedics and Queensland Health doctors, along with volunteer doctors, engineers and canine handlers.

“The team can deploy at short notice either nationally or internationally to sudden-onset disasters,” Mark said.

“The team is very skilled and experienced. Last year we deployed to Papua New Guinea for a landslide in the highlands and just before Christmas we went to Vanuatu after an earthquake.

“For this exercise, the team worked through a very realistic and challenging scenario to demonstrate their capability to the world.”

The scenario involved an 8.2-magnitude earthquake in the fictitious country of Aperitivo, which caused multiple buildings to collapse with people trapped, including a carpark with four people inside.

“The team rapidly deployed into the country with 22 tonnes of equipment and set up a base of operations,” Mark said.

“They made the scene safe by isolating power and utilities, assigning a structural engineer to assess the building, and shoring it up with timber.

“Most of the time, 90 per cent of casualties are removed by local community members or first responders, so we focus on more heavily trapped people. If we can’t move something we have to breach or break it.”

The team must be able to cut through 200mm of reinforced concrete, 20mm of steel plate and 30mm of timber.



“Then we locate the casualty and apply initial first aid, package and remove them,” Mark said. “The scenario included a range of injuries from crush wounds to impalements. The doctors had to perform an amputation to free a casualty from the rubble.

“The exercise is about 40 hours of continuous work, with crews operating 24 hours a day. The team must be self-sufficient for 14 days, sleeping in tents within the base of operations and eating ration packs.

“Once the rescue phase is over we can assist with providing humanitarian aid or community recovery operations. If requested we can provide engineers to assist local government to do structural



assessments. Our doctors and paramedics can also join the local health system.”

The scenario was evaluated by an assessment team from 10 different nations, who certified that the team met the standards for international deployment.

“The team works well together and are adaptable and scalable to the needs of the country,” Mark said.

“They are the same firefighters locals will see responding to flood and cyclone events in Queensland. They apply the same skills to conduct rescue operations, including swiftwater rescues locally. This team is classified at the international level but they are the same ones you see on firetrucks here.”

VOLUNTEERS HONoured FOR COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

Two Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ) volunteers were recognised in the Australasian Women in Emergencies Awards.

Sarah Steinegg-Downs and Jen Werbeloff received awards for their leadership, innovation and dedication to making communities safer and stronger.

Jen, who recently swapped the sunshine state for Tasmania, was a volunteer for RFSQ and the State Emergency Service (SES) for more than a decade before the move down south.

Her award nomination spoke about her compassion and empathy as a Peer Support Officer as well as her dedication to self-development to better support her peers, volunteer organisations and the communities she lives in.

Jen now shares her wealth of experience with her new Rural Fire Service and SES colleagues in Tasmania.

Sarah, who volunteers with the Rupertswood Rural Fire Brigade in addition to her day job as an aviation firefighter, also places community at the heart of all she does.

Outside of her firefighting commitments, she's the Vice President of the Alice River Community Association and a volunteer with Disaster Relief Australia. Sarah has also previously volunteered with the SES and St John Ambulance.

Sarah's volunteering career started more than a decade ago after a move from Christchurch, New Zealand to Mount Isa.

"A friend asked if I wanted to check out a local rural fire brigade meeting," she said.

"That meeting showed me I could volunteer my time and be part of this community while also learning skills for free. I was physically able and keen to learn. It was a good trade."

The meeting is a good example of what Sarah describes as a 'ripple effect' that changed the trajectory of her life.

This ripple effect is something that drives Sarah to continue looking for ways to improve community capability and resilience and help others through volunteering.

"There have been people in my life that have created that ripple effect for me, and I'd like to do that for others," she said. "It only takes one small thing. You don't know the impact it could have."

Sarah has recently been appointed to an officer role at Rupertswood and she says her brigade feels like a family.

"Our brigade is run professionally and with open communication," she said. "It's a safe space where everyone has a voice and everyone's contribution is valued."

"There's no ego and we really lean into the depth of experience our volunteers bring. At the moment we're looking at ways to improve our communication with the community. It's nice to be part of a team with shared values."

One of Sarah's motivations for volunteering is the opportunity to make a difference.

"The best thing about volunteering is that you're doing good whether people can see it or not," she said. "I have always wanted to protect people and make things better."

Sarah credits her Australasian Women in Emergencies network and other female mentors she has had during her career for the encouragement to take advantage of every opportunity that comes her way.

"I've been lucky to be part of some strong disaster management networks here in Townsville," she said. "That support makes it easy to say yes to opportunities. I'm curious and I'll give anything a go."

"These networks even led to me studying a Bachelor of Emergency Management, which I'm on track to finish in 2027."

Sarah's commitment to community means she is always looking for opportunities to share knowledge with a wider audience and liaise between groups with a common goal.

"Being part of different community groups gives me the chance to close the knowledge gap for better outcomes," she said.

Sarah's advice to other women who are considering getting involved in firefighting or disaster management?

"Just have a look and try different options until you find the right opportunity for you. If it's something you truly desire, you will find a way."



Sarah Steinegg-Downs



Jen Werbeloff



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NORTH QUEENSLAND AUXILIARY FIREFIGHTERS STEP UP

A dedicated team has completed the largest recruitment of auxiliary leadership positions in QFD history.

Auxiliary firefighters are in high demand across regional Queensland, and the Cairns South Zone is no exception. The step up from auxiliary firefighter to captain or lieutenant is a huge commitment few are able to make and several leadership roles have remained vacant.

Inspector Brad Fleming and Divisional Support Officer Rebecca Camp set about the enormous task of filling two captain and eleven lieutenant positions across seven stations.

Acting Inspector Jason Mather said there was a huge amount of pressure on auxiliary firefighters.

“They have jobs in the community with a valued commitment from their employer to leave if there’s an incident,” Jason said.

“It’s an ever-increasing pressure we place on them because they’re so important to us in the outer areas.

“These outlying auxiliary stations operate with no backup from the permanent workforce. They service smaller communities and take all the emergency calls, so the captains and lieutenants really need to step up to take control of their crews and run incidents.”

Brad and Bec ran an intensive six-week training program for grade 2 auxiliary firefighters to give them the skills to apply for leadership roles, including sessions on resume writing, body language, dress standards and interview techniques.

“We wanted to break down the barriers and make the participants aware of the support we can give,” Jason said.

“A lot of them felt isolated and weren’t aware they could reach out to other auxiliary stations. They didn’t understand we can provide

support in-person or over the phone – they’re not just on their own.”

“A lot of them had never done a job interview so they were petrified about the process,” Jason said.

“They turned up early to the training sessions and stayed back late and they learnt from each other as well as the instructors. Other area managers are now starting the process for their auxiliary groups.

“We bucked the trend – normally you just advertise singularly, but we wanted to provide the training and conduct a group recruitment.

“It was fantastic at the end to step back and watch them grow. Some valuable networks have been built over the six weeks.”

Jason said the auxiliary firefighters displayed a high level of professionalism when they interviewed for the roles.

“Once the interviews were completed, all 13 positions were filled. The successful applicants were presented with their epaulettes by Chief Superintendent Adam Gwin at a captain and lieutenant training day at Atherton Fire and Rescue Station.

“Every captain and lieutenant from the whole command attended and we provided training on finance, HR and responding to calls. It was great to have everyone in the same room.

“Our zone thanks Brad for his hard work and Bec for her administrative and logistical support. We are happy to provide the training package to any regions who are facing the same challenges.”

CELEBRATING OUR NEW STATION OFFICERS

QFD held the first promotional ceremony for the new Station Officer Program, an intensive six-month course that gives experienced firefighters the skills to become station officers.

The program's 13 participants brought diverse experience across urban and rural firefighting, technical rescue, disaster management and specialist training.

Station Officer Ryan Dubyk from Sunshine Coast Division said he joined the program because he wanted to keep evolving and improving. He worked with the Canadian fire service for a decade before joining QFD in 2017.

"QFD needs future leaders to step up into the Station Officer's role and continue their professional growth. I wanted to ensure I continued to progress as a leader and continue to evolve my skillset to be a better firefighter and Station Officer."

"It was very rewarding to complete the program. The whole process took about 14 months all up for myself, longer for some other officers. I was excited and proud to have my family at the graduation ceremony to celebrate this milestone in my career."

The program included advanced training in incident management, leadership, command and control, operational planning and application of departmental doctrine. It encouraged future station officers to think strategically, be innovative, drive accountability and outcomes and create healthy workplaces.

Training took place in large venues including Suncorp Stadium, Chandler Arena and Queensland Sport and Athletics Centre to make the scenarios as realistic as possible.

"I led a scenario in Suncorp Stadium where a fire was burning in the home locker room on level 1," Ryan said. "We had to respond with 18 firefighters and five trucks to rescue civilians and firefighters who'd gone in earlier."

"It was a four-hour real-life job condensed into 60 minutes. We dealt with everything that came at us while trying to keep everyone safe, from tasking crews to identifying where people were trapped."

"I remember sitting in the Suncorp stands by myself after the exercise and realising all the hard work was worth it. I came away a better and more confident leader."

Ryan said the group formed lifelong relationships.

"The amount of teamwork that went into the program was immense," he said. "The instructors were great mentors and everyone really stepped up. We put a lot of hard work in and our families made sacrifices."

The newly promoted Station Officers have commenced duties at stations across Queensland. Ryan has enjoyed the challenges of his new role.

"My focus will be to ensure we continue to train on operational roles while in station to provide the best service to the community. In turn this ensures that as a team we are fostering an environment that supports our new and upcoming firefighters."

"The main difference is the amount of responsibility on our shoulders. In firefighting we consistently work as a team, and everyone always has a say on how the job goes but ultimately it is the Station Officer's call to ensure all decisions provide the most positive outcome for everyone involved."

"A large spectrum of legislation, doctrine and operational knowledge goes into every decision a Station Officer makes on an emergency scene and we need to ensure we make the correct choices by continuing our training and study to be better for the crews and community every day."

"I'm thankful to the people who developed the program. They put so much work into it because they want to improve our response and service to the community."

"Inspector Mark Ashford, Station Officer Brett Holmes and other Station Officers provided their input into this new program. They all wanted to improve this program using their many years of experience and vast knowledge base to ensure we start our Station Officer career as capable and knowledgeable as possible to serve the people of Queensland."

The ceremony was the first of three scheduled for the Station Officer Program this year.



SPOTLIGHT ON INTELLIGENCE

The Intelligence and Predictions Unit is advancing QFD's intelligence capability to support efficient operations, safer communities and contemporary emergency services.

The unit is part of the State Intelligence, Predictions and Planning (SIPP) Branch at State Operations, which drives informed decision-making across QFD by delivering specialised advice and intelligence.

Some of the unit's members participated in the Australian Institute of Professional Intelligence Officers (AIPIO) Intelligence 2025 Conference in Sydney. Attended by more than 400 intelligence professionals, the conference explored the theme, "A Thriving Intelligence Profession."

QFD's State Senior Intelligence Officer Erin Steer delivered a presentation on operational intelligence partnerships, discussing how QFD has partnered with external contractors to build and maintain an intelligence capability that has the knowledge, experience and capacity to respond during natural disasters.

"It was great to highlight Queensland's progress toward integrated intelligence support for disaster response," Erin said.

"My presentation focused on QFD's partnership with Protegas, who I've worked with to develop processes, templates, mentoring and training for our intelligence capability.

"Intelligence Services was operationalised for the first time during the 2023 bushfires in south-western Queensland. We had a Protegas contractor embedded in our team and we drew on his experience as a mentor and Intelligence Officer.

"During Tropical Cyclone Alfred, our team was more experienced and we used intelligence assistants from other areas of QFD.

"Due to the scale of the event, we brought in intelligence personnel from Protegas, who worked within the State Fire Control Centre (SFCC) and remotely to aid with open-source intelligence, which allowed our team to focus more on specific locations of concern."

Other discussions explored the growing role of AI in intelligence work and the significant challenges posed by disinformation and cognitive warfare

targeting democratic institutions and societal cohesion. International and domestic experts highlighted the urgent need to build state and national intelligence capacity through innovation and collaboration.

These conversations are relevant to Queensland's emergency management, underscoring the need for enhanced situational awareness, robust information networks and agile decision-making frameworks.

Executive Manager Helen McGarry led QFD's integration of intelligence products and services to help strengthen the department's capacity to withstand, plan for and respond to fire and disaster events.

Helen has a storied career in intelligence in the defence forces and was at home among her peers at the conference.

"Our participation in the conference reinforces QFD's commitment to continuous professional development and cross-sector collaboration," Helen said.

"It strengthens Queensland's capacity to anticipate, mitigate and respond effectively to disaster risks within an increasingly dynamic risk landscape."

Executive Manager Matt Dyer said that by building on insights from the conference, Intelligence Services was committed to advancing its intelligence capability.

"Immediate next steps include establishing a community of interest to foster

professional development, and promoting collaboration and knowledge-sharing among intelligence professionals across jurisdictions and federal agencies," Matt said.

"We will also support other jurisdictions, such as the Northern Territory and New South Wales, to develop their organic intelligence capabilities.

"By sharing expertise and best practices, QFD aims to strengthen national disaster management intelligence networks, ensuring a more unified and resilient approach to managing risks and emergencies.

"These initiatives reflect QFD's ongoing commitment to innovation, collaboration and leadership in intelligence, ensuring Queensland remains at the forefront of disaster management intelligence capabilities."

Intelligence Services has been involved in preparing for and responding to bushfires this year.

"The team prepared seasonal outlooks, participated in exercises and worked with the Office of Bushfire Mitigation to prepare reports on exposures within high-risk locations," Matt said.

"We were also stood up within the SFCC and Regional Fire Control Centres to give operational support, provided outlooks to assist with planning, and worked with Predictive Services to produce fire reports."



From left to right: Deb Watkins, Helen McGarry and Erin Steer.

ANY DAY IS A GOOD DAY

Brigades, stations and workplaces across the state organised gatherings to check in for R U OK? Day.

This year's theme was to ask R U OK? any day, a reminder that any time is a good time to check in with someone you care about.

First responders face difficult situations and high-pressure incidents that can affect their mental health, and QFD members are no exception.

Supporting R U OK? Day is a chance to reduce the impact of mental ill-health for our people and their families.

Checking in with someone and listening to them could be just what they need during a difficult time. You may not have all the answers but you can help them think about their next steps.

Monday through Sunday, January to December, ask R U OK? any day and keep looking out for each other.

Good vibes on Boyne Island

Boyne Island Fire and Rescue Station hosted a successful R U OK? Day evening, bringing together 43 attendees from QFR, RFSQ, Queensland Ambulance Service and State Emergency Service.

Auxiliary Captain Wayne Lisle said the night included a practical focus on inter-agency familiarisation.

"Each service showcased their appliances and equipment, allowing crews to build awareness of each other's capabilities, enhance interoperability and strengthen the region's operational readiness," Wayne said.



"At a barbeque afterwards people reconnected with long-standing colleagues, reinforcing networks across the Gladstone emergency services community.

"The event highlighted the importance of maintaining our mental health and reinforced the strong collaboration between services in the area."

A visit from Artemis

Rockhampton psychologist Helen Madell brought her therapy dog Artemis down to local fire and rescue stations to meet the crews as they checked in with each other for R U OK? Day.

Artemis is a red setter who has been in training with Helen for two years, assisting clients in her practice. He has almost reached his accreditation milestone.

Artemis loved interacting with the firefighters and did a great job of getting conversations started around R U OK? Day.



Support is here

Confidential counselling services are available to all volunteers, staff and immediate family members.

If you feel you could benefit from support, go to fire.qld.gov.au/supporting-our-people to locate your preferred counsellor or contact the 24/7 on-call counsellor on 1800 805 980. Calls are returned within two hours and you can call on behalf of someone else.

Peer Support Officers are also available to staff and volunteers to help promote and support positive mental health and well-being.

Free resources are also available at ruok.org.au.



INGRID AND SNICKERS PREPARE FOR ANYTHING

Volunteer K9 handler Ingrid Groeger-Stone and her dog Snickers celebrated his certification as an Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) K9.

Ingrid and Snickers are part of the K9 USAR team, who undergo an intensive training regimen to locate survivors trapped under rubble in disasters. Ingrid first joined the team in 2011.

“I enjoyed dog training and dog sports but I wanted to do something with a purpose,” she said.

“A friend of mine in Europe trained for USAR and it really inspired me. It’s the perfect combination of developing a great partnership with your dog and giving something back to the community.

“I adopted Snickers three years ago from the Royal Australian Air Force breeding program. He didn’t fit into their program because he’d broken one of his canine teeth. Two of his siblings are also in our team.

“Snickers is a Belgian Malinois and a big goofball. He’s surprisingly cuddly when he’s not working. He’d like to be a lapdog but he’s 30 kilograms. We select dogs who are social and happy because it makes the job easier.

“Snickers really enjoys the work. He loves toys and playing ball, so that’s his reward when he finds someone. It’s like a game for the dogs – hunting and finding the person.”

Ingrid draws on her experience as a vet working with behavioural cases, as well as a qualified dog trainer.

“I previously trained another USAR K9, Ernie, who was my search partner for more than 10 years.

“Unfortunately I lost him last year but he was an excellent dog – one of the few advanced operational certified dogs we’ve

had. He had the best life – USAR was his favourite thing in the world.”

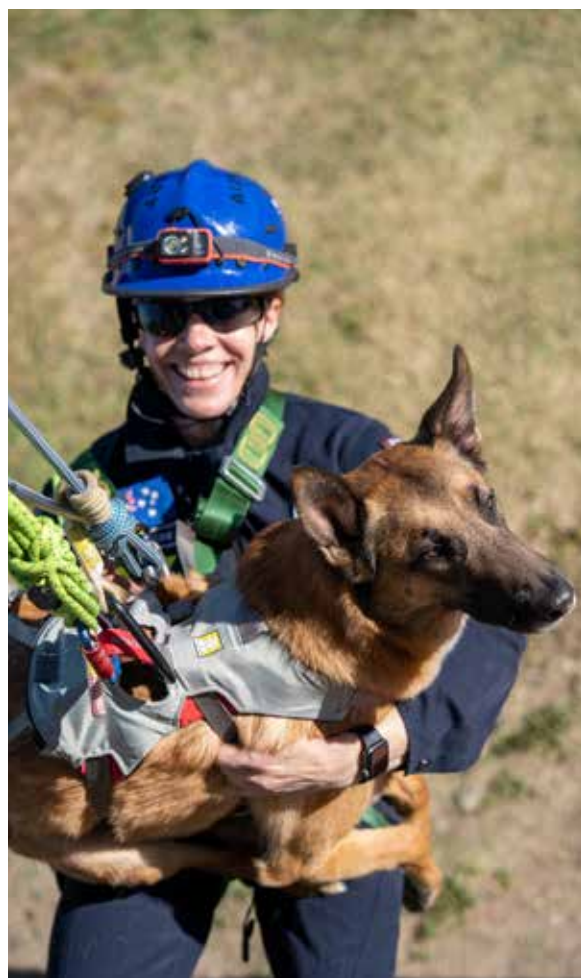
Training dogs for search and rescue is a big time commitment.

“We have a few months off over summer but other than that we train every weekend for five or six hours,” Ingrid said. “We love being there but it can be hard, especially for the family left behind.

“I really enjoy participating in the USAR team’s annual training exercise where we deploy as a team for 48 hours.

“The K9 USAR team are close-knit and supportive because we spend a lot of time together. The whole USAR team is a well-oiled machine with many parts. It’s a good feeling to be part of something that big.

“K9 USAR is a lifestyle, not a hobby. It’s like a part-time job that we really enjoy. Having that purpose is amazing.”



Ingrid and her fellow K9 handlers recently practised abseiling with their dogs.

EXERCISE CAPRICORN SURGE

QFD officers participated in a tsunami planning exercise to enhance the Gladstone region's disaster preparedness.

Exercise Capricorn Surge, led by the Gladstone Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG), was based on a plausible worst-case scenario tsunami on Queensland's Capricorn Coast, resulting from undersea earthquakes in the southwest Pacific Ocean.

Tsunami risk is one of the top 10 hazards in the Queensland State Disaster Risk Report and the Capricornia Coast is one of the top 10 most at-risk sites. When faced with a tsunami land inundation threat, the general advice for evacuation is to move one kilometre inland or 10 metres high.

The exercise was a practical test of inundation modelling developed by Geoscience Australia, in partnership with QFD's Hazard and Risk Unit and Gladstone Regional Council. The modelling is used to update evacuation mapping and enhance community safety and inform Gladstone's industrial sectors.

Senior Program Officer Tanya Van Wyk said Capricorn Surge tested response strategies, helping refine evacuation mapping and plans for the region.

"Using a realistic tsunami scenario, participants worked through key aspects

of disaster response, including evacuation protocols, communication strategies and resource coordination," Tanya said.

"The exercise was an opportunity to enhance QFD operations while strengthening relationships with key disaster management partners, including local government, Queensland Police Service (QPS), Queensland Ambulance Service, Queensland Reconstruction Authority and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.

"I was really impressed by how cohesively everyone worked together. It reflected a shared commitment to protecting lives and property."

Executive Manager Matt Dyer said participants explored roles, responsibilities and coordination arrangements.

"Our Hazard and Risk team developed preliminary evacuation zones for land warnings. While the modelling itself couldn't account for future sea level rise specifically, it did provide some insight into the likely effects of sea level rise more generally, revealing potentially significant changes in inundation for low-lying areas," Matt said.

"This information is useful when considering where QFD might need to apply a range of capabilities including technical rescue, damage assessment, washouts, aircraft operations and incident management, both today and into the future.

"The priorities underpinning QFD's planning and operational decision-making were primacy of life for emergency responders and community, understanding the operational environment, operational readiness to ensure timely and effective response, and enhancing and protecting the department's reputation."

QFD's Gladstone LDMG member, Acting Inspector Quinn Cramer, said the evacuation mapping was a key focus.

"The short arrival time of the simulated tsunami raised significant challenges, which highlighted how essential it is to have accurate evacuation mapping to inform a quick and clear response," Quinn said.

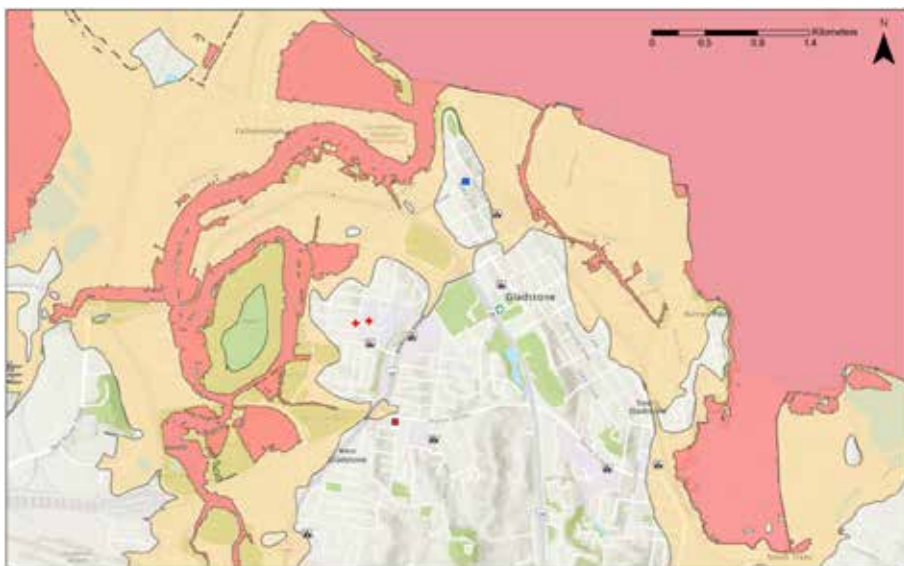
Gladstone Regional Council, in collaboration with QPS, is reviewing the mapping to further refine evacuation zones based on lessons learnt from the exercise. This will help create evacuation plans tailored to the region.

Dr Jane Sexton, Director of State Intelligence, Predictions and Planning, said she was proud of what the exercise achieved.

"Among the tsunami projects already conducted in Queensland, Gladstone is the first to apply this best-practice approach," said Jane.

"We are standing on the shoulders of giants – national science leaders such as Geoscience Australia and disaster managers in WA and NSW. We hope to inspire greater usage of the large body of knowledge on tsunami risk management to better prepare for the future."

The project was funded through the Australian Government's Coastal and Estuarine Risk Mitigation Funding program.



Gladstone Tsunami Evacuation Mapping

A comparison of modelled inundation data and the existing evacuation mapping

Modelled inundation data provided by Geoscience Australia: Macaulay, M. and Davies, G., 2025. QLD Tsunami Inundation Modelling Project Data Package. Geoscience Australia, Canberra

Indicative comparison of the modelled inundation area.

STATE-OF-THE-ART TRAINING FOR REGIONAL FIREFIGHTERS

Firefighters from Roma used QFD's new live fire simulator to train in realistic scenarios without the need to travel.

Regional Queensland Fire and Rescue (QFR) firefighters always had to take time off and travel to Brisbane for live fire training, but thanks to five new simulators they can safely train closer to home.

Shakira Westdorp, Acting Inspector at Roma Fire and Rescue Station, said the simulators were a fantastic opportunity for regional firefighters.

"We've made a simulator available for all firefighters in Roma Command as well as neighbouring commands and regions up to two-and-a-half hours away – 100 firefighters in total," Shakira said.

"It's a significant investment from the division to ensure our firefighters receive training to keep themselves, their crews and their communities safe. It gives them confidence in their skillsets and techniques, as well as improved decision-making on the fire ground.

"QFR has a strong focus on firefighter safety and in line with that we use the simulator to place firefighters in a real-life scenario in a controlled and safe manner."

The simulator was developed over eight years and Superintendent Ricky May AFSM was recognised in the 2025 King's Birthday Honours for leading the project.

Each simulator consists of a specially designed shipping container with LPG gas cylinders attached to it. The training covered smoke reading techniques, advanced hose and branch

handling, hostile entry and break-and-enter, rescue operations and tactical decision-making from the fireground.

"Personnel outside the simulator can turn the gas off and on remotely," Shakira said. "It allows crews to receive real-time feedback on their techniques.

"Thank you to the Toowoomba Division's professional development command, leadership team and tactical training unit for approving the training.

"The tactical training unit helped ensure our instructors were able to deliver training at a high level.

"We've had significant positive feedback and a lot of firefighters have gained confidence in themselves. For many this was the first time they'd been in a structure with flames overhead and they learnt how to keep themselves safe.

"I went in with a relatively new auxiliary firefighter who was hesitant on the first entry and it was so encouraging to see them improve their understanding of how fire moves and what they can do to control it."

Firefighters also participated in a two-day advanced heavy road crash rescue course at the Roma council depot.

"With high volumes of heavy vehicle traffic, grey nomads and tourist groups travelling through regional road and rail corridors, the need for advanced rescue capability is critical," Shakira said.

Crews received advanced qualifications in the use of heavy rescue tools, training in complex extrication techniques for entrapped occupants and for high-risk, isolated environments.

"They got so much out of the training and hopefully the good news will spread into their communities, and we can improve our recruitment and retention of auxiliary staff."

The simulator will remain at Roma Fire and Rescue Station for six weeks before rotating to another area.





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RAAP IN REMOTE QUEENSLAND

QFD's driver safety program has toured southwest Queensland to encourage young people in the regions to be safe behind the wheel.

Every year, presenters for the Road Attitudes and Action Planning (RAAP) program travel to some of Queensland's most remote areas to deliver an important message to young drivers.

In 2023, RAAP received funding over four years to deliver more presentations in regional communities and other settings such as youth justice and detention centres.

In early September the team conducted a regional tour of Normanton and Doomadgee. Most recently, they toured southwest Queensland, delivering presentations in Charleville, Cunnamulla and Quilpie in collaboration with the Queensland Police Service (QPS) and Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS).

Program Support Officer Jo Legg said the program aimed to give young drivers in these areas the same Queensland-wide standardised road safety messaging as their urban counterparts.

Specially trained RAAP presenters tailor the message to include the fatal five contributing factors for road crashes and create meaningful conversations with participants on locally identified issues.

"Reaching regional and remote areas is vital for several reasons," Jo said. "Young drivers in rural areas face unique challenges, such as long stretches of roads, higher speeds and limited access to emergency services."

"Delivering the RAAP program in these areas fosters community engagement, builds trust with emergency services and promotes safer driving behaviours."

"We want to break down barriers between emergency services and young adults, fostering trust and open communication."

"The program received positive feedback from both students and teachers. Students were highly engaged with the presentations, and teachers expressed their appreciation for the program's relevance and impact."

Inspector Caine Warburton initiated the collaboration between QFD, QPS and QAS in Charleville after identifying that RAAP hadn't been conducted in the area for several years.

In collaboration with the Engagement and Coordination Branch, Caine created a RAAP tour of Charleville State High School, Cunnamulla State School and Quilpie State School.

"QAS and QPS designed presentations to complement the RAAP package, providing greater insight on traffic offences, actions during police intercepts, first aid and Triple Zero (000) protocol, breaking down barriers between emergency services and young adults," Caine said.

"This approach created significant interagency collaboration and provided a united front across all three services to drive home the road safety messages."

"We had good engagement from the students and one later had a positive roadside interaction with QPS."

"I'd like to thank RAAP presenter Geoff Neubecker from Brisbane Region who demonstrated exceptional knowledge and presentation skills, tailoring his delivery to suit our target audiences."

The RAAP program has received funding for six more regional tours in the 2025-26 financial year and seven more in 2026-27.



BRINGING NEW SKILLS TO THURSDAY ISLAND

Auxiliary firefighter Troy Nowlan travelled from Thursday Island to Brisbane to complete the Suppress Urban Fire training program.

Troy joined QFD in 2023 after seeing a work colleague attend a grass fire near his house.

“I talked to them when they were making up,” Troy said. “I got curious and now here we are.

“My station is fairly active for a small island community of roughly 3000. The majority of our calls are alarms and grass fires in the dry season.

“We get out and about for school events to conduct community engagement like careers day at the high school and under 8s day.

“The most rewarding thing is being able to help my community when needed, as well as conducting community engagement with the local school kids.”

Keen to develop his operational skills, Troy signed up for the training program in Brisbane.

“The training went for three days and we participated in compartment fires, gas cooling and suppression techniques, room burns, hostile entry and search and rescue,” he said.



“It was as realistic as they could safely make it. For the compartment burn, we made a safe zone and started working our way to the seat of the fire, as if we were entering a burning house or hallway.

“We learnt how gas cooling affects the smoke layer and how to apply the right techniques. They taught us when to drive it back to the seat of the fire and how to extinguish it effectively.

“It was a challenge to read the room and read the fire and smoke behaviour. It was great to learn, even though it’s never perfect because the situation is always different.

“For the search and rescue exercise, three BA teams went into a smoky, dark environment to locate someone.”

Troy said the training was very physical. Participants had to prepare mentally and manage their fatigue.

“I’ve seen fire in different settings so I had some idea of what to expect but it can be an overwhelming experience to watch a fire start right in front of you and get up to 600 degrees or more.

“However, it’s a safe environment with plenty of instructors around you. The instructors were all great operators, extremely experienced, very knowledgeable and willing to help us.

“That was my favourite part – working with the instructors who were very open and informative. Any question you had they would answer in the best way they could.

“As well as learning more about smoke and fire behaviour, I improved my branch handling and suppression and gained more confidence in my abilities.

“The program has given me a deeper appreciation for what we do and more confidence and skills for attending fire calls.”





LIVE FIRE EXPERIENCE FOR ENGINEERS AND DESIGNERS

Queensland Fire and Rescue (QFR) invited fire safety engineers and designers from the building industry to witness fires up close during two live fire experiences.

The event reinforced the dangers of fires in buildings and the need to design buildings with the appropriate level of fire safety.

QFR Fire Engineer Mick Conway said building fires are often branded as low likelihood and therefore low risk.

“The ‘low risk’ branding is often used as a reason to scale down fire safety systems in buildings or remove them entirely,” Mick said.

“QFR has maintained the necessity of robust building fire safety systems and our Building Approval Officers (BAO) play an important role in reinforcing this message.

“When they advise on building development applications, BAOs advocate against decreasing fire safety systems in any proposed designs.

“BAOs often explain the difficulties occupants and firefighters face when a fire breaks out in a building.”

The live fire experiences took this message a step further, putting the engineers and designers in the shoes of firefighters.

QFR and other fire and rescue services have used live fire events to train fire engineers and designers for more than two decades.

“Considering that the bulk of fire safety design work is a desktop exercise, we focused the experience on the exact opposite- an immersion experience,” Mick said.

“We wanted the engineers and designers to understand (by experience) how precarious

and difficult internal fire conditions can become and how important that is for a fire safety design.”

QFR’s Fire Engineering Section and the team from the Live Fire Campus at the School of Fire and Emergency Services Training (SFEST) immersed the participants in dark, smoke-filled training cells.

“We then gave them the experience of overhead rolling flames, a descending smoke layer and lost visibility in our flashover simulators,” Mick said.

“Immersed in smoke and heat held back by the final barrier of a firefighter’s protective clothing, the engineers and designers gained an appreciation for the conditions firefighters experience.

“Firefighters know likelihood and probability count for zero when a fire starts, so we have to consider building fire safety risk from both aspects.

“Occupants must be able to escape a fire well before conditions become life-threatening, but this can happen quickly.”

Participants gave positive feedback, including that they were surprised how quickly a room could become fully smoked out.

“The live fire experiences showed there is a real appetite for industry to gain knowledge and experience by engaging with QFR,” Mick said.

“Thank you to the staff at Live Fire Campus and SFEST who made the experiences a true success.”



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A RURAL TRAILBLAZER

After joining the Rocky Point Rural Fire Brigade when he was 16, Camden Scholz became the youngest officer in the brigade's history.

Camden joined Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ) while still in school and what started as curiosity quickly became a passion.

"I learnt RFSQ is so much more than just fighting fires and being on the frontlines," Camden said.

"It's an opportunity to develop real-world skills, be part of a close-knit team and contribute to protecting my community.

"At 21, I became the youngest officer in the history of our brigade. This was an incredible milestone in both my personal and professional life. Volunteering with RFSQ has shown me what I'm capable of and led me to pursue a professional career in fire management services.

"It's helped shape who I am and sparked a lifelong passion for firefighting. It's given me a sense of purpose and a firsthand understanding of what it truly means to serve."

As the first in his family to join RFSQ, Camden hopes to inspire other young people to consider volunteering.

"Knowing the work we do helps keep our community safe and gives people confidence during difficult times is incredibly motivating," he said.

"My brigade plays an important role in the community, not just during incidents but in everyday engagement. Whether it's through community education or simply being a visible presence, we're proud to be a reliable and trusted part of the area we serve.

"The camaraderie is a huge part of it too. Our brigade isn't just a crew – it's a second family. We train together, laugh together and support one another.

"The friendships I've made in the brigade are unlike any others. You form bonds that run deep. We look out for each other, push each other to grow and carry each other through the tough days."

Taking on responsibility so early in his career also came with challenges.

"It means having to make decisions under pressure and ensuring I lead by example," Camden said. "While that can be demanding at times, it's also what drives me to keep learning and improving.

"A highlight for me was getting the opportunity to act as a Brigade Support Officer on the Gold Coast.

"It allowed me to contribute in new ways, helping with both the operational side and behind-the-scenes work. It gave me a chance to develop new skills and improve the way I volunteer within my brigade.

"RFSQ isn't just a place to volunteer, it's a place to grow, serve and be part of something that truly matters. You don't need to know everything before you start. Just show up, be willing to learn and give it your best."

+ ROAD SAFETY DEMONSTRATION AT BABINDA

QFR crews in Cairns Division presented their annual simulated crash scenario at Babinda State School to teach future drivers about the reality of road crashes. Students were able to speak with first responders and even take part in the scenario.

This annual exercise started more than 10 years ago when Mossman Fire and Rescue Station's Lieutenant Andrew Petrack saw a concerning trend of road safety incidents involving young drivers. He linked up with the local high school and coordinated a safety discussion and demonstration for senior students.

The project has grown from strength to strength and now includes QFR, RFSQ, Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS), Queensland Police Service (QPS), State Emergency Service, Rescue 510 Helicopter, undertakers and a forensic pathologist. It also features a guest speaker who lost a loved one to a road crash incident.

The exercise enables first responders to understand each agency's needs, promotes positive working relationships and allows the agencies to cohesively resolve an incident.

Students learnt the importance of road safety and the concept of thinking before acting. The scenario was a sobering look at how our decisions can impact not just our own lives but those around us as well.



+ IMBIL STATE SCHOOL EXERCISE

Crews from Imbil, Kenilworth, Cooran and Gympie joined forces with QAS for a major multi-station exercise at Imbil State School.

Crews focused on a realistic multi-pump response to a large school fire, as well as familiarisation and use of the on-site hydrant and booster systems. An SCD Building Approvals Officer provided expert advice to the crews about these systems.



+ BREAKING NEW GROUND IN GLADSTONE

For the first time, Gladstone saw three female leaders in the area command roles for QFR, RFSQ and the State Emergency Service – a significant milestone in our journey toward inclusivity and progress.

This achievement not only highlights the women's strength, expertise and leadership but the progress we are making toward building safer, stronger and more inclusive services for our communities.

Together, these leaders are paving the way for future generations and reinforcing our commitment to ensuring everyone has a place in shaping the future of our organisation.



+ EMERGENCY LANE IN THE SOUTH BURNETT

The South Burnett Area Community Engagement Network is rolling out its innovative Emergency Lane concept, designed to bring key disaster and emergency stakeholders together under one banner at community events.

Emergency Lane is all about promoting year-round awareness across the four pillars of emergency management – prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. By creating a dynamic presence at local shows and festivals, the initiative helps residents connect directly with the services and agencies that keep communities safe.

Most recently, Emergency Lane popped up at the Wondai Show and Back to Kumbia Community Celebration, drawing strong interest from locals of all ages.

Attendees had the chance to meet and engage with representatives from a wide range of services including QFR, RFSQ, QPS, QAS, South Burnett Regional Council, State Emergency Service, PCYC Emergency Cadets and Neighbourhood Watch.

The combined presence highlighted the importance of collaboration, showing that when services work together the whole community benefits. From fire safety tips to disaster preparedness advice, residents walked away with practical information and stronger connections to the people and organisations ready to support them before, during and after disasters.





+ DISASTER COMMUNITY CONNECTORS

Volunteers from the Central Queensland Multicultural Association (CQMA)'s Disaster Community Connectors joined RFSQ at Barmaryee Multi-Sports Precinct to learn about this year's bushfire safety campaign.

The CQMA volunteers talked with local firefighters about preparedness, fires and what it's like to volunteer with RFSQ.

The group was made up of volunteers from Iran, Kiribati, China, Germany, Brazil, Colombia and Papua New Guinea. They will take their learnings back to their communities to help them be more prepared during heightened bushfire activity.



+ WORKING WITH REDLAND MEN'S SHED

Crews from Redland Bay Fire and Rescue Station delivered a fire safety awareness session to their local Men's Shed. As a token of their heartfelt gratitude, the Men's Shed crafted a sculpture to be featured at the station and presented the crews with a Certificate of Appreciation.

+ MANY ROLES, ONE TEAM

From seasoned operational staff to business support officers, a team of 28 staff from South East Coast District and Regional Office came together and participated in 'Exercise Be Prepared' in September at the Rocky Point Scout Camp.

It was a great opportunity to step away from the usual routine, enhance team collaboration and demonstrate the value of working together.

Activities included fuel sampling, rake hoe, plant identification, navigation, radio operations, chainsaw refresher, fire planning and fire investigations. The main event was a two-hectare burn across three areas that all 28 staff came together to complete. The team used two light-attack and two medium-attack appliances.

This burn provided the opportunity for the seasoned operational staff to mentor the business support officers, through sharing knowledge, skills and a clear understanding of what it takes to complete a successful burn.



+ WELL-DESERVED RECOGNITION

Congratulations to A Shift Caboolture, who received their Assistant Commissioner's Certificate of Appreciation for an extremely challenging incident, involving CPR and a great result. Chief Superintendent Stephen Depinto presented the awards to Jared, Ben, Luke, Mark and Peter.



+ QUEENSLAND FIREFIGHTERS MEMORIAL GOLF DAY

For more than 30 years, Warby Day has been a cherished event in Queensland's southeast corner, paying tribute to the late Chris Warburton and the legacy of our firefighters. This year, the tradition evolved with a new name – Queensland Firefighters Memorial Golf Day – to honour all firefighters who have passed away too soon.

Held at Wantima Country Club, the event brought together 142 players for a day of camaraderie, competition and remembrance. Generous sponsors donated over \$3,000 in prizes and \$5,570 was raised for the Children's Hospital Foundation.

The dice-based handicap system puzzled a few at first but quickly became a fun and well-received novelty.

This year also marked a special partnership with the Retired Firefighters Association, who sponsored the prestigious Walley Belcher Shield for the top-performing team of past and present firefighters, including rural and auxiliary members.



+ QUEENSLAND FIRE GOLF STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

The Bribie Island Golf Club recently played host to the Queensland Fire Services Amateur Golf Association (QFSAGA) State Championships 2025.

Fifty golfers from across Queensland came together for three days of competition, mateship and laughter that perfectly embodied the spirit of this long-standing association.

The first morning buzzed with excitement as players reunited with old friends and met new ones. Firefighters past and present, along with communication staff and supporters, filled the course with good-natured banter and plenty of backslaps.

The golf across the three days was as varied as the personalities on the fairways. There were booming drives, delicate chips and putts that fell with a roar of delight – or slid past the hole to the groan of the group.

Day two carried with it the sense of tradition that underpins the championships. While the leaders on the scoreboard began to separate themselves, the clubhouse was filled with storytelling and laughter as players shared meals, swapped tales from their time in the service, and reflected on championships gone by.

The final day brought an extra buzz of anticipation. Scores were tight and with trophies and a spot in the state team on the line, the standard of play lifted once more.



Special recognition was reserved for David 'Zim' Zimmerle, who was presented with a trophy acknowledging his outstanding contributions to QFSAGA over many years. His tireless commitment to the association has left a lasting mark, and the ovation he received spoke volumes of the respect and gratitude held for him across the membership.

This year the Australasian Golf Championships are being held in Adelaide in November. A Queensland state representative team was selected to compete and do QFD proud.

As the championships drew to a close and the golfers said their goodbyes, one sentiment echoed again and again: this wasn't just about golf. It was about mateship, wellbeing and the enduring bond shared by the fire services community.

Big thanks to sponsors Tom Living from Stewart & Heaton Clothing and Drummond Golf Biggera Waters.

For more information email qldfiregolf@gmail.com or follow [qldfiregolf](#) on Instagram.



+ STRATEGIC PLANNING DAY

The Senior Leadership Team from the South East Coast District, which stretches from Noosa in the north to the NSW border in the south, came together in September for their quarterly strategic planning day.

Hosted at Ormeau Rural Fire Brigade, the day brought together leaders from the district's three areas, as well as the mitigation and training teams, to focus on delivering the best possible support to volunteers.

A highlight of the day was the brigade's demonstration of their mapping and intelligence capabilities. First Officer Ben Watson delivered a presentation on how these tools can enhance intelligence gathering and support sound decision-making for incident management teams.

The Gold Coast Group Operational Support Unit also demonstrated the capabilities of their bulk water tanker, ute and trailer.

Staff put on lunch for the volunteers and took the time to discuss local issues and challenges. These conversations were invaluable in strengthening relationships and ensuring the voices of our volunteers are considered in future planning.

Brigades interested in learning more about the Ormeau Rural Fire Brigade's mapping capabilities are encouraged to reach out to Ben Watson.



+ A VISIT TO LYTTON REFINERY

Crews from Wynnum, Cannon Hill and Hendra fire and rescue stations, along with senior officers from Metro Division and Scientific, visited the AMPOL Refinery at Lytton.

Their goal was to share information on a Major Hazard LPG storage facility and the systems in place to manage a leak to prevent a Boiling Liquid Expanding Vapor Explosion (a rupture caused by boiling liquid).



+ VOLUNTEER EDUCATORS BOOST BUSHFIRE PREPAREDNESS

A strike team of volunteer community educators recently travelled to the Gladstone region to help RFSQ brigades engage with residents living in high-risk bushfire areas.

Over three days, the educators partnered with brigades to deliver nine community events including street meets and brigade open days to give locals practical information on bushfire preparedness and safety.

Conversations focused on understanding bushfire risk, developing and practising bushfire survival plans, the permit to light system, preparing homes and properties and volunteer opportunities.

These events not only strengthened community knowledge and preparedness but also highlighted the value of collaboration between regional brigades and the broader volunteer educator network.

The positive outcomes from the Gladstone deployment demonstrated the importance of proactive community engagement in building safer, more resilient communities.





1. Hervey Bay's Emergency Services Cadets carried out a stack burn with support from Rural Fire Service Queensland volunteers from Dundowran and Aldershot and the crew from Torquay Fire and Rescue Station.
2. Charters Towers Rural Fire Brigade talked with locals about bushfire safety at the Prospect Community Day.
3. Auxiliary firefighters undertook vertical rescue training at Thursday Island.
4. Mount Blackwood and Habana rural fire brigades participated in the Konvoy 4 Kids from Sarina to Mackay Showgrounds to raise money for charity.



5. The State Fire Control Centre undertook detailed planning and training with a life-like run-through of a bushfire emergency across Queensland.
6. QFD celebrated an agreement with Volvo to deliver 80 new Queensland Fire and Rescue Type 2 trucks with improved safety and technology.
7. Firefighters took on police in eight sports at the 9/11 Commemorative Sports Day. Photo by Brooke Sleep.
8. Rocky Point Rural Fire Brigade visited King's Christian College to showcase what volunteering is all about.
9. Queensland Fire and Rescue instructors delivered Urban Search and Rescue training to the Pacific Police Support Group to help them prepare for unplanned events in the Pacific.
10. Firefighters climbed 41 flights of stairs for the Rhapsody StairClimb Challenge, raising more than \$43,000 for the Firefighters Cancer Foundation Australia.

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