

RESPONSE

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE QUEENSLAND FIRE DEPARTMENT

JUNE 2026



HONOURING THE FALLEN

QFD'S NEW
MEMORIAL WALL

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Celebrating our best



Memorial Wall honours the fallen



Fire investigation training for Fiji



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ON THE COVER

The Memorial Wall features the names of 60 fallen firefighters who lost their lives in the line of duty or as a result of their service, from 1877 to the present day.



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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.

SPOTLIGHT

30 YEARS WITH FIRECOM PAGE 21



FOREWORDS



STEVE SMITH AFSM
COMMISSIONER
QUEENSLAND FIRE DEPARTMENT

It was an honour to celebrate the official opening of QFD Headquarters and the dedication of the Queensland Firefighter Memorial Wall.

We welcomed families of our fallen firefighters for the dedication ceremony as we collectively paid our respects and honoured their loved ones. The Firefighter Memorial Wall is our first public monument to capture the names of all our fallen firefighters, and members of the community are welcome and encouraged to visit.

The new state headquarters brings together staff from across Brisbane, in a contemporary, fit-for-purpose facility that better integrates all state functions, enables collaboration and sets us up to support those on the frontline well into the future.

QFD is making another important change to the way we honour the fallen. From 2027, Queensland Firefighters' Remembrance Day memorials will be held on International Firefighters Day on 4 May, bringing us in line with other jurisdictions and the AFAC national memorial. It also coincides with the Feast of Saint Florian, the patron saint of firefighters.

As we have now moved into winter we are also working closely with partners and stakeholders to prepare for the higher risk bushfire period.

Dry, hot conditions are predicted as part of a strong El Nino and many areas already have high fuel loads.

The above-average bushfire potential this winter will likely place significant demands on QFD but I have every confidence in our ability to meet the challenge head-on to keep Queenslanders safe.

To help members prioritise time, effort and resources, I have released the Commissioner's Intent for this period. The Commissioner's Intent outlines our mission to protect Queensland communities from bushfire, particularly high-risk locations.

As we continue our planning, preparation and mitigation activities ahead of the bushfire period and continue to respond daily to incidents that deeply impact our communities, I just wanted to pause and say thank you to all for what you do.

Your selfless actions each day, no matter what role you perform within QFD, are recognised and valued and they make a difference to the communities we exist to serve. Thank you, and as always, keep the safety of yourself, your colleagues and the community at the forefront of your mind at all times.



JOHN CAWCUTT AFSM
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
QUEENSLAND FIRE AND RESCUE

It has been an honour to serve the community for 41 years and, on the eve of my retirement, I can truly say I have enjoyed nearly every single day of my career.

I have witnessed the organisation grow and improve in ways I couldn't have imagined.

I had the privilege of representing QFD when deploying to international disasters and responding to emergencies of national interest.

QFD is made up of many extraordinary people who have inspired me and made this journey unforgettable.

This career has brought me the greatest of highs and, at times, some challenging lows, all of which have left a mark. Nevertheless, I wouldn't trade a single moment.

I hope I've played a small part in leaving the organisation in better shape than when I first joined.

I am leaving the organisation in an increasingly complex and rapidly changing environment. We all know that disasters – whether they are floods, fires or storms – are increasing in frequency, severity and longevity, with more than 96% of Queensland affected last year alone.

Considering the current Middle East conflict and, closer to home, the Bondi tragedy and the upcoming Olympics, now more than ever we must remain adaptable, focus on the safety and security of our community and coordinate and work across traditional boundaries.

The role and functions of a firefighter have changed considerably from when I started, and they must continue to change so we remain relevant. These opportunities should not be opposed but actively sought out so we are always ready.

As I step away, I do so with full confidence that QFD is in excellent hands and will continue to serve the people of Queensland with courage, professionalism and heart.

To all my friends and colleagues, both past and present, thank you for your support, camaraderie and trust over the years. It's been an absolute privilege to serve.

Celebrating our best

In this year's King's Birthday Honours, we celebrated QFD members who have gone above and beyond the call of duty.

Three QFD members received Australian Fire Service Medals (AFSM) in the King's Birthday Honours.

This award is the highest accolade for fire and emergency services personnel, an honour well-deserved by these outstanding recipients.



Justin Francis
Station Officer,
Cannon Hill
Fire Station

For 30 years, Justin Francis has developed

his expertise in high-rise firefighting and applied it to operational crews. His contributions to QFD's high-rise procedures have created organisational change and a renewed understanding of how to manage fires in large structures.

"I became interested in high-rise firefighting through working at Kemp Place Fire Station for 17 years and being exposed to a variety of incidents in the city centre," Justin said.

"I expanded this interest while working as a Building Approval Officer and then sought opportunities around the world to learn from others. Some of these opportunities included being invited by the Dubai Civil Defense to discuss high-rise procedures to being one of the only internationals invited to the NFPA High-Rise Committee established after September 11. I've always reached out to share what I've learnt overseas with QFD."

Justin recently provided input into the new Station Officer Program, including a component on high-rise firefighting and firefighter safety initiatives.

"There's so much knowledge in the building approval area but it doesn't always get back to operational crews," Justin said.

"About 15 years ago I started running informal sessions for my firefighter colleagues, which eventually resulted in a formal course called 'Firefighting in the Built Environment'."

In 2019, Justin initiated the Firefighter Safety Working Group, which drove organisational change over five years by developing measures to reduce firefighters' exposure to toxins, such as on-site decontamination, post-fire air monitoring and new PPE storage and transport bags.

Justin has also taken on senior roles in operations, including the Pacific Adventurer oil spill in 2009.

"I was Duty Manager of Operations during the start of the oil spill," he said. "It was a day I will never forget.

"I coordinated fire crews to gain access onto the large container ship that was leaking oil. Ammonium nitrate was also potentially leaking into diesel fuel.

"The day felt like it took five minutes and it demonstrated how flexible and multi-skilled we can be as firefighters."

Justin also coordinated the operational response across Brisbane during the 2011 floods.

"I spent the entire day liaising with Firecom, a Regional Operations Control Centre and operational crews. The incidents were so varied, so fast and so out of the norm for firefighters.

"People were jumping out of sinking yachts in the CBD. Firefighters flew in Blackhawk helicopters and worked with surf life savers in the built environment."

Justin completed a Masters of Emergency Management at Charles Sturt University, writing a thesis on reducing firefighter exposure to toxins. He has spoken at

more than 30 national and international fire safety conferences.

"My thesis taught me how to research firefighter safety initiatives on an international and scientific level and understand the need for credible research to back up your requests for change," he said.

In 2017 he was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to conduct research into fire safety in high-rise buildings in Asia and Europe, including a visit to Grenfell Tower with the London Fire Brigade.

"I liaised with many fire departments around the world," Justin said. "What really stood out was a huge shift in the understanding of firefighters' exposure to toxins and the variety of changes aimed at reducing exposure.

"Several of my close colleagues' health had been affected by exposure. It's a huge challenge to all fire departments.

"When I returned to Australia, I realised there were many improvements we could make, such as a systematic approach to post-fire decontamination. Educating firefighters on how they could reduce their exposure became my priority.

"Something as simple as firefighters bagging contaminated PPC on the fire ground has reduced exposure. There are further improvements to be made, but it's great to see firefighters taking ownership over safety."

Justin said the highlight of his career so far was the relationships he developed with hundreds of firefighters.

"Firefighting is such a unique job – we live together, eat together and experience some intense moments together. It's the genuine bond we establish in this job over many, many years that keeps us turning up to work."



Daren Mallouk
Inspector,
State Fire
Investigation
Unit

With 25 years' service up his sleeve, Daren Mallouk has demonstrated exceptional operational and frontline service through his contributions to fire investigation and emergency management.

Daren has led or overseen more than 1000 fire investigations involving structural damage, explosions, fatalities and hazardous materials. His expertise has been critical in delivering accurate findings and expert witness testimony.

"What first drew me to fire investigation was the complexity of it and the opportunity to understand the 'why' behind an incident," Daren said.

"As firefighters, we respond to emergencies and deal with the immediate consequences, but fire investigation allows you to step back and piece together what happened.

"It's not just about determining the origin and cause of a fire, it's about improving firefighter safety, identifying emerging risks, supporting the community and helping prevent similar incidents.

"The field is constantly evolving. Modern building materials, emerging technologies such as lithium-ion batteries and energy storage systems, and increasingly complex fire environments mean investigators must continually learn and adapt.

"Equally rewarding is mentoring and developing other investigators and seeing fire investigation continue to grow."

A memorable investigation for Daren involved a serial arsonist who lit fires across Brisbane's northern suburbs over several years.

"What made the investigation unique was the scale, complexity and level of collaboration required between QFD and Queensland Police Service.

"The investigation ultimately involved 28 suspicious vegetation and structure fires, often late at night. Over time, patterns and behavioural trends emerged and we established covert monitoring operations in high-risk bushland areas.

"There were many late nights and long days. I reviewed large volumes of CCTV, covert camera imagery, fire scene information and intelligence holdings to identify links between incidents.

"I presented predictive fire modelling and environmental impact assessments that demonstrated to the court how catastrophic the vegetation fires could have been under slightly different weather or fuel conditions.

"It reinforced that fire investigation is not just about identifying what happened, but helping others understand the potential consequences and broader community risk."

Daren said providing expert witness testimony was a significant responsibility that required preparation, objectivity and professionalism.

"You need to ensure your investigation, documentation, scene examination, photographs, notes and conclusions are methodical, evidence-based and capable of withstanding scrutiny," he said.

"Preparation is critical and can often involve revisiting investigations many years after. This process may require detailed review of reports, witness statements, scene photographs, exhibits, timelines and laboratory results.

"Cross-examination can be very detailed and challenging, so maintaining professionalism, remaining composed, and staying within your expertise is essential."

Fire investigation also means dealing with uncertainty.

"Fire scenes are often heavily damaged, altered by suppression activities, weather, structural collapse or rescue operations. Much of the evidence has been destroyed.

"There can be pressure from various stakeholders wanting answers quickly,

but it's important to remain disciplined, follow the evidence and acknowledge limitations.

"The role can be personally challenging. Many investigations involve tragic circumstances, fatalities or people who have lost their homes, businesses or loved ones.

"Balancing the technical demands of the investigation with the human side is something investigators carry with them."

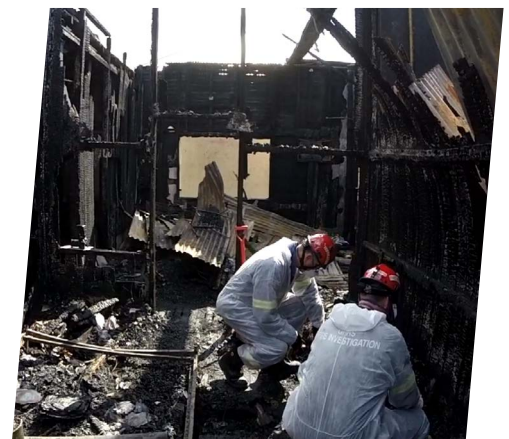
Daren has been instrumental in driving innovation at QFD, pioneering cost-saving initiatives, enhancing digital field note systems and modernising training pathways.

"One of the things I'm most proud of is helping build and develop the fire investigation capability within QFD and contributing to improvements that will continue benefiting the organisation and community into the future.

"That includes mentoring and developing investigators, contributing to national discussions around fire investigation standards and practices, and helping position QFD as a leader in emerging fire risks such as lithium-ion battery and e-mobility device fires.

"I see the AFSM not just as recognition of my own contribution, but a reflection of the teams, mentors and colleagues I've had the privilege to work with over many years.

"What has always mattered most to me is knowing the work has made a positive difference, whether that's supporting firefighters, helping provide answers after tragic incidents, improving safety or helping prevent future fires."





Stephen Malone
Auxiliary
Captain
and Rural
Firefighter,
Julia Creek,
QFR and RFSQ

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

Stephen has developed a range of community-based projects that support first responders and community members during emergencies and disasters.

"To have the Governor-General recognise my contribution to our community is very special and an honour," Stephen said.

"As a kid I loved all things environment – plants, animals, rocks and their interaction with different climatic events. We lived on a sheep and cattle station and managing fire in the landscape was crucial.

"My father was an active community volunteer and he passed on his knowledge and his values of helping others.

"I went to my first grass fire when I was eight. In 1994 I started working for a mining company and joined the Hamilton River Brigade so I could respond to fires.

"Owning our own business allows some flexibility timewise and having a very supportive family is the only way I can do what I do."

Recognising the need for stronger collaboration between QFD, SES, Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) and Queensland Police Service (QPS), Stephen founded the McKinlay Shire First Responders Group.

"All our emergency services need to be on the same page," said Stephen. "We train together, respond together and attend public events together. Our community sees us as a team.

"In the mid-90s, the SES had a road crash rescue trailer stationed at McKinlay. A private vehicle owner had to tow it and they stored it under a tree. I put a proposal together and with our partners we bought a block of land, constructed a shed and purchased a small rural appliance to tow the trailer.

"In the early 2000s we needed an all-weather airstrip for the Royal Flying Doctor Service, so I worked with partners again to turn a road into an airstrip, divert powerlines around it and paint runway markings."

In response to unprecedented fuel loads in the Mitchell Grass Downs region following consecutive wet seasons, Steve helped QFR staff organise rural fire training for graziers at the local fire station.

*"All our
emergency
services need
to be on the
same page."*

- Stephen Malone

"We have a new generation of graziers on cattle stations with a major knowledge gap in fire management. My aim was to find key, well-respected graziers who went through the fires of the 70s and use them as mentors.

"On our first training day we had more than 30 graziers, which was incredible at the busiest time of the year for mustering cattle. The training was an overwhelming success as we've had three large fire seasons with no injuries or loss of infrastructure.

"Last year was our most dangerous fire season, with one fire traveling more than 10 kilometres in 10 minutes, but people on the fire ground stayed out of harm's way."

Stephen also worked with LifeFlight to increase the range of their Mount Isa rescue helicopter by placing extra drums of fuel around its response area. This allowed the helicopter to refuel and respond to medical emergencies and search-and-rescue operations in areas previously well out of their return flight range.

Getting accurate direction from patients on cattle stations was a major issue, so Stephen worked with Firecom to produce a Triple Zero (000) Emergency Sheet for station owners to fill in with details such as crossroads, phone numbers, UHF radio channels, and latitude and longitude. This allows Firecom to quickly and easily receive accurate information about a patient's location.

In Stephen's eyes, leadership means being a person people trust and respect, as well as showing equal respect of their knowledge.

"For all our jobs to be successful you must have good communications and, in our business, the key is our Firecom team. They are my absolute heroes.

"This very small group of people are there from the start of an incident to the end, giving us whatever resources we need. They are the key to QFD's good reputation."

Other recipients

Congratulations to former QFES Commissioner Katarina Carroll, who was named an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) for distinguished service to law enforcement, disaster management response and recovery, and the community.

Further congratulations to RFSQ Inspector Justin Robinson for receiving the Conspicuous Service Cross (CSC) for his achievements with the Australian Army.

Retired RFSQ volunteer William Lewis also received the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for his service to the community.

QFD launches new volunteerism strategy

During National Volunteer Week we celebrated the launch of the new QFD Volunteerism Strategy 2026-2030.



Mr Cawcutt thanked all the volunteers who contributed to the strategy.

National Volunteer Week is an opportunity for us to recognise our extraordinary volunteers who show up every day for communities across Queensland.

It was the perfect time to launch QFD's Volunteerism Strategy, which will guide how our department supports our volunteers and enriches the volunteering experience over the next five years.

The launch coincided with the official handover of a new appliance for Guanaba Rural Fire Brigade to boost their firefighting capabilities ahead of the higher risk bushfire period. Brigade members will use the \$340,000 dual-cab medium-attack appliance to respond to incidents and conduct mitigation activities in the local area and across the wider Gold Coast region.

The strategy is informed by the recent Queensland Government Response to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Volunteering, which uncovered the key issues affecting volunteers and the barriers preventing new volunteers from coming on board.

Acting Commissioner John Cawcutt said volunteers were an invaluable part of QFD.

"Our volunteers are highly skilled – in many cases bringing a depth of experience when they first join and then dedicating years to refining their skills and completing training to the highest standard," said Mr Cawcutt.

"By removing barriers to volunteering, giving our members more input into decision making, and better supporting them through improved communication and the best equipment available, we are putting the building blocks in place to support sustainable volunteering across QFD.

"The voice of our volunteers is central to this strategy. We created it in consultation with RFSQ volunteers, Peer Support Officers, Regional Volunteer Scientific Officers, Volunteer Auxiliary Support Officers and Technical Rescue - Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) AUS-01 volunteers.

"Thank you to all our volunteers. Your dedication to supporting your colleagues and Queensland communities is admirable."

Chief Operating Officer Rebecca Denning said the Volunteerism Strategy was aligned with QFD's overall strategic

direction including the QFD Strategic Plan and Our People Strategy.

"The Volunteerism Strategy focuses on engagement, recruitment and onboarding, training, recognition, a safety-first culture, access to equipment and enhancing stakeholder partnerships; to equip volunteers with the knowledge and resources they need to support our people and keep Queenslanders safe," Rebecca said.

"QFD has a diverse and skilled volunteer workforce covering a broad range of responsibilities within our department.

"Our volunteers give a lot to QFD services, sacrificing leisure and family time, and it's up to us as an organisation to ensure that in return, volunteers are provided the best possible working environment, with the best available training and equipment, support networks and development pathways.

"The strategy ensures an adaptive and modern working environment so volunteers can continue doing what they love and feel supported while doing so."

You can read the Volunteerism Strategy on the QFD website or the Gateway.



Staff and volunteers celebrated the launch of the Volunteerism Strategy at the RFSQ South Coast Area Office in Woorangary.



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MEMORIAL WALL HONOURS THE FALLEN

Firefighters past and present gathered for the official opening of QFD Headquarters and the dedication of the Memorial Wall in honour of those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Standing at the entrance to QFD Headquarters in Albion, the Memorial Wall features the names of 60 fallen firefighters who lost their lives in the line of duty or as a result of their service, from 1877 to the present day.

Preserving history and honouring firefighters is an important part of QFD's identity and the Memorial Wall is a chance for all QFD members and the public to reflect on those who came before.

Former firefighters and Commissioners, along with the families of fallen firefighters, gathered at the launch ceremony to lay wreaths and listen to each name inscribed on the wall being read aloud.

Commissioner Steve Smith said a lot of work had gone into the construction of the Memorial Wall.

"Future memorial plaques on this wall will include not only the names of people lost during active duty, but the names of personnel lost in other ways as a result of their service, giving recognition to circumstances including presumptive illnesses covered by legislation," Commissioner Smith said.

"It's the first time we've given such prominence to fallen firefighters on a public site, and I think it's a fitting tribute to ensure their legacy lives on."

A marvelous father

Paying their respects at the ceremony were Christina Kemp and her brothers Rendell, Lindsay and Phillip Brown, the children of Station Officer Sidney William Brown, who lost his life on 17 May 1959 at age 44.

"I think it's a lovely tribute," Christina said. "It's nice to see the department refer

to us, the families, with such reverence because we're the ones who have lost the most. They've lost mates and colleagues but the families have suffered the ultimate loss.

"It's lovely that we can come here any time and bring our children to see the Memorial Wall.



Station Officer Sidney William Brown, who lost his life fighting a fire at the Star Picture Theatre.

"My brothers were 11, 14 and 16 when our dad died but I was a six-week-old baby so I never knew him as such.

"To grow up without a dad is, well, it's what happened, so I know no different. But that's the sacrifice that firefighters and first responders pay."

Phillip said their dad was 'bloody marvelous'.

"He was happy and honest, a great parent – both of them were," Phillip said. "They were just true and decent people.

"They bought what you'd call a hobby farm on Wynnum Road, a three-acre block where we had a cow and grew crops.

"I was nearly 12 when he died. You don't realise it at that age. I never knew what mum had to go through until much later."

Sidney was off-duty one Sunday morning when two fire trucks drove past. Knowing there must be a serious fire, he went to see if he could lend a hand.

"Dad put himself on duty when he saw the trucks," Rendell said. "If we lived on a different road, it wouldn't have happened."

"When he heard there was a fire in a fish and chip shop, he knew the Star Picture Theatre was adjoined to it," said Lindsay.

"These were old, dried-out timber buildings and the theatre was full of old canvas seats."

Within 40 minutes, the fire destroyed the fish and chip shop and theatre, as well as a cafe and newspaper office.

The Canberra Times reported, "At the height of the blaze, flames leapt 70ft. into the air and hundreds of people scattered as live powerlines broke and flicked crazily on the wet roadway."

Sub-Station Officer Herbert George Lees, who was in control of the Wynnum Fire Brigade at the scene, also lost his life when the projection room collapsed onto him and Sidney.

The two firefighters were in the foyer spraying water on the fire when a refrigerator mechanic, Laurence Cain, asked them to help move a fridge from the cafe next door.

"The two men were following me out when I heard a tremendous noise," Laurence told the Canberra Times. "I had just cleared the foyer by six inches when I turned and saw where Brown and Lees had been standing. All that was visible was a pile of blazing rubble 15ft. high."

In a strange twist of fate, the Wynnum Fire and Rescue Station was later built on the site of the Brown family home. The station bears a memorial plaque to Sidney.

"Mum and our dad's sister got to see the memorial at the station," said Phillip. "On the day of the opening of the station, I walked out the back of the building and thought, that's where our persimmon tree was."

The family were friends with another fallen firefighter, George Harold Hammond, who died in 1978 of a heart attack while fighting a grass fire.

"George and his wife used to visit mum on the anniversary of dad's death every year," Christina said.

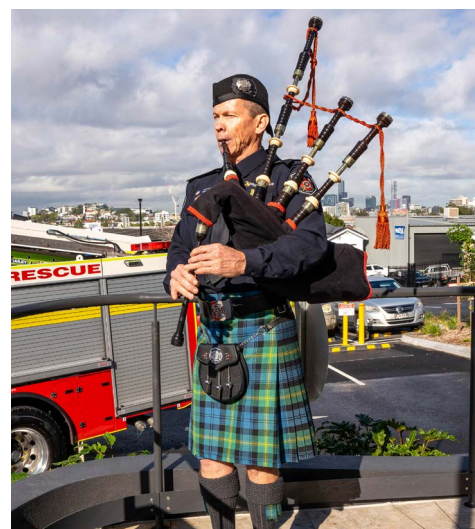
"They're heroes, all of them. They're all heroes, up on that wall. And so are all the first responders, past and present."

Remembering the past

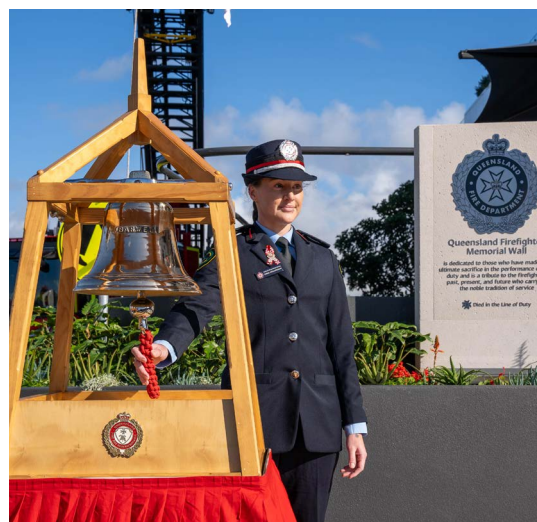
Among the attendees was Alan Musk, President of the Retired Firefighters' Association of Queensland (RFAQ).

"The Memorial Wall is a reflection of the past," Alan said. "Sometimes people don't realise the fire service dates back a long time, to the mid-1800s.

"New recruits may not know what came before but the connection grows stronger when they start working at stations.



Siblings Rendell, Christina, Lindsay and Phillip paid their respects at the Memorial Wall, which honours 60 firefighters including their father Sidney William Brown.





"The people I meet through RFAQ are a lot more connected to the history. As the years go by and you become part of the service and station life, the history builds up."

At memorial services, Alan has met some of the families who have lost people in the line of duty.

"For them, the Memorial Wall provides a physical connection, like a headstone on a grave," he said. "It means a lot."

"The Memorial Wall can help with healing. It's part of remembering people and the healing of that. It's something for future generations to reflect on."

Alan said that when they retired, most firefighters found meaning in remembering their service and connections.

"In the emergency services, you're doing such a different job – you're on shift, working in a team, going to incidents and seeing more than most people see," he said.

"When you work with people at incidents, you remember those people. Because of what you're exposed to, it's hard to tell people outside what it's like, but if you talk to a firefighter they know straight away."

"My old man was a firefighter in Brisbane, so since I've known about the fire service since day one. I know people from my dad's era who are still alive and have that sense of connection."

"My dad was a telephone orderly. When the crew travelled to an incident in their open car, he rang the bell. He kept sixpence in his pocket and when they arrived at the scene he jumped off the

car and found a telephone box so he could communicate with the station."

RFAQ honours past firefighters in a range of ways, including in their magazine and at regular coffee catchups. Volunteers also run firefighting museums like the ones at Pine Rivers and Toowoomba.

"In the RFAQ magazine we write about historical incidents, which highlights the changes QFD has undergone," Alan said. "These days firefighters are taught to work with technology, but back then they had to think differently."

"You tended to learn from the people around you. You listened to the senior firefighters and if they said something you did it."

"That was where your knowledge came from and that's why I think it's important to remember the past."





Worst-case scenario

A plane crash into Moreton Bay is the worst-case scenario QFD and other emergency services planned for in a major exercise near the Brisbane Airport.

QFR swiftwater firefighters, Scientific Unit and members of the Hendra crew helped respond to a simulated crash of a Boeing 737-800 into the bay.

Brisbane Airport Corporation (BAC) and Aviation Rescue and Fire Fighting Services (ARFF) conducted the exercise to explore multi-agency response arrangements, clarify roles and assess the Aerodrome Emergency Plan.

Area Commander Daniel Rasmussen was the QFD Commander for the exercise.

"BAC needed to test their watercraft and response procedures," Daniel said. "Their jurisdiction extends one kilometre around the airport.

"We're used to working with Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) and Queensland Police Service (QPS) but don't necessary do a lot of work with ARFF.

"I was in the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) at the International Airport, while Inspector Rohan Wilschefski was at the forward control point at the end of the northern runway.

"It was a challenge to get all the agencies to the forward control point because while the northern runway was closed, the southern runway and taxiways remained operational, so everyone had to be escorted."

Two engines out

The scenario involved a bird strike as the plane took off, causing double engine failure with 120 passengers and six crew on board.

The exercise was dubbed Exercise Sully because the accident was similar to the one in the 2016 movie *Sully*.

"Birds are a major concern with all aircraft operations," Daniel said. "Brisbane Airport is surrounded by wetlands that support a variety of birdlife.

"BAC tackle this risk in many ways including a trial of autonomous solar-powered robot lawnmowers to keep the grass down."

A Marine Rescue Queensland (MRQ) vessel was anchored 800 metres offshore to simulate the aircraft. At 10am they released flares to alert the tower to the crash and start the exercise.

The participants had plenty of challenges to contend with, from limited life raft availability to difficulties in retrieving passengers, compounded by tide conditions.

Emergency medical care couldn't be provided on water, so the survivors had to be transported ashore for treatment.

Fuel spills prevented responders from approaching the site, further delaying operations.

"Our swiftwater teams launched their rescue craft, along with ARFF, MRQ and Water Police," Daniel said. "ARFF used large deployable rafts like big floating mattresses for people to climb up on.

"We determined where to set up triage and recovery centres based on where passengers went after the crash.

"There were many ways for people to get out of the water, like swimming to shore, walking on the mudflats or getting picked up by fishing boats.

"Our Scientific Unit gave advice on decontamination due to fuel and dangerous goods on the plane."

Controlling information

When Virgin Australia activated their procedures, getting the flight manifest into the hands of first responders proved surprisingly difficult.

"Obviously an incident like this would attract a lot of interest and there would be a huge demand for information," Daniel said.

"For privacy reasons, there's a complex system to get the manifest to emergency services, and they had to hand it to us in paper form.

"There was a lot of attention from social and mainstream media and QPS led coordinated messaging.

"We needed to account for all the passengers and crew, including people who were still on board and those who self-presented at hospitals.

"QAS don't record patient names, so Queensland Health had to confirm who was where.

"Later on, a victim-identification team took the fatalities to the Water Police at Whyte Island so they could be identified properly."



Working with other agencies

The exercise helped swiftwater firefighters understand how to work with other agencies on the water.

"The bay was classed as smooth water, which is a little outside our wheelhouse, but rescuing people wherever they are definitely is."

"After a real plane crash, QFD personnel would be assisting triage, not necessarily firefighting.

"The exercise was all about sharing knowledge in case an incident like this were to happen.

"Working with our partners was great and we learnt what they can provide in this kind of situation. There was a cold debrief a few weeks later where everyone discussed what they got out of it.

"It's always important to work with other agencies to understand their capabilities and take a collaborative approach to emergency management."



QFD DELIVERS FIRE INVESTIGATION TRAINING TO FIJI

QFD continues to strengthen its international partnerships through capability development, most recently by delivering fire investigation training to the Fiji National Fire Authority (NFA).

The QFR State Fire Investigation Unit (FIU) delivered a five-day training program to five NFA fire officers.

The course enhanced their capability in determining the origin and cause of fires, combining theoretical learning with practical exercises.

State FIU Manager Daren Mallouk said the initiative reflected a shared commitment between QFD and NFA to improve fire investigation standards and strengthen professional capability to enhance community safety across both jurisdictions.

"Fire investigation is a critical function that underpins community safety, legal processes and prevention strategies," Daren said.

"Supporting our Pacific partners to build this capability is both a professional responsibility and an opportunity to strengthen regional resilience."

The training package was specifically developed by State FIU personnel, drawing on contemporary investigative practices, operational experience and established methodologies used in Queensland.

Participants learnt about fire behaviour, scene examination, evidence identification and applying the scientific method.

They engaged in realistic fire scenarios to reinforce classroom theory and build confidence in applying investigative techniques in operational environments.

"The strength of this program lies in its practical application," Daren said.

"It's not just about understanding fire investigation in theory, it's about applying that knowledge in real-world conditions with confidence and consistency."

Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive. The course was highly relevant to their operational needs and the learning outcomes were immediately applicable within their home jurisdiction.

"The engagement from the Fiji officers was outstanding," said Daren.

"Their professionalism and willingness to learn made the delivery of this course particularly rewarding. It's clear they will take these skills back and make a real difference within their organisation."

The program is an important step in fostering cooperation between QFD and NFA and is a strong foundation for future collaboration and development of fire investigation capability across the Pacific region.

This partnership highlights QFD's position as a leader in fire investigation and reinforces its commitment to supporting partner agencies through the sharing of expertise, experience and best practice.

"This is about more than a single course, it's about building long-term relationships and supporting our regional colleagues to develop sustainable capability," Daren said.

"The success of this program demonstrates what can be achieved through collaboration."



Anzac spirit on show

It was mate against mate when the QFR Bears challenged the Australian Defence Force (ADF) Lions in the annual Anzac Day Cup.

Rainy conditions could not dampen the spirits of patrons and players alike as the QFR Australian Rules teams took part in the 2026 Anzac Cup games alongside their mates from the Australian Defence Force (ADF) at Brighton Homes Arena.

Returning with the support of the Brisbane Lions and the Greater Springfield RSL Sub-Branch, the fourth edition of the burgeoning sporting tradition saw the QFR Bears women's side run out 28-point winners over the ADF Lions, with the final score locked at 4.8 (32) to 0.4 (4) when the final siren rang out.

The game began on even terms before the Bears gained ascendancy in the territory battle and on the scoreboard as a result, ultimately returning the Anzac Cup trophy to the QFR mantle after their opponents took it home last year.

QFR women's captain Sarah Duncan, who was also judged as best on ground following the win, said the Anzac Cup games had created a special bond between the two sides sharing the field each year.

"We're always grateful that they give us a few hours out of what is a pretty special occasion for them, they sacrifice most of their morning so we can have a run with them," Sarah said.

"Some of the girls have been there for all the games, so you have familiar faces there each year, and as much as we try and hit hard on the field we always pick each other up, no matter what team you're on.

"It's a social, friendly game, you want to make it special for everyone who's there to be a part of it."

The QFR women's triumph set the tone for more scintillating football as the men's side took the field next.

After the ADF got out to a commanding lead, the Bears responded with a second half flurry to pull back the margin and ultimately leave the final scores deadlocked at 5.2 (32) to 4.8 (32).

Bears men's captain Shaun Albrew said it was the second time in three years the two men's sides had drawn, while the overall opportunity to feature in an occasion like the Anzac Cup was "pretty special".

"It's always really tough playing those guys, they are super fit and they've got some really handy footballers. We always know we're up against it when we play against them," Shaun said.

"To be able to fight back in that second half, our boys showed a lot of grit and determination and nearly snatched a victory from the jaws of defeat.

"It was a good, tough contest played in really good spirit. There was no animosity and a lot of mutual respect.

"The opportunity to play on or around Anzac Day each year is pretty amazing too. Not many teams around Australia really get to do that," Shaun said.



Double rescue on Mount Barney

Faced with two rescues at once on Mount Barney, QFR crews were forced to camp out overnight in perilous conditions.

Mountain rescue specialists trekked up Mount Barney during bad weather to rescue two hikers, only to discover a group of students and teachers stranded by floodwaters. Heavy rainfall across the region had already led to several swiftwater rescues.

Inspector Chris Martial was the Incident Controller, working from a control point at the scene.

"The hikers were experienced and they'd brought all the right gear and food with them but the weather suddenly turned bad," Chris said. "They went off-track to get down the mountain but got stuck.

"It was a Queensland Police Service incident with State Emergency Service (SES) in attendance, and they requested assistance from QFR.

"While a crew of six QFR personnel were making their way up, they came across about 50 students and teachers caught between two bodies of water. A swiftwater team came to assist the students and teachers while the first crew continued up the mountain.

"The rescue needed the highest level of mountain training in QFR," Chris said. "Luckily, eight personnel had completed the mountain rescue course two weeks earlier.

"A team of five went up and remained on the mountain overnight, staying within verbal contact of the casualties to reassure them we were doing everything we could to help them.

"It was cold and windy with a lot of noise from water rushing down the mountain."

The next day, with support from three more personnel, the team tried to reach the hikers from a ridge above.

"They drilled anchors into the side of the mountain to abseil down but visibility was only about 20 metres," Chris said.

"We decided that if the firefighters managed to reach the hikers, it would be too dangerous to extricate them, so instead we called a Rescue 500 helicopter to winch the hikers up."

The clouds cleared just long enough for the helicopter to lower a winch cable and take the hikers to hospital in a stable condition. A military helicopter extricated the crews and Surf Life Saving Queensland helicopters retrieved their equipment.

Meanwhile, the swiftwater crew put a line across the floodwaters to rescue the school group.

The 43 students and five teachers from North Lakes State College had been cut off from their accommodation while on a school camp.

"The two hikers' parents turned up and we tried to deal with the situation while putting their minds at ease," Chris said.

"They stayed overnight, sleeping in their cars while they waited for their kids.

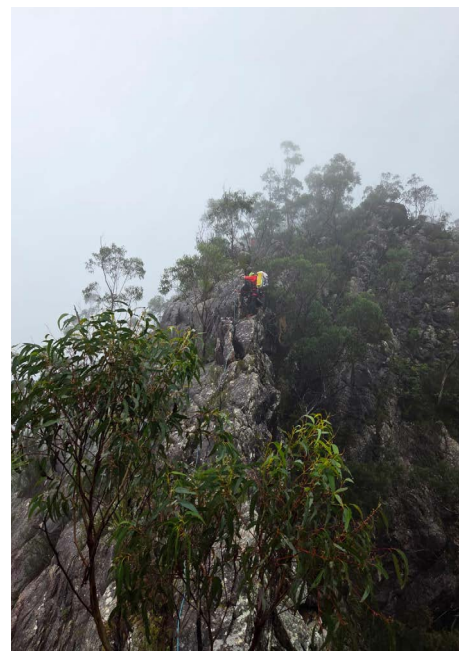
"The crews ferried the students across the water in an inflatable raft, taking two to four at a time.

"A lot of the students were frightened but our team calmed them down and assured them we were getting them somewhere safe.

"Once they were on dry land, SES took them to the triage area where paramedics assessed them."

One student was transported to Ipswich Hospital for an existing illness. A bus took the students back to school and they were reunited with their families in the early hours of the morning.

"It was a big joint effort among multiple stakeholders and the interoperability between all services was outstanding," Chris said.



Photos by QFR mountain rescue team.

Remote firefighting levels up

Remote Area Firefighting Teams (RAFT) from South Eastern Region took part in a recertification exercise in Moogerah Peaks and Mount Barney national parks, testing their skills to fight fires in difficult terrain.

With bushfires on the horizon, Remote Area Operators (RAO) put their skills to the test to ensure they're ready to battle remote fires in rugged environments.

Acting Superintendent Mark Saunders said the crews were recertified annually.

"A RAFT can navigate through dense bushland, carrying their equipment up to 15 kilometres," Mark said.

"It's a high-risk activity and we manage that risk by doing lots of training and maintaining their skills at a high level.

"This year's exercise tested their ability to mission plan, hike in, deal with first aid scenarios, control a small fire, recalculate new routes, manage communications and give a debrief," Mark said.

"We based ourselves out of the Boonah showgrounds, where in 2019 an actual Incident Control Centre (ICC) and staging area was established for about six weeks. The crews stayed overnight, sleeping in tents and swags.

"Participants split up into teams of four or five and we tasked them with extinguishing fictitious lightning-strike fires on top of Mount Greville and Mount May.

"First they sat down to work out their mission planning, including their route, medical evacuation plans, equipment lists, mission profile and communications."

The crews drove to the base of the mountains, hiked in three to four kilometres with elevation change of around 400 metres and extinguished the simulated fires.

"While enroute they had to deal with first aid incidents such as spinal injuries, heat exhaustion or snake bite," Mark said.

"Then they were re-tasked to identify a point for helicopter extraction. They also did ground-air liaison with Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems.

"Unfortunately on this occasion the weather turned and they got stuck in rain and cloud. The risk of injury became too great and each team made a dynamic risk assessment and decided to walk out before the mission could be completed."

In the morning the crews completed more mission planning exercises as individuals to reinforce the skill.

"I'm grateful everyone got a lot out of the weekend," Mark said. "They're a highly motivated team and it's good to see them work together and enjoy each other's company."

A first for arduous firefighting

RFSQ also ran their first official arduous firefighting course over two-and-a-half days in May.

Arduous firefighting, a stage below RAFT, involves teams of up to 20 firefighters building firebreaks in rugged terrain to cut off fires.



"Arduous firefighters have gone on deployments to Canada and the Grampians in Victoria in the last few years, but we haven't had formal standardised training for them," Mark said.

"From formal debriefs and lessons learnt, we identified some gaps in their training and developed a course around that.

"They learnt navigation, advanced dry firefighting, new methods of rolling lay-flat hoses, equipment carriage to reduce fatigue, ground-air liaison and advanced relay pumping.

"They also learnt how to use terrain in direct attack firefighting as well as for self-protection, because they don't have a truck or hoses to protect them.

"A second arduous firefighting course was run in early June in Central Region simultaneously with an airbase operators course. This allowed one of our participants to practise their ground-air liaison, directing a waterbomber pilot to complete a drop on a specified target.

"For me it was a massive moment to run the first arduous course and watch the participants all work together."



The 'near north coast' great fire of 1957

Many in the Bli Bli District have stories about the fire of '57, which burnt thousands of acres of cane in the valley, sending out sparks and fireballs.

The Bli Bli fire began in perfect bushfire conditions, with a dry, hot north-westerly wind blowing after months of no rain.

The fire started in the forested hills near Parklands north of Nambour. In the days that followed, there were two main fires – one in Bli Bli, Dunethin Rock and Maroochy River and one in Cooloolabin and Kiamba.

On October 18, the Nambour Chronicle and North Coast Advertiser reported the damage to be about £3000, not counting cane, timber and pasture.

"It was like an air raid without a declaration of war," Fire Chief R Christopherson told the Chronicle after sleeping only six hours in the last three days.

Out of control

When the blaze broke out on a Thursday afternoon, forestry workers rushed to the fire front but couldn't contain it.

"The blaze spread to the Bruce Highway, jumped across to Parklands and set fire to 500 acres there," reported the Chronicle.

"In the advice of Fire Chief R Christopherson, the Parklands Progress Association had only a fortnight previously burnt a large break completely round the Parklands housing area.

"The only damage done was to some bananas, a shed and some fencing, although flames were licking the stumps on one residence and a large shed."

At 2.15am there was a new outbreak. With the help of volunteers and police, the fire brigade managed to get it under control, but by 6am on Friday the fire in the reserve was out of control.

"This fire eventually consumed 8,000 acres causing heavy damage and was not brought under control until late on Sunday Afternoon," wrote the Chronicle.

Path of destruction

The fire burnt down two houses at Kiamba and almost destroyed five more. The Fire Chief himself admitted he didn't know how they'd managed to save any houses.

Five water tankers from Nambour and Yandina provided a shuttle service, with two full tankers held in reserve while the others drove back and forth with more water.

The Chronicle reported two injuries. A farmer from Nambour, while fighting the fires, "collided with a dead branch of a small tree and suffered a puncture wound of the right eye." He was seen to by a local doctor.

Another farmer, Richard Hegarty, "was seriously injured when a burning tree fell on him," but he was reported to be in a "satisfactory condition" in Nambour General Hospital. His knapsack full of water had saved him from further injury.

A black and red sky

Valerie Weaver, who was eight at the time, was at school when the bushfire swept through Bli Bli, burning her family's entire farm, including a bridge her father Cyril Buckland had built across a gully.

"My father was away fighting the fire and my sister Gloria was at home recovering from chicken pox with our mother," Valerie said.

"Luckily someone had cut our fences to let our horse and cattle out. Our horse was located two weeks later at Yandina and walked back."

Their house was saved by local volunteers after being burnt on the outside.



Overlooking Camp Flat Road. Photo by Valerie Weaver.

"I was let out of school at 1pm when the fire headed toward the school," Valerie said. "The sky was all black and red."

"I stopped at my friend Valmae's home where Gloria was waiting and we slept there for the night."

"I remember Gloria and I watching the cattle in the cucumber patch for 20 minutes of a morning before school, as it was the only green feed left on the farm for them to eat."

A perilous time

Julie Charles heard many stories about the fire from her father Neil Garrett, a cane farmer in Bli Bli.

"With the north-westerly that day, the fire spread east along the ridge on the northern side of the Bli Bli Valley," Julie said.

"My husband Russell remembers, as a four-and-a-half-year-old, the billowing smoke above Nambour."

Local farmers gathered to try and stop the fire spreading farther east and halted its progress at Camp Flat Road.

"The fire was so intense the tops of trees were bursting into flames one mile ahead of the actual fire," said Julie. "The embers created more fires, making it extremely difficult to contain."

"A block of green cane adjacent to Bli Bli Road erupted in flames from these flying embers. This was a good mile from the fire front."

"A few acres of cane burnt but it was able to be harvested and sent to the Moreton Mill as it was halfway through the cane cutting season."

More unfortunate was the Francis family, who lost many of the plants in their banana plantation.

"This fire made my father and many other farmers more aware of the dangers of fire, which could sweep again in very dry times through the forested ridges."

"As more and more houses from the 1970s were built among the trees on these ridges, he had concerns that the perilous time of 10 October 1957

could present again with more dire consequences."

Looking back

Nigel Kemp, current First Officer of Bli Bli and Districts Rural Fire Brigade, said it was wonderful how things had changed since the days of Bli Bli's worst fire.

"We now have technology like radios, mobile phones and computers that allows us to be notified within minutes of a fire being reported," Nigel said. "We can respond our appliances within 10 to 15 minutes."

"We can then appraise the situation and call in as many appliances as required from neighbouring brigades."

"Mapping tools help determine how and where to place our appliances, as well as showing roads and cleared areas we can use as fire breaks."

"The possibility of such a large-scale event happening again has certainly diminished over time."



The fire burnt right next to the Buckland family's house. Photo by Valerie Weaver.



The Buckland family's farm was reduced to ashes. Photo by Valerie Weaver.

STRENGTHENING SKILLS TO SPARK CHANGE

Fight Fire Fascination (FFF) practitioners gathered for refresher training focused on professional growth, collaboration and enhancing community safety.

Twenty-eight FFF practitioners met in Brisbane for the program's biennial refresher training over two-and-a-half days.

The FFF program, a cornerstone of QFR's prevention efforts, equips specially trained firefighters with skills and strategies to harness fire curiosity in young people and teach fundamental fire safety.

The training, developed by the Community Engagement Unit in collaboration with FFF practitioners including the Training and Guidance Group, featured internal and external subject matter experts.

Topics included engaging with neurodivergent youth, fostering cultural competency, managing family dynamics, and the risks and influences of social media.

A standout session led by the Department of Youth Justice gave an interactive look into the Restorative

Justice Conferencing process that FFF practitioners often facilitate.

Chelsea Potter, a FFF practitioner from Toowoomba, said the refresher was incredibly insightful.

"We heard from many extraordinary speakers, including Kelleigh Ryan, a leading First Nations psychologist who spoke about the challenges facing First Nations peoples and how we can best honour and respect their culture," Chelsea said.

"We also discussed where and how we might find reliable information through the 'knowledge holders' within communities, so we can better support the young people involved in the program.

"Another speaker I gained a great deal from was Georgina Carmody from Autism Queensland, who taught us about communicating with neurodiverse young people.

"Through her wealth of knowledge and passion for the subject, Georgina highlighted small but meaningful strategies we can use to improve engagement and create a greater impact.

"As FFF practitioners, we work with a diverse range of people, and I found this refresher course eye opening. It reinforced the ways we already support participants while showing us practical ways we can continue to grow and improve."

QFR and Strategy Directorate leadership also shared valuable insights and support. Their presence underscored the importance of the FFF program and its vital role in keeping Queensland families safe.

Through icebreakers, shared meals and storytelling, practitioners strengthened statewide support networks, exchanged knowledge and reaffirmed their commitment to making a difference in the lives of families across the state.

For those inspired to join FFF, the next intake course is scheduled for October 2026. Open to both permanent and auxiliary firefighters, this is a unique opportunity to support young people and their families in making safer choices.

Search 'Fight Fire Fascination' on the Gateway to learn more and register your interest.

Testimonial from FFF practitioner Andrew Knaggs

"The intrinsic value of the training is so much more than maintaining existing skillsets or developing new and innovative strategies.

Intentionally held over three days, refresher training provides the opportunity for FFF practitioners to engage and reconnect with the entire FFF family.

It's a family that supports each other through mentoring, shared experiences and a passion for educating young people in the dangers and consequences of misusing fire.

That passion is abundantly evident as soon as participants gather on the first day.

With a focus on fun activities, enthusiastic engagement and shared storytelling, the practitioners return to their regions driven to deliver a youth fire intervention program that not only educates young people but supports all Queensland families."





Denise Lincoln (front row, second from right) with members of Firecom and SOSU.

30 years with Firecom

Denise Lincoln, a Fire Communications Officer in the Specialist Operational Services Unit (SOSU) is retiring after more than 30 years of service with QFD.

Denise joined QFD when it was still the Queensland Fire Service (QFS) in May 1997.

"My children were five and three and I had a cleaning business but I wanted to do more," Denise said.

"My husband at the time was an ambulance officer and the Queensland Ambulance Service had just built a new station in Cairns, which included communications. I went for an interview with QFS and here we are today."

For many years, Denise focused on call taking and dispatch, but 14 years ago she started working for SOSU.

SOSU processes all faults and data request changes for Emergency Services Computer Aided Dispatch (ESCAD) and infrastructure associated with communications centres, such as radio repeaters, paging and Triple Zero (000) calls.

"We make sure documentation and faults are looked at so our Firecom Officers have up-to-date information for a timely response to all incidents," said Denise.

"We are a small unit and dedicated to our roles.

"The most rewarding part of the job is being able to help someone, be that a 000 caller or a Firecom Officer with a fault, or to give some input into why something went wrong. Knowing I can make a difference is rewarding."

There have been many changes at Firecom since Denise started.

"When we went to ESCAD from FireCAD back in 2008, having contact through the computers with other Firecom centres made such a difference," she said.

"The first ESCAD was very challenging to use. Getting updates into ESCAD in a timely manner every day took lots of hours and lots of hard work. But thanks to upgrades, it's now so much better.

"Training has also changed. When I started, I had a person next to me for one month and then I was on my own for most shifts across 10 years.

"When we moved to ESCAD, we were required to have two staff 24/7. Sharing

the workload was a challenge because we'd got so used to being on our own.

"Now, having supervisors in all Firecom centres has been another achievement and a step in the right direction."

Denise said her personal highlight was being able to balance a career and raising two children as a single mum.

"They are my greatest achievement," she said.

Her advice for someone considering joining Firecom?

"Go for it. If you find something you like in life and it makes you happy, you have to give it a go.

"This career is not for everyone. It can be tough – long days, night shifts, fatigue. But if you want something bad enough, you can achieve it.

"This job and the last almost 30 years have been the best for me. I have met many wonderful people along the way."

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From classrooms to park benches

QFR firefighters and Road Attitudes and Action Planning (RAAP) instructors Will Hovell and Troy Willey covered more than 800 kilometres in three days to deliver RAAP presentations to more than 350 students in Chinchilla, Roma and Tara.

"Heading west into the regional communities is a great opportunity, and one I feel is very much appreciated by the more remote schools," said Will.

"We felt very welcome at all the schools we visited. While some cohorts took a moment or two to warm up, by the end of the presentations, we had good engagement and great answers to questions."

A standout moment for the pair was delivering a presentation to a young person in Anglicare's 'Staying on Track' youth justice program.

The session took place on a park bench in the Chinchilla Botanical Gardens, offering a relaxed outdoor environment tailored to the participant's needs.

Will said it was a first for him and Troy and reflected that, "The young person was very engaged, and we later received warm feedback about how much they enjoyed the presentation."

This tour highlights the team's commitment to making a difference, no matter the distance or setting.



Crews work together at Gordonvale

Gordonvale QFR hosted a multi-agency training activity involving Cairns South QFR, Little Mulgrave RFSQ and Second Beach RFSQ.

The crews familiarised themselves with each other's appliances, equipment and capabilities in preparation for the heightened bushfire period.

During deployments, auxiliary and volunteer firefighters often crew each other's appliances or are assigned to strike teams together.

The session focused on interoperability, communication plans and establishing

and managing water supplies through a pump relay.

The training helped reinforce common operating procedures, enhance communication pathways and build shared situational awareness.

At the end of the night everyone swapped stories over a sausage sizzle. Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive.

The collaborative nature of the session not only strengthened operational capability but developed relationships between crews, which will be critical during incidents.

G'day Little Queenslanders in Bundaberg

G'day Little Queenslanders is a roadshow connecting new parents and families with essential government resources, services and support. The event offers live children's entertainment, activities, information stalls and food trucks.

QFD participated in the pilot program in four locations last year. In 2026, G'day Little Queenslanders has expanded to a state-wide program of 14 events, with the first in Bundaberg.

About 2500 people came along and more than 770 participated in fire truck tours and conversations, with more than 150 kids playing a 'hoses and ladders' game.

QFD members promoted fire safety and raised awareness of QFD's role in keeping the community safe. Their conversations focused around smoke alarms, bushfire risk, kitchen safety and emergency preparedness. They handed

out thousands of stickers and tested families on their knowledge of Triple Zero (000).

Firefighters also took part in a G'day Little Queenslanders event at Camp Hill with nearly 4000 community members.

The events allowed QFD to gather insights into community needs and improve future safety initiatives, as well as fostering collaboration with other agencies.



Recognised for bravery

Two Beenleigh Division firefighters were presented with the Commissioner's Commendation for Bravery Award at Woodridge Fire and Rescue Station.

Matthew Urquhart and Joshua Bennedick rescued a critically injured casualty from the second floor of a burning building at Woodridge in June 2024.

Matthew had been in QFR for almost two years at the time and Joshua had only been on shift for four months.

Retired Station Officer Robert Bertram nominated the crew and was on hand to present the awards, as well as receiving his certificate and plaque for 40 years' service.



Mackay Ag Trade Expo

RFSQ volunteers from Mount Blackwood, Eton and Habana engaged with the community at the Mackay Ag Trade Expo. They spoke with more than 120 community members about fire permits and RFSQ recruitment.

Surf Life Saving training

Four Caloundra auxiliary firefighters joined 32 members of Surf Life Saving Queensland (SLSQ) for a training program at Kings Beach.

The firefighters participated as casualties in a scenario where the SLSQ members honed their skills, highlighting the importance of collaboration during an emergency response.



Fire station wins global prize

The architect who designed the Maryborough Fire and Rescue Station has won the Built by Nature Prize, a global award recognising excellence in timber and bio-based construction.

The station is the southern hemisphere's first contemporary engineered timber fire station. It was selected from nearly 400 entries across 39 countries and was recognised for integrating sustainable design, innovation and responsible use of timber.

The building project was part of the University of Queensland's Centre for Future Timber Structures. It has helped change industry perceptions, highlighting the sustainable use of timber in significant infrastructure.

The station, along with five other winning projects, will be featured in an upcoming documentary, *Our Future: Built by Nature*.



Charlton graduation

Congratulations to the seven members who successfully graduated from the Auxiliary Recruit Training and Education Program at Charlton Regional Headquarters.

Six participants also completed the Operate Pumps module and four passed their Objective Focused Operational Training assessments, progressing from Auxiliary Grade 1 to Grade 2.



Robert Paterson receives OAM

Retired Station Officer Robert Paterson OAM formally received his Medal of the Order of Australia at an Investiture Ceremony at Government House.

Robert is currently QFD Chaplain and a Senior Fire Education Volunteer for Beenleigh Division.

"I commenced my career in 1974 with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade Board Brisbane and finished with Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, Gold Coast in 2002," said Robert. "In 2007, I returned as a volunteer.

"It is humbling to be the recipient of the Order of Australia Medal for service to the communities I have lived in over 60 years."



Bundaberg First Nations Resilience Network

The Bundaberg First Nations Resilience Network held their first meeting to discuss getting prepared, knowing your risk and communicating in a disaster.

Hosted by Bundaberg Regional Council, the network will strengthen disaster preparedness and community resilience among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. About 30 First Nations community members attended.

The network focuses on collaborative, locally led strategies to manage hazards like floods and bushfires, incorporating traditional knowledge, cultural burning and community-driven holistic approaches for long-term sustainability.

RFSQ Area Manager Daniel Schneider spoke about bushfire risk, while Regional Community Engagement Coordinator Brooke Burke presented on bushfire warnings and the Fires Near Me app.



In a workshop section, participants discussed how they could support each other during and after a storm where roads and power had been cut off, localised pockets of the community were flooded and roofs were affected by wind and hail.

Hervey Bay YouthFest

During Queensland Youth Week, QFD members engaged with young people at YouthFest in Hervey Bay.

The event, designed for young people aged 12 to 25, featured live music, interactive activities, come-and-try sports, food vendors and community stalls.

QFR and RFSQ personnel gathered insights into youth perceptions of fire safety, identified trusted sources of information and piloted two innovative engagement methods. They discussed how to contact emergency services, smoke alarms, escape planning, kitchen fire safety and lithium-ion batteries.

The QFD members hosted a fire truck and information stall, ran an interactive 'hoses and ladders' activity and even joined in a spontaneous handball competition with young attendees. This highlighted the importance of informal, fun activities in fostering engagement and building trust with young people.

By participating in events like YouthFest, QFD can better connect with the community and promote a culture of safety and preparedness.



Replacing Robert's lost awards

Robert Doyle, a retired Auxiliary Captain of 35 years, recently lost most of his possessions in a house fire.

The fire happened while Robert (pictured, fifth from left) was away receiving treatment for an illness.

Among his possessions he lost most of the awards he received over the

years, including the Commissioner's Commendation for Notable Action and the Commissioner's Unit Citation.

Staff from Tablelands Command/ Cairns Division liaised with the Honours, Reward and Recognition unit to replace Robert's medals, certificates and plaques. It was their pleasure to present the awards to him at Atherton Fire and Rescue Station.



Firefighters and cyclists rode more than 800 kilometres from Bundaberg to Brisbane for the 20th annual Bike 4 Burns ride, raising funds for the Children's Hospital Foundation.



QFD crews helped launch the 2026 Australian Red Cross Lifeblood Emergency Services Blood Drive.



Volunteers from Massie and District Rural Fire Brigade gave a special visitor a tour of the trucks before he headed off to Brisbane for treatment.



The Redlands Adventurefest Emergency Services Expo attracted more than 10,000 people to celebrate and learn more about emergency services.



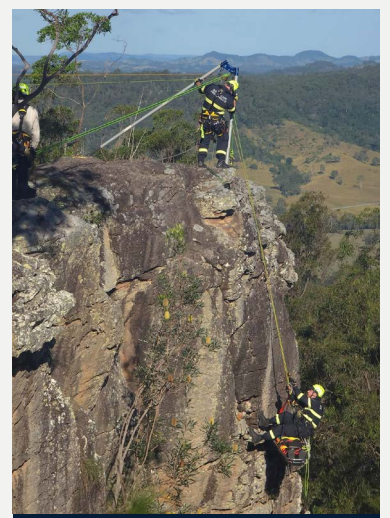
RFSQ crews from Darling Downs completed several hazard reduction burns in St George.



Charters Towers RFSQ volunteers and QFR firefighters participated in the annual street parade for the Charters Towers Country Music Festival.



Team QFD took to the streets of Townsville for Run Army, completing the course in full turn-out gear to support the Firefighters Cancer Foundation Australia.



QFR firefighters undertook vertical rescue training.



QFR firefighters led a road crash rescue scenario for Year 11 students at Mossman State High School.



QFR crews gave high school students a peek at life as a firefighter at the Charleville Careers Expo.

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