

RESPONSE

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE QUEENSLAND FIRE DEPARTMENT

SEPTEMBER 2026



**ALWAYS
READY**

BRIGADES PREPARE
FOR BUSHFIRES

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Commissioner's Awards for Excellence



Legacy is here to help



A long path to closure



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ON THE COVER

RFSQ volunteers and QFR auxiliary firefighters from Roma, Amby Town and Mitchell conducted a hazard reduction burn near the Maranoa River. Photo by Tim Bateup, Light & Land Photography.

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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.

NAIDOC WEEK

SHARING STORIES PAGE 12



FOREWORDS



STEVE SMITH AFSM
COMMISSIONER
QUEENSLAND FIRE DEPARTMENT

Recognition of our people is a key element of striving for and celebrating excellence. It was an honour recently to recognise and celebrate outstanding initiatives, projects, teams and individuals from across the department at award ceremonies for the Commissioner's Awards for Excellence, the RFSQ Week Awards, and the international Higgins and Langley Awards.

Congratulations to all our staff and volunteers who were recognised. Our people do incredible work across the state every day, and it's important for us to take the time to acknowledge some of our brightest stars.

We also recently celebrated the opening of several RFSQ stations, including an RFSQ/SES facility in Bamaga, which is a genuine step forward for brigades across the Torres Peninsula, and the first three pilot builds of RFSQ's new standardised station designs at Mt Alford, Biddaddaba and Biggenden.

These stations are modern operational hubs that support our people to plan, prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies and disasters. They ensure our volunteers and staff have a purpose-built base that supports how they operate now and into the future.

Thank you to everyone who gave their feedback on the standardised station design concepts and our Asset Services Directorate for their execution of these projects, both of which have ensured we have fit-for-purpose facilities now and for many years to come.

QFR firefighters have responded to some challenging and complex incidents recently, including a liquid mercury spill at several sites in the town of Cunnamulla, and pieces of space debris that had to be contained after washing up at Forrest Beach. These types of incidents show the range of challenges that any day may confront our crews and the skills they bring to bear in resolving them safely for their communities.

This year we celebrated 50 years of NAIDOC Week, with brigades, stations and offices celebrating First Nations cultures and histories. At a special event on the Sunshine Coast, Auxiliary Firefighter Emmett Winterburn shared his personal connection to culture and country as part of his Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal heritage.

As we publish, bushfires are already burning across many parts of Queensland and our people have been out in force responding to them. Communities are well prepared, thanks to all the mitigation work we've conducted across the year.

We have a busy time ahead of us and I want to thank everyone for the hard work you put in every day to reduce the impact of the incidents you respond to. Thank you, take care of each other, and stay safe.



KAYLENE JONES
CHIEF OFFICER
RURAL FIRE SERVICE QUEENSLAND

It was fantastic to celebrate the amazing work of our volunteers during this year's RFSQ Week. We showed our appreciation at open days, community events, truck handovers and medal presentations at brigades across the state.

I was delighted to attend the official launch at Cooroibah Rural Fire Brigade (RFB), where we celebrated the handover of six new appliances. Congratulations to the recipients of this year's RFSQ Week Awards, particularly our state winners – Volunteer of the Year Max Pearce, Young Volunteer of the Year Keira Danziger and Brigade of the Year Stanwell RFB. With the higher risk bushfire period ahead of us, we are encouraging the community to be prepared and remain alert to changing conditions. Unseasonal rainfall has reduced bushfire risk in some parts of Queensland, but according to AFAC's Seasonal Bushfire Spring Outlook, south-east Queensland and parts of the southern interior remain dry and at risk of bushfire. RFSQ staff and volunteers continue to prioritise mitigation activities in high-risk areas to reduce fuel loads.

Between January and July this year, landholders lit more than 12,300 burns with an issued permit and RFSQ attended more than 1,400. Our aerial firefighting assets are ready to assist, including the Large Air Tanker, various fixed-wing and rotary aircraft and Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems.

We have also installed the first 11 satellite communication units for brigades across the South Western, Central and Northern regions, marking the beginning of a statewide rollout to more than 400 brigades.

These units will improve connectivity for frontline RFSQ vehicles in remote and isolated areas with limited or no mobile coverage.

It will help keep crews safe, improving decision-making and situational awareness during bushfires and other emergencies. Thank you to our RFSQ personnel for working with the community to get prepared and keep Queenslanders safe from bushfires.

We are in the 'firming the foundations' stage of QFD's Volunteerism Strategy, working hard to enhance volunteerism to 2030 and beyond. Guided by the Strategy, we are developing a contemporary approach to volunteering that supports our volunteers to deliver exceptional outcomes for their communities.

RFSQ Week was a great example of our key focus on celebrating volunteer contributions and achievements.

Our other key focus areas include providing effective communication and engagement, embedding a 'Safety First' culture, ensuring efficient access to equipment and resources, and promoting and fostering stakeholder relationships. Our volunteers are at the core of RFSQ and we will continue to enrich the volunteering experience by concentrating our efforts around these key focus areas.

Excellence on display

The Commissioner's Awards for Excellence celebrated the outstanding work of staff and volunteers across QFD.

In August we recognised the achievements of staff and volunteers in the Commissioner's Awards for Excellence (CAFE).

The volume of nominations highlighted the depth of knowledge and skills our people bring to their work with communities.

Congratulations to all our nominees and award recipients who are creating change and improving how we operate.

Safety Champion **Cameron Cash** *Fleet Services Director*

Cameron Cash has led significant safety reforms for QFD's eight fleet workshops, where about 50 staff support more than 600 vehicles.

"Fleet is so important to QFD," Cameron said. "Without operable vehicles, personal protecting clothing and equipment, QFD couldn't deliver our services to the community."

"The award was quite unexpected but I'm happy to be recognised."

After joining QFD in 2022, Cameron toured the fleet workshops and identified areas where safety could be improved, from housekeeping and licencing to infrastructure, tools, training and procedures.

"Our maintenance team is really valuable and we have to ensure they can work safely and effectively. It's not just compliance – it's about protecting our staff."

Drawing on his background in the oil and gas industry, Army Reserve, logistics and transport, Cameron and the team conducted a broad-based risk assessment and identified actions to work through.

Cameron brought workshop leaders together, engaged external safety specialists, introduced health and safety representative training, established a monthly safety meeting with actions log, consulted with external stakeholders, and helped establish a sustainable safety management framework.

"We ran training and followed up with the workshops," he said. "The training

helped boost morale and gave people confidence they were being invested in. We still have some work to do but we've established a good baseline moving forward.

"This tied in with some work we did with the maintenance team to develop an overarching asset management plan and maintenance manual to guide maintenance work aligned to industry standards and regulatory requirements to ensure a consistent maintenance approach and governance of the fleet.

"A Take 5 booklet, Safe Work Instructions and Job Safety Analysis template were developed to support safety implementation by staff in the maintenance operations. These tools make a big impact, encouraging people to pause and think how to do a job safely."

The team are now working on a new induction package that will set expectations for safety and work standards in the workshops.

Values **Caine Ward**

First Officer, Russell Island Rural Fire Brigade

Caine Ward has demonstrated outstanding leadership, transforming brigade culture through respect, inclusiveness and collaboration.

"I was a bit shocked when I heard about the award," said Caine.

"I joined RFSQ because I'm semi-retired and I wanted to do something in our small island community. The previous First Officer lived next-door and he encouraged me to join the brigade and give a hand."

Much like an auxiliary crew, the brigade responds to road crash rescues and structure fires, with support from Queensland Police Service and Queensland Ambulance Service.



"There are no urban firefighters on the island so we're the first responders," Caine said. "The island has a couple of ambulances with one paramedic in each and we work closely with them."

"It's tough. I attach support counsellors to our members after we've done hard jobs and I go around and check in on everyone to see how they are."

Caine has built trust and strengthened member engagement, building the brigade up from 25 members to 35. His commitment to firefighter wellbeing and integrity has created a supportive environment where volunteers feel valued.

"I completed a Certificate IV in training and assessment so I could assess people and sign them off as firefighters," Caine said.

"Our brigade's never had someone at that level, so we had to wait for area officers to visit the island. Now we do everything in-house."

"I assess training for three other islands as well – Macleay, Lamb and Karragarra."

Caine has strengthened partnerships with brigades and agencies across the South Moreton Bay Islands.

"We're the biggest island with the most bushland so we do a lot more burning than the other islands," he said.

"When we conduct large controlled burns we invite other brigades to get involved so their members can gain experience."



His leadership sets a powerful example of service, accountability and respect in action.

"My focus is on listening to our members. Some of the older members were getting bored so I made sure to include them in things at the station."

"It's a big job, working with 35 members. It's almost impossible to keep everyone happy but I try to listen to what everyone's got to say."

"I try to lead by example. I don't believe you can expect things from people if you're not doing it yourself."

Partnerships with Purpose Auxiliary Firefighter Development Unit and Regional Staff

The Auxiliary Firefighter Development Unit was recognised for developing a culturally responsive training program for auxiliary firefighter recruits in remote and Indigenous communities.

Working with regional staff, auxiliary leaders and community representatives, the team designed a flexible program that addressed language, literacy and numeracy barriers.

By adapting the training to local needs and incorporating community knowledge, the team improved engagement and completion rates.

The unit's manager, Inspector Scott Banbury, said it was an honour for their work to be recognised.

"Our team is improving the quality of training material and delivery for auxiliary firefighters," said Scott. "We're developing a state standard so every auxiliary firefighter gets trained the same way."



"We've rewritten all the training material to suit the auxiliary workforce, making it more direct and relevant to their needs."

When the Maryborough Division asked the team to assist with a training course in Cherbourg, they used the course as a testing ground for some of the new training units.

"We adapted the course to include support from the assessors, so if questions arose, we could explain the meaning of the question," Scott said.

"We made the training more practical and allowed the students to express concepts in their own words to show their understanding."

"We spread the program out over several weekends to give them a break and a chance to relearn and consolidate their training. The assessors individualised check-ins and support for participants who were having any difficulties."

Participants earned a Certificate II and their Road Crash Rescue competencies.

"The local Murgon and Cherbourg stations were very supportive, as were the trainers, area staff and senior management in Maryborough," said Scott. "The local captain was very grateful for the increase to the station's capability."

The team then ran three pilots of the new training in Townsville, Rockhampton and Cairns, with great feedback from trainers and staff. They're now finalising the program for a planned state rollout in the near future.

"I want to acknowledge the support of the staff and business support officers within the unit and the senior management here at the school and in the State Capability Directorate for allowing us to focus on this project."



Legacy is here to help

QFD is proud to support Queensland Fire Legacy, a new charity that will help our staff, volunteers and their families through hard times.

Queensland Fire Legacy (QFL) was established in December 2025 and registered as a charity in June 2026. It will support current and retired QFD personnel when their service results in an injury causing permanent disability, an incurable or terminal condition (including those covered by the presumptive legislation), or loss of life.

QFL's management committee represents all areas of the department, with Commissioner Steve Smith as President.

QFD Chaplain Lyn Cook was excited to join the committee because she saw it as an extension of her chaplaincy duties.

"I've been a chaplain for 12 years and I enjoy getting to know firefighters at stations and brigades around the greater Brisbane region," Lyn said.

"I like supporting them out on jobs and looking after people in the vicinity so the firefighters can get on with their work.

"I also support QFD staff through hospital visits, meeting up with retired firefighters, and conducting life events such as weddings and funerals.

"Being a chaplain is a privilege I don't take for granted and I look forward to serving this fire family for years to come.

"When QFL was announced, I thought a chaplain would be a great fit. There's common ground between the work of QFL and chaplains – we all support people in times of need, times of stress and challenge. As a chaplain, my eyes are open to the ways QFL could help our people."

QFL will assist families with costs such as school fees, tools for trade qualifications, driving training, sports or arts participation, and resume preparation.

QFL will also deliver practical support for care and recovery. This support is modelled on similar legacy schemes for police, ambulance and defence.

"We're all in this one big family together and if everyone helps in a little way, there's support there for all of us," Lyn said. "You never know when something could happen where we might need support.

"While we can physically and emotionally support families, there's great value in offering financial support as well, particularly for young families who will need ongoing assistance for years."

QFD supports QFL through a modest sponsorship, assisting with administrative costs so donations can be dedicated to programs. QFD also directs funds from the Albion HQ recycling program via Containers for Change.

QFL Week will be held at the end of March each year, commemorating the date of the earliest listed firefighter on the Firefighter Memorial Wall at Albion HQ (James Thomas Mooney on 25 March 1877).

During QFL Week stations, brigades and offices can support fundraising and connect with legatee families ahead of Queensland Firefighter Remembrance Day, which from 2027 will be acknowledged on 4 May.

"We hope to have family liaison volunteers to find out families' needs and work with them as those needs are met," Lyn said.

"We will also host gatherings of families in similar circumstances. This idea was inspired by the dedication ceremony of the Firefighters Memorial Wall, where some of the families were keen to connect."



How you can help

- Become a member to stay informed about opportunities to get involved. Members are asked to make a \$20 annual donation.
- Support families directly as a family liaison volunteer. You will receive onboarding support and regular check-ins.
- Support QFL when lodging your recycling through Containers for Change.
- Fundraise during QFL Week at the end of March.
- Take part in Run Army 2027 to raise funds for QFL.
- QFD staff can donate through payroll deductions, self-managed in Aurion. Email QFL for easy-to-follow instructions, or forms for other employers.

All donations are tax-deductible. For volunteering and donation enquiries, email qldfirelegacy@gmail.com.

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MYSTERY SPACE DEBRIS AT FORREST BEACH

A quiet seaside town was turned upside-down when space debris washed ashore. Firefighters worked with police to render it safe.

When three metal spheres the size of basketballs washed up at Forrest Beach, a town of about 1500 people near Ingham, no one knew what they were or if they posed a threat.

Auxiliary Lieutenant firefighter Keith Amos was first on scene with his crew, along with a Queensland Police Service (QPS) officer.

"We looked at a sphere through binoculars and set up a 500-metre exclusion zone," Keith said.

"Two permanent firefighters from the Ingham Fire and Rescue Station were called in to assist. Through the chain of command we worked out the spheres may be fuel cells for hydrazine."

Hydrazine is a flammable, toxic gas used as a propellant in satellites and space launch vehicles. While most space debris either returns to Earth in a controlled manner or burns up in the atmosphere, some objects survive re-entry.

"The first sphere was two or three kilometres down the beach and to carry our equipment there we commandeered the Forrest Beach Surf Club's all-terrain vehicle," Keith said.



"Without the ATV to transport testing equipment and gear, we would have been in for a longer night.

"With the possibility of hydrazine, we didn't have the right testing tools, so we needed specialist QFD hazmat firefighters who then drove up from Townsville to assist."

After liaising with QFD's Scientific Unit, the hazmat crew tested the spheres and cleared them of anything dangerous. The team sealed them in an overdrum for the night.

"We left them in a safe location above the high-tide line and the police put a 24-hour guard on them until we were informed of what to do with them," Keith said.

"On Saturday night we found another sphere. The hazmat crew had left for Townsville two hours earlier so they turned around. This one was further up the beach and we could only reach it at low tide using the ATV.

"We had to move it up the beach so the tide wouldn't carry it away before the hazmat crew arrived. Since we couldn't get close to it, two of us stood 30 metres either side of the object and used ropes

and straps to lasso it and drag it up the beach above the high tide line, so it wouldn't get washed away before the hazmat team could secure it."

As the tide was rising, they required a police launch, so it came up from Townsville that night to ferry the hazmat crew from the Forrest Beach boat ramp. They tested the sphere and made it safe, and placed it in an overdrum.

"On Sunday morning we found a fifth sphere and the hazmat crew had to come back again. They ended up making four trips in three days," Keith explained.

"By then we were advised by QPS that the spheres were safe to move so the hazmat crew put them all in one big overdrum.

"QPS took ownership of them and we relocated the spheres to an old tip site where QPS kept guard awaiting further information."

Keith said there was no fear in the community thanks to excellent communication from QPS.

"They helped everyone feel secure. Even the local takeaway shop sold an alien special to get the community involved.

"Locals have said a lot of junk washes up on that stretch of beach – maybe due to a funnel effect from the Palm Islands. Some people reckoned they heard a big bang the night before but that's locals being locals I reckon.

"It was fantastic working with the specialist hazmat team and QPS. We knew exactly what they wanted us to do and vice-versa. We received expert advice on everything we did, with help from the Scientific Unit to keep the community safe."



A long path to closure

QFR firefighters received a Higgins and Langley Memorial Award for a swiftwater recovery operation in remote Western Australia.

In August, Station Officers Matthew Roser and Brenton Morris and Senior Firefighters Luke Hamdorf and Matthew Kelemen received the Higgins and Langley Memorial Award for recovering the body of a kayaker from floodwaters in March 2025.

Five recreational kayakers and their guides were travelling down the Drysdale River in the far north Kimberley when heavy rainfall led to flooding.

A 79-year-old man's kayak overturned and pinned his arm against a tree in the fast-flowing water. Unable to free himself, the man tragically passed away.

The group's guide tried to reach him but was also caught in the current. When WA Police arrived, they rescued the uninjured guide from a tree about 15 metres from the shore, but couldn't reach the casualty.

The WA Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) didn't have the capability for such a complex recovery, so they reached out to QFR for assistance.

The journey over

Station Officer Matthew Roser, who received a second Higgins and Langley Award for his work with the Australasian Rescue Organisation, took a call from a counterpart in WA.

"DFES had seen our work through an informal group of national swiftwater instructors, and they came to us as one of the leading agencies in Australia," Matthew said.

"They sent me some videos and we held a meeting about how to recover the body and what equipment we'd need. Another monsoon trough was coming in so they had to recover the body soon.

"Three hours after their call, the four of us were on a plane, but it took about a day and a half to get there. We flew domestic from Brisbane to Perth to Broome, then took a charter flight to Kununurra near the Northern Territory border."

They took another charter flight to Drysdale Station between Kununurra and Broome, then took a helicopter out to the incident scene.

"We were fatigued by the time we arrived and the light was fading so the helicopter couldn't land," Matthew said.

"After getting a bird's eye view of the scene we came up with a plan to recover the body using our raft and a motorised boat we borrowed from WA Police."

Navigating the river

At first light the QFR crew went back to the scene in the helicopter.

"The area was about as remote as you can get," Matthew said. "The river was surrounded by boulders so there was no flat ground to work on. The temperature reached 43 degrees and it felt like working in the desert.

"There was rain upstream and water levels were still rising. Police camped beside the river to guard the body, holding automatic rifles to deter crocodiles."

There was limited drinking water so they had to use strict rationing. To make things worse, the water had risen overnight and dislodged the body, carrying it downstream.

The firefighters navigated across the river in the raft and used a mechanical advantage system to recover the kayak.

"The system uses lines and pulleys to overcome the force of the water," Matthew said.

"The helicopter searched for the deceased downstream because the terrain was too difficult to negotiate



and getting back in our raft could have been nearly impossible. They found the deceased about 100 metres downstream."

Two of the firefighters rafted down to the deceased and secured them about 500 metres downstream.

"The water was filled with trees, shrubs, debris and strainers all the way down," Matthew said. "The other two firefighters got the motorised boat ready and navigated down to recover the deceased.

"We placed the body in a bag and navigated back upstream through the strainers and debris.

"After leaving the body with the police, we went back down and recovered the other two rescuers and the raft."

Once everyone was back on dry land, the helicopter evacuated them to Drysdale Station.

A sense of closure

The recovery, which took about five hours, was a massive logistical undertaking with the added complication of national media interest, but the team maintained a strong focus on operational procedures and safety throughout.

"WA Police and DFES did a great job and I was really impressed with how they managed the logistics," Matthew said.

"We had to make sure we took the right equipment because there was no backup. We would have waited another day and a half for someone to assist if something went wrong.

"Three recently qualified swiftwater technicians from DFES observed the recovery. They'd never been to a job before so it was a good learning outcome for them.

"The operation was a good validation that our skills and techniques are effective and can be applied to remote locations."

The QFR team flew home via Darwin, where they held a much-needed debrief.

"It was a tough job and it will definitely stick with us, so it was really important to decompress," Matthew said. "We were quite fatigued and it was a relief to get home."

All up, the crew travelled 10,500 kilometres on 10 flights over three days. Despite the hardships, they were relieved they'd been able to return the deceased to their family with dignity and respect.

"We were satisfied we had given the family a sense of closure," Matthew said. "His wife was part of the group and saw it happen, so closure was really important."



Sharing stories for NAIDOC Week

During NAIDOC Week, QFD members around the state celebrated First Nations cultures and histories.

This year was a major milestone for NAIDOC Week, marking Fifty Years of Deadly. Stations, offices and brigades acknowledged the outstanding contributions of our First Nations staff, volunteers and community members.

At a morning tea at the QFD Sunshine Coast Hub, guest speakers Auxiliary Firefighter Emmett Winterburn and his sister Mallora Bowie shared their personal connection to culture and country as part of their Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal heritage.

Emmett became an auxiliary firefighter in 2024 in the wake of a family tragedy.

"My younger brother passed away in a car accident," Emmett said. "It was really confronting and tough and it knocked the family around a lot.

"I didn't want to let it hold me back, so I looked into pathways into the fire service along with my older brother, who's a permanent firefighter in Mount Isa now.

"We wanted to help people and this was a way to turn a big hardship into a positive. After six months I realised I could do it forever. I love it."

Emmett shared that he wasn't always connected to the Indigenous side of his family growing up, and is now making a conscious effort to reconnect with his heritage so its stories and traditions can be carried forward.

"I've been talking to a lot of people in my family and I hope to visit the Torres Strait," he said.

"A big part of how we share our culture is through storytelling. After my younger brother passed away, a lot of family came down from up north and I reconnected with people I hadn't seen in a long time. I grew curious and became an advocate for my people and culture."

Emmett shared stories from his 87-year-old Athe (grandfather), who was born on Badu Island.

"One of 14 siblings, he supported his family as a pearl diver," Emmett said.

"The divers worked in teams of three or four, jumping off the side of boats in metal diving helmets. They criss-crossed the sea floor in different patterns to cover as much sand as possible.

"One time he turned around to see a giant groper bigger than a man – big enough to swallow someone or hold them down until they drowned.

"The groper tried to attack him and he managed to get away, but he always talked about how scary that was. They faced many dangers for very little pay.

"In the early 60s he came down to the mainland and met my Aka (grandmother), who was from Erub Island with family connections to Palm Island."

Emmett enjoyed sharing facts about the Torres Strait, which includes more than 270 islands, 17 of which are inhabited.

"It was great to do my part for my heritage by telling some of the stories," he said. "This was the first time I'd spoken in front of a group about my culture. I'm learning myself and the best way to learn is to teach back.



Emmett Winterburn and his sister Mallora Bowie shared their stories at the Sunshine Coast.



Acting Inspector Shakira Westdorp, a proud Wiradjuri woman, and Acting Inspector Steven Lohmann, a proud Bundjalung man from the land of the Yugambeh people, attended a Toowoomba NAIDOC event.

"It was awesome to have my sister Mallora there. She talked about dancing in our culture and brought Kulap shells that help keep rhythm and beat.

"She brought in some flash cards to show the English and Torres Strait Islander words for Torres Strait Islander people, animals and traditional wear.

"We speak so passionately about my brother's passing because it's part of our journey – we have bigger dreams because of the hard times we've had. It opened our eyes to the bigger goals out there for us.

"In a workplace like QFD it's so important to have cultural understanding and awareness. The more our country moves forward, the more important it is to embrace diversity.

"The opportunity to speak during NAIDOC Week was just the beginning of broadening my horizons and being the difference I want to see."

Staff presented Emmett with the 1997 NAIDOC poster, commemorating the year he was born.

Emmett's presentation has opened doors for him to deliver Acknowledgements to Country for several local rural fire brigades, paving the way for further cultural connection across the region.

Other events across the state included the Musgrave Park Family Fun Day and Undumbi NAIDOC Festival of the Harvest.

One highlight was the Gympie Family Fun Day hosted by the Gympie Murri Networking Group.

"QFR attendance at the Gympie event was a visible, public acknowledgment of the rich history, culture, and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, showing an active commitment to reconciliation and cultural safety while honouring the Traditional Custodians of the lands we serve," said Regional Community Engagement Coordinator Peta-Lee Staples.

"It demonstrates that QFD's commitment to diversity isn't just a policy on a page, but a lived practice, reinforcing to the community—and to the wider department—that we are dedicated to supporting and celebrating all segments of the community we protect."



At the Undumbi Festival of the Harvest in Baringa, QFD provided kids activities, dress ups and fire escape plans.



QFD members joined a flag raising ceremony in Nambour.

Acknowledgement to Country at Caloundra

As part of their commitment to cultural respect and community connection, Caloundra South Fire and Rescue Station installed an Acknowledgement to Country plaque at the station's main entrance.

"The plaque features vibrant First Nations artwork, serving as a daily visual reflection of respect for the Traditional Custodians of the land on which the station stands and serves," Regional Community Engagement Coordinator Peta-Lee Staples said.

"The installation was thoughtfully timed to coincide with NAIDOC Week, adding a deep sense of pride and celebration to the occasion.

"The timing highlighted QFD's ongoing dedication to building meaningful relationships with local First Nations communities and ensuring station environments are inclusive and culturally welcoming.

"By embedding First Nations art and recognition directly into the entryway, the station honours the local culture, history and ongoing connection to Country."



Keeping bushfires at bay

The higher risk bushfire period officially started on 1 September and QFD personnel and communities are well-prepared.

Crews around the state fought several bushfires in early September, including large grass fires in Ipswich and Lockyer Valley.

August was already busy, with crews responding to more than 800 vegetation fires in the first three weeks.

Communities are well prepared thanks to mitigation work conducted by QFD personnel and our partners year-round. Since January, about 640 hazard reduction burns and 400 community engagement activities have been completed.

Between January and July, landholders lit more than 12,300 burns with a permit and RFSQ attended more than 1,400.

RFSQ Superintendent Adam Moss said Queensland had experienced typical fire behaviour for early September.

Adam said that as detailed in the AFAC Spring Seasonal Bushfire Outlook, unseasonal rainfall across much of the state had moderated bushfire risk in some areas. However, parts of the southern interior, extending into the Darling Downs and Granite Belt, remained comparatively dry with below-average root-zone soil moisture and increased evaporative stress.

Overall, parts of the southern interior and adjoining western parts of the south-east coast may experience above-average fire danger during spring, while areas in the Channel Country are expected to face comparatively lower levels of risk.



Localised areas with above-average fuel loads and advanced curing may still experience increased bushfire activity and fire intensity.

The Queensland Government recently declared drought in several southern regions for the first time in two years. The affected local government areas are Balonne, Goondiwindi, Southern Downs, and the southern part of Maranoa.

"The biggest risk is fast-moving grass fires," Adam said. "A lot of tourists have come up for the beautiful weather and they have to be careful not to become isolated on roads."

"This is a good time to be vigilant, and our partners and stakeholders are working hard to mitigate risk."

Adam's message to volunteers at the start of the higher risk bushfire period was to stay safe and remember their crew.

"Trust your equipment, trust your gear," he said. "Volunteering is an amazing thing and the brigade is there to support their community."

Cross-border exercise

In August, QFD teams at the State Fire Control Centre (SFCC) joined their counterparts from New South Wales Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) for an exercise that prepared them for large cross-border bushfires.

Executive Manager of the Strategic Operational Planning Unit Alex Rees said QFD Intelligence suggested Queensland could expect hotter, drier weather, with large parts of the state primed to carry bushfire.

"With the prospect of a much more active bushfire period and extensive activation of QFD's incident management arrangements, the

Assistant Commissioner State Operations Directorate decided a strategic-level exercise should be undertaken," Alex said.

"Of particular interest was collaboration and coordination with NSW RFS.

"About 50 personnel took part in the exercise, with support from an Exercise Control Team of 16 QFD staff from the State Operations Directorate and RFSQ."

The exercise consisted of three key themes: report writing; Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis; and briefing and media.

"Firecom officers performed the role of report writers, preparing the Commissioner's Brief to the Queensland Disaster Management Committee (QDMC)," Alex said.

"Each function within the SFCC undertook a SWOT analysis in collaboration with their NSW counterparts.

"The State Fire Controller briefed the Commissioner on the situation and the Commissioner prepared to brief the QDMC. The Chief Officer, as the On Call Senior Executive, undertook a mock interview, briefing the community and addressing questions from the media.

"The exercise was a great opportunity to build relationships with our NSW colleagues. Time spent now investing in these relationships will pay dividends when QFD is in joint operations.

"These types of exercises are an opportunity to practise our skills, refresh knowledge and understand the issues that will likely arise in a real-life operation.

"Understanding the full complexity of operating in a cross-border environment better prepares our team for when an emergency of this nature occurs."



Maritime exercise for rescue technicians

QFR firefighters training to become rescue technicians practised retrieving casualties from a ship at the Queensland Maritime Museum.

Eighteen participants from QFR worked through real-world scenarios in dark, confined spaces onboard the ex-HMAS Diamantina and its dry dock as part of their Level 2 Technical Rescue qualifications.

The Diamantina, a World War II-era navy frigate, forced participants to think outside the box.

Station Officer and State Technical Rescue Instructor Michael Stephenson facilitated the course along with five other instructors.

"The HMAS Diamantina provides a realistic industrial environment where tight spaces limit responders' options and they have to rely on critical thinking and teamwork," Michael said.

"Participants used varying strategies depending on factors such as hazardous atmosphere, machinery, on-site contacts and casualties with physical injuries.

"We began with dynamic risk assessments, size ups and information gathering, then worked through Rescue, Exposures, Confinement, Extinguish, Overhaul (RECEO).

"Participants used atmospheric monitoring and ventilation, airline trolleys with breathing apparatus, and confined space extraction techniques.

"They responded in line with organisational directives, guides and overarching legislation, and in accordance with work health and safety legislation and Confined Spaces Code of Practice."

QFD has partnered with the Queensland Maritime Museum (QMM) for many years to deliver this training and appreciates their continued support.

"This exercise gives QMM and the public a chance to witness what QFD technical rescue is all about," Michael said.

"The day at QMM is always a highlight for candidates and instructors alike. I've been many times but I can still be surprised by an impromptu method of extraction that proves to be safe and efficient.

"When a team employs a not so effective technique, it's great to see their excellent teamwork and unrelenting determination in the face of adversity, which I believe is equally as important.

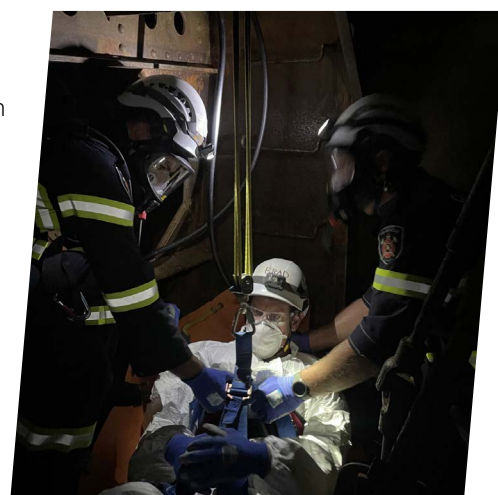
"We all know sometimes things don't go to plan and we must adapt, overcome and keep marching toward the mission objectives.

"The exercise was bittersweet for our instructor group because it was the last one for Station Officer Nigel Kane before he retires.

"He's had a stellar career within the department, had a huge influence on the confined space and trench rescue discipline and served diligently within technical rescue for a very long time. He's leaving big boots to fill."

The participants previously trained in vertical rescue and swiftwater rescue. Next, they'll train in urban search and rescue, culminating in a 48-hour exercise that will encompass all the skills they've learnt.

"Once trained in technical rescue, our candidates are highly capable rescue professionals who can adapt to any environment and help communities wherever it may be needed," Michael said.



RURAL FIRE'S FINEST

During RFSQ Week we celebrated the incredible work of our volunteers across the state.

The RFSQ Week Awards recognised outstanding leadership, commitment, innovation and service to community. *Response* sat down with the three state award winners to find out more about their journeys with RFSQ.



**State Volunteer of the Year -
Max Pearce
North Dallarnil
Rural Fire Brigade**

Forty-seven years ago, almost by accident, Max Pearce helped found the brigade north of Biggenden he still leads today. Back then, with almost no resources, local farmers relied on one another during bushfires.

"There was no equipment or fire shed, just a meeting in the hall once every year or two," Max said. "I got roped into a meeting but I said wouldn't take on any jobs. I walked away as the president and I've been with the brigade ever since."

A huge fire on Mount Woowoonga in 1991 was a turning point for the brigade.

"A guy was cutting posts at the foot of the mountain and his chainsaw lit it up," Max said.

"All we had was knapsacks and wet bags. We broke branches off trees to fight the fire and used cattle trucks to put in a backburn down the road, but the fire came straight over the top of us.

"We dropped down to get out of the smoke. One firefighter lay on the bitumen and two of us in the ute.

"The fire singed the hair off our arms. Then it jumped over a gully and lit up a ridge a kilometre away. We didn't want to fight another fire like that."

In the wake of the fire, Max and others raised funds for equipment and a shed.

"Things have come a long way – from bushes and bags to trucks and aerial bombing."

It was clear how far the brigade had come when another fire lit up the same mountain 10 years ago.

"Quite a few locals told me we couldn't control the fire and I said if you haven't tried you don't know," Max said.

"We led the fire 13 kilometres down that mountain and not once did it give us any grief until we got to the bottom and the wind changed and the fire grew more intense.

"This time we had one crew putting in a backburn and five firefighters spraying down the fire in rotation. I was running the Incident Control Centre and I have to give credit to the people out there doing the hard yards."

Max accepted the award on behalf of his whole brigade.

"They're a great brigade and without them I'm not the same sort of person. Even though I'm the first officer, I walk beside the others. A good leader listens when people have something to say.

"All volunteers deserve a pat on the back because they give up their job to go to incidents. They do a hell of a job under extreme conditions and I'm proud to be part of RFSQ. I take my hat off to all the volunteers."



**State Young Volunteer of the Year -
Keira Danziger
Round Mountain
Rural Fire Brigade**

Keira Danziger has been passionate about firefighting and community service from an early age. At just 14 years old, she reached out to the local brigade to see if she could join. When she found out she had to wait until she turned 16, she applied on her birthday.

Almost a year later, Keira has become an integral and much-loved member of the brigade near Townsville.

"I think the biggest thing for me is the challenge and excitement of it – getting to learn new skills, handling equipment and being part of hazard reduction burns," she said.

"A personal highlight of mine is attending the Anzac Day march in Thuringowa and getting to be the flagbearer leading everyone. It was meaningful to me as my grandfather was a veteran."

Balancing her responsibilities as a Year 11 student with two part-time jobs at a convenience store and doggy daycare, Keira has shown remarkable time management and dedication.

"Having a great structure really helps," she said. "I have school during the day and in the afternoons and weekends



I have set days to work at one job and other set days for my other job, and I fit brigade duties in between. Having good communication really helps as well.

"Volunteering with RFSQ is important to me because it allows me to support my community in a way that truly matters. Through RFSQ, I've learnt new skills that help protect property, but I've also learnt the value of teamwork, resilience and service."

Keira has volunteered for several events promoting RFSQ, including the QFD Motor Neurone Disease Walk, the Townsville Convoy for a Cure, family days at Bunnings and under 8s day.

"I love seeing everyone's happy faces, particularly younger kids when they see the fire trucks or have a go at the hoses," Keira said. "The kids get so excited to wear helmets and participate."

"Everyone in my brigade is so amazing and lovely, helping me when I get stuck or have questions about something. They are always so happy to help and teach if I need it."

State Brigade of the Year Stanwell Rural Fire Brigade

In a town of about 300 people in the Rockhampton region, the Stanwell Rural Fire Brigade has been working hard to mitigate bushfire risks and provide support during large-scale incidents.

The brigade was recognised for exceptional leadership, operational excellence and community engagement.

First Officer Owen Kavanagh, who has been with the brigade for seven years, said a large fire at Nine Mile last year was challenging for the brigade.

"We attended the fire for about a week, assisting with backburning and firefighting," Owen said. "The weather was dry and windy and the terrain was very hilly. The fire burnt a couple of thousand acres."

The brigade leads bushfire mitigation efforts to keep the community safe, including hazard reduction burns, strategic infrastructure protection and coordinated mitigation activities involving several brigades.

"Our focus is on community engagement and organising hazard reduction burns for community members and organisations," Owen said.

The brigade has worked hard to rebuild its membership, strengthen its relationship with the community and create a positive culture after previously facing the prospect of closure.

Training and mentoring have been a big part of that turnaround.

"We focused on supporting each other — experienced members mentored new volunteers, our leadership pulled together, confidence grew, and everyone felt valued as part of the team," Owen said.

"It's rewarding to watch new and existing members learn and grow, seeing the satisfaction they get from helping out."

The brigade empowers their local community through education programs, collaborative planning, engaging vulnerable groups, and localised communication and awareness campaigns.

"It's a small community – a nice little town, spread out a bit, mostly small farms – and everyone's starting to realise we've all got to get together and work together," Owen said.

"Everyone is very appreciative to receive this acknowledgement for the hard work we've been putting in."



RFSQ Week was officially launched at Cooroibah Rural Fire Brigade, where six new firefighting appliances were handed over.



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Northern Region volunteers sharpen skills

More than 60 RFSQ personnel converged on the Charters Towers Showgrounds to refresh their skills and test out new equipment ahead of the bushfire period.

Volunteers from across North Queensland attended the development weekend, including Thursday Island, Mornington Island, Mount Isa, Mackay, Charters Towers, Cairns, Cooktown and the Tablelands.

Inspectors Nick Bloomfield and Shaun Hunter organised the event in collaboration with the Northern Region Operational Support Group (NROSG), led by First Officer Jim Besgrove AFSM.

The exercise was inspired by a gift from South East Region – a 30-person flexible habitat to be used for deployments.

“NROSG wanted to practise putting it together and we decided to do some practical training at the same time,” Nick said.

“We wanted to give everyone hands-on practical skills they could share with their brigades and use on the fire ground.

“Everyone slept in tents and we used the habitat for classrooms. NROSG have their own containers with toilets, showers, washing machines, cooking facilities and so on.

“We held inductions on new light-attack and medium-attack appliances, including their deluge systems. Not all the brigades

will receive new appliances, but if they're deployed or join a strike team during the bushfire period, they'll be familiar with them.”

Participants honed skills such as relay pumping, mapping and radio communications.

“We practised drawing water from a collar dam and relaying it to appliances,” Nick said. “QFR brought an appliance and we practised relaying water into that from a rural appliance.

“Representatives from Firecom, the Fire and Emergency Services Support Network and the Public Information and Warnings Unit, along with Regional Duty Managers, held informal sessions about what they do and how they can help.

“The bushfire mitigation team gave a talk on permits, lighting techniques and good practice for mitigation burns.

“The training and development unit also ran an exercise based on a zombie apocalypse, which got people thinking outside the box.”

Also on display was a new Operational Command Vehicle where volunteers could watch footage livestreamed from a Remotely Piloted Aircraft System. A

helicopter landed at Charters Towers airport so volunteers could ask the pilot questions and learn about working safely under the aircraft.

On Sunday morning, Chief Officer Kaylene Jones and Deputy Chief Officer Clint Tunnie held a Q&A session for volunteers.

“The Chief Officer stayed for the entire weekend,” Nick said. “She was out talking to the volunteers and got involved in everything.

“The volunteers really enjoyed the weekend. They all got in and helped each other out. The feedback was great – people enjoyed learning practical skills they could use.

“This bushfire period is expected to be big. If people join strike teams or deployments there's a better chance they'll know each other now.”

Of course, a lot of work went on behind the scenes to bring everything together.

“It was a regional effort from staff and volunteers in all the areas and districts, and the NROSG team were just amazing,” Nick said.





Mercury spill at Cunnamulla

After a liquid mercury spill at Cunnamulla, QFR crews and scientific officers worked around the clock to clear more than a dozen contaminated sites.

It was a regular school day in Cunnamulla when local students found vials of liquid mercury at the refuse tip and brought them to school, teachers raised the alarm.

Charleville Area Commander Caine Warburton and three local auxiliary firefighters were first on scene.

They worked through the night with other emergency response agencies and the Paroo Shire Council to isolate contaminated sites while specialist crews and scientific officers travelled from Brisbane, Toowoomba and Rockhampton.

"The auxiliary crew worked hard, including Captain Tom King, leveraging their local relationships in the community to identify contaminated sites," Caine said.

"It was tricky to ascertain information initially as the students who'd found the vials wanted to come forth with information but thought they might get in trouble.

"Eventually we found out the spill was not just at the school but had been spread around the entire community."

The spread was partly due to a lack of education and awareness around the risks of mercury which impacted how local authorities initially dealt with the spill.

"It happened at 9am with the school engaging Poisons Information Centre and the council before fully understanding the risk and alerting QFR at 2pm," Caine said.

"On that first night, the auxiliary crews did a fantastic job of isolating the school and service station. They proactively started contract tracing to ascertain who may have been exposed.

"We eventually shut down the school, hospital emergency room, service station and refuse tip and evacuated 11 homes. The hospital provides the most western-based medical support all the way to the NSW and South Australian border but we had to confirm its safety before reopening.

"We established an evacuation centre at the Paroo Shire Hall and negotiated with local services to get bedding, food and equipment for the evacuees."

Shifting priorities

The crew from Toowoomba arrived at 8pm the next day with specialist hazmat equipment and breathing apparatus (BA) support.

The QFD Scientific Unit sent specialist QFD scientist officers with mercury detectors and a mercury vacuum built by Scientific Officer Zenon Splawinski,

fully sealed to prevent poisonous gas escaping.

"It's a very delicate piece of equipment that couldn't be put on a plane because it can't get bumped or knocked," Caine said.

"The burden of distance was a challenge when requesting resources because I had to think about what we might need in four or five days' time and get that equipment on the road.

"The initial team from Toowoomba and Zenon worked especially hard, having left in the morning, arrived on scene at 8pm and worked all the way through till 2am. With bad weather on the way and exposed mercury in the open at the service station, they had to work fast to stop the groundwater from getting contaminated.

"The next day, we assessed the level of contamination at various sites. The hospital was the first priority and we opened it as quickly as we could to build community confidence and maintain emergency service delivery to the region.

"We also prioritised a family who had to take their baby daughter for emergency surgery.

"We reviewed our priorities every day, remaining agile as they constantly changed based on the community impact and level of contamination.

"For example, closing a service station might not seem like a big deal in the city, but in a small community essential businesses like this provide more than just fuel, being the only provider of a number of essential items to the community."

Neutralising the threat

More crews arrived over the next few days and QFR started running 24-hour operations to clean up all the sites and return evacuees to their homes as quickly as possible. At the height of the incident there were four scientific officers and 20 firefighters deployed.

Rumours abounded in the small town, which lies about nine hours west of Brisbane with a population of about 1100.

"Keeping the community informed was essential. We pushed a lot of information out through social media, radio, council text messaging systems and local news. I held a town hall to allow the community to ask questions and help allay any fears," Caine said.

"The meeting brought the community on-side and helped them understand the risks and delays. We also identified a few areas for improvement for our stakeholders moving forward.

"A lot of people were concerned they may have been exposed and we gave them confidence and information to look after their health.

"Even though older people might remember playing with liquid mercury in a science class, it's a very toxic substance with acute and chronic health impacts.

"You might touch it and not immediately notice any effects, but it presents a hazardous respiratory risk and can soak into carpet or furniture and release toxic gas over days or weeks, causing mercury poisoning.

"A lot of our education work focused on showing people why we needed to take it seriously. The most at-risk cohorts from mercury poisoning are children and pregnant women, who were the most impacted in Cunnamulla."

Immediate symptoms of mercury poisoning include rashes, shortness of breath or gastrointestinal issues, while long exposure can lead to more serious symptoms such as numbness, muscle weakness, changes in behaviour or headaches.

"When mercury is in the open you can vacuum it up, but if you can't see it and the levels are high, you can use a chemical to neutralise it over several hours," Caine said.

"We wore protective splash suits with breathing apparatus. We bagged up all chemical waste and confiscated items

like contaminated bedding and bits of carpet. We isolated it all within hazardous material recovery drums.

"We worked alongside the council to establish a hazardous material collection point and guided them through the disposal process in conjunction with the Department of Environment and Science.

The firefighters worked closely with partners such as the Queensland Ambulance Service and Queensland Police Service.

"Their support throughout the incident was fantastic," said Caine. "We also worked with the local council, LDMG, Queensland Health, the Public Health Unit and the Department of Environment and Science.

"Remote communities are extremely robust and they do a lot with very little. It was the largest hazmat incident in a town that I am aware of in QFD's recent history. We managed it with limited resources and a lot of hard work from the crews, community and stakeholders."



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Regional remote tour strengthens community connections

Senior firefighters Will Hovell and Noah Littell travelled more than 1600 kilometres across south-west Queensland over five days for a Road Attitudes and Action Planning (RAAP) tour focused on community education and engagement.

Based mainly in Charleville, the tour included visits to Cunnamulla, Mitchell and Roma, where the pair were warmly welcomed by local communities.

Will and Noah delivered RAAP presentations at Cunnamulla State School and Charleville. They also ran three alternative-setting sessions in partnership with the Anglicare Staying on Track Program. Some of the sessions were outdoors to create a more comfortable environment for young people.

A special thank you to Captain Tom King from Cunnamulla Fire and Rescue Station for his support in coordinating with local police for the local school presentation.

The tour was supported by Toowoomba Command, which released Will and Noah from night shift duties, and coordinated by the State Community Engagement Unit.



Remembering September 11

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Centre, in which 2753 people died, including 343 New York firefighters.

In a show of international firefighter solidarity, QFD will be part of the commemorations, with women's AFL and men's basketball teams playing memorial matches.



In a tribute almost two years in the making, current and retired Queensland firefighters will ride motorbikes from Santa Monica to New York via Route 66, travelling through 18 states to join our sporting teams for the special commemoration in New York on September 11.

Toowoomba firefighters hone skills

Auxiliary firefighters across Toowoomba Command are continuing to build their specialist skills.

Crews from Dalby, Toowoomba, Gatton and Warwick Commands completed Hazardous Materials Training, a hands-on and intensive course to prepare them for complex emergencies.

The training included identifying hazardous materials, undertaking risk assessments, applying control measures and managing incidents safely. Participants took part in realistic scenarios that reinforced the importance of teamwork, communication, planning and sound decision-making in high-risk situations.

Captain Stephen Soderquist said the course delivered valuable outcomes.

"This course has provided our auxiliary firefighters with valuable skills and confidence to safely respond to hazardous materials incidents," Stephen said.

Toowoomba Command auxiliary firefighters also undertook Level 1 Vertical Rescue training at Charlton HQ.

These training activities reflect QFR's ongoing commitment to maintaining a highly capable and prepared workforce across the Darling Downs.



G'day Little Queenslanders

The G'day Little Queenslanders program has rolled out to communities to bring joy to new babies and their families, connect communities and make sure parents have access to government resources and local services.



QFR and RFSQ crews had a fantastic time meeting thousands of families at G'Day Little Queenslanders events across the state. They proudly demonstrated equipment and capabilities to the next generation of Queenslanders.

PSOs welcomed at Dalby exercises

The importance of mental health and wellbeing was front and centre during training activities in Dalby, with Peer Support Officers (PSOs) welcomed as part of the day's exercises.

PSOs connected with RFSQ volunteers from the Dalby area and auxiliary firefighters from Miles in a relaxed and supportive environment. Their presence encouraged meaningful conversations and helped strengthen connections across brigades and auxiliaries.



The positive response from participants highlighted the value of integrating wellbeing support into training activities, ensuring firefighters know where to turn for support and feel comfortable engaging with the peer support network.

The day also reflected the strong commitment across the region to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of firefighters, recognising that looking after people is just as important as building operational capability.

Tesla training for firefighters

QFD was the first fire service in the Asia-Pacific region to receive a specialised emergency response training package directly from Tesla.

Thank you to Simon Roylance from Tesla Emergency Response for giving 125 QFR and RFSQ firefighters valuable information on managing Tesla's lithium-ion products during fires and other emergencies.

This training gave crews valuable insights into Tesla products including vehicles, domestic batteries and recharging stations. The training also covered upcoming technology and its potential impacts for emergency responses, as well as advanced isolation procedures for high-voltage batteries.

As renewable energies evolve, this type of training helps QFD firefighters stay ahead of the game to protect our community. The participants are already looking forward to next year when Simon plans to bring a trailer with props such as an electric car, domestic power wall and commercial charging posts to show firefighters what's inside.



Exercise Mud Crab

QFR crews from across the South Coast Zone in Beenleigh Division took part in Exercise Mud Crab – a large-scale, multi-agency emergency deployment simulated at Gold Coast Airport.

The realistic exercise required a temporary, coordinated closure of Runway 17-35 to test complex incident command structures, multi-agency communication and rapid response capabilities alongside airport aviation rescue teams, partner emergency services and cross-border arrangements.

The exercise integrated frontline crews with motorised watercraft for marine-based rescue, alongside Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) for overhead surveillance.

For the first time in an airport environment of this scale locally, live intelligence, data and thermal imaging feeds from the RPAS units were linked to the on-site Emergency Operations Centre.

This capability provided the Incident Management Team and Operational Senior Officers with real-time situational awareness, streamlining the command-and-control loop.

The key learnings from Exercise Mud Crab will continue to refine QFR's operational readiness and reinforce their strong working relationship with Gold Coast Airport stakeholder networks and cross-border neighbours.



Desktop exercise for bushfires

RFSQ members in the South East Coast District were put through their paces in a desktop exercise that tested their preparedness ahead of the bushfire period.

The team worked through a simulated bushfire scenario with rapidly changing conditions and complex operational challenges, putting their decision making and emergency coordination skills to the test.



Lockyer Valley Festival of Cultures

South Eastern Region RFSQ members attended the Lockyer Valley Festival of Cultures as part of Multicultural Queensland Month.

It was a great chance to meet people from different cultures, connect with the local community and share important safety tips ahead of the bushfire period.



Thermal image training with the experts

US experts Insight Fire Training worked with QFR firefighters at a two-day Thermal Imaging Camera (TIC) training session at the Live Fire campus.

The training focused on finetuning knowledge, skills and procedures with the potentially lifesaving equipment.

QFR firefighters use TIC to identify hidden hazards and possible escape routes in heavy smoke during structure fires. Photo by Insight Fire Training.



Touch football brings Mackay together

The Mackay police and emergency services held their annual touch footy competition, competing for the illustrious shield and local bragging rights.

The QFR team competed against the might of Queensland Police Service Sarina in the final and won the day.

Ongoing friendships were made and the collaboration between services remains



Collaboration in action at Cardwell

Fire and land management partners across the wet tropics area participated in a collaborative hazard reduction burn and operational exercise at Cardwell.

The exercise brought together the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, HQPlantations, RFSQ brigades and area staff, RFSQ Tropical Coast District staff, Mamu Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC and Girringun Aboriginal Corporation.

The exercise helped strengthen operational relationships, exchange specialist knowledge and build a more connected and resilient approach to landscape fire management.

The burn created a realistic learning environment where participants could enhance their operational readiness, refine decision-making and strengthen cross-agency coordination.

The exercise showed the value of bringing together operational

experience, contemporary fire management practices, local knowledge and the cultural perspectives of Traditional Custodian organisations.

The involvement of Mamu Aboriginal Corporation and Girringun Aboriginal Corporation further strengthened relationships and supported meaningful knowledge-sharing between agencies, land managers and First Nations partners.

Working side-by-side, participants built trust, strengthened interoperability and developed a shared understanding of each other's capabilities, responsibilities and operational priorities.

Conducted during RFSQ Week, the exercise was also a fitting opportunity to recognise the extraordinary contribution of RFSQ volunteers.

Through collaboration and shared leadership, the participants have strengthened regional preparedness and helped build more resilient communities across the wet tropics.

at an all-time high. Money raised on the day went to a nominated charity.

Special acknowledgment to Station Officer Matt Geiger for organising the QFR teams each year.



New RFSQ facility in Bamaga

The first RFSQ facility to operate out of Bamaga has officially opened, a milestone for brigades across the Torres Peninsula.

The new facility provides a permanent base for RFSQ staff and volunteers and emergency services personnel

supporting some of Queensland's most remote communities.

Supporting more than 160 volunteers and 17 brigades, the facility will be home to RFSQ support staff and the Northern Peninsula Area Rural Fire Brigade and will be used by the State Emergency Service to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies.





Emergency services cadets competed in the 2026 Cadet Games at Redcliffe.



RFSQ volunteers conducted a hazard reduction burn at Cherbourg in cooperation with the Bunya Peoples' Aboriginal Corporation.



Firefighters put smiles on faces at the G'day Little Queenslanders in Clontarf.



Auxiliary crews from Injune and Roma joined forces with Amby and Roma rural fire brigades to carry out a hazard reduction burn to the north-east of Injune.



QFR Station Officer Program candidates from Beenleigh, Toowoomba and Cairns trained at Cbus Super Stadium in Robina.



Closeburn Rural Fire Brigade set up a Portable Automatic Weather Station near Samford to track local weather in the lead-up to the higher risk bushfire period.



The State Air Operations team supported personnel in Far North Queensland at a two-day Airbase Operator workshop in Mareeba.



RFSQ personnel took part in a training exercise at Lowmead to brush up on operational skills and decision making.



Auxiliary and volunteer firefighters joined Noosa Council Fire Management Officers and Kabi Kabi Land and Sea Rangers to conduct a hazard reduction burn in Noosa.



QFR technical rescue firefighters helped two climbers stranded at Mount Tibrogargan.

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