The issue of climate change and its impact on the environment and across a range of aspects has been discussed for sometime however recent media attention has focussed us back onto the topic although that is not to say that we have ever taken our eyes off the ball. There is no doubt that climatic changes have seen and will continue to see an increase in the number of very high and extreme fire days into the future and although there is research data to confirm this, we can all draw on anecdotal evidence, and the stories from those that have been around for a while, that this is indeed happening. There are, of course, some steps that we as a fire service and as individuals can do to adjust the onset and magnitude of these climatic change occurrences however, they are somewhat governed by aspects beyond our control.

It is important to recognise that QFRS and in particular Rural Operations does take this issue seriously as it does with all fire related management aspects, and as such, I thought it would be appropriate to share some of the strategies we have adopted. Over the past decade, the population across Queensland has increased exponentially and as a result of the urban sprawl, communities are now impacting on rural areas and into traditional bush settings where the fire danger risk is generally higher. The added effects of climate change in these areas have further prompted a response from the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service to continue to improve its techniques for dealing with fire emergencies in these areas.

Not only does Queensland have 36,000 Rural Fire Brigade volunteers being community members who are naturally aware of the conditions that they could experience during extreme fire danger periods but we also have a very strong network of almost 2,500 volunteer fire wardens who, through the permit to light fire system, approve the reduction of fuel loads with the application of fire. A review is currently underway of the Fire Warden and Permit to Light Fire system so that it is well positioned to manage and advise on the safe use of fire and the protection of life, property and the environment well into the future.

We have also, over recent years, strengthened our capacity to assist adjoining areas, regions and interstate through the adoption of the regional Wildfire Alert Levels (WAL). Determining the respective regions WAL is predominantly through the information contained and released on a daily basis through the Fire Danger Rating Graphic which projects up to four days out on a range of aspects such as fuel loads, curing rates, wind speed and direction, humidity and temperature. This has proven to be a very useful predictive modelling tool, designed by the Manager, Planning and Research, Inspector Fergus Adrian, and used by Rural Operations Regional Managers for activities such as determining wildfire alert levels, planning for hazard reduction burns and training at Crew Leader Courses. Ferg also engages with other fire agencies throughout Australia, the Bureau of Meteorology and the CSIRO to develop National Fire Potential Outlooks for forthcoming fire seasons.

In the last edition of the Bulletin I highlighted our collaborative approach with government and land management agencies towards bushfire management by providing an overview of the State Interdepartmental Committee for Bushfire Management and also the formation of the six Regional Interdepartmental Committees that facilitates and supports the activities of the State at a regional level. These committees review fire mitigation programs, firefighting strategies, training programs and community safety messages and programs for both now and into the future. At an Australasian level, myself, and others within Rural Operations, sit on a range of land management, fire service and research committees which provide up-to-date and accurate technologies placing us in a strong position to deal with future climatic changes.

On a closing note; personal and personnel safety must be the paramount concern, and consideration must be given to the incident that we are encountering, the environment that we are in and the conditions that are confronting us. We must continually assess and re-assess the situation in order to manage it to a successful and safe conclusion.

The climate change report is a message to all of us as individuals in the greater community, that the actions of human activity on the planet, if continued at the current rate, will have impacts such as increased fire activity.

Until next time, be safe and take care.

Regards

Steve Rothwell AFSM
Assistant Commissioner Rural Operations
Queensland Fire and Rescue Service
Firefighter’s Exposure To Air Toxics During Prescribed Burns

Bushfire fighting can be hazardous and in general control strategies are in place to minimize the hazards. However, Bushfire CRC partner agencies felt that there was little knowledge about firefighter’s exposure to bushfire smoke, a complex mixture of toxic gases and particles. The Bushfire CRC Project D 2.2 on Air Toxics Exposure and Management aims at developing a risk management strategy to mitigate the impact of smoke on firefighters.

This will be done by limiting the exposure of firefighters according to a Bushfire Exposure Standard. The research undertaken for this purpose involves characterising the bushfire firefighting working environment, in particular understanding and quantifying exposure levels to toxic air pollutants in bushfire smoke.

Extensive personal exposure studies of bushfire firefighters have been carried out in the United States, but no other country. In Australia there is little knowledge of firefighter’s exposure to toxic air pollutants emitted during prescribed burn operations or bushfires. Since vegetation types, fire characteristics and fire fighting operations are likely to differ from those in the US, it was considered necessary to carry out field measurements during Australian burns and bushfires to determine the magnitude of smoke exposure and related health risks.

Background

Bushfire smoke is a complex mixture of toxic air contaminants that might be inhaled while fighting fires. These air toxics can be present as gases or as particulate matter.

Major air contaminants released in bushfire smoke include carbon monoxide, respiratory irritants (particles, formaldehyde, acrolein), volatile organic compounds (such as benzene) and potentially toxic compounds adsorbed to particles, such as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). If present at elevated levels, these compounds can potentially cause short-term health effects (headaches, dizziness, irritation, fatigue, lack of concentration) or long term health effects (cardio-respiratory health effects, reduced lung function, cancer). Currently no formal standard of work practice for bushfire fighting exists, which specifies safe levels of exposure to air toxics.

Exposure

To determine the exposure levels of firefighters to air toxics, quantitative samples were collected within the breathing zone of randomly selected firefighters. At each prescribed burn, up to four firefighters were asked to wear a sampling pack which included a range of sampling devices for monitoring different air toxics (Table 2). The sampling devices have been chosen based on a range of criteria: comfort, weight, robustness, specificity to selected air toxic, availability of reliable analysis method.

To determine the variability of exposure levels, monitoring was conducted for key tasks involved at prescribed burns (supervision, ignition with hand-held drip torch, patrolling, fire suppression with hose or rake-hoe), different fuel types (eucalypt forest, grassland, mallee heath land, tropical forest, button grass) and different fire types (fuel reduction burns, slash or heap burns, experimental burns).

Definitions

**Carbon Monoxide (CO)** is a colourless, odourless and nonirritating gas which is produced when carbon-containing compounds burn with insufficient air. When carbon monoxide is inhaled, it binds to hemoglobin, the red blood pigment that normally carries oxygen to all parts of the body.

**Carboxyhemoglobin (COHb)** is produced inhibiting transport, delivery and utilisation of oxygen.

**Respirable particles** are small particles that can settle deep within the lungs and that are not ejected by exhaling, coughing, or expulsion by mucus.

**PAHs** are organic compounds consisting of at least two fused benzene rings. They are products of incomplete combustion of organic matter and can be present in the gas and particle phase. A number of these are classified as probable and possible human carcinogens.
Possibilities for control strategies include:

- Strategies to mitigate or minimize the risks in situations of unacceptable risk and develop risk management schemes.

The outcomes of the research will aim at identifying those burns; future work needs to include wildfires and burns at the urban interface to complete the picture.

So far measurements have focused primarily on prescribed schemes, but measurements in mixes of these air toxics and that simplified measurement may be possible in the future.

A good correlation was observed between pollutants in particular between CO, respirable particles and aldehydes. This shows that exposures will generally be to combined mixtures of these air toxics and that simplified measurement schemes may be possible in the future.

A large variability was observed among the samples collected. The type of work activity has been found to be a major factor influencing exposure risks. Crew members involved in patrolling and suppression have higher exposures to bushfire air toxics than those crew members involved in the ignition of burns. Drip torches however are an additional source of VOCs and inhalation of the fumes may lead to headaches.

Drip torches however are an additional source of VOCs and therefore exposure to high levels of CO over an extended period of time may lead to impaired judgement and may have an effect on performing tasks that require vigilance. Elevated CO concentrations may also aggravate cardiac conditions especially for people with preexisting heart disease, as the heart has to work harder with less oxygen available to help it. Regular monitoring of firefighter’s carboxyhemoglobin (COHb) levels on the fire ground may be critical to ensure that no CO-induced symptoms are observed and that firefighters spend enough time in a CO-free environment to reduce their COHb levels in the blood.

The results have shown that:

- According to the current OES relevant to bushfire air toxics, the majority of exposure levels are in compliance. However it should be noted that exposure standards may need to be adjusted to take into account the more strenuous workload firefighters are carrying out. Increased lung ventilation rate may lead to increased uptake of air contaminants.

- CO levels exceeded occupational exposure standards in a small number of cases, both from the averaged exposure limit of 30 ppm (2%) and the peak limit of 400 ppm (8%), which should never be exceeded. CO reduces the oxygen carrying capacity of the blood and therefore exposure to high levels of CO over an extended period of time may lead to impaired judgement and may have an effect on performing tasks that require vigilance. Elevated CO concentrations may also aggravate cardiac conditions especially for people with preexisting heart disease, as the heart has to work harder with less oxygen available to help it. Regular monitoring of firefighter’s carboxyhemoglobin (COHb) levels on the fire ground may be critical to ensure that no CO-induced symptoms are observed and that firefighters spend enough time in a CO-free environment to reduce their COHb levels in the blood.

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**How Is Bushfire CRC Research Being Used**

The outcomes of the research will aim at identifying those situations of unacceptable risk and develop risk management strategies to mitigate or minimize the risks.

Possibilities for control strategies include:

- At operational level: task assignment and rotation (mix high/low exposure tasks, assign firefighters to specific tasks)
- Hazard awareness training: explain situations where exposure to air toxics is likely to be high and how exposure risk can be minimized;
- Respiratory protection

**Future Directions**

Over the next fire season, personal exposure monitoring will continue in order to increase the coverage of current monitoring to other states and vegetation classes, and also expand monitoring in bushfires as well as burns at the urban interface.

An extended version of this article can be found as a Bushfire CRC Fire Note at www.bushfirecrc.com

The researchers involved are Fabienne Reisen and Mick Meyer of CSIRO Marine and Atmospheric Research and Dane Hansen of RMIT University. Contact: fabienne.reisen@csiro.au

**Use of personal exposure sensors – CO sensor to alert firefighters of high exposure risks and when the use of respiratory protection is recommended**

**Better understanding of the bushfire firefighting working environment**

In addition, agencies can develop protocols to:

- Avoid injuries and fatalities resulting from impaired decision making
- Retain staff and volunteers by reducing chronic impacts of smoke exposure

**Rural Fire Service Volunteers of the Year**

This year saw the introduction of the Fire Awareness Week Volunteer of the Year Awards.

The Awards are designed to recognise volunteers who have made significant contributions to the Rural Fire Service over the past 12 months.

Congratulations to Ronald Beacroft, Bloomfield RFB, Far Northern Region, Paul Cauchi, Toobana RFB, Northern Region, Alistair Chapman, Calliope RFB, Central Region, Lesley Broome, Brooweena RFB, North Coast Region, Malcolm Stacey, Gladfield-Maryvale RFB, South West Region, Sue Ward, Mutdapilly RFB, South East Region and Allan Wells, Samford RFB, Brisbane Region who were chosen as the recipients of the 2007 Volunteer of the Year Awards.

These volunteers were selected for their ongoing commitment to:

- Actively promoting the Rural Fire Service in a positive fashion
- Displaying high levels of commitment to achieving positive outcomes in all areas of responsibility
- Demonstrating a willingness to improve the Rural Fire Service
- Making a notable contribution to achieving the strategic goals for the Rural Fire Service within their brigade.
- Demonstrating commitment to personal development and
- Representing the Rural Fire Service in accordance with the relevant codes of conduct.

Congratulations to all our award recipients and thank you for your ongoing commitment to the Rural Fire Service.
A report by the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre (CRC), the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) and the CSIRO released in September suggested Australian firefighters may face a future of extended and more extreme bushfire weather seasons.

With this year’s fire season set to begin, the report estimates that the overall intensity of fire weather seasons may increase up to 30% with high levels of global warming. The number of days of extreme fire danger experienced each year in Australia could increase by 65% by 2020 and 300% by 2050.

The report also shows that the recent fire weather seasons have been the worst and longest on record, with fire season intensity jumping by 10-40% above the levels in the 1980s and 1990s.

Assistant Commissioner Rural Operations Steve Rothwell said the prospect of the impact climate change could have on the Queensland bushfire season is of serious concern to the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS).

“QFRS has seen thorough data collected over the past 63 years, which shows that more than 50% of extreme fire weather days have occurred since 1990.” Assistant Commissioner Rothwell said.

“The increase in extreme fire weather days has been particularly prevalent in the South East corner of the State.”

This (the CSIRO, BOM and Bushfire CRC) report has provided QFRS with in-depth information from which it can work with in planning for possible future scenarios that the organisation may not have experienced before.

Assistant Commissioner Rural Operations Steve Rothwell also said there have been various significant enhancements to Queensland Fire and Rescue Service’s Rural Operations Division over the past five years, all of which have considerably benefited volunteers, the community and also our environment.

“The enhancement package for Rural Operations, which was released in June 2006 and has now been fully implemented, saw the largest increase in staff numbers since the Rural Fire Service was established in 1948, with 23 new full-time equivalent positions introduced.”

“Two of these positions, being the Manager, Rural Fire Research and Training and the Manager, Planning and Research, are specifically dedicated to undertaking research and planning into rural landscape and land use issues relating to fire management and mitigation, as well as developing, implementing and reporting on strategic and operational fire management issues and interacting with other fire agencies throughout Australia and internationally.

“Regional Managers, Area Training and Support Officers and Brigade Training and Support Officers have been appointed in each region, which will reduce the administrative workload of staff within the rural area locations to better service, support and train our rural fire volunteers. This model, by aligning with the seven region model of Queensland Fire and Rescue Service Urban Operations, has also achieved greater synergies by an increased resource capability to deliver key priorities.

“These enhancements, as well as significantly increasing the training and support services provided to 36,000 rural fire volunteers and also fire wardens across the state, have created a seamless and integrated delivery of operations in rural environments and have strengthened and regionalised the strategic thinking and planning associated with bushfire management and volunteer support.

“This government has also continued to provide funding that significantly benefits Queensland’s rural fire brigades. The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service 2007-2008 budget includes $3.9 million for the construction of rural fire appliances and fire trailers. Further, in excess of $1 million has been spent each financial year since 2001 on providing, at no cost to brigades, personal protective equipment to each active volunteer, and no reasonable request has been refused.

“A total of $540,000 will be spent in 2007-08 ($2.7 million over five years) on the development of communication equipment available to Rural Operations volunteers to ensure appropriate service delivery and firefighter safety in the expanding iZone – the urban-rural interface or where towns meet the bush.” Assistant Commissioner Rothwell said.

“Along with this, QFRS is continually undertaking proactive planning approaches where the issue of climate change is concerned, many of which I discussed in my opening message. We are looking closely at our techniques and operational strategies to battle the predicted high intensity fires - especially where water may be scarce.”

More information on The Climate Institute and the report can be found at www.climateinstitute.org.au.
Earlier this year, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) undertook a research project focusing on Prepare, Stay and Defend or Go Early. The aim of the research was to aid QFRS in understanding Queensland residents' likelihood to ‘go early’ or ‘prepare to stay and defend their properties’ in the event of a bushfire.

Specifically, the objectives of the research were to:

- Understand residents' awareness of the threat of bushfire to their properties
- Explore, in depth, residents' attitudes towards, and confidence in, staying and defending their properties.
- Understanding the factors that trigger a residents' decision to go early in the case of bushfire.

To undertake this research, 500 Queensland residents who live in high risk areas were interviewed. An overview of who was spoken to is:

- Of those interviewed, there was a well-distributed range of ages in the sample, with perhaps slightly more in the 45 – 54 year old age range.
- Of those surveyed, most respondents were full-time workers and retired residents.

Perceived Bushfire Threat and Preparedness

Although the sample surveyed was sourced from streets known to be in high risk areas, only 1 in 5 surveyed believe they live in a high risk area.

It would seem the distance from bushland is the main reason for residents' belief that they do not live in a high bushfire risk area. For example, residents who can see houses or buildings next to them, are less likely to believe they live in a high risk area than those who can see bush or national park next to their property.

22% of respondents believed there was no threat at all to their properties, 46% believe there is only a slight threat, 24% believe a moderate threat, 6% believe a high threat, while only 2% of respondents believe their properties are at very high threat.

Of those surveyed, only 18% had previously experienced a bushfire. The research showed people who had previously experienced a bushfire are more alert to the fact they live in a high risk area.

Just over 50% of people believe they are moderately, well, or very well prepared for bushfire and most believe they will only receive a couple of hours notice of a bushfire.

Exploring Prepare, Stay and Defend

52% of respondents were likely or very likely to stay with their properties in the event of a bushfire. The remainder were either unlikely or unsure.

The research shows families in the later stages of life (with teenage or grown children) are more likely to stay and defend their properties, as are home owners.

Although 52% of respondents believe they would stay and defend, only 23% state that they are confident or very confident in their ability to defend their home.

When asked what would give respondents sufficient confidence to stay and defend, some of the main replies were:

- 40% said a good supply of water
- 18% said if their home was easy to defend, cleared and maintained
- 17% said if the Fire Brigade was close by fighting fires.

When those who said they were not confident enough to stay and defend their properties were asked what would give them sufficient confidence to stay, some of the main responses were:

- 29% said nothing – they would not stay
- 18% said training and more information
- 17% said if the Fire Brigade was close by fighting fires.
- 16% said equipment and resources.

66% of residents surveyed believe that preparing their properties for bushfire will take less than a couple of hours. More than half of those who said they would stay and defend their properties feel they would need no more than one hour to prepare.

59% of people said they had taken no action to prepare their homes however, residents who have taken action to prepare are more likely to stay and defend than those who have taken no action.

What influences going early

When asked (if they were not going to stay and defend) at what point they would make the decision to leave, the most common answer was ‘seeing the fire close to home’. The research showed females, aged 35 – 54 with young families, are more likely to leave early.
Brigade Training and Support Officers Graduate

The 10th of September marked a significant occasion for Rural Operations and Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS), with the graduation ceremony of the inaugural intake of Brigade Training and Support Officers (BTSO).

The day marked both an ending and beginning for the BTSOs and Rural Operations. It was the end of the almost 16 week BTSO induction program and probationary period, and the beginning a new chapter for Rural Operations, with the BTSOs formally taking up their new roles.

The Honourable Neil Roberts MP, Minister for Emergency Services officiated at the ceremony, accompanied by Director-General for the Department of Emergency Services Ms Fiona McKersie, QFRS Commissioner Mr Lee Johnson and Assistant Commissioner Rural Operations Mr Steve Rothwell.

Cheered on by family and friends and in many cases, Regional Managers and Area Directors, the 11 graduating BTSOs were presented with their certificate of completion and insignia of rank.

Assistant Commissioner Rural Operations Steve Rothwell said the day was significant for a number of reasons.

“This graduation was the first of its kind in Rural Operations history, and heralds a new chapter in the history of QFRS.” Assistant Commissioner Rothwell said.

“The role played by BTSOs is critical to the role of QFRS. They are the doorway between volunteers and the Area Office and are in a position to not only enhance our support to brigades, but be instrumental in the resolution of issues.

“Congratulations to them all.”

Bernie Grech is the BTSO for Innisfail
Naomi Scott is the BTSO for Rockhampton
Col Neal is the BTSO for Roma
Paul Storrs is the BTSO for Toowoomba
Tony Stroud is the BTSO for Charters Towers
Simon Sievers is the BTSO for Bundaberg
Brian Smith is the BTSO for Ipswich
Fiona Quirk is the BTSO for Mackay
Wayne Ford is the BTSO for the Maryborough
Andrew Allan is the BTSO for Caloundra
Brett Weston is the BTSO for Cairns.
It Happened and We Were There

The biggest event on the Far Northern Region rural farming calendar, the Agricultural Field Days, occurred at Walkamin on the Atherton Tablelands. Running over two days in early July and attracting a record number of exhibitors, the Agricultural Field Days drew a large crowd of enthusiastic and inquisitive community members.

Farmers and land users from all walks of life travelled many hundreds of kilometres to talk the rural talk and catch up with friends and acquaintances not seen for many months. They also came to view the many displays and exhibits showcasing the latest technology and trends within the agricultural arena.

As a well established community stakeholder Rural Operations was amongst the many and varied exhibitors, and our site and displays attracted a constant stream of visitors, some just browsing whilst others seeking brochures, handouts or just a chat.

ABC radio held a live broadcast providing information on key exhibits and enabling a number of key messages to go out to those unable to attend. The day started early with a radio phone interview with Rural Operations Regional Manager Ian Thomas, followed by a live interview with ATSO Steve Barber then with Group Officer John Thompson who is farmer and active volunteer member of Chlosey Group.

The interviews covered a number of key issues including the fire permit system, bushfire behaviour and climate change, fire as a land management tool, Bushfire Prepared Communities, bushfire issues affecting the izone, smoke alarm legislation, how to join a volunteer brigade and life as a volunteer firefighter, community member and farmer.

With the interviews over, it was time to set up and man the stall. Our display was jointly supported by rural and urban operations and was located on the most prized and highly sought after piece of real estate - right next to the entrance. This afforded us the opportunity to capture the visitors early, prior to being dazzled by technology, machinery, livestock and food.

Due to our highly visible and outstanding display, together with our excellent location, we attracted a large number of visitors who were interested in a variety of issues including, smoke alarms - the new smoke alarm legislation and what is the most suitable location, the best types and where to purchase them, fire permits and how they work, fuel reduction burning and general home fire safety. We also took the opportunity to discuss “Your Rural Fire Brigade” and pressed the recruitment message diligently with those keen and enthusiastic visitors who sought further information.

I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate and thank those people who tirelessly supported the event. As volunteers your efforts did not go un-noticed and on behalf of the Regional Manager Far Northern Region and from the Cairns Peninsula Area, thank you to a job well done.

Steve Barber
Area Training Support Officer
Rural Operations
Cairns – Peninsula Area

RFS and Family Matters

Volunteering with RFS is said to be family matter for many volunteers. Sean Cowlishaw wants to find out what kind of a family matter it is! Sean is a Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre PhD student at La Trobe University in Melbourne.

“We know that RFS volunteering puts a unique blend of pressures on volunteers and their families” Sean says.

“But fire agencies need to know more about these pressures so they can make sure that families of volunteers get the support they need. Some of the things we know about include partners worrying when the volunteer is away for long periods on campaign fires. It also seems that some volunteers put the brigade ahead of the family on occasions—which probably doesn’t go down too well if it happens a lot.”

Sean began by interviewing managers of CFA volunteers in Victoria about impacts of volunteering on families, but said they really need to hear it from the volunteers, and most of all from their spouses and partners.

Sean is seeking input from Queensland Rural Fire Service volunteers and their partners. He also wants to find out about the impacts on families of other emergency services volunteering, like SES and volunteer rescue.

“Not all impacts need be negative”, he said. “Volunteering can lead to more social contacts in the local community, especially if you are new to the area”.

The research is being supervised by Dr Jim McLennan, Manager of the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre Volunteerism Project (phone 03 9479 2420), who is very enthusiastic about Sean’s work.

“This is ground breaking stuff! Nothing like Sean’s study has been done anywhere else in the world”.

Great care is being taken to ensure that information provided is anonymous and confidential. If you are interested in participating in the survey, you can find out more and obtain electronic forms at www.latrobe.edu.au/bushfirecrc or by phoning 1300 85 01 99 (free call) and leaving a message. If you want to have material, including a reply paid envelope, mailed to you, leave a mailing address; if you would like the material in electronic form so you can download it, leave an email address. No records will be kept of any contacts.

Returns go directly back to La Trobe University by Reply Paid mail.

“I aim to give a report to agencies with recommendations on family support needs around July next year” says Sean.

If you would like more information, or would like to obtain a summary of findings, you can contact Sean on s.cowlishaw@latrobe.edu.au

Sean (left) Gets a Briefing on a Recent Fire. Photograph by Glenn Elliott, Bushfire CRC
Volunteer Recruitment

With the new recruitment material set to be available late November, we thought we would provide you with some background into research that has been conducted on “Recruiting Younger Fire Service Volunteers” which helped shape the direction of the new recruitment material.

Below is a snippet of information from the Bushfire CRC January 07 Issue of Fire Note in relation to the “New Volunteer Member Tracking Project’ which was done in conjunction with the CFA.

Background

Australia’s annual birth rates have declined over the past three decades. This has resulted in an ageing population. In 1970/71, 31 per cent of the population was aged 15 years or younger. By 2002/3 the corresponding figure had declined to 22 per cent. Over the same period the percentage of the Australian population aged 65-plus grew from 8 per cent to 13 per cent.

It is predicted that the percentage of the population aged 65-plus will climb to about 25 per cent by 2040, while growth in the traditional workforce age range (18-60 years) will slow to almost zero (McLennan & Birch, 2005).

Australia’s volunteer-based rural fire services are not insulated from these demographic changes. Almost all agencies report concerns that the age of their volunteer membership is rising. Over the period 2001-2006 the median age of CFA’s volunteer membership rose from 40 years to 46 years. This is a potentially serious development for fire agencies since operational fire fighting can be a very physically demanding activity.

Clearly, volunteer-based fire agencies would like to halt and reverse the ageing of their volunteer memberships by recruiting and retaining greater numbers of younger (<35 years) volunteers. However, other social factors, including changes in the nature of work in Australia, make this difficult.

A Survey of New Volunteers

As one component of enhancing volunteer recruitment and retention, the CFA, in collaboration with the Bushfire CRC Volunteerism Project team, initiated the New Volunteer Member Tracking Project. This involved surveying all new volunteers approximately six months after joining. The survey questionnaire asked what prompted them to join, their reasons for joining, how easy it was to make contact, and what their initial experiences were on joining their brigade. Demographic information was also sought: including age, gender, education, occupation, marital and family status.

The aim of the project is to provide the CFA with information about who volunteers, why, and how, so as to inform improvements in recruiting, training, supporting, and retaining their volunteers. It is proposed to re-survey a sample of the new volunteers after:

- 12 months to find out about their experiences during firefighting operations;
- 24 months to find out the impact of fire service volunteering on work and family life, health and fitness, and personal development.

Outcomes from the project

Survey returns from 455 new volunteers (311 men and 144 women) were analysed. Ten potential motivations for joining CFA were listed on the survey form and participants were asked to rate the importance of each. These ratings were analysed and three clusters of motivational factors were identified:

- Self-oriented motivations (4 items).
- Community safety oriented motivations (4 items).
- Community contribution motivations (2 items).

The ratings for the items making up each cluster were summed to generate for each volunteer three motivations scores: Self, Community Safety, and Community Contribution-oriented motives.

To investigate age and motivation to volunteer, the means of the three motivation scores for volunteers aged 18-34, 35-44, and 45+ years were compared. There were no significant differences across the three age groups for mean scores on Community Safety and Community Contribution motivations. However, Self-oriented motivations were more important for volunteers 18-34 years compared with volunteers in the two older age groups. This suggests that while younger volunteers are no less motivated by community safety and community contribution issues, they are rather more likely to be motivated by self-oriented issues (career, new skills, new friends, personal development) compared with older volunteers (Birch & McLennan, 2006).
News Update

From the Manager Operational Support

Hearing Protection

Hearing protection will be provided to Area offices for distribution to Brigades for the use of Pump Operators, during pumping operations, and should be used strictly in compliance with the manufacturers fitting instructions and within the recommended time exposure limits.

In addition to the hearing protection, warning stickers will be provided for fixing to a prominent position within the pump operator’s area.

The following manufacturers fitting instructions should be followed when using the reusable ear plugs in conjunction with the time exposure limits chart.

1. To ensure a correct and comfortable fit, pull the outer ear upwards and backwards with your free hand while inserting the plug with a slight rocking and twisting motion
2. Continue to gently rock and twist the ear plug until it is well fitted and a good seal is achieved (background noise shall be experienced to be considerably reduced when achieving a good seal)
3. A good fit and seal should normally leave no flanges of the earplug outside the entrance of the ear canal.
4. If a good fit and seal is not achieved: repeat the procedure above. DO NOT EXPOSE YOURSELF TO HARMFUL NOISE WITH NO OR INSUFFICIENT SEAL!

Note: To avoid pain and or damage to the ear canal / eardrum, remove the earplug with a slow and gentle twist while removing it from the ear canal.

Noise Emission and Exposure Limits

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noise Travel</th>
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<td>4m</td>
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<td>15 mins</td>
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<td>1 hour</td>
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<tr>
<td>FULL THROTTLE</td>
<td>HALF THROTTLE</td>
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</table>

These distances and exposure limits are proportional to the typical noise outputs of the engine at full operating revs with no hearing protection and are to be used as a guide only. Exposure time frames will be increased with the use of adequate hearing protection.

Spare Wheel Relocation

In response to feedback from the RFBAQ and Brigade members, regarding the positioning of the spare wheel on the Isuzu NPS 300 Medium Attack appliance, Rural Operations has engaged Brisbane Isuzu to design and manufacture a retrofitted spare wheel mount which relocates the spare from the rear of the vehicle to a midship position, in front of the near side rear wheel. Isuzu have indicated that the retrofit kit would be available in the near future at an approximate cost of $195.

The repositioning of the spare wheel should provide improved departure angle for the Medium Attack appliance without compromising the ramp angle, as the lowest part of the wheel is about 40mm higher than the fuel tank and muffler.

Equipment List

As you would all be aware the 07-08 equipment list has been released with some changes to the availability of equipment through the Central Warehouse located at Kedron. Some hose fittings, including seals, hose clamps and lower priced couplings have been removed from the equipment list as the cost of processing these items through the various purchasing stages generated more expense than the actual value of the item. These items may now be purchased by the Brigade from any supplier, including local suppliers or through the current SOA F-1176 provider, All Hose and Tubing on Phone No 07 3252 3632.

Floppy Hats

To provide protection from the sun during non operational activities, floppy hats will be available via requisition to the area office, once the supply details are finalised.

Type 1 Wildland Boots

The current issue of Type 1 Wildland firefighting boot is being reviewed to address some concerns in relation their suitability during specific activities where increased ankle support may be required.

One of the boots to be trailed is 200mm high, 40mm higher than the current issue, side zip lace up style with either a steel or fibre composite toe cap.

The outcome of the evaluation may influence the future direction of firefighting boots for active members during operational activities.
New Look Rural Fire Brigade Stations

For some time now, there has been ongoing conversation about signage at Rural Fire Stations and across the State. Currently the look and image of Rural Fire Stations vary greatly.

We are pleased to advise you that brand new signage has now been developed to be used at all future Rural Fire Stations. The signage is designed to draw attention to the Rural Fire Station, while at the same time providing a means for the brigade to provide information to the community.

There are two parts to the new signage:

- The street signage is steel frame 2 metres in height and 1.2m in width and will include the relevant logos, the Rural Fire Brigade’s name and the date the brigade was established. Underneath this section will be a “slide in” section, where the brigade can post information relevant to members of the community, such as date and time of the next community meeting or next brigade training session. (see image 1)

- The second section is the building signage, which will again include the relevant logos and the Rural Fire Brigade’s name. There are two different styles of building signage for a brigade to choose from depending on their station size and style. All building signage is manufactured to the relevant size. (see image 2)

The new signage will be supplied for installation for all new Rural Fire Brigade stations at not cost to the Brigade. Brigades with existing stations are able to order new signs however the cost will need to be worn by the brigade. For further information contact your Area Office.

Deployment Register for Rural Fire Service Volunteers

Any Rural Fire Service volunteers interested in participating in interstate deployments need to ensure they are listed on the deployment register. To list your name on the deployment register you need to contact your Area Office.

Please be aware that there are mandatory requirements for volunteers who wish to participate in interstate deployments. These are:

- Firefighter Minimum Skills
- IMS Introduction course (4hrs AIIMS)
- Minimum of two years fire experience
- Current Drivers licence.

* Crew Leaders will require additional qualifications.

Please note, volunteers interested in interstate deployments need to be willing to undergo a Criminal History Check.

More information on the deployment register can be found in the new Brigade Manual.
Prepare, Stay and Defend or Go Early in Action

On 1st September 2007, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) responded to a deliberately lit grass fire at Kingaroy Court, Merrimac. The situation when QFRS arrived was that the fire was burning in between a rail line and residential properties, heading in a north-westerly direction. A passenger train had been stopped for the safety of those on board and the fire was moving in the direction of the homes.

Attending the incident was an Urban pumper from Robina station, an Urban pumper from Surfers Paradise Station, a light and medium attack vehicle from the Mudgeeraba Rural Fire Brigade and a light attack vehicle from the Bonogin Valley Rural Fire Brigade.

Incident Controller at the scene was Acting Inspector, School Fire Rescue Service Training, Chris Robinson, who was stationed at Robina at the time of the incident. Chris said after assessing the situation, it was determined that there was no time for evacuation, so he immediately visited the 12 that would be initially threatened by the fire.

“It is important to note that there was initially some concern from residents in relation to re-connecting their hoses due to water restrictions. They were concerned they would face penalties from the Council. Residents had to be reassured this would not occur.”

“The residents’ response to this request was effective and efficient. High pressure hose reels were also positioned by QFRS to provide support to residents in their efforts.”

QFRS was supported in the decision for residents to stay and defend their properties by the Queensland Police Service, who agreed, and proceeded to close surrounding roads and ensure other members of the public were kept well away.

Incident Controller Chris Robinson was also in constant contact with Queensland Rail and was able to quickly move the delayed train through the area and proceed to close the rail line between Nerang and Robina.

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“With a combination of back burning, blackening out and hose reels, and with assistance from residents in defending their own properties, the fire was successfully brought under control without damage to the surrounding homes.” Chris said.
“The fire began at 3.33pm, at 5.03 it was classed as ‘under control’ and at 17.24 QFRS ceased activities. Unfortunately at 17.26 the fire jumped the fire line and was heading towards the train line. Queensland Rail escorted the fire appliances up the line so the fire could be contained.

“The Gold Coast Area is fortunate enough to have an excellent relationship with the Rural Fire Brigades. The attendance of the Rural Fire Service at this incident was essential to the outcome. I would like to personally thank them for their efforts, which began at 4.24pm and continued until 7.42pm.

“I would also like to stress the success and importance of the property owners actively defending their homes. It was only through this method that we were able to obtain such a favourable outcome.

“The only thing I would have changed in the process, if I’d had the manpower and time, would have been to immediately have allocated a liaison officer to discuss the situation and actions with the residents.” Chris said.

“Other than that, the process of residents staying and defending their properties was executed efficiently and effectively and resulted in the best possible outcome.”

The Prepare, Stay and Defend or Go Early initiative now offers residents the option of staying and defending a well prepared property. With more and more Queenslanders living in and near bushland, it is essential they have a plan in place in case they ever at risk. ‘Prepare, Stay and Defend or Go Early’ is designed to help them make the right decision, depending on their home, environment and personal circumstances.

One of the most important messages of this initiative is that people need to prepare their property, whether they are planning to stay or go, and that when making this decision, they need to assess their resources, preventative actions and capabilities before making a decision.

Research has shown that appropriately prepared and constructed buildings offer protection to people during bushfires, reducing the likelihood of bushfire-related injury and fatality. Most buildings lost in bushfires ignite from small fires caused by sparks and embers, and these ignitions can occur immediately before, during, or up to several hours after, the passage of the main fire.

By remaining with their property to extinguish small initial ignitions, people who are prepared, and who are equipped with appropriate skills and basic resources, can save a building that could otherwise be lost in a fire.

Alternatively, if residents are planning to go, they should be prepared to go early. They should decide where they will go, how they will get there, and what trigger they will use to initiate their plan.
2008 STATE FIREFIGHTER CHAMPIONSHIPS

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QUEENSLAND’S GARDEN CITY

Come and see our States best compete...
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BRING THE WHOLE FAMILY AND MAKE A GREAT TIME AWAY!

Plenty to see and do for everyone!!!

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Command & Control at Level 1 Incidents: Crew leader training for volunteers

In all Regions across the State, Crew leader courses have been undertaken by Brigade Officers and volunteers with substantial fireground experience. These courses are aimed at providing our volunteer leaders with the knowledge and skills necessary to take command and control at incidents and become the Incident Controllers at Level 1 wildfire incidents. This course had been rolled out as a Director, Rural Operations initiative, but the Regions have recently become responsible to manage the delivery of the Crew Leader courses for volunteers.

Successful completion of the Crew Leader course provides the attendee with practical knowledge about suppressing wildfires and managing the QFRS crews under their supervision. It is also worth noting that the training undertaken by volunteers is also provided to Urban personnel, meaning that we all have a common understanding of the issues facing Incident Controllers at wildfires.

Set out below are a number of photos taken from recent training undertaken by volunteers at various Crew Leader courses and demonstrate the varied tasks that an Incident Controller needs to be aware of.
Training Trailer in the spotlight

The recent release of the Wildfire simulator and the Trailer unit to Regions in Queensland has been supported with a Trainer’s Guide titled “Training Trailer Quick Reference Guide”. This Guide is further supported by a CD which sequentially outlines the intention, use and application of the combined unit as a portable training “classroom” with practical scenarios presented in visual format.

In mid September this year the Trainer Guide and CD were presented to the nations top forum of fire industry educators and trainers at the Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC) Learning and Development Group, which met in Melbourne. Representatives from over twenty eight fire agencies viewed pictures and video of both the Simulator and Trailer units and were very impressed with the compact, practical nature of the learning tools. Many agencies requested further details and took the opportunity to register follow-up contact through their state office.

Following the exposure opportunity for these units at the AFAC Learning & Development Group in Melbourne, further national exposure occurred at the AFAC Conference held in Hobart and the Fire Knowledge Network Workshop held the following week.

Once again, much interest was shown by fire agencies in using the Trailer and Wildfire Simulator in brigade training, devising scenarios to capitalise on lessons learnt and as a means of engaging with local communities and spreading the message about preparing properties in advance of the bushfire season. Aspects that have particularly appealed to agencies are the simplicity of the design, its ease of use, the potential to use the equipment for purposes other than just training and the way each simulation engages with the intended audience and deeply embeds the desired message.

The first set of these units were distributed across Rural Regions towards the end of July this year. Rural Areas within Queensland that have not yet received their Trailer Unit and Wildfire Simulator should take delivery at Area Offices later this year. With this in mind, volunteer firefighters across Queensland will soon receive some of the most up-to-date wildfire based scenario training available in the nation.
Lessons Learnt

In August 2006, a routine mopping up exercise at Mount French became the start of a long road to recovery for volunteer firefighter Peter Truer.

Peter, who has been a member of the Mt French Brigade for around 10 years, was mopping up after a fire had gone through the Mt French National Park. He was using a chainsaw on a fallen tree to separate the smouldering base from the unburnt remainder of the tree. As he pulled on a dead branch on the smouldering base with his right hand, to roll the cut off section aside, it snapped off and then, as Peter said, he felt a sudden sharp pain in his right shoulder.

Peter had sustained a full thickness tear in one of the main tendons of his right shoulder (the supraspinatus) and another tear in the biceps tendon. What followed was a 12 month period of recovery which prevented him from doing many of the things we all take for granted. Things such as shaving and brushing his teeth became an exercise in creativity and he became highly skilled in using his left hand.

The impact on Peter was significant as the injury prevented him from fulfilling his firefighting duties for that 12 month period. Whilst he was able to continue working in his normal role as photographer with the Fassifern Guardian he did so in a sling, after having surgery to repair the torn tendons. Peter said ‘The worst part was not being able to drive and be independent’.

For many of our volunteers, an injury can mean not working for extended periods. The resulting loss of independence and income can have a significant impact on families and the community.

Peter acknowledged that although the injury was one of those things that he couldn’t have predicted, he did say that it was important to be constantly aware of your surroundings.

“One thing this injury has reminded me of is the need to be constantly doing a risk assessment” he said, “when you’re fighting the fire you are constantly alert but when you relax and do the routine things you’re not as vigilant”. With hindsight, Peter thought that he could have asked for help from one of his team mates or used a crowbar to move the log.

Peter expressed his gratitude to the QFRS Regional OH Advisor in South East region, Nicky Marr, who he said did a great job of helping him with the WorkCover processes and with getting back to full strength.

Happily, Peter has now returned to firefighting duties and in an ironic twist, he believes that his right arm, although not quite as mobile as it once was, is now stronger than his left arm.

But his message to fellow volunteers is simple: “Be aware of your surroundings and your mates at all times”

Hindsight is a fine thing once the event has occurred but learning and more importantly, sharing the lessons from these types of events can go a long way to preventing injuries from happening in the future.
Last Bulletin we discussed the Department of Emergency Services’ overall Workplace Health and Safety strategy including some discussion on ZEROharm.

We are committed to keeping everyone safe on the fireground, around the station or at training activities. We want everyone to go home from all firefighting activities in exactly the same shape as when they started. This means that we want everyone to understand the environment they are operating within and take a risk management approach accordingly. To do this, we need to identify, measure, report and reduce risks in all activities associated with fighting the various fires and other RFB functions that you respond to or attend. This applies to everything you do as a volunteer, whether it’s on the fire ground (both hazard reduction or fire suppression activities), in training, or in the selection and maintenance of stations, equipment and PPC.

Conducting a risk assessment either at the station or on the fireground can help to reduce the risk of injuries caused by activities conducted by volunteers and Rural Operations staff. This is something we do as a matter of course when fighting fires. Think for a minute – what’s the first thing you do when you are confronted with an incident or when you are planning a hazard reduction burn? You assess the risks, look at the terrain, the wind conditions, what PPC and other equipment you will need and use this information to determine the best approach to manage the incident overall.

So ZEROharm is nothing new. It’s a matter of applying that risk management approach in everything we do. You probably already do this in your everyday activities outside the RFS. Most Queensland workplaces have procedures that relate to safety in the workplace and the national approach to managing WH&S in rural communities has been highlighted through organisations such as Farmsafe Queensland.

The WH&S review that was conducted earlier this year has revealed a number of areas where Rural Operations can gradually enhance the way we create safe working environments for our staff and volunteers. The review highlighted the need for RFB members to notify injuries as they happen and highlight and report hazards as they are observed.

One thing we can do to improve our overall WH&S performance is to increase the level of reporting and notification. If you see something that doesn’t meet safety requirements then it’s vital for you to notify your Area Director. Some things that you might consider are whether there are chemicals in the station that haven't been stored correctly, or perhaps your station needs a fire extinguisher. Do you have electrical equipment in your station that hasn't been tested lately? Or has someone been injured either in training or at an incident and the Area Director hasn't been notified?

By increasing the amount of reporting, we can increase awareness of safety issues across Rural Operations and the RFS and create an environment that is risk aware in all aspects of volunteer firefighting, both on and off the fireground.

Your loved ones depend on that.

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**If you need Police, Fire or Ambulance in an emergency call triple zero (000)**

**When should you call triple zero (000)**

- If a crime is happening now.
- When a life is threatened.
- When the event is time critical, for example a fire.
Rural Brigade competes in the National Firefighter Championships

Withcott Rural Fire Brigade has created history by being selected as the first rural volunteer fire brigade from Queensland to compete at a National Firefighter Championships, which will be held this year at Lakes Entrance in Victoria from the 19th to 21st October 2007.

Firefighter competitions are an important part of fire service history and have contributed to the development of the culture of all state volunteer fire services since the late 1800s. The competitions provide an opportunity to display firefighting skills, teamwork and determination against colleagues from across Australia and New Zealand.

The National Firefighter Championships is now an established biennial event, having a national focus on format, events, and rules. A maximum of thirty teams are invited to contest a ten-event program comprising events drawn from state/agency competitions.

The Withcott Brigade will be represented by brigade members Kerry McCullagh (Team Captain), Rodney Kuhn, Greg Mees and Allan Morris. Tracy Clulow from the Gatton Auxiliary Brigade has been the team coach and is also the team’s reserve member.

Team member Rodney Kuhn said the brigade appreciates the opportunity to represent the Queensland Rural Fire Brigades and are honoured to be selected to participate at the Nationals.

“We had been training solidly for several months leading up to the Regional and State Championships, and we are looking forward to giving a good account of ourselves at this Championship.” Rodney said.

Withcott Rurals will travel to Lakes Entrance with other Queensland teams from Atherton, Wondai and Mount Tamborine Auxiliary brigades on 18th October and will return on 22nd October 2007.

Noel Quince from the Birnam Rural Fire Brigade will also be competing at the Championships as the reserve member of the Mt Tamborine Auxiliary team.

“I am very proud that a rural brigade has been selected to compete at this year’s event. The Withcott team has done exceptionally well and thoroughly deserves this opportunity. To compete at the highest level against fellow firefighters from around the country is an achievement for which they can be justifiably proud,” said Area Director Rural Operations, Craig Smith.

“Queensland Rural is well represented and we look forward to following everyone’s progress.”

The team has been well supported by Assistant Commissioner Peter Beauchamp, Regional Manager Rural Operations Steve Crouch, and Peter Mason from the South Eastern Region.
On Saturday 25th August a joint brigade exercise was conducted in the Tara Blocks area. The exercise was attended by four rural brigades utilising nine appliances and an urban appliance and crew from Chinchilla. The exercise was designed to test the Incident Control Centre at Wieambilla South Brigade Shed and to test the communications capability in the area.

It was proposed to conduct a burn of approximately 200 acres on a property in Winfield road. Unfortunately despite the best efforts of the crews the burn program was unsuccessful due to the heavy rain in the area in the week prior.

The other desired outcomes of testing the area communications and the Incident Control Centre were successful with some valuable lessons learned. The day also provided the opportunity to expose some volunteers to the operations of an Incident Control Centre.

The exercise was developed and managed by Area Training and Support Officer Mike Patch with assistance on the day from Area Director Dalby Grahame Cook and Mike Smith Area Director Miles/Roma.

It is proposed to conduct a further exercise in February 2008 to build on the experience gained from this exercise.

SSAA Burn Story

Over the weekend of the 27 to the 29 of July this year the Toowoomba area had an exercise at the Sporting Shooters Association range near Millmerran. The aim of the burn was to test both the local ICC and the RFCC in Toowoomba as well as skills retention and further training of volunteers across the area. Involved in the exercise dubbed “Smoking Guns” were personal from QPWS, DNR-Forests, QAS, Auxiliary fire fighters from Millmerran and over forty volunteer rural fire brigade members. Another highlight of the weekend was the involvement of air operations with two spotters and two water bombers which provided some valuable training and interaction for all involved.
Volunteers Night at the RNA

On Friday the 17th of August six Rural Fire Brigades from Caboolture Area represented the state’s rural volunteers at a special “Volunteers Night” at the Royal National Association Exhibition (otherwise known as the EKKA) in Brisbane. The night featured a vehicle parade around the main ring by members from various volunteer organisations. Represented were the S.E.S., Volunteer Marine Rescue, Surf Life Saving, QAS and the Rural Fire Service.

Brigades attending were Samford, Toorbul, Elimbah, Rocksberg/Moorina, Clear Mountain and Narangba. Blazer the fire fighting Koala also entertained the children and adults before the parade began. It is rumoured that this Blazer was from a gum tree in Clear Mountain. The brigades performed an excellent display and proudly represented all rural volunteers on the night.

Volunteer Night was designed to give the people of Queensland a chance to see the volunteers and their vehicles up close and to show their appreciation of the dedication and service they provide and the important role they all play in delivering emergency services across the State.
Winfield and Yandaran Rural Fire Brigades attended a Road Accident Awareness Training Session

Winfield and Yandaran Rural Fire Brigades attended a Road Accident Awareness Training Session, Provided by the Bundaberg QFRS Rural Operations. Conducted over three evenings, by trainer Dion Skinner from Elliot Heads Brigade, the course offered sessions on legislation, personal safety, infection control, casualty management, incident management. The third session was on RAR Equipment and Tools with a simulated exercise where Dion demonstrated casualty extraction by cutting open a car.

Vale Roy Phillip Moss

The 11th May 2007 was a sad day for the Miles Rural Fire Area, for on this day one of the stalwarts of the Yuleba Rural Fire Brigade answered his final call.

Roy or Mossey as he was affectionately known by all had served his brigade and community for more than 40 years. During this time he held the positions of brigade secretary and 2nd officer, but he was more than that to the brigade, he was the driving force and the soul of the brigade. He was awarded the Australian Fire Service medal and the National Medal with two bars for his outstanding service.

Since I first came to the Miles District Roy has been a good friend and advisor on matters rural and many other issues. He always loved to tell a good yarn and was a great source of information and advice.

You are greatly missed old friend.

Mike Smith
Area Director Rural Operations
Rural Operations Miles
Rural meets Auxiliary in Burnett Heads

The Burnett Heads Rural Fire Brigade was started in February 1963 after the local Progress Association identified the need for a Brigade. Initially run independently of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS), the Brigade was gazetted on the 23 December 1978.

The Brigade’s first appliance was a Morris J Van and trailer, which was soon replaced by a yellow 1958 Ford F500 tanker, which affectionately became known as “Yellow Dog”.

Rural Operations Bundaberg Area Director Tony Johnston said the Brigade has changed dramatically since those first days.

“The Burnett Heads Rural Fire Brigade is leading the way in the effort to provide effective and seamless service delivery to the community” Tony said.

“Not only does the Brigade now boast a 1995 Mitsubishi Canter, a 2002 Isuzu and a soon to be acquired brand new Toyota Hilux, which will be used as a command and control unit, they are also about to join with a newly established Auxiliary team, which will be made up of current rural volunteers and community members.

“The addition of the Auxiliary appliance and team will simply mean improved capacity and capability of the entire service. When the community calls 000, QFRS will now respond with the appropriate resource. If it is a grass or landscape fire, the Rural Fire Brigade will respond. If it is a structure fire or motor vehicle accident, then the Auxiliaries will be paged.” Tony said.

“The Auxiliary appliance and team will simply mean improved capacity and capability of the entire service. When the community calls 000, QFRS will now respond with the appropriate resource. If it is a grass or landscape fire, the Rural Fire Brigade will respond. If it is a structure fire or motor vehicle accident, then the Auxiliaries will be paged.” Tony said.

“Here, both rural and urban demographics exist in a relatively small geographic area, and there are risks for each. This new model ensures the best possible service delivery.

“In addition, the brigade will now be financially supported through the levy that is collected for urban operations. The brigade will have increased funding, reduced financial paperwork and will not have to fundraise for equipment. These are just a few of the benefits the community of Burnett Heads and the surrounding communities will see from the establishment of the Auxiliary urban service.”
South West Region Update

The lack of rainfall and long running drought are still the main factors affecting the QFRS in many ways in the region. The small amount of rainfall has only supported vegetation relying on the top 200mm of soil moisture. All forest areas are still very much under stress and if a fire is started in these areas with high fire danger our suppression activities will be tough.

In saying this though, our fire season preparation is now in full readiness. We have conducted a number of exercises utilising ground crews, incident control centres, air operations and the Regional Fire Coordination Centre to ensure all resources are prepared for wildfire management. We will be well prepared 24 to 48 hours prior to any significant fire weather event. Already we have used a fixed wing aircraft as a fire spotter which provides us with good intelligence and information for a rapid response to any fire outbreaks.

The major exercise for the Region was held near Millmerran and called “Smoking Guns”. This was a large multi-agency exercise that planned to burn out 600 ha of land owned by the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia and 2000 ha of Department of Natural Resources – Forest and Queensland Parks and Wildlife estate. Our remote airbase capabilities were also tested utilising the nearby airstrip. Two fixed wing water bombers and one fixed wing observation plane were used in the exercise giving staff and volunteers hands on training with aircraft.

In all 80 people were involved in the exercise and some very positive outcomes achieved. Thanks must go to ATSO Brian Cook and BTSO Paul Storrs for their efforts in planning this exercise and for the volunteers who attended and conducted the control burn.

The Dalby Muster was held in August with 22 – 4 person teams participating in 9 operational events over the weekend. This year staff were also given the opportunity to maintain their incident management skills by performing duties in the IMT which managed the events over the weekend. It was pleasing to see a combination of volunteer and auxiliary fire fighters undertaking these activities in a non-competitive training and skills learning environment.

It was appropriate that Mal Stacey from Gladfield/Maryvale brigade and Group Officer for Warwick shire was presented with his award at the commencement of the Muster, by Acting Assistant Commissioner Paul Adcock as “Volunteer of the Year” for the Southwest Region as a part of the Fire Awareness Week awards. We all congratulate Mal for the work he has done and the leadership he provides in his area.

The Rural Operation Office in Roma has now relocated and joined with the Urban Area office. This has given the team at Roma a little more space and the ability to share resources. QFRS has now achieved a one stop shop for the community on fire related issues and obtaining information.

Over the last few months the Rural Operations training team in Roma has been working closely with the Roma EMQ to combine training courses in remote towns where possible. This initiative is mainly in regards to the new HLT First Aid courses but has also been applied to other competencies that are common to both organisations training packages such as “Operate Communications Equipment” and “Work in a Team”. By cross-referencing training records it has assisted volunteers in both the SES and Rural Fire Brigades to gain their qualifications in Firefighter Minimum Skills, Working Safely at Heights etc., without having to redo competencies they have already completed with the other organisation. Recently at Eromanga (the furthest town from the sea in any direction in Australia) EMQ and Rural Operations Training Officers delivered the new HLT First Aid package to local SES and RFB volunteers. Further cooperation in the delivery of training to RFB/SES volunteers has already been scheduled for the coming months.

The Roma Rural Operations Training staff have recently designed an RFB Volunteer PPE order form which assists brigade secretaries to easily supply individual members with their PPE entitlements. Trials of the form have had excellent feedback from the brigade members who find it simple and easy to use. The Roma Training Team has also been working with Bush Heritage Australia at Carnarvon Station Reserve in assisting with their environmental grassland restoration projects and conducting Firefighter Minimum Skills training for local brigade members and QPWS rangers who belong to brigades adjoining their national parks. Further assistance in this area is planned for early next year.

The rollout of Firefighter Minimum Skills in Toowoomba area to priority B brigades is progressing very well with the added bonus of picking up one priority A brigade along the way. This involved delivery and assessment to members of the following Brigades:- Karara Leyburn; Bracker Creek; Myall Valley & Dalveen. There has been delivery only, with assessment to come, to Brigade members from the Warwick group and the Stanthorpe Group. This is being carried out by Group Training Officers.

Fire Warden Training /Refresher courses will be conducted over the next month in the following areas :- Warwick; Stanthorpe, Cambooya, Urban Station Officers Warwick and Dalby. All brigade officers and fire wardens will gain valuable information from attending these sessions.

It is pleasing to announce that both BTSO’s from Southwest Region graduated from their 16 week intensive training program on the 7 September at a ceremony held at the Training academy at Whyte Island, Brisbane. We congratulate Paul Storrs from Toowoomba Office and Col Neal from Roma office on completion of the training and welcome them into the team.

Proposed training events for October to December for Toowoomba area will be –

- Continue Firefighter Minimum Skills implementation to more brigades,
- OpsDoc and Air Ops to be delivered to Crows Nest Group
- Bushfire Prepared Communities Public meetings to continue at strategic locations.
- Incident Controller Level 1 (crew Leader) to be delivered in four sessions between November and June 08

Training will slow down during December and January while staff are on leave, depending on wildfire issues.

Wayne Waltisbuhl
Regional Manager
South West Region
Regional Updates

South East Region Update

Rainfall throughout the region has been welcome over the past quarter but certainly not enough to ease the current fire situation for the south east corner. Fires have been spread around, particularly in the areas surrounding the Gold Coast hinterland but certainly not confined to these areas.

All brigades who have been involved in the management of these fires are to be congratulated on the commitment and ultimately the results in the containment of all these fires. Many volunteers and staff have displayed great expertise in the containment of these fires whilst property loss has been kept to a minimum. WELL DONE TO ALL.

There have been some minor injuries and some near misses which show we must all remember and embrace the zero harm philosophy to ensure all fire-fighters safely return home from each incident. Andy Boyd, the 1st Officer from Coomera Valley Brigade suffered a minor heart attack whilst working at a fire at Ormeau recently and all wish Andy a swift recovery and quick return to normality.

Congratulations to the team from Withcott who have been selected to attend the Australasian Fire-fighter Championships in Victoria in late October. This is a first for rural fire-fighters from Queensland and the South East Management team congratulates the members on the hard work and dedication you have displayed in reaching this milestone. Enjoy the experience we are all jointly very proud of your achievement.

The new Brigade Manuals should now be at all brigades and I urge all members to read through the manuals to maintain their knowledge on how we are to operate. If there are any questions please do not hesitate to contact the Area Office for confirmation.

The Area Office at Raceview has relocated to the Ipswich Fire Station. Unfortunately the same telephone numbers cannot be retained and the new numbers will be 3381 7122, fax 3381 7116.

Finally lets all hope it rains but above all keep safe.

Steve Crouch
Regional Manager
South East Region

Far Northern Region update

Despite patchy rain in July/August, brigades and land management agencies were active conducting hazard reduction burns in preparation for the fire season. Many of the burns were completed as joint operations through risk identification planning at local Fire Management Groups. The annual aerial burning programme is now completed and well done to ATSO Jamie Haskell with all his work with conducting community consultation meetings at various locations in the Cape to provide maximum benefit for the programme. The fire scans as identified on the satellite monitoring will provide significant fire advantages for landholders and QFRS to manage and monitor fires in the 2007/08 season. The drier conditions allowed for the major exercise at Kurrimine to proceed with good cooperation with urban and rural operations staff, local brigades and land management agencies and use of aerial work to complete the burn.

With the onset of the bushfire season FNR Rural Operations staff have been kept busy with training of volunteers, exercises and community fire safety education. High fuel loads exist in the western areas and the region is starting to experience an increase in fire activity with escaped burns from landholder burning. Several outbreaks in the Koah area have kept local brigades and QPWS busy protecting homes and valuable pasture. Active media campaigns are warning landholders to prepare for the fire season and to take care when conducting burning operations.

ABC local radio is very supportive of the community safety awareness campaign and this has assisted us with the Bush Fire Prepared community (BPC) workshops and delivery of Bush Fire Prepared communities programme and the Prepare Stay and Defend or Go Early being implemented across identified high risk areas in the region on the Cooktown and Tablelands areas. Managed through the Izone officer and strong support from our CLO, the BPC project is a good example of effective cooperation between Urban and Rural Operations.

Rural Operations were part of the Community Expo in Cairns and the opportunity to demonstrate our new wildfire simulator to all the school kids and others at the Expo was an enjoyable learning experience for the kids and also the ‘big kids’ learning to use the new training aide. A second trailer is currently in production and will be supplied to Innisfail Area next month giving us two in the region for brigade training and community education. Thank you to all those that helped at the Expo and provided support in the background to ensure our region offered a professional display to the public.

The introduction of the Wildfire Alert Levels this year will see a greater use of the FDRG monitoring using curing rates and weather data to assist in determining fire danger readiness in our crews. FNR Firecom will be implementing this initiative in October, where weather and alert levels will be broadcast daily to keep our people informed on potential fire threat.

Finally congratulations to Ron Beacroft, Bloomfield RFB on receiving FNR Volunteer of the year Fire Awareness Award. It is difficult to select one person due to the many hardworking volunteers we have in the region and Ron’s award was in recognition of not only his operation work with brigade but also his tireless work as brigade Secretary in ensuring compliance with all the administrative operations of a busy brigade.

Ian Thomas
Regional Manager
Far Northern Region
North Coast Region Update

The North Coast Region’s ICC (Incident Control Centre) and RFCC (Regional Fire Co-ordination Centre) exercise “Exercise Firestorm” was held on 16 August. The premise of the exercise involved numerous fires occurring in the Sunshine Coast and Maryborough areas, with intense weather behaviour. ICC’s involving both Rural and Urban staff were set up in Maroochydore and Maryborough, with the RFCC running from the Regional Headquarters in Maryborough.

This was a good learning opportunity for all staff involved and provided knowledge and experience for when ‘the real thing’ happens. Communications hitches, in the form of necessary phone and fax lines not working, provided ‘real time’ issues for members of the ICC to deal with.

Director Rural Operations Paul Adcock, Inspector Mike Smith, Superintendent John Cawcutt (State Operations Directorate) and Station Officer Brad Jeffs monitored how the exercise ran and the effectiveness of the teams. Feedback from the exercise has provided an opportunity for review of some of the forms used, particularly those used in the RFCC.

The three areas have been kept busy with vehicle handovers, medal presentations and fire season preparation.

The newly appointed Minister for Emergency Services, The Honourable Neil Roberts visited the Bundaberg Area on Saturday 11 August, to officially open two new fire stations (Perry River and Winfield), hand over the keys to three new medium attack appliances and present six National Medals, three 1st clasps and one 3rd clasp to long serving volunteers as follows:

- **National Medals:**
  - Neil Rodney Franklin Bullyard RFB 16 years service
  - Sam Galea Bullyard RFB 18 years service
  - Rodney David Moller Bullyard RFB 23 years service

- **National Medals and National Medal First Clasps:**
  - Lawrence Stirrat Monduran District RFB 27 years service
  - Lloyd Tucker Lindemans Road RFB 29 years service
  - Geoffrey McLaughlan Yarrol RFB 30 years service

- **National Medal Third Clasp:**
  - John Murdoch Burnett Heads RFB 47 years service

Maryborough Area Office is proud to share on two significant achievements in the area since the last bulletin. Merv Gibson was awarded the Australian Fire Service Medal from Governor Quentin Bryce on Wednesday 12 September 2007 at Government House Brisbane.

Merv commenced as a member of Veteran Rural Fire Brigade on 14 September 1977 and became first officer on 6 August 1979, a position he currently still holds. He is a person of great integrity and community spirit. He has enormous knowledge of his rural environment and has considerable knowledge of bush fire behaviour across a broad range of vegetation types. He has used his knowledge and leadership qualities to quickly gain control of numerous bushfires he has attended.

Congratulations also go to Lesley Brand, Secretary Broweena Rural Fire Brigade, who was awarded the Fire Awareness Week Award of Rural Fire Service Volunteer of the Year.

Lesley has represented the Rural Fire Service to the local community for many years and actively promoting the Rural Fire Service in a positive fashion.

The Minister for Emergency Services, The Honourable Neil Roberts, visited the Murgon Fire Station on Saturday 8 September 2007, to officially handover the keys of new appliances for Chelmsford Rural Fire Brigade, and the recently formed Cloyna District and Redgate Rural Fire Brigades.

Following the celebrations in Murgon, the Minister then visited Wolvi Hall to officially handover the keys of new appliances for Wolvi, Gympie South and Brooloo/Mary River Rural Fire Brigades.

BTSO Andrew Allen attended the handover of a water tank from Maroochy Shire Council to Yandina North Arm Rural Fire Brigade in July 2007. The tank is situated at Ninderry Mountain to supply water during fire events in the local area. Before the tank was installed there was a 30 minute round trip to the base of the mountain for a water supply. Yandina Brigade contributed $5000 towards the tank and council contributed $17,500 thus making it a $22,500 project. Maroochy Council have agreed to fill the tank and hopefully rain will keep the tank topped up through the gazebo style structure built next to the tank. It is great to see one of our Rural Brigades in partnership with local council supporting their local community.

Following the wildfires in the Eudlo area, the Caloundra Area Office staff spent a day during Fire Awareness Week, distributing leaflets and pamphlets in this region. This was aimed at helping the local community affected in the area be better prepared in the future.
Regional Updates

During the day local residents were keen to discuss fire issues with staff relating to their situation. This day was a tremendous help in the education of the public.

As part of Fire Awareness Week, Area staff also spent time with the Eudlo Rural Fire Brigade, discussing Bushfire Prepared Communities and the Prepare, Stay and Defend or Go Early initiative.

We are pleased to announce the Caloundra staff have now moved into their new office at the Caloundra Fire Station at 18 Industrial Ave Caloundra.

Gary Seaman AD, Neil Kelso ATSO Andrew Allan BTSO and Ronny Michael Admin Officer, have been busy setting up the new office, and are now well and truly open for business.

Peter Hollier
Regional Manager
North Coast Region

Caloundra Area Director Gary Seaman providing advice to a local resident

Handover of water tank form Maroochy Shire Council to Yandina North Arm Rural Fire Brigade
Brisbane Region Update

The Caboolture Area has been relatively fortunate in the last three months, receiving significant rain falls, mainly on the coastal areas. Although the influence weakened quickly away from the coast, useful falls occurred in the upper reaches of the Stanley and Brisbane rivers, the two watersheds that concentrate the major flows into the Somerset and Wivenhoe dams respectively. The rainfall was sufficient to return the Keech-Byram Drought Index to zero, at the Forest Plantations Queensland (FPQ) Beerburrum recording station.

The seasonal cycle of high pressure systems with trailing frontal complexes has settled into a steady rhythm. So far this season the conditions ahead of the fronts have not deteriorated to trigger higher fire danger ratings.

Regional Manager Rural Operations Bernie Trembath, is constantly monitoring the current and predicted weather conditions and advising the Assistant Commissioner for Brisbane Region of the operational readiness requirements for all fire fighters in the Region.

The air attack aircraft have been utilized already to assist with the containment of fires that have the potential to impact on residential property. The aircraft being used to provide an initial attack to contain the spread of the fire, reduce the active perimeter and the time required to black out and make the fire safe.

The Regional Manager recently took a number of senior officers and Area Directors for a reconnaissance flight across the Brisbane Region to provide an overview of the rainfall effect and the variability of the grassland and forest fuel loadings. It was obvious that the rain had promoted new growth on eaten out pastures, unfortunately in many areas it appeared to consist of herbage and less palatable species. The flight provided an opportunity for those officers to obtain an appreciation of the size and complexity of the Region within its relatively discrete boundaries.

The construction of the new fire station at Burpengarry will impact markedly on the Narangba Rural Fire Brigade area of responsibility and their income from rural levies.

The Assistant Commissioner Brisbane Region acknowledges the human and physical resources, knowledge and experience of the Narangba brigade is irreplaceable and must be retained, if an effective QFRS operational response and management of wildfires in the Caboolture Area is to continue.

Community Safety and Education

Bushfire Prepared Communities (BPC) workshops and street meetings are being conducted in Pine Rivers and Caboolture Shires with full support from both Councils. The BPC are jointly presented by the Rural Operations and QFRS Urban Officers and are achieving very good attendances at all venues.

A Fire Ed session (fire safety for grade one) was held at Macleay Island school and was enjoyed by the students and attending crew. A Fire Ed kit is available at the Caboolture Area Office for use by any brigade who has a school in their area that does not receive Fire Ed.

The Fire Simulator Training and display trailer has been received and used to promote the QFRS Rural Operations at local events.

Training and operations

Fire Warden Refresher courses are part of the ongoing training program throughout the District. Firefighter Minimum Skills training assessments being delivered under the Caboolture Area training plan to meet the area targets and a major exercise is planned for 27th October involving urban and rural crews, air support and other agencies. It will be centered on a hazard reduction burn of approximately 100 hectares. The planning, implementation and management of the exercise will utilize IMS methodology and will test internal and cross boundary resourcing and communications.

As previously mentioned the recent rain has provided a respite for the local crews. Despite a much needed boost to the ground moisture the intensity of fires occurring in the dried fuels continues to test the fire fighters.

A fire in bushland at Wamuran was quickly dealt with by five rural units, three urban pumpers, a Yankee vehicle, an incident control vehicle, a communications vehicle and two helitacs.

The first arriving crews found homes threatened and quickly called for assistance. Rural, Urban and Air Operations crews worked together seamlessly to achieve an excellent outcome.

The recent weather patterns have seen an increase in ambient temperatures slightly above normal for this time of year. The warmer conditions increase the chances of ignition and the persistence of fires that do occur, however thus far we have been fortunate, that due to the absence of the winds and the timely response of fire fighters, no significant loss or damage has occurred.

Our People

I am pleased to be able to report that Mr. Allan Wells of the Samford Brigade was awarded the Rural Fire Service Volunteer of the Year Award for the Brisbane Region. Allan has been a tireless worker in the Samford brigade as a firefighter and Officer as well as performing the role of Fire Warden. Allan and his wife Anne (Brigade secretary) are typical of the brigade volunteer contribution to the well being and safety of their local community. Congratulations Allan.

On behalf of the Regional District staff I would like to thank all brigade members in the Brisbane Region for their continuing enthusiasm and dedication to education, training and operational response.

Bernie Trembath
Regional Manager
Brisbane Region
Regional Updates

Northern Region Update

The Northern Region fire season has started with significant increase in fire activity evident already. A number of fires have been fought in the Townsville Area to protect property and livelihood. An outbreak of fire in the Hinchinbrook cane growing area was fought by rural volunteers alongside urban crews from Ingham. All worked well together to minimise the damage to the cane and protect surrounding properties. At the same time our gulf country members were busy fighting a large fire of over 10,000 square kilometres in the Settlement Creek brigade district. Property managers, neighbouring brigades, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Officers from Lawn Hill and Rural Operations staff from Cloncurry all played a part in helping with the fire fighting efforts. Aircraft were used to survey the fire and proposed control lines whilst heavy machinery was used to cut breaks for crews to burn back from.

With the higher than normal fuel loading caused by the heavy wet season rains and follow up winter rain, the activity is expected to continue until the next rains arrive. Some locals are tipping an early wet, lets hope they are right.

Brigades, Rural Operations staff and the Northern Region Community Safety Unit have been active in educating the people of the north in fire safety. Schools education has been delivered to around six schools in Charters Towers/Cloncurry and Townsville Areas. Brigade members who assisted were impressed with the way the children interacted with the presenters, so much so that one brigade member even promised to bring his hearing aid next time so as to hear what was being said. A spin off from the school based fire education was an invite to Thuringowa Group to assist at the Vincent Primary School ‘wet day’. Volunteer members not only attended and provided the ‘wet’ in the wet day, but they also got wet doing it.

Brigades have also taken the opportunity to use many community activities to promote Rural Fire Service volunteering and our key fire safety messages. Charters Towers Area Director Lee Skinn has supported brigades at the round of local agricultural shows. Lee provided the travelling circus complete with tent and displays to answer questions and hand out printed material. Other community activities attended include the Paluma Push, mountain bike race in the rainforests of the Paluma Range, the Burdekin Motorbike Trials at Clare and many others. Every one of these events provides a great opportunity for brigades to raise their profile and deliver important safety messages.

Brigades out west may meet up with Mike McCloskey from the Community Safety Unit. Mike, a Station Officer from Townsville is visiting rural and remote areas to assist with delivering the QFRS community safety functions. He is concentrating his efforts in the technical fields of building fire safety at the moment. Mike has been asked to interact with brigades as he travels around, and to involve brigades where possible to raise fire safety awareness in areas other than bushfire.

Staff movements in Northern Region have seen the Regional Managers position filled temporarily by Ewan Cayzer, the Area Director from Townsville. In turn his position has been filled by Barry Heilbronn from Cairns up until mid November, then by Brian Dale from Maryborough through to February next year. Charters Towers/Cloncurry will also have some new faces from December this year with Lee Skinn taking a well earned break for an extended period. The Area Director position will be watched over by some career minded staff in his absence. We have also welcomed our ATSO Michael Dodds who has settled in to his position in Townsville. Michael has taken over from Rosemary Kavanagh who most ably filled the position for 12 months in a caretaker role. On behalf of all staff and volunteers who have had contact with Rosemary, I extend our thanks to her for the dedication and professionalism she displayed over the 12 months.

Training is running to schedule under Michael’s supervision with Firefighter Minimum Skills, Crew Leader, IMS courses being delivered by volunteer trainers, casual trainers and staff across the region.

The regions Interdepartmental Committee for Bushfire has met a second time to discuss regional level issues across agencies. This committee is well supported by some very active fire management groups in the shires and cities of the north. The volunteers, QFRS staff and other agencies combine well to arrange fire prevention activities and prepare for the coming fire season in a spirit of cooperation and mutual goals in the coastal shires. Further inland the tyranny of distance makes these forums more difficult, however Charters Towers/Cloncurry staff have been able to innovate and turn local issues into a driver for cooperative meetings between agencies and landholders.

Ewan Cayzer
A/Regional Manager
Northern Region

Vincent Primary School ‘wet day’
Central Region Update

Central Region continues to roll out a significant training program for rural brigades. The completion of firefighter minimum skills training for all brigades is a challenging task but is fundamental to our ability to deliver other more specialised courses. In particular the Crew Leader training package is scheduled for delivery over eight locations as a minimum this financial year and requires a minimum number of pre-requisite units to ensure that participants get the most from the weekend course.

The continued joint training in AIIMS with participation from EMQ, QPS, EPA and DES staff is proving to be very successful and courses have been held in Longreach, Rockhampton (3), Gladstone, Airlie Beach and Emerald. The two day AIIMS course is a key package for members who are expected to take a command role at any level of an incident and introduces the principles of AIIMS and practices some of the systems that support it. Additional courses are being planned for Rockhampton, Mackay and Biloela.

The Rockhampton Area has been developing a strong group based training program utilising casual trainers to deliver minimum skills training. The development of this additional training capacity will allow us to progress the backlog in demand for this core training and hopefully establish a minimum number of suitably qualified firefighters in each brigade.

Inter-departmental Committees at a Regional and Area levels are leading the way in solving some of the integration issues we have between agencies. A significant joint training focus and common risk mapping products are some of the keys areas that the RIDC has identified and is progressing through agency contacts. This will assist local RFB’s by ensuring where we work with other agencies we are able to do so more efficiently and also deal with areas of common risk more efficiently.

The Bushfire Prepared Communities package has been the focus in the Mackay and Rockhampton areas over the past three months with brigades being very helpful in raising awareness.
Regional Updates

in the community of the package and the issue. The next step in this program will be to use local engagement to reinforce the message that people need to consider their ability to defend their property in a bushfire. The process of determining if they will prepare to stay and defend their property or go early needs to be undertaken well before the event and local brigades can assist their community with this decision process.

In a sign of the changing attitude towards individual responsibility, the Tasmania Fire Service in recent fires made an assessment of the defendability of individual properties and advised residents that fire crews would not attempt to defend properties that did not meet the standard. Some of these properties subsequently burnt.

Mackay Area has been active with some significant hazard reduction burns being undertaken jointly with EPA and NRM. The involvement of brigades and especially newer members in these activities is a key tool in ensuring the training we provide is translated into learning and through this the acquisition of skills. Large HR burns demonstrate some of the elements of a large fire and require similar levels of planning in communications, strategies, co-ordination and control. Rockhampton Area has been able to use three abandoned properties for the demonstration of house fire progression to local Brigades in Mt Larcom and Keppel Group with the assistance of local Urban brigades.

A major commitment to training and exercise in the Emerald/Barcaldine Area has been underway for the past six months. One area of focus has been Woorabinda RFB where 10 members have been very enthusiastic in completing minimum skills training and undertaking operational exercises. This community has a high level of structural fires and the local RFB is inevitably going to be the first unit on scene and has a significant challenge to ensure they can perform their role safely and effectively.

John Fisher
Regional Manager
Central Region

Local brigades attending a structural fire training day at Targinni. The aim of the day was to burn the house ...not put it out. Hence their relaxed demeanour as it burns!!

Joint Exercise planning in the Gemfields with QFRS, NRM crews and local RFB crews
Contact Details for Area Offices

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