Assistant Commissioner’s Message

It is well recognised, and has been for some time that training of our Rural Fire Service volunteers is one of the most strategic and significant issues facing QFRS Rural Operations.

To drive the agenda, we released the Volunteer Learning and Development Framework (VLDF) with the aim of meeting the challenge of aligning the roles and responsibilities of individuals, with the programs available within the VLDF.

With the release of the VLDF we set our targets to align with the new Brigade classifications (iZone, Village, Rural or Primary Producers). However, as the targets were classification based, and not Brigade based against resource allocation, most targets were left unachievable. To correct this, targets have now been set against the resources assigned to the Brigade along with a minimum membership count.

From a random selection of Brigades where the formulae had been applied, the Brigades that hadn’t achieved their target actually met it under the new formulae. This new approach allows staff to program their training where it is needed. The minimum membership count criteria will also allow them to work with you using our new recruitment kit to encourage more members of your community to join your RFB. I think you will appreciate the new approach taken and should you wish to find out a little more about this, then I encourage you to contact your Area Training and Support Officer.

I recently took part in the Bushfire Co-operative Research Centre’s (CRC) 5th year review which was conducted by an independent panel. The panel was tasked with assessing the scientific quality and research performance against agreed milestones of the research that has been undertaken to date. Also, to identify the benefits derived from the Bushfire CRC research and to ascertain the successes (or otherwise) surrounding the knowledge transfer uptake. As an ‘end user’ leader for Program ‘A’ (Prevention, Preparation and Suppression) and reflecting on what has been achieved over the last number of years, the review clearly proved that the CRC was delivering on the ‘end user’ needs across the four programs.

From a Queensland perspective, we have embraced research surrounding fuel and fire behaviour, aerial firefighting, community profiling and education strategies, firefighter safety, through to designing a contemporary well structured recruitment kit for Queensland RFB’s. The breadth and scope of the research becoming available in the next year, and that arising from the last two years of this CRC will see many agencies across Australasia pick up the relevant research findings that will benefit their organisation.

In QFRS, we have established a Research Adoption Working Group that reviews the applicability to Queensland and recommendations for changes to curriculum, practices, equipment, community education, etc. This CRC has been so successful that the Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC) is now developing a comprehensive submission for a new CRC to hopefully take effect once this one expires. The new CRC, should it form, will be titled ‘Fire – Environment & Society’. It will progress down research themes of:

- living with the threat of fire in a changing world
- future role of people, technologies and systems in managing fire
- fire’s future role in delivering sustainable ecosystems
- enhanced environments and risk assessment.

Further information on the current and proposed CRC is available at www.bushfirecrc.com.

In closing, can I take this opportunity to wish everyone a very merry Christmas and a prosperous, healthy and happy new year.

Until next time, keep safe and take care.

Steve Rothwell AFSM
Assistant Commissioner Rural Operations
Queensland Fire and Rescue Service
Message

Volunteer of the Year Awards 2008

Congratulations to the worthy recipients of the Volunteer of the Year Awards for 2008. The following winners were selected from a nomination process and most were unaware of their win prior to the presentations of the awards at various events throughout the State. I would like to personally thank each of these people for their contribution to the Rural Fire Service and urge you all to remember members of your Brigade for the Volunteer of the year awards for 2009. Nomination forms will be sent out mid next year.

North Coast Region
Peter Barnes of Tinana RFB
A highly committed First Officer, Peter has taken the Brigade to a new level in regards to recruitment and retention of volunteers, and working within the community. Peter is committed to the training and personal development of the Tinana Brigade members and is a member of the Maryborough/Woocoo Local Incident Management Team. Peter is highly regarded by volunteer and Area staff alike. This award recognises his dedicated commitment to the Rural Fire Service.

South West Region
Arthur “Buddy” Dodd of Wieambilla South RFB
As First Officer, Buddy has been instrumental in guiding the Brigade through some difficult times. His leadership within the Brigade and the surrounding brigades within the Tara Group has given him a good reputation as a Fire ground commander and mentor. He has been successful in the last year in completing a number of training courses including the Crew Leader Course of which he is now a strong advocate. Buddy has been a strong supporter of the Rural Fire Service and a great assistance to local Area staff.

Northern Region
Calvin Gallagher of Normanton RFB
Calvin has committed considerable time and effort to the Normanton RFB over a number of years. He has contributed tirelessly to the provision of emergency response capabilities and promotion of the Rural Fire Brigade within the Normanton Community.

Central Region
Krister Nilsson of Gemfields RFB
Kris has been a leader in the Brigade organising and delivering training sessions and building partnerships with adjoining brigades and the Gemfields SES unit. Kris constantly encourages the local community to be prepared and has helped organise brigade members to spread the fire safety message.

Far Northern Region
Michael Sands of Yarrabah RFB
With a 10 year service record as the First Officer of the Brigade, Michael has earned his reputation as a committed member of the Yarrabah community. During his leadership, both the Brigade and the SES have seen an increase in membership and work closely to provide services to the 3000 members of the Yarrabah community.

Brisbane
Colleen Smith of Narangba RFB
A member of the Brigade for over 3 years, Colleen actively promotes the Rural Fire Service through Recruitment and Fire Safety displays at the major shopping centres and shop fronts throughout the area. Colleen coordinates the logistics and takes a lead role in joint agency large scale hazard reduction burn exercises in the Caboolture Area. Colleen’s commitment and enthusiasm to the Brigade is an inspiration to her fellow Brigade members.

South East Region
Col Emms of Mulgowie RFB
Col has displayed an outstanding level of commitment to the Rural Fire Service and to the community by implementing bushfire mitigation strategies, developing Brigade members and educating the community. Col is highly regarded in the Laidley community and continues to provide significant support to the Area Office to ensure organisation priorities can be achieved.
2009 will be a year to celebrate and reflect, as we reach 60 years of the Rural Fire Service.

Assistant Commissioner Steve Rothwell said, “The last 60 years is a testament to all past and present Rural Fire Service volunteers”.

“Since it’s inception in 1949, the Rural Fire Service has been made possible thanks to the dedication of generations of volunteers, and in 2009 we celebrate them.” Assistant Commissioner Rothwell said.

“2009 is an opportunity to celebrate all that has occurred in the last 60 years. We saw the establishment of the Board in 1949, and inclusion of Fire Wardens in the system. We have seen dramatic changes in the equipment we use, from horse drawn fire ploughs to the new Isuzu appliances.

“We have also seen the introduction of Air Operations and even changes in the way we view our core business and market ourselves.

“This anniversary is, of course, also about looking forward, about the next 60 years and the future of the Rural Fire Service.” Assistant Commissioner Rothwell said.

“There are many demands and challenges faced by Rural Fire Brigades, now and in the future however, I believe the strength of the Service has always been the volunteers’ ability to come together, their ability for teamwork and for supporting each other and their communities when these challenges arise.

“I look forward to working with you all as we face the challenges ahead. I also look forward to all the good times yet to come and a strong future for Rural Fire Brigades.”
What’s New
Reliance Petroleum Partnership Launch

On 30 September 2008, QFRS Commissioner Lee Johnson, in conjunction with Reliance Petroleum Sales Development Manager Tom O’Brien, were pleased to officially launch the partnership between QFRS and Reliance Petroleum, with the handover of the first of 20 slip-on units to the Grant Rural Fire Brigade.

QFRS Rural Operations Assistant Commissioner Steve Rothwell said the partnership with Reliance Petroleum would provide 20 Rural Fire Brigades with a fire fighting resource that would assist them now and in years to come.

“This is a very exciting partnership between Reliance Petroleum and the QFRS.” Assistant Commissioner Rothwell said.

“This partnership will see 20 very deserving Rural Fire Brigades across Queensland obtain a vital piece of firefighting equipment that will assist them not only in this fire season, but for the seasons to come.

“We are very appreciative of the fantastic sponsorship opportunity that Reliance Petroleum has provided and we are proud to be associated with this initiative.”

Reliance Petroleum Managing Director David Birrell said Reliance Petroleum was proud to support such an active part of the Queensland Community.

“Queensland Rural Fire Brigades do so much for local communities and we wanted to be able to do something in return,” Mr Birrell said.

“We are proud to be able to work with the Rural Fire Service on such a great initiative and proud to be in a position to assist them with their vital work.” Rural Fire Brigades had the opportunity to nominate to receive one of the units, and the nominations were evaluated on a range of criteria such as current resources and operational and community need.

Over the next 12 months, units will be provided to the following Rural Fire Brigades:

- Upper Pilton RFB, Toowoomba
- Durong RFB, Maryborough
- Barratts Lagoon RFB, Cairns
- Toobanna RFB, Townsville
- Canoona RFB, Rockhampton
- Hurdle Gully RFB, Bundaberg
- Mitchell Palmer RFB, Cairns
- Edie RFB, Emerald
- Nottingham RFB, Charters Towers/Cloncurry
- Munburra RFB, Mackay
- Alice Palmer RFB, Cairns
- Tingarra RFB, Miles/Roma
What’s New

Flexible Learning for Volunteers

As part of the exciting new direction in learning and development, our volunteers will soon have more options to choose from when undertaking training. These options will include a range of different learning choices for example Workbooks, Podcasts, DVD’s and even online courses, which all supplement face-to-face training. Having a range of options will allow you to choose what best suits your lifestyle and learning style; and will be particularly beneficial for those who have found it difficult to dedicate large blocks of time to face-to-face training.

There will also be a significant increase in learning and development information offered through the new Volunteer Portal. For example video clips or learning bytes as they are called will be available on a range of topics such as equipment, fire behaviour and learning related topics for volunteers to access at their leisure. I would encourage you to try the new range of training options as they become available and to talk to your Area Training and Support Officer (ATSO) or Brigade Training and Support Officer (BTSO) who can tell you what’s new in the world of Flexible Learning for Volunteers.

Reliance Petroleum operates throughout rural and regional Australia and is Australia’s largest BP fuel and lubricant distributor, as well as a distributor of the full range of quality Castrol products.
What’s New

Bushfire Preparation with a DVD

The recently shown telemovie “Scorched” depicts a major bushfire emergency in the Blue Mountains during a severe fire season where water supplies are restricted to affected areas. The video will soon be released for rental at local video stores and in a promotion to gain the attention of householders, Central Region and Leading Edge Video have co-operated to provide counter displays and brochures of the Bushfire Prepared Communities program at Leading Edge Video stores in November and promote it to families who hire the video.

The Regional Manager Rural Operations, John Fisher said the opportunity for this promotion was raised by David Button, a volunteer firefighter from Tannum Sands RFB and the owner of the local video store.

“The idea of the BPC program has real connection with the visual image of a large bushfire threatening urban edge communities” John said.

“Bushfire Awareness – are you prepared?” is an effective mobile message that has the opportunity to be seen by large numbers in the communities in Southwest Region.

“It highlights the overwhelming nature of such an event and the importance of being prepared at a household level. It seems like a logical thing for QFRS to do to provide material with an answer to the inevitable question – What can we do in case it happens in our community?”

The promotion was originally planned for Central Region but the level of interest from store owners is such that we will now try and supply the material to rural and urban edge communities throughout the 400 stores in Queensland. “If we can get householders to think about their own situation and conduct property and self assessments, we will have made some real progress in case a major fire does impact upon a Queensland community” John said.

Community safety advertising

As part of Southwest Region’s Bushfire awareness campaign this year, we have placed some signage on all Rural Operations staff vehicles. These signs were launched in July as part of Bushfire Awareness month.

The sign “Bushfire Awareness – are you prepared?” is an effective mobile message that has the opportunity to be seen by large numbers in the communities in Southwest Region.

The signs enable full visibility out of the car.
Safety Certificates

Brigades are reminded of the importance of having annual safety inspections conducted by a qualified mechanic, on appliances and other brigade vehicles. At the time of inspection either a Safety Certificate (SC) or a Certificate of Inspection (COI) will be issued for each appliance. It is important that a copy of the certificate is sent to your respective Area Office for recording on your brigade file. For further information, please contact your Area Office or refer to Business Rule D8.7 in your brigade manual.

Automatic Invoicing Reminders

We receive, on occasion, phone calls from brigade secretaries who have received reminder notices on paid accounts.

Please be aware, that on the first of every month, the system automatically generates reminder notices. Often, if a brigade has posted their payment towards the end of the month, it will not have been processed prior to the automatic reminder notice being generated.

Do Not Call Register

The do not call register provides Australians with the opportunity to “Opt Out” of receiving certain telemarketing calls. It is against the law for an organisation to make unsolicited telemarketing calls to a number listed on the register, unless consent for the call has been obtained.

Rural Operations’ advises any brigades undertaking fundraising or any other telemarketing activities, to ensure they have checked their calling list against the do not call register.

More information on the do not call register is available at www.acma.gov.au, or you can contact the Industry Assistance line on 1300 785 749.

New Wildland Firefighting Boots

Rural Operations has entered into a new agreement for the supply of Wildland Firefighting boots.

The new boots, produced in Australia, are higher, and offer better ankle support. They have a front lace and a side zipper. The boots are available in black, and range from size 4 to 16, with half sizes available up to 15.5.

Boots are provided free of charge to volunteers, and can be ordered through your Area Office on a separate requisition form to all other equipment.

The new boot is now available to all volunteers. For more information please contact your Area Office.

Issuing of Epaulettes

As you are aware, the new volunteer epaulettes were announced in the March edition of the Bulletin. We have received a lot of interest in the epaulettes since the announcement, with many orders being received.

We would like to advise that currently, the only epaulettes being issued are the First Officer, Officer and Member epaulettes. As the other epaulettes such as Crew Leader, Firefighter, Senior Firefighter etc, all identify specific roles, appropriate volunteer training is required before they can be issued. As such, these epaulettes will not be made available until further notice.
News Update

A Fair Go – It’s the Law

In Queensland, you are entitled to be treated fairly according to the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act 1991. You should not be judged by your sex, race, age or religion, whether you have an impairment or hold certain political beliefs.

The law applies when you are:

- At work (including volunteer work)
- In a shop, hotel or restaurant
- In accommodation
- Using Government services
- At school, TAFE or university
- At the doctor or dentist.

What treatment is against the law?

It is against the law to treat you unfairly because of your:

- Sex
- Relationship or parental status
- Race
- Religious beliefs or activity
- Political beliefs or activity
- Impairment
- Trade union activity
- Lawful sexual activity
- Pregnancy
- Breastfeeding needs
- Family responsibilities
- Gender identity
- Sexuality
- Age

The law covers discrimination which is direct as well as that which is indirect. Indirect discrimination is any unfair treatment listed above that is not always obvious. For example, a policy or rule may seem fair because it applies to everyone, but a closer look shows that some people are unfairly affected.

What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature in relation to you. It happens when a reasonable person would expect that you'd feel humiliated or intimidated by the conduct. It has nothing to do with mutual attraction or friendship between people.

What is vilification?

Vilification is a public act or statement that incites others to hate you or your group because of your race, religion, gender identity or sexuality. This sort of hatred is illegal and can show up in a number of ways including through leaflets, speech, graffiti, websites and public abuse or media remarks.

Who is Responsible?

The person or people who discriminated against you, asked unnecessary questions, sexually harassed, publicly vilified, or victimised you, are responsible for their own behaviour. If they did this at work, their employer may also be responsible for allowing it to happen unless they had taken reasonable steps to prevent the offending behaviour. This is called ‘vicarious liability’. Anyone else who encouraged or requested this behaviour is also responsible.

Is all unfair treatment against the law?

No. Your treatment may seem unfair, but if it’s not based on the reasons and areas covered by the law, the Anti-Discrimination Commission cannot deal with your complaint.

How will I know if my treatment of others is unlawful discrimination?

To be unlawful, your unfair treatment has to be based on two things:

1. the reason it happened, and
2. what you were doing.

What can I do about it?

You could talk to the person or people involved. Tell them you object to the behaviour and ask them to stop. Often this is enough.

If the behaviour happened within the Brigade, ask your First Officer or your Rural Area Director what you might do. Or contact the Anti-Discrimination Commission on 1300 130 670 for more information or visit the website www.adcq.qld.gov.au.
Fire Warden Survey

As part of the Fire Warden Review, a profile and issues survey of fire wardens was recently conducted by QFRS Rural Operations and the Bushfire CRC Volunteerism team from La Trobe University. It was important to QFRS to provide all wardens with input into the review. The aim of the survey was to profile our wardens and identify the issues associated with their role, and the communication pathways between our wardens and QFRS. The survey had a 22% response rate, which is a similar response rate to other surveys undertaken by volunteer agencies across Australia. We now have a greater understanding of fire wardens’ views of the issues facing them in the current climate, and an indication of new issues, and those that will become a great challenge in the future.

Of the 562 responses received fire wardens made up 95.6%, chief fire wardens 3.7%, while 0.7% did not provide their status. The ages of those who completed the survey ranged from 29 to 90 years, with 35% of the respondents over 65.

The survey indicated that fire wardens tend to be long serving, with 54% serving more than 10 years. One of the challenges we need to look at, is how this knowledge and experience can be passed down to the new generation of fire wardens.

The survey indicated that 72% of respondents recorded their occupation as a farmer managing their own business, with another 20% being full-time employees. The rest were either part-time employees or retired.

More than 15000 permits are issued annually. On average, up to 12.9 hours per month are taken up in fire warden duties, with fire wardens indicating they spend between 20 and 200 hours per month performing the role.

40% of fire wardens did not make any site inspections in the last 12 months. 60% inspected between 4 and 180 sites.

Although 89% of fire wardens reported not having to deal with any escaped fires, the main reasons given for escaped fires were:

- Landholders carelessness and lack of attention to responsibility
- Landholders not complying with conditions
- Wind change.

From the views of our fire wardens expressed in this survey, Rural Operations is now developing strategies to improve our support of the integral role they play in the community.

We would like to thank all chief fire wardens and fire wardens across the State for their input into the review. It is their knowledge and experience that will guide the fire warden network into the future.

FMS TRAINING
Kuku Nyungkal CALM SHIPTONS FLAT/ROSSVILLE

It all started when Ray Rex from the Tafe in Mossman called me and asked me if I would do some FMS training for a group of Indigenous rangers at Shiptons Flat in Rossville. We approached the Rossville brigade and asked them if they would be interested in signing on the rangers as volunteers. The brigade was thrilled with the idea of getting a new resource of Firefighters. After sending the paper work including Criminal History Checks and membership forms, I invited one of my casual Trainers from Aurukun (Stuart Watson) to assist me with the training.

On Sunday 14 September 2008, Stuart and I drove to Bloomfield to prepare for the training. On Monday we drove to Home Rule in Rossville to deliver the FMS training. The young trainees were very enthusiastic with lots of positive feedback and discussion. We fought our way through the theory and finished with a hazard reduction-mitigation burn for the traditional owner of Shiptons Flat.

Some of the more experienced Rossville brigade members and National Parks fire crew helped with the burn, by mentoring the new recruits with Stuart and I. The Parks crew brought a slip on unit and Rossville had their light attack unit. The burn went well with no injuries (Zero Harm) and no wild fires.

The use of the Permit system and a sound conception of how it works and benefits to the community was well received. Our two oldest recruits Marilyn and Peter Wallace were refreshing to have on board. They were invaluable coordinators, and I couldn’t have done without them. Their cultural knowledge of the area is something to be proud of. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their support, from Tafe, National Parks and the local Rossville brigade. Thanks to Home Rule for supplying the venue. A great place to squirt some foam and do the theory.

Jamie Haskell
Area Training and Support Officer
Rural Operations Cairns
9 Mile Exercise Alton Downs

Central Region, Rockhampton Area and Alton Downs RFB conducted a major joint exercise on Sunday 5 October 2008. Local Rural Fire Brigades, Urban Brigades from Rockhampton and Gracemere and Call When Needed aircraft operators from Rockhampton and Caboolture were involved. In total, 50 participants spent Grand Final Day conducting a hazard reduction burn that simulated a 5th Alarm response.

The exercise involved establishing an Incident Management Team with an Air Operations section to control aircraft over a fire being managed by 17 appliances from eight brigades. To add some complexity to the event, three aircraft were used on the day. An Air Attack platform to supervise a Turbine Thrush fixed wing bomber and the Capricorn Rescue helicopter bucketing water on to the control lines. All aircraft were co-ordinated by the Air Attack Supervisor who flew at 1000 feet in a Cessna 206 and utilised Air Ground Co-ordination with the Sector Commanders.

Further challenges were added by making sure the event occurred during the Australian and Singapore Defence Forces joint training exercise Wallaby 2008, which had established controlled airspace around Rockhampton airport and Shoalwater Bay. Fortunately there were no unfriendly interactions between F16’s and Cessnas, and the use of aircraft in combating grass fires was well demonstrated to local urban and rural crews.

The application of eight 2000 litre drops of 2.5% foam mix from a fixed wing greatly impressed all involved. The effectiveness and accuracy of the pilot Richard McDonald and the quick turn around times of the Capricorn Rescue helicopter were highlights of the use of aircraft in these types of incidents. The longevity of the effect of a foam drop was also a surprise to many fire-fighters who had not worked with aircraft before and demonstrated how useful an aircraft can be in protecting properties especially in fast moving grassfires.
Rural Research and Training

Capricorn Rescue Helicopter.

Turbine Thrush fixed wing bomber performing foam drop.
Innisfail Area Group Training Exercises

On 23 August 2008, five crews from the Herberton Group participated in a group training exercise held at Innot Hot Springs. The purpose of the exercise was to:

1. Provide an opportunity to practice managing a multiple brigade response using the AIIMS Incident Management System & the Group Standard Operating Procedures.
2. Ensure that Rural Fire Brigade equipment is operational for the coming fire season and that brigade members are able to operate the equipment safely & effectively.
3. Identify any potential issues with communications, incident management & firefighter safety.

The training exercise was organised and managed by Innisfail Area Office staff, with assistance from Cairns Area Office Staff and Casual Trainers from both areas.

Mentors were allocated to record any unsafe practices or procedures undertaken by the crews, with a point allocated to the crew if they undertook unsafe practices or did not follow procedure. The team with lowest score at the end of the day was pronounced the best crew for the exercise.

Feedback on performance was provided to each crew at the completion of individual activities.

The Tableland Lakes group also took part in their group training exercise, held on 31 August 2008 at Tinaroo Park, Lake Barine. The six crews participated in the seven activities including knowledge tests, using fire prediction tools, appliance checks and more.

Both training exercises were a huge success as they allowed crews of both Innisfail Groups to refresh their skills for fire season.
Rural Research and Training

The appliances of the Tableland Lakes Group awaiting crews.

Brett Weston, John Kenna and Lee Crimmins checking an appliance in preparation for the group exercise.
QFRS RO – RESEARCH & TRAINING UPDATE

Bushfire CRC – PROJECT PHOENIX

The Rural Operations Research Team and Dr Kevin Tolhurst, a Senior Researcher and Program Leader with the Bushfire CRC held a three day Project Phoenix workshop in July.

Phoenix is a dynamic bushfire risk management model that incorporates a simulation model capable of showing the spread of fire across the landscape under different weather and fire suppression scenarios. Fire behaviour and fire spread are modelled using a modified CSIRO southern grassland fire spread model and the McArthur Mk5 forest fire behaviour model.

Phoenix can be:

- Used as a bushfire risk management model that demonstrates the effect of fire management
- Used to identify areas where fires could cause significant damage and suppression difficulty
- Used as a guide to assess the relative benefits and best combinations of bushfire prevention, preparedness, response, recovery and fire regime management.

To provide an accurate model of the spread and behaviour of a bushfire, Phoenix needs a lot of data. Fuel quantity and vegetation data, weather data, topography, assets/values, scenario conditions, fire history data, and fire suppression effort are required before Phoenix can provide a good model of how a bushfire will spread under certain weather conditions. Phoenix can model a single fire or several fires in one session over a pre-determined time period. Having accurate data of mitigation burns and wildfires for an area has a big impact on how fire intensity and fire spread are modelled.

Phoenix has another great feature that shows how a fire moves across a landscape by using a three-dimensional terrain model. This really helps to understand the effect that different terrain has on fire intensity and fire spread.

The Phoenix program is currently at the Beta release stage. Rural Operations has been invited to be part of the product evaluation team that provides feedback to the Bushfire CRC. The Phoenix program evaluation is scheduled to run until February 2009.

Project Vesta Fuel Assessment and Fire Behaviour Prediction Workshop

In August, the Rural Operations Research Team held two one-day Vesta Fuel Assessment and Fire Behaviour Prediction Workshops for QFRS, Parks and Wildlife, and Forestry at the Samford Rural Fire Brigade Training Centre. The workshop was presented by Jim Gould from CSIRO Forest Biosciences. Jim is the Program Leader of the Bushfire CRC Program for Safe Prevention, Preparation and Suppression of bushfires and has spent the last ten years researching fire behaviour in dry eucalypt forests.

The Project Vesta research program has presented us with a lot of new knowledge on fire behaviour and fire spread in eucalypt forests. While a lot of this knowledge has been used to improve firefighter safety (many of you have heard of or seen the Dead Man Zone) it also gave rise to a new model for assessing fuel loads and fire behaviour prediction in dry eucalypt forests.

The two day workshop was an important first step for a select group of experienced fire managers and practitioners to get a copy of the new Vesta Field Guide and learn to use its content for Fuel Assessment, Rate of Spread, Fuel Moisture Models, Slope Correction, and Spotting Distance assessment.

The classroom session of the workshop included presentations and exercises on Fuel Structure and Assessment, Fire Spread Prediction, Fuel Moisture and Spotting Potential which was followed by a field trip to Brisbane Forest Park to undertake the practical component for fuel assessment, wind measurement, fuel moisture assessment and slope determination.

Both workshops allowed us to train a few people that can help us to assess and validate if the new fuel assessment and fire behaviour prediction methods are applicable for Queensland conditions. It also gives us a core group of people that can provide training in using Vesta methodology to other staff and volunteers over the coming month.

The workshops drew an enthusiastic group of 14 QFRS Rural Operations staff, 2 i-Zone officers, a couple of volunteers and about 20 staff from Parks and Wildlife, Forestry and Natural Resources.

Finally a big ‘Thank You’ to the Samford Rural Fire Brigade for allowing us to use their excellent training facilities.
Safety Matters

ZEROharm – all injuries are preventable

Sharing the learnings

The ZEROharm message is spreading across the Rural Fire Service. The key message of ZEROharm is ensuring that we achieve a positive safety culture. Part of achieving this goal is sharing lessons learnt both in an operational and non-operational setting.

Personal Protective Equipment is provided for your protection in a fire fighting setting. Gloves, helmets, visors, goggles, mask and of course, your overalls all serve to protect you when you’re on the fireground. Using this essential PPE should be an intrinsic part of the way you operate on the fireground. However none of these should be relied on as the sole method of protection. Using your basic risk assessment and situation awareness skills are the most important ways of ensuring both your and your team members’ safety on the fireground.

The photo included here is of a helmet that was recently exposed to radiant heat by one of our members. Clearly it did its job well! You can see from the blistering that the heat from the flames caused some damage to the surface layer of the helmet. The firefighter reported that they didn’t feel the heat until they went to move the visor and couldn’t shift it.

Online reporting update

The Safety Health Environment (SHE) system is up and running across the Department and there has been an excellent uptake by Rural Operations and Rural Fire Service members. At present, the most effective way for brigade members to ensure that WHS issues are captured is to report incidents, near misses and hazards through the Area Office. Area Office staff have or are in the process of undergoing training in the SHE system. One of the best features of the system is that there is an automatic reporting of issues to supervisors which means that investigations are carried out as soon as practical to develop control measures.

The other key feature of an online reporting system is that it helps to establish broader issues for the organisation as a whole. For example, if an issue with a piece of equipment is raised by one brigade, it may prove to be an issue for many other brigades also. This can then be addressed at the beginning for example at the design or purchasing stage. This helps head off issues before they happen.

Station Reviews

Many brigades have recently been visited by Area staff for the purpose of conducting a WHS station review. This process commenced in November 2007 and thus far, over 440 stations have been reviewed. Many brigades have excellent station inspection processes in place.

It’s a good idea to conduct a station review on a regular basis to identify any potential hazards in the station. Remember a station is a workplace too and although volunteers may not spend a lot of time in the station, there are still hazards that exist there.

For instance, the way brigades store fuel and foam in the station is one important aspect that should be assessed. Small amounts of fuel can be stored in a station without any special needs, for example 2 x 20litre gerry cans full of unleaded petrol. Larger amounts should be assessed for their potential risks and stored appropriately. Other things like adequate ventilation, temperature and security should be considered.

The best way to identify an issue around hazardous substances storage and management is to refer to a Material Safety Data Sheet (or MSDS). So make sure you have up to date MSDS’s in the brigade station that are easily accessible for all members. These are available from your Area Office.
Northern Army Cadets Careers Day

On Thursday 25 September 2008, the Townsville BTSOs, along with volunteers from the Rangewood Rural Fire Brigade, manned a stall at the Laverack Barracks in Townsville promoting the Rural Fire Service to the Army Cadets. Over 1000 Cadets, aged 8 to 18 from Gladstone North, had the opportunity to talk first hand to both Urban Crews and Rural Fire Service Volunteers as well as Rural Operations Staff.

The display consisted of urban vehicles and the kitchen fire demonstration, while Rangewood RFB proudly displayed their new appliance. The rural wildfire simulator and training trailer was also a big hit with the cadets.

Promoting the Rural Fire Service at events such as this, helps promote the work the Rural Fire Service does to the younger generations.

One group of the Northern Army Cadets looking over Rangewood 52.
Our Volunteers Our Brigades

IGA Donation

The Wamuran Rural Fire Brigade was pleased to receive a donation of $250.00 from their Local IGA store through its Community Chest initiative.

Community Chest is IGA’s way of giving back to the community. IGA retailers have long had a reputation for their community values, regularly supporting and giving back to the communities where their stores are located.

Through the year-round program, a percentage from the sale of all private label and certain other products is accumulated in each store’s ‘Community Chest’, as well as through various fundraising activities and direct store donations. The cumulative value of donations from all IGA stores adds up to a huge amount each year being given back to beneficiaries around the country.
Duaringa Rural Fire Brigade receives a boost

On 2 July 2008, Duaringa Rural Fire Brigade received a boost to its response capability with the recent addition of a Nissan Patrol Light Attack appliance to its fleet.

The official handing over of the vehicle was carried out by the then Acting Assistant Commissioner Peter Hollier on behalf of the Minister, The Honourable Neil Roberts.

The new appliance replaces a 1988 veteran ex-Forestry petrol Toyota Landcruiser tray back. The Brigade’s financial contribution towards the purchase of the appliance was provided by a RFBAQ grant.

Officers of the Brigade made special mention of the support they receive from the Central Highlands Regional Council Duaringa Workshop with regular maintenance and servicing of vehicles at no cost to the Brigade.

Gemfields and Anakie HRB

The Gemfields and Anakie RFBs conducted a hazard reduction burn at “Casuarina Hill” Gemfields on Saturday 13 September. They had 3 fire appliances and a slip on unit with 14 volunteers working together with a great result and no injuries!
On 28 September 2008, organisations from across Townsville joined together to undertake a Hazard Reduction Burn at Blakey’s Crossing on the Old Bruce Highway. In attendance were National Parks and Wildlife, Natural Resources and Water, Centrogen, Townsville City Council, Air Services Australia, Department of Defence, Auxiliaries from Ayr and Forrest Beach, Urban Permanent Crews from around Townsville, Rural Operations staff, Rural Fire Brigades (Saunders Beach, Rangewood, Black River) and the Salvation Army.

Over 200 hectares were burnt from time of ignition at 09:00 till crews were sent back to stations at 16:30. The Incident was divided up into 3 sectors which were lit at staggered intervals to ensure that there were sufficient resources for the worst case scenario of the fire escaping from the control line. The incident was run by an Incident Management Team at the staging area. A multitude of appliances were used including 41s, 51s, trailers, slip on units, four wheelers, fire packs, grass units and the Triton. The burn went well with all organisations working together to ensure maximum vegetation was burnt.
Fire Education Innisfail Area

On 11 September “Firefighter Helaine” and “Firefighter Brendan” of Innisfail Area Office delivered Fire Education to the Prep’s and Grade 1’s at Mount Garnet Primary School with the assistance of “Firefighter Don” and “Firefighter Betty” from the Mount Garnet Rural Fire Brigade.

It was a great learning experience for the class as they practised “Stop Drop and Roll” and “Get Down Low and Go! Go! Go!” as well participating in a class fire drill. There was much hilarity in the class as Brigade Training and Support Officer Helaine Clerk and Area Training and Support Officer Brendan Ridgwell attempted to demonstrate these intricate moves. The 20 students revisited the rules in the Feeling Safe, Being Safe Book covering the topics of Firefighters help us in an emergency, Safe and Unsafe Fires, Working smoke alarms save lives, Dial “000” in an emergency, Escape plans that have two ways out, Don’t hide! Scream and Shout and Get out and stay out.

With the completion of the in class learning the students were then able to dress up as a Rural Firefighter and operated the branch of the Mount Garnet Appliance.
New Rural Fire Station

The official opening of the Dayboro & District Rural Fire Brigade Fire Station took place on 23 August 2008. The Brigade dates back to the days of the Dayboro Bush Fire Brigade in 1957 when Bill Rowe was Treasurer. Bill became Chairman in 1960 and held the position for 42 years. Bill has been awarded a National Medal and a Diligent and Ethical Services Medal but was unable to attend the presentation on the day.

Neville Juffs, Fire Warden for Ocean View was presented with the Diligent and Ethical Services Medal for 48 years of service. It was presented by State Member for Kurwongbah, Linda Lavarch.

Members of the Dayboro & District, Samsonvale and Ocean View Rural Fire Brigades attended the highly successful event.

All of the Rural Fire Service volunteers who were present at the opening.

Bunnings Blitz Landsborough

On 8, 9 and 10 September 2008, the crew from Bunnings Hardware Caloundra and members of the Landsborough Rural Fire Brigade did a makeover of the Landsborough Rural Fire Station.

Over three days the Fire Station was painted in heritage colours, gardens were weeded, replanted and mulched and the fire station signage was renovated. Bunnings Hardware contributed staff, paint, plants, mulch and the labour. The makeover was organised and coordinated by Pauline Horan, Bunnings Hardware Caloundra and the Landsborough RFB. The initiative to do the makeover was part of Bunnings Hardware supporting volunteer organisations in the community.

On 13 September 2008 an official handover and thank you to all concerned was organised and facilitated by staff from the Caloundra Rural area office and the Landsborough Rural Fire Brigade.

A big thankyou to all the staff and management at Bunnings Hardware Caloundra.
70 Years of Combined Service Celebrated

On 23 July 2008 at the Beenleigh Fire Station, National Medals and Clasps were presented to a number of fire personnel, by Minister for Emergency Services the Honourable Neil Roberts.

First Officer Brian Currant and Second Officer Noel Haase, from Rocky Point Rural Fire Brigade, were the recipients of their second clasps, giving them a total of over 70 years of service between them.

A Reliance Petroleum Slip-on Unit for Upper Pilton RFB

The Toowoomba Area was graced with the second Reliance Petroleum slip-on unit. On Tuesday 14 October, Reliance Petroleum’s Area Sales Manager, Mr David Green handed over a slip-on unit thanks to Reliance Petroleum’s very generous sponsorship.

The lucky recipient was the Upper Pilton Rural Fire Brigade. Brigade First Officer, Mr Graham Stark said that this unit will be the first piece of dedicated fire fighting equipment for the Upper Pilton Rural Fire Brigade. “Most of the brigade members have their own spray and water tanks, but not a dedicated fire fighting unit” Graham said.

The brigade was formed in November of 1990 and relies on the support and commitment of their members to maintain an active presence in the area. Toowoomba Area Director, Inspector Bruce Ehrlich said “the brigade does not receive rural equipment levies so this unit obtained by Reliance Petroleum’s sponsorship is a great bonus for the brigade. It greatly increases the Brigade’s ability to respond to fires.”
Our Volunteers Our Brigades

Western Queensland’s premier agriculture field days were held on 9 & 10 September 2008. They have once again been a huge success, attracting over 4000 people over the two days. Area Director Larry Lewis reported that visitors travelled from as far south as Cunnamulla through to Cloncurry and Charters Towers in the north and east to Emerald and down into the channel country. It was a great opportunity to promote QFRS Rural Operations and catch up with Fire Wardens and primary producer brigade members from across the Region. Derrick Hine and Aaron Cook from AAA Engineering and Technology Crows Nest were on hand to assist with any enquiries and provide specialist advice on mop-up units and other fire fighting equipment. It was timely that Central Region's iZone Officer Gerry Brimmell made the trip out west to also join our team from the Barcaldine/Emerald offices, to promote and deliver sessions on Bushfire Prepared Communities and meet rural landholders. Inspector Lee Skinn (Charters Towers) was welcomed down from the north to provide support during the field days. Like Rural Fire Brigades, Westech is a volunteer organisation and without the tireless work of the dedicated committee members and volunteers the field days would not have been successful. Westech is held every 3 years.
Regional Updates

Brisbane Region

The onset of spring weather has seen a rise in daytime temperatures, the steady march of high pressure systems across the continent and the passage of the attendant seasonal systems. The early storms experienced have not continued however, the Bureau of Meteorology is maintaining a positive outlook for the summer.

The brigade activity levels are relatively normal for this time of the season.

As I write there have been two fires in the North Coast Area which have attracted some attention however, they are not significant in their occurrence. Incidents such as these are a good test for QFRS preparedness and the ability to activate the available and appropriate resources to reduce the impact of the event. The debrief process as always will provide the opportunity to critically analyse our performance.

I have returned to the region after relieving as the Director of Rural Operations for a period of six weeks. During that time Area Director Peter Varley was the A/Regional Manager. The QFRS iZone Officer Gary McCormack stepped up as the A/Area Director Caboolture and Firefighter Simon Statham replaced ATSO Richard Lohse whilst he was on leave. All the Officers performed their roles in a professional manner and I thank them for their efforts. ATSO Eric Lanham is continuing in his role as the A/Manager Rural Training-Product Development.

The Dayboro & District fire station was officially opened by MP Linda Lavarch who was assisted by Commissioner Lee Johnson, Assistant Commissioner Rural Operations Steve Rothwell, Director General Jim McGowan, and Moreton Bay Region Councillor Bob Millar. The day was a huge success and a credit to the hard working Committee of the Brigade.

The presentation of Bushfire Prepared Communities is continuing and the area focus is very much on preparing the communities and providing them with the information that they need to help themselves mitigate the risk.

Training is the priority for the area staff and the training program is being delivered on schedule. The Area’s new Brigade Training Support Officer Graham King has very quickly established himself as a member of the area team and I welcome him to the position.

The brigade group structure in the Caboolture area has been modified to reflect the council amalgamations. The new structure will ensure a manageable span of control, retain relatively autonomous command and control and enable brigades to work together to share resources and information.

The level of activity over the next few months will as always be determined by the prevailing weather conditions. I thank you for your continuing efforts and urge all volunteers and staff to remember, the most important reasons to work and act safely are waiting for you at home.

Bernard Trembath
Regional Manager Rural Operations
Brisbane Region

Central Region

Bushfire potential in Central Queensland is the highest observed for some years. The rains in February and some follow up rains through the coast and Central Highlands have produced spectacular growth which has now cured off to produce equally spectacular fuel loads. The absence of good herd numbers has meant many areas remain lightly grazed and have the potential to produce a significant fire event if the weather patterns conspire against us.

Fires are developing throughout Central Region with a lot of activity in the Gladstone, Biloela and Rockhampton areas. Brigades are already busy responding to reported fires and unfortunately a significant number are deliberate lights or escapes from permitted burns. It is a real question whether we should be conducting hazard reduction burns when we have little follow up rain for a few months and the potential for escape appears to be so high.

Aircraft have always been a difficult and expensive tool to use in fighting fires but recent Bushfire CRC research demonstrates that effective use of aircraft occurs when they attack fires that are small, and in keeping them small, can increase the
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Central Region has been promoting the effective use of aircraft for air observation, intelligence gathering and suppression and now have aircraft on contract at most major locations. Trained Air Observers, Air attack Supervisors and Aircraft Officers are now in place with Group Officer Gordon Ryan completing training in NSW as an Air Attack Supervisor and BAO Wayne Smith training as an Aircraft Officer. Both were given some experience in the recent 9 Mile Exercise at Alton Downs with three aircraft involved in a 5th Alarm level event.

Emerald/Barcaldine and Rockhampton Areas have been fortunate to receive approval to employ new staff with a new BTSO approved for each location. The BTSO at Barcaldine will be conducting training across a wide range of Brigades with a strong Primary Producer focus and a developing brigade profile around Emerald. The Rockhampton position joins an established team with a very active and enthusiastic group structure with more than enough work keeping ATSO Gavin Fryar and Acting BTSO Tracey Charles busy.

The Mackay Area team have been very active in Bushfire Prepared Communities (BPC) presentations with the Central Region iZone Officer Gerry Brimmell spending a lot of effort with local brigades successfully promoting the BPC program to local communities. The ability for local brigades to promote the BPC presentations, and for staff to undertake presentations to informed communities is making a big difference to the levels of attendance and take up of the program.

The level of interaction between the local District Disaster Management Groups and Local Disaster Management Groups during the Central Queensland monsoonal floods has led to a greater awareness of the need for all emergency services to have a common understanding of incident management. Regional Councils, Queensland Police Service, Department of Health, Emergency Management Queensland and QFRS in Central Region are working together to undertake joint training and exercises. Improvement of the working relationship and systems between agencies is the objective for every participating agency so we can improve our delivery to the community during the next emergency.

John Fisher
Regional Manager Rural Operations
Central Region
Regional Updates

I Far Northern Region

I would like to welcome Charlotte Roberts and Tammy Rochford to the team. Charlotte is replacing Maria who is off on maternity leave—congratulations to Maria and Trent on the birth of Jessica. Tammy is replacing Di Edwards who is on temporary transfer. I would also like to congratulate former Cairns Peninsula AFSO Barry Heilbronn on his move to Rural Operations Brisbane, on behalf of the rural regional family thank you Barry for your commitment and dedication to rural operations FNR and we wish you well for the future. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island AFSO Jamie Haskell has replaced Barry as the AFSO Cairns Peninsula. Applications will be called shortly for a second BTSO for Cairns Peninsula Area. From Far Northern Region, welcome to the rural family and we all look forward to the future together.

There has been a significant increase in fire activity in the Region with brigades responding to many grass and vegetation fires. Vegetation growth across the eastern, western and northern parts of the region has been well above average. Annual rainfall records for the region continue to be challenged with breaking records recorded in several key areas earlier in the year.

High evaporation rates, dry conditions and low humidity have led to several areas experiencing overnight fires, this will continue until significant rainfall is experienced. Hazard reduction burning has continued in many areas, with a number of large fuel reduction exercises incorporating incident management teams and multi agency fire fighting crews.

Since the last issue, a number of activities and events have occurred that have showcased rural operations within Far Northern Region, including the Innisfail and Cairns Area field days, Mona Mona exercise, Lake Barrine and Daintree training field day and Herberton wildfire with IMT.

A number of significant bushfires have kept our brigades and other fire management agencies busy since the last edition, these include: Herberton wildfire(with IMT), Second Beach Cairns, Innis Hot Springs, Lakeland, Oaky Creek and Mossman Cane fire. Rural and urban crews together with landowners and other land managers have worked tirelessly to protect public safety and infrastructure, supported with many community fire safety messages being aired through local radio media coverage.

There have been some new fire appliance arrivals and future approvals for the region, these include medium tankers for both Wonga Beach and Mena Creek. Also approval for Tarzali and Bamaga. The Mena Creek and Wonga Beach appliances will be handed over in the near future, with Bamaga and Tarzali approved for the 08/09 build. Lake Eacham RFB, is in the construction phase of their Fire Station and hope to have it finished by Christmas. We are still working through the process of land acquisition for Stony Batter RFB, Watson/Baskerville RFB, Murray Upper RFB and Battle Creek RFB.

Successful field day training exercises were conducted by AFSO Brendan Ridgwell for the Brigades in the Herberton and Tablelands Lakes Groups. The exercise involved an IMT and enabled incident management processes and procedures to be practiced by our volunteers. It also enabled valuable skills maintenance and competency assessment to be conducted in a practical learning environment.

Ian and Jo attended the inaugural community day at Croydon last weekend. A sizeable amount of money was collected for the local emergency organisations including RFB, SES, QAS and Hospital. Our theme was Bush Fire Prepared Communities and recruitment. In a community of 300 people, we had an attendance of at least half that number.

In late September, Cairns Peninsula staff and casual trainers held a firefighter minimum skills practical fun day at the Daintree Village. Numerous surrounding brigades participated in the training day which developed valuable skills maintenance and competency acquisitions and included some good laughs and some new friendships along the way. The day started out with a SMEACS brief, followed by instruction on Communication systems and Wildfire. Then it was out to the paddock for the practical exercises.

The teams were pitted against each other in the rural event from the firefighter championships. It was a close contest with a composite team from Wonga Beach and Daintree taking the win. A great day was had by all.

A large scale multi-agency exercise was conducted at the Mona Mona Aboriginal Community North of Kuranda 31 July – 2 August 2008. With representation from numerous fire and land management agencies, QPS, SES and QAS, Cairns and Tableland Regional Councils, and the Mona Mona Community. 54 personnel from eight agencies mustered at Mona Mona to be briefed by Incident Controller John Thompson who provided an overview. The exercise objective was a controlled fuel reduction burn to protect infrastructure and regional ecosystems. This area is known for a number of severe fires in the past ten years. Agencies carried out two controlled burns to reduce fuel loads including the Clifton Spur escarpment area and up to the IZone behind James Cook University, Smithfield and also the area around the Mona Mona Community, Black Mountain Road, Kuranda. The commencement of the burn was by aerial ignition high up on the escarpment over Clifton Spur to Saddle Mountain, Kuranda. Agencies exercised their skills and training prior to the fire season, in a real life scenario. This exercise was a test of all agency responses and support for wildfire incidents reviewing hydration of Firefighters working in hot and humid conditions. The Regional Operations Control Centre (ROCC) was activated during the exercise on Friday 31 July 2008 testing the Electronic Logging System, equipment and personnel capabilities within the Regional Office, Cairns.

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Led by our enthusiastic ATSOs and BTSOs, our casual trainers have been active in the past months delivering FMS training and specialised courses to numerous brigades. During May/June two Fireline Leadership five day courses were conducted in the Atherton Tablelands. These courses provide leadership and coaching opportunities for a variety of rural operations members as well as other emergency service organisations. Crew leader training will be ongoing to develop and increase the operational capability of our brigades within the region.

In preparation for the fire season Bush Fire Prepared Communities sessions are being delivered to at risk areas with joint presentations with urban brigades held in a number of areas. Public safety displays and recruitment drives were held at a number of locations within the region.

The last three months has been a busy time for our Fire Wardens. Our Fire Wardens play a vital role in the community and are normally the first point of contact for many people when dealing with rural operations, so please continue to support our fire wardens particularly during this heightened fire season.

Steve Barber
Regional Manager, Rural Operations
Far Northern Region

North Coast Region

Across the region currently we have varying degrees of fire danger with the first active fire cracking off in the Caloundra Area near Landsborough. Job well done to those brigades that attended and brought the situation under control so quickly.

All Area staff are ensuring that training activities are being made available and I would strongly encourage you to consider the training on offer, and if you are available, jump onto the next training course. These training events are a great opportunity to network, share experiences and learn from each other.

With the implementation of our North Coast Regional priorities we are aiming to train 450 volunteers in Fire Management Skills, 72 Volunteer Crew Leaders, 60 Volunteer Officers, and increase the number of volunteer brigade trainers by 5%. In the Region we are aiming to have 95% of all appliances with a safety certificate issued and 100% by 2010/2011 - this will ensure volunteer safety when using appliances, especially during emergency events.

Regarding Bushfire Prepared Community presentations, each area in the region is striving to achieve a minimum of one presentation delivered to the high bushfire risk zones in their area.

Recently the Area Managers completed some aerial reconnaissance of the region, reviewing the risk areas with the outcome of ensuring operational readiness. This annual activity allows the staff to identify areas that may require some specific attention, therefore generating engagement with volunteers and brigades, addressing the highest risk areas prior to the summer months.

Our region has been selected to participate in a pilot project of trialling the Automatic Vehicle Location system. This will allow satellite and web based tracking to occur using our existing radio infrastructure, improving volunteer safety and area support to brigade activities. This project is in its infancy, and as more details emerge your Area Office will be able to provide you with further information.

On behalf of all the staff in the North Coast Region we offer to you and your family a happy and fire safe Christmas and New Year.

Peter Hollier
Regional Manager, Rural Operations
North Coast Region
Regional Updates

\section{Northern Region}

We would like to advise that the Northern Regional Office and Townsville Area Office have moved location. Both offices are now located in the Citypoint building on the corner of Sturt and Stokes Streets Townsville. New telephone numbers have been created in the change and can be found on the back page of this Bulletin. The postal address has remained the same. We encourage all brigade members to visit the office when in Townsville.

The past three months has seen a consolidation of brigade preparedness for the fire season. The weather has been kind to us with mid-year rains slowing the onset of the fire season long enough for some significant hazard reduction activities. Brigades have undertaken some large hazard reduction burns providing the opportunity to hone skills in incident management, sector command and managing multi-agency incidents. Land management agencies have also been busy across the region, undertaking large burns using aerial ignition for the management of weeds and the ongoing work required to manage the natural environment. Attention is now turning to response to unwanted fires.

Region and Area staff have been busy behind the scenes continuing with implementing government and fire service priorities. Five brigades have put their first appliances into service. Mt Isa, Mingela, Scott, Lime Hills Elliot and Seymour Rural Fire Brigades are all to be congratulated for rising to the challenge of acquiring and managing a major asset. All of these brigades have already responded a number of times to protect their communities. Paluma, Range wood and Lime Hills Elliot brigades are also to be thanked for passing on appliances or equipment to assist other brigades.

Radio enhancements continue across the region with the installation of UHF linked repeaters and VHF stand alone repeaters on the Cungulla water tower (UHF 23 and VHF 43) and at Mary Kathleen and Cloncurry (UHF 29 and 25 and VHF 65). Portable radios continue to be rolled out with all Hinchinbrook brigades now having at least one radio able to contact Firecom directly.

Three brigades have commissioned new stations. Clare, Nome and Crystal Creek brigades have now moved in to their new stations providing much improved housing for equipment and brigade activities. I hope to report a further three new stations in the next bulletin.

Numbers of brigades across the region have changed as well. The creation of the Mt Isa Rural Fire Brigade has been a great success. The brigade has taken possession of a new medium attack appliance and set up station at the Mt Isa SES compound. Membership is still growing through the hard work of the foundation members networking amongst the community. This time of year sees significant grass fire activity in the Mt Isa district which requires the brigade to work in closely with the Urban fire service to provide protection around the Mt Isa district.

Closer to the coast, demographic and land management changes have led to less brigades through amalgamation of small brigades originally created on cane harvester group boundaries. Five brigades recently amalgamated to create the Maidevale Rural Fire Brigade near Ayr in the Burdekin Shire.

In the midst of all this activity it is great to see one of our own achieve the highest fire service award. First Officer of Palm Island Rural Fire Brigade, Ilikena Dabea was recognised in the Queens Birthday Honours List as a recipient of the Australian Fire Service Medal. Well done Ili.

Finally, a thank you to all volunteers across the Northern Region for working safely throughout the last three months. With all the brigade activity occurring in the lead up to the fire season it is good to see that very few incidents have occurred and those that have occurred are minor in nature.

Ewan Cayzer
A/Regional Manager Rural Operations
Northern Region

\section{South East Region}

The volunteers and staff of South East Region have been very active in their preparation for the 2008 – 2009 fire season which is now upon us. Operational exercises involving the Air Wing of Rural Operations have provided the impetus for maintenance of skills involving Air Attack Supervisors, Air Support Ground Staff and basic Air Attack familiarisation. Significant activities have been conducted at Ripley Valley RFB and Hatton Vale RFB where QFRS staff and volunteers, numbering between 100 & 150, were engaged in updating their skills in working safely around aircraft and working with aircraft
Regional Updates

during water bombing activities. Further exercises of this nature were scheduled for the Gold Coast Group as well as rural brigades and auxiliary units from the Scenic Rim Shire during separate instances in October.

Interagency activity has been a highlight in recent months with joint Urban, Rural and Local Government operations at hazard reduction burns at places such as Eden’s Landing and with the Department of Main Roads on major routes between Ipswich and the NSW border. A large cross agency DES exercise involving motor vehicle accident rescue and extrication, medical treatment, land search and incident management planned for late July was re-scheduled to mid-October; this involved QFRS Urban, Auxiliary and Rural personnel as well as members from SES, QPS, QAS, SES Cadets and the local Salvation Army Catering unit.

Community Safety Operations have been high on the agenda. The promotion of the issues surrounding the Prepare, Stay and Defend or Go Early initiative have been supported by the numerous Bushfire Prepared Communities (BPC) presentations conducted across the Region. BPCs have been held at centres such as Withcott, Greenbank, Boonah, Canungra and Fernvale. As the fire season has begun to take a more apparent hold in recent weeks, attendance and interest in these BPC events has escalated. In support of these community activities, there have been a number of separate iZone exercises initiated particularly around the Gold Coast hinterland, where Urban shifts and local RFB’s have participated in a range of operational scenarios.

Training of volunteers in the new Volunteer Learning and Development Framework (VLDF) has been gathering momentum. New Member Courses, which were initiated during last year’s training plan, have been scaled back in number but remain an opportunity which volunteers have found extremely beneficial as they network with other newly signed members and are mentored through the preliminary units of their Firefighter Minimum Skills.

On the business side of our regional activities, brigades have been heavily engaged across the district as AGM’s and Group meetings have continued regularly. Several brigades are at various stages of placing funding or grant applications for building extensions, land acquisitions or shed constructions, as well as preparing for appliance delivery through new or replacement programs.

A highlight recently was the official opening of the building extensions to the Ripley Valley RFB complex by the Assistant Commissioner Rural Operations, Steve Rothwell, along with the Manager of Transmission Environment from Powerlink, Alison Gray. This facility may well prove its vital role in the management of local incidents, as the area is scheduled to expand in the next five years as it supports growth towards a community numbering in excess of 100,000 people. The impact of Brisbane’s urban expansion is an ever present issue with brigades across the South East Region such as Ripley Valley which border with the greater urban fringe.

Andrew Hopkins
A/Regional Manager Rural Operations
South East Region

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## Contact Details for Area Offices

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