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Cover and Inside: Photo courtesy of Morning Bulletin
Assistant Commissioner’s Message

What a state of extreme weather conditions we live in where in just a matter of a few months we have moved from devastating bushfires to flooding rains. Late 2009 saw Queensland experience one of the worst fire seasons on record with over 7,000 fires being attended with several of these regarded as some of the most intense fires this State has ever witnessed.

The unusual nature of this fire season had all our seven regions experiencing fire activity to varying degrees at the same time which in itself placed additional pressure on our crews and staff. Despite this, it is has been well noted that we all came through it with flying colours albeit that we exhausted everyone involved and without doubt it would have tested us had it have continued. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those RFS volunteers that went the ‘extra mile’ and gave of their time willingly not only to assist their community but others around the State. Many deployments out of area, even into northern NSW, were activated during this period, placing both staff and volunteers in unfamiliar surrounds, however all were there with the same goal in mind. Thank you one and all.

This year will see Queensland introduce the new Prepare Act Survive (PAS) campaign which emanated from the recommendations handed down by the Royal Commission established to review the devastating Victorian ‘Black Saturday’ fires. The PAS campaign will see the very successful Bushfire Prepared Communities (BPC) program currently used within Queensland being retired however a significant amount of material contained within BPC will be incorporated into the new PAS concept. Planning is well underway to introduce PAS into Queensland where we will see TV and radio advertising take place, brochures and other informative messages being developed along with training and awareness material provided to staff and volunteers. The adoption of PAS will see a nationally consistent approach to community education. PAS follows on from and compliments the introduction of the new fire danger ratings and tiered community messaging which Queensland adopted on 1 October 2009.

This year will also see the commencement of the Volunteer Community Educator (VCE) concept and it is exciting to see the take up by RFS volunteers to adopt this role within their own brigades. VCE’s will play a key role in educating their communities in relation to bushfire preparedness and more importantly what they need to do prior to, during and post fire activity. VCE’s will be instrumental in getting the PAS message out and as this will see ‘locals educating locals’ there is no doubt that the take up of the message will be heard.

Another major focus this year will see us introduce more rigour towards mitigation exercises where we will incorporate, as far as practical, an operational component that will utilise mitigation exercises structured to reflect an operational incident and depending on the size and likely duration of the exercise will incorporate a range of factors such as Incident Management Teams with a strong focus on the planning cell, engagement of support functions such as air operations, logistical support, etc. This ‘operationalising’ mitigation will also act as a conduit for training (initial and competency maintenance) with a major benefit of being able to bring brigades together to operate within a campaign type scenario.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge and congratulate Mr Don Alexander on being awarded the Australian Fire Service Medal, announced on Australia Day. Don is a stalwart of the RFS and an advocate for volunteer issues, campaigning for many issues in his role as the RFBAQ representative for the Barcaldine area.

Until next time, keep safe and take care.

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

www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au
2009 was an eventful, challenging and in some areas a record breaking year for the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service with extensive floods, cyclones, storms and one of the busiest bushfire season in years. Other incidents included a major oil spill off Moreton Bay, international deployments of Urban Search and Rescue Teams to Samoa (Tsunami) and Sumatra (earthquake), and national deployments to the Victorian ‘Black Saturday’ bushfires in New South Wales.

By INSPECTOR BRUNO GREIMEL
Manager, Environmental Fire Research and Training, Rural Operations, Queensland Fire and Rescue Service

Photo’s courtesy of Morning Bulletin
Setting the scene

In Queensland 2009 began with a baptism of floods in the tropical north while south east Australia sweated and sweated through the worst heatwave in 70 years. Record temperatures morphed into a devastating bushfire season that came to a head with the Victorian Black Saturday bushfires. In March, Cyclone Hamish moved south along the Queensland Coast causing a second dose of flooding and a maritime disaster when the cargo ship Pacific Adventurer lost 31 containers of ammonium nitrate and caused a nasty oil slick that eventually washed ashore at Moreton Island and the Sunshine Coast.

During May, an East Coast Low in Moreton Bay brought very heavy rainfall to parts of south east Queensland and resulted in flash flooding and moderate to major flooding of streams between the Sunshine Coast and the Ipswich area, whereas the rest of the State experienced below average rainfall. This rainfall pattern continued throughout June while July brought some serious rainfall deficiencies over large areas of Queensland.

This combination of rainfall events and dry spells helped create the fuel profile and condition that pretty much predetermined the active fire season we experienced over the majority of Queensland in 2009. The Bureau of Meteorology’s long range forecasts for the second half of 2009 and at the annual fire season prediction workshop held between the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre and Australian Fire Services confirmed that an early and severe bushfire season could be expected.

An early start to the fire season

From July onwards conditions started to deteriorate as serious rainfall deficiencies were experienced over large areas of Queensland. Although this was consistent with the development of an El Niño event, the record average and maximum temperatures and strong winds experienced during this time sent fire danger ratings into extreme, causing QFRS to issue a Fire Ban over four QFRS Regions in the southern and south western parts of the State on 23 August 2009. Many more were to follow. By the end of December and due to continuous periods of extreme fire weather in various parts of the State QFRS had declared a total of 22 Fire Bans with a total of 94 days over 36 local government areas. The only areas not affected by fire bans were the Shires in the far northern and far western part of the State.

As predicted, last year’s fire season has come upon us quick and fast with sustained hazardous fire weather and major incidents requiring a coordinated response from QFRS and other agencies and by the end of August rural and urban fire crews had been already battling hundreds of fires, mostly in the southern half of the State. From August to December all regions experienced fire weather that required the elevation of Wildfire Alert Levels (WALs) and activation of Incident Control Centre’s (ICC’s), Regional Operation Coordination Centre’s (ROCC’s) and the State Operation Coordination Centre (SOCC) to support ongoing fire operations.

It was the hottest and driest July to September period on record and the unusually dry and hot conditions continued into October bringing about a series of extraordinary dust-storms across south eastern part of the continent. Millions of people in south east Queensland and New South Wales were looking up at orange skies. This time however it was not smoke but severe dust storms that cloaked vast areas from Sydney to Brisbane. This pattern of little rain and high temperatures with widespread dust storms over southern and western Queensland continued until a series of severe thunderstorms moved across south east Queensland.

From August to December QFRS urban and rural fire crews responded to more than 7000 bush and grass fires, burning an area of more than 750 000 hectares of bush and farm land – that’s equivalent to roughly three and a half times the area of the ACT. The largest incident of these has been Mt Archer National Park near Rockhampton in the Central Region, where blazes threatened hundreds of homes. The Mt Archer fire burnt out more than 31 000 hectares of land before it was eventually contained with the assistance of volunteer firefighters from around Queensland as well as a task force from the NSW Rural Fire Service.

In the same month a grass fire caused widespread damage to fences and paddocks across thousands of hectares near Gaeta in the North Coast Region. Major fires also occurred at Gin Gin and Moolboolaman in the North Coast Region and Mt Morgan in the Central Region. In the Northern Region the fires at Bluewater, Mt Fox, Rollingstone, Ingham and Hidden Valley were some of the larger incidents of the 950 fires the region experienced between August and December.

In October the South West region had several large fires burning in the country north of Roma in the Injune/Carnarvon/ Springsure area and west of Warwick, which caused the activation of the Roma and Warwick Incident Control Centres to better support fire operations in both areas. Ground crews from QFRS, Queensland Parks and Wildlife and Forest Products Queensland were supported by surveillance and waterbombing aircraft. At the same time, the Q150 Steam Train was scheduled to tour the western areas of Queensland. Due to the high fire danger and fuel conditions parallel to the rail corridor the train was shadowed by rural fire appliances on its return journey between Toowoomba, Charleville and Stanthorpe.

State Operations

The SOCC was activated on the 22nd of September and operated continuously to support fire fighting efforts across the State for a record seven week period.

Numerous intrastate deployments of strike teams and IMT personnel have been conducted to provide support to
regional fire fighting efforts. For the first time, strike teams and fire investigators from the NSW Rural Fire Service have been deployed to assist operations in the North Coast and Central Regions. During this period the SOCC coordinated and supported multiple deployments including the two international deployments of our Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams to assist in recovery operations in the Samoan tsunami and Sumatran earthquake disaster zones.

2009 state-wild fire facts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sept</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landscape fires</td>
<td>1530</td>
<td>2439</td>
<td>2561</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>7169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total area burnt (Hectares)</td>
<td>231 669</td>
<td>223 737</td>
<td>260 290</td>
<td>25 365</td>
<td>741 061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firefighters involved</td>
<td>5299</td>
<td>8213</td>
<td>8646</td>
<td>2183</td>
<td>24341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire appliances involved</td>
<td>2129</td>
<td>3761</td>
<td>3859</td>
<td>913</td>
<td>10662</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The Air Operation Unit was called into action early in the season with the three Squirrel waterbombing helicopters switching instantaneously from training to operational mode to support fire crews a day after their arrival in Brisbane. In the period from August to December there was an unprecedented use of aircraft across all Regions. At its peak, the Air Operations Unit had up to 18 aircraft operating daily for a six day period to support on ground fire fighting efforts across the state. A mixture of fixed wing aircraft and rotary aircraft were used extensively for Aerial Observation and Water Bombing. Where required, aircraft were operating from forward airbases that were set up closer to the incident to provide better operational support to fire crews. Throughout the fire season Air Operations have been extensively utilised with good effect. For example, the use of aircraft in direct property protection was an outstanding success and a valuable lesson learnt for fire crews was the importance of good communications with Air Operations and early deployment of air assets. Lessons learnt and experience gained during this time will help us to strengthen our operational capability for future operations.

Air operation hours per QFRS region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Air Observation</th>
<th>Firebombing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FNR</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NR</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Coast</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1065 hours</td>
<td>1055 hours</td>
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QFRS Central Region hosted the State’s largest ever bushfire fighting operation.

Central Queensland experienced its biggest fire season in living memory. Within a three month period Central Region fire crews fought around 1532 vegetation fires. By late September fire activity became so prominent that QFRS declared a fire ban across the Central region for the first time since the early 1990’s. These bans remained in place until significant rainfall events in late December, making it the longest consecutive period of fire ban days in Queensland’s history.

Rockhampton made headlines in October by playing host to the State’s largest bushfire fighting operation when bushfires burned out of control in Mt Archer National Park on the outskirts of the city. In a three week campaign volunteer firefighters of the rural fire brigades in Central Queensland, Far Northern, Southeast, North Coast and Brisbane regions and New South Wales along with urban crews and fire crews from Land Management Agencies worked tirelessly side by side with land holders, often under extreme conditions to protect life and property. Despite the evacuation of residents from Frenchville, Koongal and Lakes Creek at various times on Saturday 17th, Sunday 18th and Monday 19th only one property was destroyed. The success of these operations highlights the importance of the joint training and co-ordination that has been promoted by QFRS across the state both in bushfires, floods and other emergencies.

A new Fire Danger Rating System

Unlike others states, Queensland was in the middle of its busiest fire season when the Royal Commission’s Interim Report on the Victorian Bushfires called for the implementation of changes to the Fire Danger Rating Scale and new public warnings system. Despite being in the middle of fighting fires from Cape York to Coolangatta, the QFRS acted quickly and confidently and implemented the revised Fire Danger Rating Scale (which includes two new categories of severe and catastrophic into the Fire Danger Rating Scale) in line with other states on 1 October 2009. The implementation of other recommendations, such as changes to the Prepare, Stay and Defend or Go Early policy and the launch of the new ‘Prepare Act Survive’ public awareness campaign had to be
postponed until the next fire season to avoid public confusion and to allow for adequate time to implement the revised system.

Queensland has been lucky to escape high levels of bushfire activity in the past few years but in 2009, in the August to December period alone, QFRS urban and rural fire crews responded to more than 7000 bush and grass fires across the State. During this time fires burnt over a combined area of more than 750,000 hectares of bush and farm land and despite unfavourable weather conditions and difficult terrain, with a minimal loss of houses and structures and thankfully no loss of life.

The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service would like to take this opportunity to thank all those volunteers and staff that were part of last year’s tremendous firefighting effort. Also a special thank you to all the Queensland and NSW firefighters that were deployed out of area to provide vital relief to local crews. These deployments are vital to our efforts to put maximum resources onto a fire to fight it effectively and enhance the operational capabilities of our staff and volunteers in different operating environments.

A final note to all that have taken part in one of the many emergency management operations in 2009. You have given much of yourselves in the interests of community safety. For that, you have a grateful community and our profound gratitude. A job well done.
Rural Operations and the Rural Fire Service are gearing up to develop a first class community education network to help keep communities safe thanks to the new Volunteer Community Educator (VCE) role and the implementation of the new Mitigation Education Officers (MEO).

Assistant Commissioner Steve Rothwell said that interest shown in the new VCE role since its launch in November 2009 has been extremely encouraging with applications already received across the state.

"Firstly I would like to thank everyone for the support they have shown to the implementation of this new role in the Service," Assistant Commissioner Rothwell said.

"Not only have we had a great number of enquiries, but we have already received a very positive number of applications. These applications are already being processed and training days being planned.

"To know that we will have our first VCEs trained and out in the field by late February is fantastic."

Since the launch in November there have been a number of queries regarding the role, any pre-requisites and the training. We wanted to take the opportunity to clarify some of these questions.

Q. Do I need a Certificate 4 or need to complete a Certificate 4 to become a VCE?

A. No. All the training you require is provided to you in the VCE one day training course organised by your Area Office however, any VCEs who would like the opportunity to undertake further training will be supported to do so.

Q. Can there be more than one VCE per brigade?

A. Definitely. How you choose to organise VCEs within the brigade is an entirely a brigade decision. Some brigades may have one or two VCEs who present all community education programs. Others may have several VCEs and one may present only Fire Ed, another BPC etc. Many brigades are simply working a system that suits their needs.

Q. Can I be an operational firefighter and a Volunteer Community Educator?

A. Yes however, one of the responsibilities of a VCE is to communicate important messages to their community during an incident. What this means is that you can be an operational firefighter but during an incident where messages need to be conveyed to the public, the role of VCE needs to take priority over your operational role.
As with the previous question, many brigades are finding their own solutions to this. For example, one brigade has several operational volunteers who are also taking on the VCE role. To manage the conflict between the VCE role and firefighting they have developed a monthly roster so they know, should an incident occur during that month, the person on the roster will take on the VCE role during the incident. This is just one example and once again your brigade can come up with a system that suits your needs.

Assistant Commissioner Steve Rothwell said with the VCEs up and running, we were extremely pleased to receive funding for the next five years to bring on seven Mitigation Education Officers to support and develop the network of VCEs and provide bushfire education to Queensland communities.

“Six of the new Mitigation Education Officer positions, or MEOs as we call them, have been classified as RFM02s and will be based in their respective regional offices of Cairns, Townsville, Rockhampton, Maryborough, Toowoomba and Beenleigh,” Assistant Commissioner Rothwell said.

“The role of these six MEOs will be to support and manage the VCE network in their region through recruitment, training and reporting and working with the Regional Manager to promote QFRS education packages and improve community resilience.

“MEOs will also take on a large mitigation role and will support the Regional Interdepartmental Committees’ and assist Fire Management Groups and local communities with bushfire mitigation strategies and planning.

“The seventh MEO position is classified as an Inspector level and will based in Brisbane. Although the Inspector position will also undertake these activities, the position will provide overall coordination and oversight of the VCE network at a state-wide level.

“This position will also manage and coordinate the state-wide reporting of the wildfire mitigation planning process and will work with myself on the Interdepartmental Committee for Bushfires providing a whole-of-government approach to wildfire mitigation and education strategies.”
New RF14 Forms

Every time your brigade completes an Incident Report Form (RF14) and sends it to the Area Office, your Area Office staff enter these details into the Operations Management System. This information is then analysed and used by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) to report to government on the incidents handled by our brigades and volunteers.

So why is this important? Having accurate data on the incidents attended and the time and commitment given by our volunteers allows us to more accurately report on what you do and why you do it. This identifies the importance of Rural Fire Brigades and their commitment to their communities and the state of Queensland.

We are aware that incident reporting can be time consuming however the RF14 form has been simplified and shortened making it easier to complete. The new incident report form will be available shortly and we are asking that when they become available all incident reporting be undertaken on the new forms.

You will be able to access an electronic copy of the form, available through the RFS Volunteer Portal, which can be submitted via email, or hard copy versions can be obtained through your Area Office.

Diesel Engine Retrofitting

As previously advised in the November issue of the Rural Fire Bulletin, the testing and trial installation of the new diesel pumpsets for the light and medium appliances was successfully conducted at the QFRS Brisbane workshop with Stage 1 of the Implementation Plan now well under way.

To ensure minimal modification to mounts and plumbing configurations are necessary locally, the medium attack appliances will be retrofitted with a Subaru/Robin diesel pumpset while the Light response appliances will be retrofitted with a Yanmar/Davey combination.

Stage one of the Implementation Plan (January to June 2010) will see the retrofitting of diesel pumpsets to appliances built in the past three years, with Stage 2 (July 2010 to June 2011) targeting appliances less than eight years old.

The initial supply of diesel pumpsets and installation kits are being delivered to 11 areas and the rollout of the remaining pumpsets scheduled for February and March 2010.
Energex Supporting Rural Fire Brigades

A range of equipment and resources will be made available to Rural Fire Brigades in the Brisbane and South East regions thanks to a new sponsorship agreement with Energex valued at $75,000.

Assistant Commissioner Steve Rothwell said he was extremely pleased to be able to present this new sponsorship agreement with Energex, which will greatly support brigades in the Brisbane and South East regions and enhance their operational and support capacity.

“Energex has long supported Rural Fire Brigades and through this new agreement, are offering these brigades the opportunity to apply for a range of approved items that will assist them to undertake mitigation and response activities within their communities.”

The items available are:
- Bouyal (Portable Dam)
- Slip-on unit
- Speed loader
- Chainsaw and associated PPE and Portable radios

As well as the following kits:
- First Aid Kit and Defibrillator
- Stand pipe/hose/pump and drip torch
- Generating and lighting tower

Energex Group Manager Corporate Communications Manager Ron Watson said Energex are proud to support such an important group of volunteers within the community.

“Energex have always been proud to support local Rural Fire Brigades. To us this new sponsorship arrangement is just another way we can thank RFS volunteers for the important job they do.”

All First Officers and Secretaries have been provided with an Energex Sponsorship Nomination Form with their edition of the Bulletin. If your brigade is in the South East or Brisbane regions and is interested in nominating to receive any of the items listed above, please complete the form and return it to your Area Office by Friday 9 April 2010. Applications need to be endorsed by your Area Director and Regional Manager. Successful brigades will be notified in writing.

The Managing Difficult Situations topic from within the First Officer program is now available on DVD!

www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au
Congratulations to the 2009 Volunteers of the Year

The Rural Fire Service (RFS) Volunteer of the Year Award is awarded annually to one RFS Volunteer per region who has made a significant contribution to the RFS during the past 12 months.

Congratulations to the following worthy recipients of the Award for 2009. We would like to acknowledge each of these people for their high level of commitment and enthusiasm towards their role as a volunteer in the RFS.

Far Northern Region – Marcus Brooks of Western Cape Region Rural Fire Brigade

Marcus is a dedicated volunteer who takes every opportunity to welcome and organise training for his brigade and himself. The Western Cape Region RFB provides fire service for Rio Tinto and supports a town with a population of more than 3000 so the responsibility is tremendous considering the isolation and distance. Marcus is well respected by his fellow co-workers and we are proud to have Marcus as a volunteer in the Cairns Peninsula District Rural Operations.

Northern Region – Michael Terkelsen of Horseshoe Bay Rural Fire Brigade

Michael Terkelsen was presented with the Volunteer of the Year Award for his committed leadership of the Horseshoe Bay RFB. During the past twelve months the brigade under Michael’s guidance has undertaken a number of excellent initiatives. These initiatives include a volunteer recruitment drive which has improved the capacity of the brigade and the installation of photovoltaic cells to harvest solar power. Solar power not only provides the brigade with some revenue but also assists in lowering the brigade’s carbon footprint. These initiatives have assisted the brigade to be an integral part of the Magnetic Island Community.

Central Region – Robert Downey of Gemfields Rural Fire Brigade

Rob has been a strong leader in the Emerald Area in both recruitment and the training of new volunteers to the Moodewarra Brigade through his work with students from the Emerald Agricultural College. Rob has also been the leader in implementing an accredited chainsaw course for rural fire brigade volunteers in Central Region and through his efforts many brigades now have suitably trained and qualified chainsaw operators. Rob’s commitment and enthusiasm has been a bonus to the training and operational capability of the brigade, area and region especially in the recent Central Region fire emergency.
Brisbane Region – Melissa Webb of Clear Mountain Rural Fire Brigade

Mel Webb is a member of Clear Mountain Rural Fire Brigade. She is the Pine Rivers Group Administration Officer and a Brigade Training Officer. Mel has been on numerous deployments both intra and inter-state. She was a Sector Commander during the November 2008 storm damage recovery effort in The Gap area of Brisbane. Mel shows a high level of commitment to the Rural Fire Service and always performs her duties in an exemplary manner. She has earned respect in varied roles including fire fighter, group administration and team leader.

South East Region – Andrew Rose of Mount Hallen Rural Fire Brigade

Andrew has been an active and involved volunteer for over nine years, serving as an operational officer and an executive office bearer of his local brigade and serving as a deputy group officer. Andrew shows great pride in representing the Rural Fire Service and promoting community safety and resilience. His passion and drive to help educate his local community members and Andrew works with his brigade to ensure a safer community.

North Coast Region – Brendon Goldsmith of South Nanango Rural Fire Brigade

Brendon has committed considerable time and effort to the South Nanango RFB and the Nanango RFB Group. His leadership within the brigade and within the group has given him a good reputation as a leader and mentor. Brendon is highly regarded by the local community, volunteers and the Caloundra Area staff and he works tirelessly to promote the Rural Fire Service on every level.

South West Region – Alan Payne of Warwick Group Rural Fire Brigade

Allan is the First Officer for Freestone RFB which is a rural brigade east of Warwick. Allan was elected as Group Officer for the Warwick Group last year and has developed a great operational capability with all the brigades in the Group. Alan’s commitment and tireless efforts in supporting both his community and the volunteers in the Group has earned him this recognition as Volunteer of the Year.
Revised Departmental Code of Conduct

The Department of Community Safety (DCS) provides public safety emergency response management and secure and appropriate corrective services to the state of Queensland.

In working together to achieve this goal the staff and volunteers of the DCS deal with difficult and complex matters and your decisions, actions and personal conduct can have a significant impact on the community.

To help guide volunteers and staff in their actions a revised departmental Code of Conduct was released in late 2009 and encompasses the previous Code of Conduct we operate under into the new DCS format. The Code of Conduct is based on the following five ethics principles:

Respect for People:
The DCS is committed to creating workplaces that are free from bullying, harassment and discrimination, where people are respected and diversity is embraced. To achieve this goal you are expected to:

- Treat people with respect, courtesy, honesty and fairness
- Respect difference values, beliefs, cultures and religions
- Value the contribution of the people you work with
- Work co-operatively
- Not bully, intimidate, harass or discriminate against other people.

Integrity:
Working as a volunteer of the Rural Fire Service means that you are in a position of trust. You must ensure that you:

- Make fair and transparent decisions
- Never use your position improperly to gain an advantage in your private life
- Report any fraud or corruption that you become aware of at work
- Make it clear that public comments about work matters are your personal views
- Only release DCS information when authorised.

Respect for the law and the system of government:
You are required to have a working knowledge of the laws and policies that apply to your work, including the Code of Conduct.

Diligence:
Work safely and to the best of your ability. The DCS is committed to creating and maintaining a workplace which is free from harm, and encourages a culture that has safety as an absolutely priority.

Economy and efficiency:
Use your time and your work assets and resources efficiently. You must:

- Always ensure that if you are responsible for any spending of the department’s funds, it is for legitimate activities only in line with departmental policy.
- Participate in relevant learning and development opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to perform your job and enhance the delivery of services.

There are times while undertaking your role as volunteers that you will need to make decisions or take actions that are not specifically covered in the Code of Conduct. A five-step ethical decision making model has been developed that will help you decide on the right thing to do when face with an ethical problem.
Privacy is Everyone’s Business

As a volunteer of the Rural Fire Service it is essential you understand your rights and obligations relating to yours and other peoples private information.

The Department of Community Safety (DCS) collects and uses personal information as part of its day-to-day activities. The Department’s obligation to protect personal information applies to all staff and volunteers.


The Act requires that personal information held by the Department be collected, stored, used and disclosed in accordance with the eleven Information Privacy Principles set out in the Act. An essential element of ensuring all private information is handled appropriately is for all volunteers to understand their role in protecting personal information.

‘Personal information’ is any information about an individual whose identity is apparent, or can reasonably be ascertained from the information. Sometimes personal information about an individual can reveal their identity even if their name is not mentioned, for example their address or physical description can lead to them being identified. Personal information can be anything about a person including work life, not just private life.

Here are some tips to follow when collecting, storing and securing personal information:

• Discuss sensitive and personal matters where others cannot overhear.
• Remember that emergency radio frequencies are not secure – do not discuss, by radio, any personal information that is not operationally essential.
• Ensure that all documentation that may contain personal information is stored safely and disposed of appropriately, for example in a paper shredder.
• Do not discuss the personal details of fellow brigade members with your friends or colleagues.
• Never discuss the personal information held by your brigade in public places.

Copies of the decision making model, Code of Conduct posters and the full Code of Conduct are available on the Volunteer Portal or from your Area Office.
Did you know on the RFS Volunteer Portal...

✓ You can view fortnightly video updates from QFRS staff on a range of projects, changes and initiatives.
✓ You can access the Rural Fire Service Brigade Manual.
✓ You can view weather conditions and access tools such as the FDRG and Wildfire Alert Levels to assist with your brigade planning.
✓ You can access the Operations Doctrine.
✓ You can view the latest news, training and events from your Area Office.
✓ You can see the Training Toolbox and play a range of video learning bytes on equipment, training and more.
✓ You can access the equipment catalogue.
✓ You can view the latest communication from the department including the Bulletin, Emergency and other newsletters.
✓ You can check out the latest news and announcements from Rural Operations on local, state and national projects, changes and initiatives plus much more.

To check out the Volunteer Portal visit the Rural Fire Service website at www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au and click on the “Connect to the Volunteer Portal” link at the bottom of the home page. Once to get to the Volunteer Portal select the “New User” button and go from there.

If you are having any difficulties accessing the site please contact Christine Osborne on (07) 3247 8305
We are now pleased to be able to announce to you the continuation of this partnership with Reliance Petroleum for another year in 2010.

Assistant Commissioner Rural Operations Steve Rothwell said that as with our previous partnership, this new support will provide brigades with fire fighting resources that will assist them now and in years to come.

“Reliance Petroleum are once again supporting rural fire brigades through the provision of 20 slip-on units to the value of $100 000,” Assistant Commissioner Rothwell said.

“Brigades in Far Northern, Northern, Central, North Coast and South West regions will have the opportunity to apply for one of these units to assist with their operational response capacity.

“We are extremely appreciative of the ongoing support rural fire brigades receive from Reliance Petroleum. Their contribution has and will continue to make a big difference for many brigades across the State.”

Reliance Petroleum Managing Director, David Birrell said rural fire brigades play a vital role in Queensland communities and Reliance Petroleum is pleased to be able to recognise this and support volunteers.

“The recent fires we have seen across much of the State have re-enforced the importance of rural fire brigades in protecting our communities and the dedication of the volunteers that make up the service.

“Providing these units is our way of assisting them and making their jobs a little easier.”

Even More Support from Reliance Petroleum

In 2008 we were pleased to announce a community safety partnership with Reliance Petroleum who provided 20 slip-on units to brigades across the State to the value of $100 000.

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Rural Operations have put in place a nomination process where brigades can apply to receive one of the 20 slip-on units available. Nominations are only open to brigades in Far Northern, Northern, Central, North Coast and South West regions.

Nomination forms have been provided to all Secretaries and First Officers with their copy of the Bulletin and are also available on the RFS Volunteer Portal. Any brigades interested in applying should complete the Reliance Petroleum Nomination Form and return it to their Area Office by Friday 9 April 2010.

Nominations need to be endorsed by your Area Director and Regional Manager and applications will be assessed on risk, current resourcing and brigade activities. Successful applicants will be notified in writing and the slip-on units will be distributed throughout 2010. To complement the support provided by Reliance Petroleum, Rural Operations will provide Speed Loaders to all brigades successful in receiving a slip-on unit.
RFS Fighting Fit has now begun!

Have you checked out Fighting Fit on the Volunteer Portal?

A comprehensive resource guide to participating in the RFS Fighting Fit Challenge has been created on the Volunteer Portal. If you have not yet registered to access the Volunteer Portal, visit the Rural Fire Service website at www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au and click on the “New User” button and follow the prompts.

The Fighting Fit Homepage is your gateway to information on participation, resources to help you through the Challenge, useful links and weekly result updates.

If you are having any difficulties accessing the site, please contact Christine Osborne on 3247 8305.
Ordering Automatic External Defibrillators

An Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) has been proven to be effective in those first few seconds in saving lives. In the unfortunate event of Cardiac Arrest, a patient’s chances are tripled if early defibrillation is used and can assist the heart to regain a normal rhythm.

In the November edition of the Bulletin we advised that brigades are now eligible to purchase AEDs, after being approved by the Assistant Commissioner Rural Operations through your Area Office.

For any brigades interested purchasing an Automatic External Defibrillator, approval will be based on whether the brigade can meet the following criteria:

1. The equipment is purchased from a reputable source – for example the Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) or St John’s Ambulance – thus ensuring it meets the relevant Australian Standards and that there is ongoing support should there be any issues.

2. There is a minimum of 2 brigade members who have obtained the appropriate first aid qualifications (ie the users are appropriately trained in use of defibrillators).

3. A testing regime as recommended by the manufacturer is implemented to ensure the machine’s safe usage; this would normally be the responsibility of the brigade First Aid Officer.

4. An appropriate maintenance regime is implemented in line with the manufacturer’s recommendations.

5. The AED is used for rendering assistance to volunteers who may require life-saving first aid.

All brigade secretaries have been provided with the Automated External Defibrillator Order Form with their edition of the Bulletin. Any brigade interested in purchasing an AED should review the form, complete it if interested and forward it to their Area Office.

For more information please contact your local Area Office.

Working Together to Improve Services

On 5 January 2010 Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) Commissioner Lee Johnson and Chief Executive Ergon Energy Ian McLeod signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the goal of working together to improve efficiencies in operations and provide better outcomes for Queensland communities.

QFRS operates the state’s urban and rural fire services throughout Queensland. In the parts of Queensland serviced by Ergon Energy, QFRS operates or supports the operations of 65 urban fire stations and 120 rural fire brigades.

The purpose of the MOU is to:

- Facilitate effective and efficient communications and planning regarding bush and grassfire risks in regional Queensland.
- Facilitate effective systems designed to minimise environmental impacts, minimise net public costs and maintain high standards of safety.
- Guide related dealings between the parties.
- Provide an overarching strategic framework that supports and guides specific operational processes in place between the parties.

Assistant Commissioner Steve Rothwell said each party recognise that they both have a role in providing, maintaining, and managing facilities and operations that contribute to the social and economic wellbeing and safety of the community.

“Ergon Energy’s primary role is the efficient and safe provision, maintenance and operation of its energy distribution network,” he said.

“And both parties have interests in the mitigation of bushfires in regional Queensland. The MOU is simply an agreement of the responsibilities, processes, decision criteria and standards which will assist us in achieving effective and efficient working arrangements between QFRS and Ergon Energy.

“The purpose of the MOU is not only to improve working arrangements between the two organisations, but also to work together for continuous improvement to the services both organisations provide to Queensland Communities.”
Bushfire CRC Research News

Over the past year, the Bushfire CRC has been busy increasing its research output. At the last count, the Bushfire CRC’s four research programs had produced around 761 outputs. This includes conference presentations, research reports, journal articles, research posters, books and many other types of academic and general publications dating back to 2002/3 when the Bushfire CRC began.

Another resource that is a central part of the CRC research adoption process are the regular project updates and scientific briefing papers, published in the form of ‘Fire Notes’ and ‘Fire Updates’. Recently published additions include topics on fire behaviour investigation, fire and carbon emissions, teamwork in Incident Management Teams, historical bushfire patterns in Western Australia, fire and plant survivability, firefighter fitness, human factors and decision making, aerial suppression drop assessment, and domestic experiences of bushfires. All of which are available on the Volunteer Portal or through the Bushfire CRC website.

Rural Operations staff are monitoring all research outputs to ensure that relevant research outcomes are captured and transferred into our guidelines and procedures.

Some of these are currently being appraised by QFRS Rural Operations through their CRC Research Adoption Group for implementation into our training and operational guidelines. These include the Smoke Exposure Management Field Guide and the Smoke Exposure Management on the Fire Ground: A Reference Guide. The later is a detailed research report from which the ‘Field Guide’ has been published. Based on research outcomes from these publications the QFRS will be developing its own guidelines to minimise smoke exposure on the fireground in the near future. Please check the Volunteer Portal and the next issue of the RFS Bulletin for updates.

Other publications that are currently being assessed include:

- A guide for burning under young eucalypts which deals with managing fire in young production forests and the Fire Severity Categories for the Tropical Savanna Woodlands of Northern Australia, which from a Queensland perspective has relevance for Gulf country and the grasslands of the tropical north.
- The final publication is the ‘Human Factors Interview Protocol (HFIP)’. This is an interview guide designed to draw out accurate recollections from incident staff during debriefs.

Despite the massive output by the Bushfire CRC to date, much of the research of the last seven years is still awaiting publication in various journals and many reports are yet to be converted from scientific literature to products suitable for adoption by end users. Over the next few month the QFRS will endeavour to provide regular updates and developments through the Volunteer portal and future issues of the Bulletin.

Safety Leadership

Safety leadership drives a positive safety culture and produces safe people. A safety culture is one that places importance on a safe working environment and where there is a strong organisational and managerial commitment to safety.

Here are some practical tips to create a strong safety culture:

- Talk about Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) issues at all brigade meetings especially any that may have been experienced by your brigade.
- Always identify any WHS issues with the First Officer.
- If required, escalate WHS issues to your Area Director.
- Keep up the good work with reporting WHS issues to your First Officer and Area Office.

Everyone in a workplace is a safety leader and everyone has a responsibility to keep the workplace safe.

Why not take some time to revisit the ‘Prevent Injury’ module of your basic firefighter skills training? In there you will find some practical advice on WHS matters on the fireground. It never hurts to revisit this information from time to time.
Incident Reporting and Investigation

The reporting of injuries is a positive step towards creating a safe workplace, which is an integral part of the way we do business.

In QFRS we use the Safety, Health and Environment (SHE) Incident Reporting System to report injuries, near misses, or hazards. Every incident reported through your First Officer and/or Area Office is recorded on SHE and undergoes an investigation. Thorough incident investigations are an effective way to identify information that can be used to prevent or control work related injuries or illnesses. Incidents are seldom caused by one single factor. The underlying causes of any incident can be uncovered by applying a systematic process of investigating facts, environment, statements and systems of work etc.

As a result of the investigating, actions can be implemented, which may minimise a similar incident and also be instrumental in preventing incidents of a different nature. Appropriate time and resources are allocated to the incident investigation process.

All Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) incidents must be reported and investigated.

Reporting of Injuries for Rural Operations across the state

During the period October to December, 59 injuries were recorded on the SHE Incident Reporting System. It was found that these injuries were sustained on the fire ground and also when travelling to and from fire incidents.

Every injury recorded in this time has been investigated. The investigations have highlighted:

- Areas where training can be improved
- The importance of wearing personal protective clothing at all times on the fire ground
- Maintaining a conscious awareness of your surroundings at all times

Fatigue has been identified as the catalyst for some injuries sustained by firefighters on the fire ground. It is important that everyone considers their own and their fellow firefighters safety and manages fatigue appropriately.

The common cause of fatigue is lack of sleep although there are many other factors such as work activity levels, travel to and from the incident, dehydration and nutrition before, during and after activity, which have a direct influence.

Ensuring you have regular breaks, keeping your body hydrated and eating nutritional foods can assist in preventing fatigue.

Ensure regular intake of water – particularly when working in hot conditions. Plain water is the most effective drink to prevent dehydration.

The signs of dehydration include – thirst, fatigue, lack of coordination, irritability and increased body temperature.
Brisbane Region

Major activities:
On the 17 December 2009 Area Training and Support Officer (ATSO) Richard Lohse led a strike team to Stanthorpe to assist NSW Rural Fire Service with fires on the border ranges. The team returned on the 21 December.

At the same time 14 volunteer fire fighters from Brisbane Region flew to Armidale for deployment in NSW.

Brisbane Region RFBs attended fires in the Wamuran area.

- Brisbane Region RFBs sent strike teams to North Coast Region to assist with a number of fires in the Region.
- Volunteers from Brisbane Region were deployed to Northern Region to assist with operational and incident management
- As is normal for this time of year many of the Area activities were curtailed due to the operational requirements.

Major achievements:
- The construction of the Mount Nebo Fire Station moved a step closer with agreement in November from neighbouring land holders on boundaries and access. The site is now in the process of gaining Ministerial Designation.
- We are pleased to announce the initial First Officer Workshop with six attendees was held at Wamuran on 21 November 2009. The First Officers gained knowledge of the Fire & Rescue Service Act 1990, planning mitigation burns, leadership qualities, the RFB Manual and strategies to deal with difficult situations. A second First Officer Workshop was held with 8 attendees at Stoney Creek on the 30th of January 2010.

The Caboolture Area Office introduced a Certificate II in Public Safety Fire Fighting Operations program to students at Kilcoy High School as a trial recruitment initiative. So far we have excellent interest from the students and are looking forward to delivering the program throughout the year.
- The program ensuring the annual inspection of all appliances to meet safety requirements has been readily accepted and implemented by all brigades was undertaken.

Special announcements/acknowledgements:
- BTSO Peta Miller has been successful in gaining the newly created position of Mitigation and Education Officer for the region. Peta has built a strong relationship with many volunteers and brigades across the region, work which will benefit her in this new and challenging role.

Southern East Region

Major activities:
In recent months South Eastern region, volunteer, auxiliary and permanent firefighters have been extremely busy controlling over three thousand reported vegetation fires across the region, and supporting other regions and New South Wales Rural Fire Brigades.

Brigades provided over one hundred personnel and thirty vehicles for nine intra-state and two inter-state deployments and I would like to thank everyone for their participation and support.

At home in South Eastern Region, brigades managed some significant fires, with activities extending over a number of days on occasions. The volunteer, auxiliary and permanent fire fighters and support members of the region can feel proud of their efforts over what was a difficult and busy season. All fire fighters applied the principles of Incident Management and weight of attack, as well as making good use of aircraft and heavy machinery, and partnering with other agencies and organisations to minimise fire damage.

Special announcements/acknowledgements:
- South Eastern Region welcomes two new staff members to the Ipswich Area. Clinton Neumann and Simon Dawson have been appointed to the positions of Brigade Training and Support Officer. Both have a long history of volunteer service with brigades in the Area, strengthening the staff knowledge of the volunteer culture within Ipswich.
- BTSO Peta Miller has been successful in gaining the newly created position of Mitigation and Education Officer for the region. Peta has built a strong relationship with many volunteers and brigades across the region, work which will benefit her in this new and challenging role.
- Australia day 2010 provides an opportunity for QFRS and South Eastern Region to recognise the work of many volunteers. This year we are proud to recognise Mr Andrew Rose, First Officer of Mount Hallen RFB as Volunteer of the Year, along with awarding Australia Day Medallions to John Bowles, Wayne Cook, Nicole Dobbin, Gwilyn Griffiths, Bert Headland, David Limberg, Brett McIlwaine, William Purvis, Russel Watson, Wesley Bruce and Matthew Meister. Bernadette Spittal from the Ipswich Area Office was also recognised with an Australia Day Medallion.
Central Region

Major activities:
The last quarter of 2009 saw the greatest level of fire fighting activity in Central Region in recent history. The continued drought and an ongoing failure of normal rainfall patterns saw no effective rainfall in most of Central Region for the period from April. This lack of rain combined with a good growing season in January – February provided ideal conditions for significant bushfires which threatened life and property.

Fortunately, even though the fires did eventuate we were able to protect almost all houses with only minimal losses. The willingness of rural fire brigades to support others in the Region was critical to this success. Even this was not sufficient during the mid October period when for the first time resources were called in from NSW Rural Fire service to assist in the Central and North Coast Regions.

The level of seamless integration between brigades, urban and rural resources and multiple agencies was recognised by everyone in the debriefs of the fires as a highlight. The focus of the regional training program in 2010 -2011 will be to build on this and ensure we are a stronger team for next time we are asked to respond.

Major achievements:
- The fact that interstate teams from NSW were able to repay the favours of recent deployments to their State is once again a testament to the AIIMS System and the compatibility of the National Standard training that rural firefighters undertake across the country.
- The NSW and other regional deployments were effective and efficient through the great efforts of staff and crews organising the transport, accommodation, catering, resourcing and briefing and the integration of crews with local knowledge.
- Debriefs for this period of fire activity have been undertaken and the results and lessons learned are being incorporated into a Major Incident Report.
- The period of Fire Bans implemented across the Region is the longest period of fire ban ever implemented and was a key element in the reduction of dangerous fires experienced during October – December and highlights the need to undertake true hazard reduction activities early in the season and not to leave this essential task until the fire season has arrived.

Special announcements/acknowledgements:
- Congratulations are in order to Mat MacFarlane who has been appointed to the Area Director (AD) position in Mackay following the move of Andrew Houley to the Reef Catchments Program. Many will know Mat from his period acting in the AD Mackay role previously and as a Station Officer in Mackay. Mat is a great asset to the Region and to the RFBs in the Area and he is looking forward to learning how to fish.
- Congratulations are also due to Brigade Training and Support Officer (BTSO) Tracey Charles who has been appointed to the Mitigation and Education Officer position in Central Region. Tracey will bring her usual enthusiasm and energy to a very important role especially given the lessons learnt from the recent fire emergency in Central Region.
North Coast Region

Major activities:
Vegetation Fire activity kicked off late July early August with 2090 vegetation fires recorded between 1st August and 25 November. The peak of this activity was 41 days from 22 August till 30 October, with a total of 1000 vegetation fires recorded, averaging 24 fires per day.

Volunteers from across the Region dedicated countless hours in firefighting, stand by, strike teams, Incident Management and Support and Air Operations just to name a few. A strike team was formed from brigades in the Maryborough/Hervey Bay area and departed Maryborough for Gayndah on 27 September 2009 to attend fires over a two day period. The volunteers received a briefing from Area Director, Warren Edwards before departing. Administration Officer Lisa Spencer organised logistical support for the volunteers.

During this peak period North Coast Region received assistance from South East, Brisbane, Far Northern and South West Regions. Central Office staff were also assisting in the ICC’s (set up at Kingaroy, Caloundra, Maryborough and Bundaberg) and Regional Operations Coordination Centre (ROCC) at North Coast Regional Office. New South Wales Rural Fire Service also supported fire operations with fire fighters, staff and wildfire investigation teams. Fire Comm also received assistance from adjoining Regions. Maintenance and servicing of appliances were undertaken by QFRS mechanics and supported by Queensland Transport, QPS and Road Tec.
Without the dedication of the volunteers and staff the fires would not have been brought under control in such a safe and effective manner.

Major achievements:
- A very successful First Officers forum was held in Caloundra covering items including: Volunteer Community Educator and Volunteer Portal, Volunteer Training and Development, Fire Care Presentations, Radio Communications (Repairs, Infrastructure and Firecom), Bushfire Prepared Communities, State Overview Rural Operations and National Medal presentations.
- The Black Mt RFB Station opening and Kureelpa RFB appliance handover in November.

Special announcements/acknowledgements:
- Congratulations to Area Director Gary Seaman for achieving Rural Operations Staff Officer of the year.
- Congratulations to Volunteer Brendon Goldsmith from South Nanango Rural Fire Brigade for being successful as the North Coast Regions Volunteer of the Year recipient.
- Welcome to our latest staff member to join the team at Bundaberg and that is Brigade Training and Support Officer Nicole Dobbin. Nicole comes to us from the Ipswich Area and has been an active brigade member for 5 plus years. I would also like to welcome Craig Magick who has been appointed to the role of North Coast Region Mitigation Education Officer. Craig was previously with Queensland Health however has been an Auxiliary Lieutenant for the last 15 years.

Property loss and injury rates were low given the number of fires and the suppression activity levels. Fires of this magnitude do not just go out – it takes an extensive logistic support system to ensure operations are effective. Concerted efforts were made by all staff and volunteers and often people went over and beyond expected levels. All personnel involved should take pride in the efforts made to combat these fires and have placed North Coast Region in a good position in managing such events.
South West Region

Major activities:
The past four months has been an extremely busy time for many rural fire brigades and staff from South West Region. This fire season presented many challenges for us. We had numerous fires starting from lightening strikes, and the extremely dry conditions provided some very unusual fire behaviours. There were some very large fires in the range country north of Injune and for the first time we were able to deploy strike teams from the eastern part of the region to support landowners and primary producer brigades to control these fires.

Many days throughout this period the Fire Danger reached well into “Extreme”. Thankyou to everyone for their efforts throughout this extended period of wildfire activity. The contribution from everyone had a significant impact on the management of all incidents.

The cooperation between all land management agencies this fire season has been extremely good on the fire ground, at control centres and overall regional coordination. The South West region assisted NSW Rural Fire Service in controlling a number of fires just south of the border and strike teams from Warwick, Stanthorpe and Toowoomba were deployed over a 10 day period.

The South West region now has the capacity to operate three remote air bases to support and coordinate air operations. We have found that by using aircraft as first response on days when the FDI is 40 plus and for aggressive mopping up is the best form of support to ground crews. A number of training sessions have been programmed for early 2010 to up skill identified staff in a range of air operation disciplines.

Major achievements:
Bushfire Prepared Community programs have had unprecedented attendances during November and December around Toowoomba, with up to 100 people attending each of the 2 sessions at the Middle Ridge Golf Club. Zone Officer Dennis Burton and BTSO Paul Storrs conducted these programs and made quite a number of follow up visits to inspect properties and provide specific advice particular to the landowner needs.

Special announcements/acknowledgements:
• The third Command vehicle for the Region was delivered to the Crows Nest Group in December. This was another Triton light attack that has been transferred from a fire fighting appliance to a command vehicle. Warwick Group has completed their vehicle and this design will be used by Stanthorpe and Crows Nest. These vehicles have provided tremendous assistance at incidents in helping support command and control.
• The Dalveen community came out in strength when their fire station was officially opened on 5 December. Also at this ceremony AC Rothwell presented 9 Diligent and Ethical Service medals to Volunteers, the keys to Freestones new appliance and announced the Volunteer of the Year.
• The Volunteer of the year for South West Region was presented to Alan Payne. Alan is the Group Officer for the Warwick Group and First Officer for Freestone Rural Fire Brigade. Alan’s commitment and tireless efforts in supporting both his community and the volunteers in the Group has earned him this recognition.
• The Glen Aplin Fire station was officially opened by AC Rothwell on the 5 December 2009. The keys to their light attack appliance were also presented at this ceremony.
• Congratulations to Paul Storrs BTSO for the Toowoomba Region who was successfully appointed to the role of Mitigation Education Officer for the region. Paul will continue to work closely with volunteers in his new role.
Northern Region

Major activities:
The Northern Region experienced its busiest bushfire season in over 30 years. From 18 August to 23 December the region experienced 1018 fires over 128 days. The region lifted the last of the local fire bans on 4 January 2010 and has reverted to WAL 1.

The western parts of the region has and is experiencing flooding in the LGA’s of Burke, Carpentaria and Diamantina with the later being disaster declared in December. The region is currently preparing for the wet season which is forecasted to be short but very intense.

Region Manager Steve Barber conducted an IMS familiarisation and disaster management training day followed by a real time large scale exercise for the DDMG, with 35 members participating.

The region has completed its lessons learnt workshop with a number of opportunities to progress, a report will be finalised by end January.

Major achievements:

• Regional staff, volunteers CLO’s and SES volunteers were very active in many communities, particularly those bushfire affected communities. This includes doorknocking, public meetings, media messages and interviews.

• Rural Operations has completed the Hinchinbrook Flood Warden project on behalf of EMQ and shire council, this includes FW training, communication equipment testing, and Helicopter LZ identification, risk assessment and LAP completion.

Special announcements/ acknowledgements:

• A new Medium appliance was delivered to Burketown Rural Fire Brigade in November and the official handover is scheduled for 6 February.

• Congratulations to Mat MacFarlane who was successful in being in achieving a promotion to the role of Area Director Rural Operations Mackay. I would also like to congratulate A/ATSO Charters Towers Tony Stroud was successful in being permanently appointed to the ATSO position in Mackay

• BTSO Tim Chittendon was successful in achieving promotion to Mitigation Education Officer Townsville. I am sure Tim will continue to work with many of you in his new role.

Lastly, I would like to thank all volunteers for their hard work and dedication over the last few months. It has been an extremely busy, tiring and stressful time and your commitment and dedication to not only your brigades, but your communities has been apparent.
Far Northern Region

Major activities:

Far Northern Region experienced a busy protracted fire season with little or no rainfall recorded in most areas from February to late December. At the time of writing although the monsoon trough is now active in the Northern Cape, the Tablelands area is still rain deficient and continues to experience fire activity.

I would like to thank all our volunteers and staff that worked tirelessly and diligently over the past few months in managing the numerous outbreaks and incidents in the region. With abnormally dry conditions, low humidity and strong winds hampering control efforts it was good to see our brigades still positive with their approach to managing incidents and planning for the protracted event rather than applying short term tactics that were doomed to fail given the weather and fire behaviour conditions.

Unfortunately many outbreaks were deliberately lit or caused through human error, and while our Fire Wardens were vigilant in refusing or restricting permits we still have a long way to go in educating many landholders about lighting fires less than two metres in any direction during severe fire weather and drought conditions.

To ensure firefighter safety and provide financial support to our brigades, all identified Rural appliances used during the extended firefighting operations were serviced and maintained by QFRS.

Major achievements:

- While a significant amount of country was burnt this year through wildfires, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of many brigades, landholders and land management authorities in reducing the fire risk in numerous identified high fire risk areas through hazard reduction prior to the season. It is through their efforts and planning that we were successful in reducing property and pasture loss this year and created valuable fall back options for our brigades.

- Cooperation with urban and rural crews and land management agencies was again excellent this year with Incident Controllers appointed based on local needs and joint operations focusing on the management of the fire and reducing the impact on the community.

- Fire activity was significant in the Cape and areas west of Cooktown and the tablelands this year and the coordination of fires with remote landholders and the managing neighbour disputes was handled extremely well by many of our brigade officers. With limited equipment and communication difficulties in many remote areas the work of these officers and their brigades with private equipment was significant in maintaining valuable feed for stock and reducing damage to fences, equipment and out buildings.

- Despite all the fire activity our trainers were still able to deliver training and conduct assessment of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for many existing members to accredit them in FMS though observation at fires and incidents.

- Crew Leader training was provided at Almaden and well done to all the Horn and Prince of Wales Island brigade members that recently completed their FMS accreditation and building firefighting capacity in their communities.

- Please contact your Area office if you wish to participate in any training. Remember to regularly review the Area training calendar on the Volunteer Portal if you have internet access.

Special announcements/acknowledgements:

- Congratulations to BTSO Jacqui Gibson in being successful in her application for the Mitigation and Education Officer position in the region. Jacqui is well known to many in the region through her excellent work in training and community education. After attending a one week induction program in Brisbane, Jacqui will commence duties in the Regional Office on 15 February 2010.

- At the time of writing due to an aneurism and hospitalisation in October 2009, ATSO Brendan Ridgwell is on extended sick leave and currently in the acute care ward in Townsville hospital. With the excellent support from his wife Alison and two girls I am sure Brendan’s situation will improve, however it is unknown when Brendan will return to work and his enthusiasm, skills and experience are currently missed in the region.
## Contact Details for Area Offices

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<th>Office</th>
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<td><strong>North Coast Region</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Maryborough Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 4190 4839</td>
<td>(07) 4190 4853</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bundaberg Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 4153 3244</td>
<td>(07) 4151 2166</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caloundra Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 5420 7517</td>
<td>(07) 5420 7521</td>
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<td><strong>South West Region</strong></td>
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<td>Toowoomba Area Office</td>
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<td>(07) 4614 2833</td>
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<td>Roma Area Office</td>
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<td>(07) 4622 1451</td>
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<td><strong>South East Region</strong></td>
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<td>Ipswich Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 3381 7122</td>
<td>(07) 3381 7116</td>
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<td><strong>Brisbane Region</strong></td>
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<td>Caboolture Area Office</td>
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<td>(07) 5420 1339</td>
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<td><strong>Far Northern Region</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cairns Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 4039 8240</td>
<td>(07) 4039 8647</td>
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<tr>
<td>Innisfail Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 4061 0650</td>
<td>(07) 4061 0651</td>
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<td><strong>Northern Region</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Townsville Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 4796 9082</td>
<td>(07) 4799 7184</td>
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<td>Charters Towers/Cloncurry Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 4787 8213</td>
<td>(07) 4787 4708</td>
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<td><strong>Central Region</strong></td>
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<td>Mackay Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 4965 6641</td>
<td>(07) 4965 6640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barcaldine Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 4651 1190</td>
<td>(07) 4651 1803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerald Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 4982 0001</td>
<td>(07) 4982 0411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockhampton Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 4938 4736</td>
<td>(07) 4922 2768</td>
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