As you read this August edition of the Rural Fire Bulletin, we will have begun the 2014-15 Fire Season. I trust that First Officers and Brigades took advantage of the second annual Operation Cool Burn, and your proactive approach to bushfire mitigation has prepared your communities for what is looking like a drier than normal season.

This season, not unlike previous seasons, I expect that volunteers, part-time, and full-time staff will operate together in an environment of mutual respect and trust. Our operations benefit from this partnership as much as they benefit from local knowledge.

Please continue to fully engage with your communities, your local government, land management agencies, and landholders, to ensure that the best effort is applied.

As Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) develops as a new Department, ongoing changes are being made across the whole organisation.

In early June the Commissioner, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services announced a new Senior Management structure. QFES will now move to a three (3) Deputy Commissioner model.

The new model will cover the service delivery areas of Regional Operations, Emergency Management, the Rural Fire Service and State Emergency Service and a new area of Operational Capability and Performance.

First and foremost, I want to say a big thank you to all those who expressed their congratulations on my appointment as the acting Deputy Commissioner, Emergency Service Volunteers, which I have received from volunteers, staff and community partners. I can assure you it is extremely humbling and I am giving this new role my 110 percent effort.

My vision is reflective and I intend reinvesting in fire in the landscape through both applications of mitigation and response. I also intend to empower the local teams of all volunteers and their respective communities so they can achieve their aspirations and goals. I am also very keen for us as an organisation to continue to work in partnership with our key stakeholders and continue to build on these already positive working relationships.
All 3 Deputy Commissioner positions will provide support and guidance to our Department to shape the future of QFES.

The following arrangements will apply:

- Mr Bryan Cifuentes will act in the role of Deputy Commissioner, Emergency Service Volunteers, covering all volunteer activity for QFES - commencing 16 June 2014
- Mr Ian Mitchell will act in in the role of Deputy Commissioner, Operational Capability and Performance – commencing 10 June 2014
- Mr Mark Roche will continue to act in the existing role of Deputy Commissioner, Operations

Some further work will be done to realign areas of responsibility between the existing Deputy Commissioner, Operations and the new Deputy Commissioner, Operational Capability and Performance. A separate announcement will be made in the near future concerning this matter.

QFES is now moving on from the transition to a new Department model into an era of continuous improvement and action. Your suggestions and ideas will continue to be sought to assist us in moving forward.

The QFES Strategic Plan 2014 – 2018 has been accepted by the Public Service Commissioner and is now available on the Volunteer Portal. Please take some time to read through the strategic plan, familiarising yourself with the organisational vision, purpose, values, objectives, and strategies that will underpin the priorities of the organisation.

Update on Recommendations

I am pleased to confirm the formal closure of a further nine Malone recommendations submitted to the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services. These include; M5, M18, M27, M32, M33, M66, M67, M68 and M71. This now makes 52 Malone recommendations, one PACSR recommendation and one PACSR finding closed. For further information, closure statements summarising the outcomes can be found on the Closed Recommendations page of the QFES Transition Information Site, located on the Volunteer Portal.

To date, the closed recommendations provide QFES with enhanced capabilities and improved direction.

New QFES crest

The new Queensland Fire and Emergency Services Crest has been approved, and using a phased approach will be implemented on to new material.

Predictive Services Unit

Finally, I would like to extend my congratulations to Andrew Sturgess – the first person in Australia to gain the Fire Behaviour Analyst qualification. You will find an article on Andrew’s work in this edition of the Bulletin.

Recruitment

In the coming months, recruitment and selection processes will be undertaken for various vacant permanent positions within Rural Fire Service Queensland. This includes both operational and administrative positions. Volunteers who meet the selection criteria qualifications and any mandatory qualifications are eligible to apply. These vacant positions will be advertised on the Queensland Government Smart Jobs website, so if you are interested, then it is suggested that you regularly check this website. The website address is www.smartjobs.qld.gov.au, then at the drop down Box titled ‘Department or Organisation’, choose ‘Fire and Emergency Services’.

Neil Gallant
AFSM MiFireE BTeach Assistant Commissioner Rural Fire Service Queensland

Queensland is a big state and various challenges above the local response require coordination. Through my role in Rural Fire Service Queensland, I have supported various State Emergency Service responses to cyclones and floods which are a natural part of living in North Queensland. Time and again, I have witnessed where the local units, whilst overwhelmed with the size of the disaster, rallied and provided local expertise to guide the out of area response. This builds on the Commissioner’s strong message of “know your patch” and a strong appreciation of that local knowledge. There is no substitute; full stop.

I plan to build on this model of local experience and expertise, guiding appropriate response to volunteer activations, because the locals will own the outcome well after the support has gone home. Coordination rather than command will be the cornerstone of volunteer engagement and operational success. Partnerships with a range of stakeholders, particularly Regional Councils, industry groups and regional representatives from government agencies are crucial to ensuring the best response to any situation.

Having been a member on the Malone Review team and listening to the collective voices of volunteers and community partners across Queensland, this has strengthened my existing belief that the real core strength of the organisation is local community values of neighbour helping neighbour, community helping community and empowerment of local ownership. I strongly believe that this ethos is part of any volunteer’s reason for doing what they do. This will not only be core to Rural Fire Service Queensland and State Emergency Service volunteer groups, but also Volunteer Marine Rescue, Coastguard, Lifesavers and many others not mentioned. Any sports team will never win any premiership if they did not have the same ethos of mate helping mate!

Fundamental to my belief has been my long term on-the-ground experience of 43 years at the coalface commencing with Forestry Department, National Parks, Fraser Island Recreation Board, the Rural Fire Board and Rural Fire Service Queensland. A highlight of my career is having had the good fortune along the way of gaining working experience on “Project VESTA” directed by Phil Chaney and Jim Gould, who are both highly regarded and renowned CSIRO scientists on fire behavior and the impact on the landscape.

I look forward to dealing with the many challenges that I will no doubt encounter in my new role as the Deputy Commissioner, Emergency Service Volunteers and I am very optimistic about moving my portfolio forward into the future.

Bryan Cifuentes
Acting Deputy Commissioner, Emergency Service Volunteers Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au

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The Social Revolution
Interacting in 2014

Interacting and socialising has seen a significant shift in recent years with the introduction and prevalence of social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube and the myriad of others.

Social media isn’t a fad, it’s become a revolution and is now part of the fabric of everyday life to help us socialise, organise, discover, learn and share! The rate of growth of sites like Facebook has never been seen before, it is incredible to think that in less than a year Facebook added over 200 million users, that if it were a country it would be the world’s third largest and that there are a phenomenal 60 million status updates on Facebook daily!

But what does this mean for Rural Fire Brigades? What opportunity does this offer? If you and your brigade have been trying to find effective ways to reach new potential volunteers, to inform all current members of upcoming activities or perhaps you are trying to find the best way to communicate with the masses in a quick timeframe in times of emergency... well the answer might be to go digital!

We have all seen the power and influence of the keyboard, during emergencies such as the Brisbane Floods or Cyclone Yasi and there is no reason the positive results from these events need to be isolated to large-scale natural disasters. Social media is certainly not the only solution and should not replace other traditional communication strategies, but it is a cost effective and efficient way to communicate and interact with both the community and the brigade.

If you have been looking at starting a Facebook or social media strategy or perhaps have a page and don’t know where to start here are my suggestions to getting online:

Step 1: Determine your target market – who will you be talking to? In most cases you will want to talk to two distinct different markets the community and brigade members. They may seem like one in the same, but think about the language you would use to talk to each market and think about the type of information and messaging you want to send to each.

Step 2: Determine your online goals and objectives, give your social media a direction – how many people do you want to reach, what type of interaction do you aim to attract and what real results (eg: new volunteers) would you like to see come from the page.

Step 3: Manage your resources: Social Media and digital platforms can take a lot of time to maintain, but doesn’t need to if your strategy provides clear direction, allocates resources effectively and allows for scheduling. Develop a content calendar: who will post what, when will it be posted, and will budget be allocated to promoting the post?

Step 4: Set boundaries and policies: implementing a social media policy gives employees and volunteers a clear direction with regards to usage and appropriate behaviour online and can manage your brigades reputation. This about how you will respond to poor feedback and what the expectations of the brigade are.

Step 5: Now it is time to get social, set up your page, monitor the stats and start building your online audience. Here are my top 10 tips to building your online presence and maximizing your results:

1. LikeAlyzer: Use this tool to review your Facebook page and get recommendations on improving your engagement and interaction. www.likealyzer.com

2. Focus your online efforts: select the key platforms that can help you build the greatest presence for your event and focus on these, try not to spread your time thinly across multiple platforms, but rather do really well in two or three mediums.

3. Social Media is a two way street – Take the time to ask questions, reply to comments and show a genuine interest in your audience

4. Leverage your existing networks to build your online presence: get your staff, avid customers, business partners and business networks to help share your online content. Encourage posting at your event

5. Think Social, Think Human... Social media is not a hard sell, it is a social platform and content should be fun, quirky and something which the audience will engage and be interested in

6. Monitor the stats and respond to what works

7. Don’t block or delete negative comments or feedback! If a customer posts something negative on your page about an experience they have had with your event, your instant reaction might be to hit delete. Instead, show your clients and audience you care about their feedback and respond providing solutions, users will look at posts like this and judge your reaction more than the post itself

8. Timing is key use social media to drive traffic to your business, if you have an event or activity on a Saturday that you wish to promote, post something on the Friday night and the Saturday morning (for the impulse customers). Use the stats to see when your audience is online and leverage this!

9. Less is more keep your posts short, succinct and interesting, set a limit on the number of characters per post to increase engagement. Use hash tags to tap into trending topics and start a conversation – but don’t overuse them.

10. Pictures = more engagement 120% more engagement! Personalise your page with photos of your event or even your workplace or volunteers to give the audience a better connection with you and your team

Lisa Budd
Firefighter, Secretary, and VCE
Saunders Beach RFB

www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au
Chaplaincy & Family Support

What is chaplaincy & family support?
QFES Chaplaincy and Family Support Program exist for the purpose of supporting, nurturing and expressing the spiritual and religious beliefs and values of the members of the service and their families.

Who can use chaplaincy?
ALL Fire Service personnel (paid and volunteer), their families, and victims of incidents involving QFES Irrespective of religion or denominational affiliation

Confidentiality?
Work alongside other ministers of religion and FireCare, all information relating to individuals is kept confidential, unless permission to share is gained.

What type of services does chaplaincy provide?
- Ceremonies – weddings, renewal of vows, funerals, memorials, christening or naming ceremonies, any other ceremony as arranged
- Visits – stations / brigades, hospital, home or at another suitable venue
- Family guidance – on request
- Stress management - assist

Who are the chaplains?
Genne & Dennis Bryant
Genne.Bryant@qfes.qld.gov.au
Dennis.Bryant@qfes.qld.gov.au

Know Your Patch

Identifying and Profiling risk in your patch is what we do every time we are out in area. Whether on the way to an incident or training in area. We are always watching and assessing our bushfire risk. If we admit it – we even do it when we are not at station.

Bushfire risk perception can most times be a personal opinion. It can be driven by history and experiences. So what does risk mean to our community? Is it the risk to their home and their family or is it risk of losing their crops and their livelihood? Like everything in our state – it varies from region to region. To understand risk in our communities we need to acknowledge that everyone will have their own opinion, their own needs and their own expectation. How we use that for good will depend on what risk means to us. Our biggest challenge is to ensure that our communities understand and own THEIR own risk. If they own the risk and acknowledge the consequences if nothing is done – we have the ground work for a successful resolve and outcome. Sometimes it won’t be easy but the old saying of constant dripping wears away to stone – works well.

Let’s not reinvent the wheel. When I am out and about I speak to long term residents within the community. Researching the area history is important to all brigades. What has the risk been in the past – what has changed? What mitigation activities have been undertaken – where there hazard reduction burns conducted or did the weather and conditions not support this and a community education based approach was used? What are their concerns and what suggestions do they have? Listen – listen to what they say and utilise what they are telling you. We rely on local knowledge during incidents – so why would it be any different in our preparation phase?

First Officers - if you have an area that you are concerned about in your patch please contact your regional Bushfire Safety Officer for further assistance. Together we can plan a review of the risk and formulate a strategy to address it.

Peta Miller-Rose
Manager, Bushfire Safety
RFSQ South East Region
The GWN is a fully Managed Service which means that individual brigades will no longer have to fund radio maintenance as the service provided from Telstra/Motorola covers genuine radio faults. This includes technology refreshes but not inappropriate usage or consumables.

The GWN will bring the public safety agencies onto the same radio communications platform and frequency group, and provide the ability to communicate between multiple agencies.

One of these new functions is a ‘Duress’ which will allow for GPS locating along with priority alerted messaging of a person on the incident scene in position of a radio who is experiencing an emergency.

The GWN provides a significant improvement in digital radio coverage which is eagerly anticipated by QFES. The GWN will not solve all ‘black spots’ but firefighters should see a vast improvement in coverage due within the Service Area.

Rural Brigades that are serviced by the GWN shall be receiving the new Motorola APX Series radios. These digital radios will replace the Simoco analogue UHF mobile and portable radios and shall be allocated to riding positions on appliances. An intelligent Impress Multi-charger will be issued to stations to ensure that batteries are always maintained for optimum performance – no more need for manual reconditioning or deep cycling. The changeover of the radios will be coordinated by the respective area staff that will ensure that the radio installation and required training happen simultaneously. The GWN implementation does not affect the existing VHF network.

**GWN User Reference Groups**

The QFES GWN Unit are very conscious about engaging a collective from the wider organisation.

Two QFES User Reference Groups (URG) have been established and are critical in identifying the issues, recommending solutions and assisting in transition of the GWN into effective GWN operations.

The 2 URGs are:
1. Firecom User Reference Group
2. Fire Officer’s User Reference Group
The P25 Rollout

Over the past 20 years, there have been a range of studies that have reviewed the state of the Land Mobile Radio (LMR) infrastructure operated by Queensland’s Emergency Service Organisations and proposed various ways, (both organisationally and functionally), of delivering a more up-to-date and fit-for-purpose LMR service.

In mid-2012, the Queensland Government commissioned the procurement of an LMR service, to be known as the GWN that is intended to address the frontline radio communications needs of the State’s Police, Fire and Ambulance services in South East Queensland (SEQ).

On 2 September 2013, the Premier Campbell Newman and Treasurer Tim Nicholls announced that Telstra had been chosen to design, build, operate, and maintain the GWN for the 2014 G20 Leader Forum and for SEQ worth $457.3 million over 15 years under a managed services agreement.

Whilst the GWN will provide contemporary radio communications services to support Fire Service operations in SEQ, it does not currently address the needs of other non-fire specific emergency service personnel such as those of the SES, nor is there any timetable for GWN to be extended beyond SEQ.

Given the above, QFES have been planning how best to address the state-wide communications challenges and help identify an appropriate course for development of LMR capabilities to support QFES operations over the coming five to eight years.

In order to trial other P25 Digital platforms the Ergon Energy P25 – VHF High-band digital platform was chosen. The Fire and Ergon Energy Trial – P25 (FEET25) – forms a key part of those planning activities for QFES, specifically looking at the technical and operational aspects of a partnership between both organisations, with a view to inform any future commercial and financial discussions. This trial has been jointly resourced by QFES and Ergon Energy as the trial utilises existing Ergon Energy network infrastructure. The Ergon Energy network is currently based on having suitable mobile radio coverage.

The objectives of the Trial are to:
1. Establish at a high level a validated position on the use of the Ergon Energy network as a part of the QFES network outside of the GWN SEQ Service Area;
2. Establish the limitations and opportunities in an operational sense to QFES operations in using the Ergon Energy network;
3. Establish the limitations and opportunities in using the Ergon Energy network from a technical perspective;
4. Gain a deeper understanding of any areas that need to be addressed in commercial discussions generally in areas such as support, capacity, coverage etc.; and
5. Test the interoperability between the GWN and the Ergon Energy network, to inform QFES on options to address the GWN Digital Divide.

The trial timeframe aligns with QFES exercises and actual proactive fire risk reduction (i.e. burning) for the upcoming 2014 Fire Season which will also be undertaken between March and July 2014, with the final results of the trial due in August 2014.

The trial is being conducted using seven Urban Brigades (14 appliances), fifteen Rural Brigades (23 appliances) and one SES Group across the Warwick and Stanthorpe areas.

QFES has identified the talk groups to use during the trial and adjusted the operational plans to reflect the difference between a channel and a talk group. A talk group being a group of users with a common purpose i.e. talking to firecom, talking to sector command, etc. and not geographically bound like a channel. QFES has also explored the use of the standard status messaging features in the P25 as an alternative to voice communications.

Incident statistics for the trial area suggest that in order to maximise the ability to establish at a high level a validated position on the use of the Ergon Energy network as a part of the QFES network outside of the GWN SEQ Service Area, multiple operational exercises will have been included in the trial.

The scenarios for the exercises have the following characteristics:
- Grass Fire;
- Threat to property;
- Urban and Rural response required;
- Current Black Spot area(s);
- Power Pole catches fire;
- Incident Command Centre (ICC) established;
- Officer down/hurt; and
- Real time data exchange with the Commissioner.

The exercise evaluation criteria include:
- Coverage Assessment;
- Capacity Assessment;
- User Satisfaction;
- Identification and assess operational limitations; and
- Identification operational opportunities for subsequent consideration by governance.

The Ergon Energy network uses benefits of the P25 Digital platform unlike the current QFES network uses large amounts of “air time” and “bandwidth”. It uses half the bandwidth and sends information as a data burst and not voice on a carrier wave. The radio signal will also last for longer with better quality but does not have the deterioration curve like analogue. i.e. It will work and then not - if this happens the radio will tell you when you have coverage or not. All transmissions are digitally encrypted and the Ergon Energy network has a “Distress/Man Down” functionality built into it.

So far, a number of exercises with the local RFB volunteers, auxiliary and permanent urban firefighters and SES members have been carried out with positive feedback.
Malone and PACSR

Since the release of the recommendations of the Police and Community Safety Review (PACSR) and the Malone Review into Rural Fire Services in Queensland in 2013, work has been underway across Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES), including Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ) and the State Emergency Service (SES) to implement changes to deliver sustainable and positive outcomes for Queensland communities and improved support for emergency service volunteers.

While the Malone recommendations provide a focus specifically on RFSQ and the needs of volunteers, the PACSR recommendations incorporate these needs into a holistic approach for all of emergency services. Events such as Tropical Cyclone Ita in Far North Queensland earlier this year highlight the need for emergency service agencies to work with each other and align closely with local government and other agencies to ensure a coordinated and effective response to disasters regardless of their nature.

A key outcome has been the establishment of an area of QFES distinctly supporting emergency service volunteers, which also maintains RFSQ as an integral part of emergency services in Queensland. This provides a balance between recognising the unique identity and needs of volunteers, at the same time providing a single service to the community which allows for the full resources of the QFES to be called upon for the protection of Queensland communities.

Outcomes since the release of both reports which deliver benefit to RFSQ volunteers and brigades include:

- Fitting all rural brigade appliances with red and blue flashing lights which provide a superior level of visibility when rural appliances are operating on roadsides;
- Committing to fully fund essential fire fighting equipment, which previously required a financial contribution from brigades;
- Committing to fully fund replacement appliances, which previously required up to $20,000 contribution from brigades. Both of these changes not only reduce the financial burden on brigades, but also greatly reduce the administration and red tape associated with the previous co-funding arrangements;
- Reducing the overall cost of slip-on units and expanding the range of options available. This represents a reduction in costs for brigades who are directly purchasing the equipment items and for the RFSQ for the items they supply to brigades. There are a variety of configurations now available which allow for brigades to choose the option which best suits their requirements.
- Commitment to policy and procedure development being driven by volunteer engagement. This includes involvement of volunteers in the development of fire fighting appliances and associated equipment through the appliance committee which is now solely focused on development of rural appliances and involves representation from brigade volunteers and the Rural Fire Brigades Association Queensland (RFBAQ);
- Increasing the amount available to brigades in QFES station construction grants from $10,000 to a maximum of 25% of the construction costs, (capped at $25,000). This allows for an enhanced level of support to brigades during the planning and construction of stations and reduces the requirement for volunteers to raise funds by other means;
- Purchasing sufficient licenses for Ozi-Explorer to enable any brigade access to the technology. The Ozi-Explorer component of the Brigade Mapping Toolset allows brigades to create mapping solutions to suit their various needs. This will lead to enhanced capacity when undertaking hazard reduction activities and operational planning by Rural Brigades; and,
- The removal of requirements for existing volunteers to undertake criminal history checks when taking up office bearing positions, changing brigades, or nominating for deployment. Criminal history checks are no longer required to be undertaken for Primary Producer Brigades (PPBs), however a PPB may request that CHCs are undertaken for their brigade. CHCs are now only required for: persons over the age of 18 applying for RFSQ volunteer membership (with the exception of PPBs); registered junior volunteers upon turning age 18 (with the exception of those in PPBs); any external person who is not a volunteer and is applying to become a Fire Warden or Deputy Fire Warden; any person applying for RFSQ membership who has lived in New Zealand for a period of 12 months or more since turning 16 years of age are also required to undergo a New Zealand CHC (with the exception of those in PPBs).

Implementation of the remaining recommendations is progressing; it is important to note that those recommendations involving significant change will take time to implement properly. Consultation with volunteers has been ongoing throughout the implementation process. The assurance to consult with volunteers is integral to the Volunteer Charter, and remains a commitment from this Government.

The RFSQ Strategic Working Groups for Operations; Volunteer Support; and Research and Training play a critical role in the implementation of the recommendations. Each Strategic Working Group includes volunteer representation from each of the brigade classifications and representatives from the RFBAQ, along with regional and head office staff from RFSQ. These Working Groups are the key forum for change driven by volunteers for volunteers into the future.

Updates on the progress of the implementation are available through www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au on the publications page, and through the Volunteer Portal. Get involved or have your say by contacting QFES-Transition@qfes.qld.gov.au
Development of a Fire Management Guide Dashboard for the South Brigalow Belt bioregion

In 2010 the North Coast Regional Inter-Departmental Committee (RIDC) for Bushfires determined the need for a dashboard snapshot guide to Fire Management that provides advice to First Officers and Fire Wardens of best practice for individual vegetation types and bioregions.

The Burnett Mary Regional Group (BMRG), being the peak body for natural resource management for our region comprising the Burnett and Mary River catchments and the associated sub catchment areas, has sought Federal Government assistance funding to develop a Fire Management Guide Dashboard for the South Brigalow Belt bioregion (Parts of North and South Burnett).

From the 2010 RIDC decision, it was identified that a number of issues exist within the region fire regimes that required addressing through the development of a Fire Management Guide including:

- too frequent burning; an absence of fire in vegetation that requires fire; burning entire patches rather than mosaics;
- an available tool that would assist the knowledge and understanding of some Fire Wardens and Rural Fire Brigades in this bioregion and assist with identifying the use of fire in the landscape.

Reef Catchments has developed a range of fire management tools in consultation with Rural Fire Brigades, Fire Wardens, fire scientists, and key landholders to support their fire management activities and are engaged in this project.

In developing the Fire Management Guide, QFES as a key stakeholder, has with BMRG and Reef Catchments, commenced consultation with the key landholders, Fire Wardens, Rural Fire Brigades, and Government Departments on ground truthing and verifying fire regimes and best practice guides to be included into this Fire Management Guide Dashboard.

Over the month of May and into June a small consultative group travelled the region with the purpose of undertaking this work, capturing fuel load and species data including photos that will be included in the finished product.

It is anticipated that the Fire Management Guide Dashboard will be completed ready for printing prior to the Fire Season 2015.
Wally Gray
AFSM Recipient
Julatten Rural Fire Brigade

Wally Gray was presented with the Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM) by the Governor of Queensland, Her Excellency Ms Penelope Wensley, AC at Government House in Brisbane on 8 May 2014.

Wally commenced with Julatten Rural Fire Brigade on 29 July 1981 as a member and fire fighter, and is currently the First Officer, a position he has held since 1 June 1992. He is also currently the Chairperson and Equipment Officer and was responsible for pushing the equipment and maintenance levy to be passed in the Mareeba Shire during his time as a Councillor.

His passion for the Rural Fire Service is unbelievable, Wally is sometimes likened to the street fighter whose perseverance has achieved the construction of fire stations, not only in his area, and the fire appliances and equipment so rightly needed in their community. Likened to a football coach he ensures his team of fire fighters get whatever training they can and this shows in their response to not only fire but to Cyclone Larry and Yasi, first to respond to open the Rex Range, first to call to lend a hand to other areas in need including interstate.

Wally is a community leader who has earned the highest of respect and is one of the most dependable in times when disaster strikes. He has also served as the Cairns Peninsula Area Representative for the Rural Fire Brigade Association of Queensland from 2002 until 2008. I have the highest admiration and congratulate Wally on receiving this deserving and prestigious award.

Tell us what you think

The Public Safety Business Agency would like to know about your volunteering experience.

Over 40,000 Queenslanders volunteer in direct support of police, fire and emergency services. Their contribution is crucial to public safety.

That’s why a survey to assess volunteer satisfaction is so important. It’s not compulsory to complete the survey; but your views will be used to better support volunteers.

TNS, an independent market research company, is conducting the survey on our behalf. All responses will remain completely anonymous.

The survey will begin on Monday 21 July and close on Monday 18 August. It can be completed online at www.tsonlinesurveys.com.au/volunteerpublicsafetysurvey.

TNS will email a link to the online survey to those volunteers who have provided email addresses to Rural Fire Service Queensland.

All volunteer members from Rural Fire Services Queensland, the State Emergency Services, Volunteers in Policing and the QFRS Scientific Division are being invited to complete the survey.

Further information on the survey can be obtained from Helen Crook, Senior Strategy Officer, Public Safety Business Agency on telephone (07) 3364 6971 or email crook.helenm@police.qld.gov.au.
Opening of Bauple Fire Station & hand over of Bauple 51 appliance

7 June 2014 was a wonderful day for the members of the Bauple Rural Fire Brigade who celebrated the Opening of their new Fire Station and Vehicle Handover.

The A/Area Director Rural Fire Service Queensland Maryborough, Mr Andrew Allan welcomed Mrs Anne Maddern, MP, member for Maryborough, who spoke about the volunteers and how much she supports them in the duties they perform within the community.

A/Assistant Commissioner Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, Mr John Bolger commended the volunteers on their efforts.

Mr Bob Maxwell, Bauple Rural Fire Brigade First Officer, reminded us all about how far we had come from no training then, use of an old farm Dodge donated by the members in 1962, housed in a tin shed off the side of the Bauple Band Hall to trained fire fighters today who wear PPE and use safe fire appliances and equipment which are housed in suitable Fire Stations such as ours. He thanked the brigade members for all that they do, without them we would not have a brigade.

One of our long standing honouree members came for the occasion, Mr Basil Gee, who was a member of our brigade in the early days and had lots of stories to tell us.

Anne officially opened the new station, unveiling a beautiful brass plaque, provided by our Area Office and handed the keys of the Isuzu 51 to First Officer Bob Maxwell.

Group brigade members were present, Councillors Mr Phil Truscott and Mr Rolf Lift from Fraser Coast Regional Council attended, and Mr Graeme McWilliam, District Representative of the Rural Fire Brigade Association.

We welcomed some representatives from local organisations within our community.

To complete the occasion, morning tea and a lot of conversations were enjoyed after the official ceremony.

Special Thanks to local businesses, Bauple Blooms and Longs Welding for their donations.

Mrs Carolyn Maxwell
Secretary
Bauple Rural Fire Brigade.

Commissioner’s eNewsletter

There have been some changes to the way in which the Commissioner’s Updates will be coordinated and communicated.

The new eNewsletter approach includes a refreshed look with scope to include images, videos and the use of online links for further detail.

The eNewsletter also has a subscription function enabling volunteers and auxiliary an option to subscribe/unsubscribe, allowing direct communication with the Commissioner’s Updates. Once available, this subscription link can be found on the Volunteer Portal.

In addition to receiving the eNewsletter via email, the electronic version will continue to be available via the Volunteer Portal.
Incident Reporting

The message from volunteers at the Volunteer Summit in 2012 was to “reduce the amount of information collected on RF14’s and have brigades provide the information to Firecom at the time of the incident instead”. It has now been a year since the incident reports themselves have been simplified and the requirement for volunteers to complete incident report forms was removed.

Not only has this reduced the red-tape and time taken for Brigades to complete the form, it also makes the process less onerous for Area Office administrative staff who now directly access the FireCom information about the incident, verify it in the Operations Management System (OMS) where incident reports are managed, and close the job.

Incident report completion rates now sit at over 97% across the state. This means that over 97% of the jobs which rural fire brigades log with Firecom are reflected in the data used by government for decision making and to represent the hard work brigades undertake.

From the consultation process undertaken last year, we understand that not all brigades have the capacity to talk to Firecom at the time of the incident, and even getting the information to them afterwards can be a challenge. The solutions to these issues are not quick or easy and require anything from improving communications infrastructure and equipment, to ongoing relationship building between volunteers and Firecom.

During the consultation process a number of volunteers indicated the value of the existing forms for brigades to keep their own record of incidents. RFSQ are investigating means to provide information collected in incident reports directly back to brigades to eliminate the need to maintain separate records.

We are also interested in your thoughts on the RFSQ Additional Incident Information Form (OBM082). This was a new, non-mandatory form to be used to submit details of volunteers in attendance at an incident and other information not already captured by Firecom. Are you using the form? Do you find it useful?

It has been both enlightening and encouraging to implement such a positive change prompted by volunteer feedback, we rely on your advice to continue to make improvements to remove the administrative burden on volunteers.

To submit your feedback or suggestions on the incident reporting process and forms, please complete a Rural Feedback form (available on the Volunteer Portal).

Madonna Day
Executive Manager, Volunteering and Support
Rural Fire Service Queensland

Rural Fire Brigade Manual Business Rules

New Business Rule:

- **C1.2-Application for Membership** – this business rule has been updated following a major review of the volunteer membership application process. Key changes include:
  - there is now only one business rule that provides all the information on how a potential applicant applies to become a member of a brigade;
  - key information on medical history is provided in this revised business rule;
  - the application form has been redesigned and simplified to a two-page booklet style;
  - the application form now incorporates the Queensland Police Criminal History Check form;
  - there is now no separate self-medical check; medical history questions are included in the application form;
  - a fact sheet on notifiable medical conditions has been included as an appendix to this Business Rule, rather than forming part of the application kit. It is aimed to provide further information to brigades if required;
  - applicants are no longer provided the Rural Fire Service awareness DVD with the application form; and
  - a new brochure has been developed to be included with the application form ‘Volunteering in the Rural Fire Service Queensland’ (RFSQ). This brochure aims to provide general information about RFSQ, the support provided to volunteers and the expectations of volunteers.

Major Changes:

- **B1.1.1-Volunteer Community Educators** – Information on criminal history check requirements was removed from this business rule, as it is contained in the business rule C1.5-Criminal History Checks.

- **C1.5-Criminal History Checks** – This Business Rule was revised to remove the mandatory requirement for members of Primary Producer Rural Fire Brigades undergoing a criminal history check. It should be noted that Primary Producer Brigades have the option of requesting that criminal history checks are undertaken for their brigade.

Minor Change:

- **D5.3.5 – Purchase and Use of Automatic External Defibrillators** – link to form updated only.
New Appliances

One of the most challenging tasks in selecting new cab chassis is finding a suitable replacement which is comparable with the older more robust appliances because “they don’t make them like they used to”.

The good news is that RFSQ has taken the initiative and looked further afield for a better selection of 4x4 cab chassis to meet the rural fire industry expectations for reliability and robustness. The Iveco Daily 4x4 is a relatively new entry to the Australian 4x4 market but has proven to have old fashioned “grunt” and the go anywhere capability of the legendary Canter. The first concept Daily light appliance body layout was designed within the RFSQ Operational Support section with a view of maintaining a regular load on the front axle with a variable load capability on the stronger rear axle to maximise future increases in the vehicle’s Gross Vehicle Mass.

The first Iveco has a 4495 kg GVM, “C” Class licence, and will feature a 70 LPM, high pressure-low volume positive pressure diaphragm pump driven by a 10 HP Yanmar electric start diesel engine. The body features an 800 litre water tank, which is supported on a sturdy aluminium frame, as well as two large and two smaller lockers with gull wing doors for easy access to the entire locker space. The single RFR2 electric rewind hose reel is fitted with 90 metres of 12mm High Pressure (HP) hose and can be rotated through 90 degrees to payout and rewind hose from the rear or off-side of the appliance. In addition there are two HP take off points located on the either side of the tray, behind the cabin, which allows two HP branches to be used simultaneously.

The body has full LED under tray lighting for glare free night vision and LED door lights which use mercury switches to activate the lights when the doors are opened. The obvious down side of this appliance, other than being plain ugly, is that the cabin height will be a challenge for some locations with low hanging foliage. Although no higher than a Canter or Isuzu, the Iveco is higher than previous light appliances which have a lower profile.

Appliances showcased at the Volunteer Summit

At the recent Rural Volunteer Summit, a number of appliances were showcased as part of the Appliance Capability Forum presentation.

The presentation detailed the annual appliance allocation process and foreshadowed future ranges of appliances and available options within the ranges. Participants were advised that in keeping with the Malone Review into Rural Fires Services, recommendation 77, representatives from I-Zone, Village, Rural and Primary Producer Brigades as well as two RFBAQ representatives from Izone and Village Brigades were among the membership of the Operations Strategic Working Group which is charged with reviewing current models of appliances and providing recommendations on vehicle suitability.
Sunday 15 June, saw a hive of activity at the Stanley River Environmental Centre, Hazeldean. There was a mix of navy and yellow uniforms with Rural appliances participating in a day of learning and camaraderie.

Emergency Service Cadets from Cooroora, near Pomona, worked alongside Rural brigades from Villeneuve, Mt Kilcoy, Hazeldean, Stanmore, Bellthorpe, and Ten Mile. This training exercise was an initiative of the Rural Fire Service Queensland staff from the Caboolture Area Office.

Only last year, PCYC’s across the state partnered with Emergency Management Queensland for a new cadet program which encourages youth to explore emergency service careers.

Premier Campbell Newman said, “We want to give cadets an opportunity to experience a wider range of emergency service skills, to really give them a taste for the roles available to them and greater interaction with serving staff.”

The program teaches cadets about the roles of SES, Police, Fire, and Ambulance personnel.

Sunday was all about the Cadets familiarisation with Rural brigades and learning new skills, rolling and bowling hoses, uses of different nozzles, pump operation and drafting water from a portable tub. This was conducted in a fun and interactive manner. The concluding activity saw teams competing to start the pump, supply water from a case 1 hose and maneuver a drum around an obstacle course.

The State Emergency Service Cadet Program Manager, Jennie Schoof, said she really appreciated the opportunity to work with Rural firefighters and thanked all participants for volunteering their time.

Many of the young cadets could be heard asking further questions and showing a genuine interest in Rural Brigades. It is hoped some of these young Cadets will become future firefighters.

This training exercise certainly gave Cadets an opportunity to experience a wider range of emergency service skills, opportunities to interact with volunteer firefighters and gave them a taste for the roles available to them.

Graham King
Brigade Training and Support Officer
RFSQ Caboolture.
Last Friday, local children had a fun day at Kilcoy State School for Under 8s celebrations.

A team from Queensland Fire and Emergency Services were in attendance to provide activities for the children and parents. Rural Volunteers from Bellthorpe, Hazeldean, Mt Kilcoy and Villeneuve, Kilcoy Auxiliary Firefighters, Volunteer Community Educators, young volunteers in the Certificate II Public Safety Firefighting Operations program, and operational staff from Caboolture Area Office were kept busy offering both fun and educational activities.

“Little Flick”, the Rural Fire Engine, took children for a ride, whilst Blazer and Evil Knevil debated how to keep safe. The children helped Blazer let Evil Knevil know that you can’t go back inside a burning building, you must GET DOWN LOW AND GO, GO, GO and if your clothes catch on fire you should STOP, DROP AND ROLL. Parents and children watched a demonstration on how to extinguish a pot of oil that had ignited. The sounds of utter amazement and astonishment that came from the crowd when they were shown why you should NEVER put water on an oil fire will leave lasting memories in their minds.

Even without the kitchen fire, there was plenty of warmth with blue skies and sunshine providing these energetic youngsters with plenty to celebrate.
SPOTLIGHT ON:
Aratula Rural Fire Brigade

Aratula Rural Fire Brigade is located on the Cunningham Highway at Aratula. “Officially” formed in 1990 Aratula has a long history prior to this as a locally formed brigade of farmers and primary producers. Currently there are around 50 members, with 26 on the paging list.

Our “area” has 501 properties ranging from residential in Aratula, to lifestyle blocks, izone, grazing and crop properties and vegetable processing plants and Moogerah Dam over an area of 135km². We respond to around 40 to 50 turnouts a year, with almost all of these being emergency responses. We do very little controlled burning as the community is very self-reliant.

We have two medium attack appliances, one 3 seater and a 7 seater dual cab (prior to this a 1971 Ford F-series-hand-me-down was the primary unit), a trailer unit that is the original equipment the brigade ran with for the first 12 years and a slip on. The station is a shared facility with the Aratula unit of the Scenic Rim SES and the building was erected in 2001. For the past few years we have been the busiest brigade in the old Boonah Shire area and third busiest brigade in the Scenic Rim, with very few calls being controlled burns etc, the majority (all save one or two jobs a year) are emergency calls. We average roughly one call every nine days.

We are progressively increasing active members but, like all brigades, we don’t get many new members under 35. We are finding that individual approach is working best for our recruitment.

2013’s cyclone Oswald event saw the biggest and most destructive flooding ever seen in the area. Moogerah Dam peaked at 2.85m over the spill way, the highest ever. Local members that could get to the station assisted with accommodating stranded motorists and clearing the highway immediately following the water receding. Several members received certificates of appreciation for the work that they did over a 36 hour period.

Aratula RFB responds to the whole range of incidents from simple small grass fires through to assisting with vehicle fires and road accident rescue on the highway and structural fires.

We have a good working relationship with the Kalbar and Boonah urban brigades. We have been called upon to assist the ambulance service with medical cases, supplying drivers and assisting with patients with all types of conditions. Aratula has a team of people from across the spectrum of life experiences and they all bring 100% to all turnouts and training, a strong and proud group of people.

Over the past few years improvements have included the introduction of pagers and SMS alerts for fire calls, which resulted in more than halving our turnout times and the issuing of the bushmaster helmets with torches to all active fire fighters. The future holds not only great promise of further improvements and challenges along with training but also the further growth of the brigade to meet the needs of our greater area.

Aratula RFB: “Getting it done for the community”

The attached photos are of a hay truck that caught alight on the highway on the Kalbar RFB, Warrill View RFB and Aratula RFB boundary. Aratula weren’t called for this one as we’d been on Cunningham’s Gap for 6 hours the night before with a b-double carrying freight that caught alight. Kalbar and Harrisville urban, Kalbar, Warrill View and Mt Forbes RFBs all attended.

Paul Tiffany
Chairman and First Officer
Aratula RFB
New Breed Firefighters

June saw a new group of young volunteers commence their program, Certificate II Public Safety, Firefighting Operations. Graham King, inspired this program and has now run it for five years. The young volunteers attend training sessions on Wednesdays at the Kilcoy Auxiliary Fire Station, as well as attending training sessions with the Rural Brigade that they join. They undergo an intense program over twelve months and graduate at the end of the year as rural firefighters with a Certificate II.

In order to connect and make training meaningful, this year Graham has introduced laptops with all training materials downloaded onto the laptop. Electronic learning material replaces the large, heavy manual previously required for the program. The young volunteers are able to use interactive activities in the theoretical aspects of the program.

There are many hands on activities associated with this program. The young volunteers will soon be out in the field learning about the effects of wind and gradients on the speed of a fire. They will be investigating vegetation types and analysing fuel loadings as well as learning fire lighting patterns. As a primary role of a firefighter is the extinguishment of a fire, the volunteers will learn and develop skills for direct and indirect attack to contain a fire.

As with previous volunteers this new group will soon find out how hard and strenuous it can be when the pressure is on to contain a fire. It can be hot, it can be smoky, the conditions can be uncomfortable, but the job must be done.

Brenda King
Auxiliary Support Officer
Brisbane Region
Sunshine Coast Rural Liaison Officer (RLO) Trial

Rural Fire Brigades on the Sunshine Coast will be trialling the Rural Liaison Officer (RLO) concept for the 2014 Fire Season.

The RLO concept was instigated from the 2013 wildfire debriefs, whereby Rural Fire Brigade Group Officers and Brigade volunteers sought future additional support from within their ranks during escalated wildfire incidents.

The RLO concept has gained much support from both Rural and Urban Officers across the Sunshine Coast area, and due to this enthusiasm and the dedication of our volunteers, we are confident that the concept will be a success.

The RLO’s role is to support Rural Fire Brigades on the fire ground.

Once five appliances are in attendance on the fire ground, the rostered on-call RLO, when requested, will be responded to attend the incident to provide support to Rural Fire Brigades and liaise between other Agencies.

The Rural Liaison Officer position will be filled from Brigade Officers across the Sunshine Coast and will assist the Incident Controller with a various duties:

- Logistical support
- Command and Control
- Agency Liaison
- Liaising with Landholder

There will be two RLOs operating at a time across the area using Rural Fire Brigade 91 support units as a means of transport.

The RLO will be supported by the Rural on call rostered staff.

The initiative is based on VOLUNTEERS supporting VOLUNTEERS in time of need.

Gary Seaman
Area Director
RFSQ Caloundra

New product »

A new postcard has been developed to help you remember your volunteer portal login details. These are available to order from your Area Office.

Coming soon!

Branded table cloths will soon be available to borrow from your Area Office for use at community displays and events.

Two designs will be available, as pictured to the right.

Send us your feedback!

If there is a brochure, poster, postcard, or other product that you feel could be improved, let us know by filling in the Feedback Form.
Thank you to all of those who gave their time and efforts to Saturday 7 June for the second ever Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ) Day.

RFSQ Day 2014 also saw the launch a new initiative – Bushfire Safety Week. This week concentrated efforts and messages to help Queenslanders prepare for bushfire season.

**Step one: prepare yourself.**
Familiarise yourself and your family with the four levels of bushfire warnings.

**Step two: prepare your family.**
Organise a Bushfire Survival Plan and practice it

**Step three: prepare your property.**
Reduce risk on your property and prepare properly

RFSQ Day and Bushfire Safety Week are great ways to showcase and celebrate the work of the RFSQ by giving residents an opportunity to meet their brigade, and learn how to protect themselves and their properties from bushfire.

**Participating brigades:**
- Wartburg
- Black River & Districts
- Bouldercombe
- Branyan
- Binger Weir
- Burrum Heads
- Canungra
- Southern Cross Rural
- Kogan & District
- Currumbin Valley
- Curtis Island
- Dayboro & District
- Dundowran
- Mount Maurice
- Gracemere
- Greenbank
- Mothar Mountain
- Landsborough
- Tesch Park, Maleny
- McEuen
- Montville
- Mount Fox
- Mount Isa
- Mt Hallen
- Mt Mee
- South Nanango
- Narangba
- Ocean View
- Rangewood
- Mount Forbes
- Samford
- Hattonvale Summerholm
- Takura
- Tallebudgera Valley
- Forest Pines
- Toorbul
- Wamuran
- Western Cape Regional
- Woodgate

www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au
There are four levels of community warnings which can be issued as an event escalates. These include:

**Advisory**
there is a fire in your area, there is currently no threat to property; there is no action required;

**Advice**
there is a fire in your area, there is currently no threat to property, but stay informed and consider taking a series of preparatory actions;

**Watch and Act**
there is a fire in your area, you could be impacted and should prepare to enact your Bushfire Survival Plan; and

**Emergency Warning**
there is a fire in your area, you need to enact your Bushfire Survival Plan immediately and prepare for impact.

If a community warning is issued in your area, you must tune into your local news broadcaster as emergency services personnel provide local radio with the most up to date information as it comes to hand.

It’s up to each person to take notice, seek information, make decisions and act.

Community warnings are used to inform residents of threat to properties, time to impact, the direction and strength of the fire and of the steps residents must take to survive.

It’s essential for all Queenslanders to educate themselves and their families and understand the levels of warning NOW to ensure they aren’t confused or panicked if a community warning is issued for their area this bushfire season.

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Warnings are not only issued by the media or on social media platforms. Firefighters, State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers or police may doorknock in the area or you could receive an Emergency Alert message on your mobile or home phone with advice on the situation and where to go for further information.

The Standard Emergency Warning Signal (SEWS) is also used when bushfire threatens life. The siren sound effect is the same used for cyclone warnings.
On Saturday 31 May, Brisbane Region conducted a major multi-agency interoperability deployment exercise – ‘Exercise Headache – Tactical Day’.

The exercise was the first major component of a multi-tiered event with ‘Exercise Headache – Strategic’ scheduled for late July.

The Tactical Day was designed to expose more than 350 participants from across 10 different agencies to the principles of joint emergency response operations with the ultimate goal of improving regional interoperability. RFSQ was admirably represented with 100 volunteers and staff performing various roles including Divisional Commander, Sector Commander, Crew Leader, Fire Fighter, and Incident Management Team positions within Incident Control, Planning, Operations, Public Information, Electronic Incident Action Plan (EIAP) operations, and Management Support (Administration).

The exercise facilitated three different types of operational streams relevant to a large scale high impact campaign bushfire with all scenario activities being held at the Queensland Combined Emergency Services Academy (QCESA).

The exercise streams were conducted simultaneously over three 90 minute sessions with multi-agency Taskforces rotating through a range of relevant scenarios. The streams were themed into the following areas:

1. **Impact Zone** – Conducted at the Live Fire Campus (LFC). The crews were exposed to scenarios including: structural defence, external structural firefighting, gas cylinder fires, and transportation fires.

2. **Response to Impact** – Conducted at the Road Crash Rescue (RCR) area of the Operational Training Facility (OTF). Crews were exposed to: multiple RCR’s incorporating electrical hazards, entrapments, heavy vehicle, and Hazmat.

3. **Post Impact Assessment** – This session commenced with a theoretical information session on the use of Thermal Imaging Cameras (TICs), how to conduct Dynamic Risk Assessments (DRA) and the methodology of internal Search and Rescue techniques. The crews were then deployed into the Street Scape area of the OTF to perform a series of practical exercises utilising the skills explained in the information briefing.

As with all large scale emergency events the efficiency and effectiveness of Staging Area operations was critical for overall success. With 220 emergency and support agency personnel operating from 75 response vehicles the exercise planning team ensured a high focus was placed on this important element which proved to be a key achievement of the exercise.

The exercise incorporated a multi-agency IMT of 50 people which once again provided an excellent avenue to build relationships and capability in an educational environment.

The day incorporated an Emergency Service Expo which provided participants with educational entertainment during the luncheon break.

I would like to acknowledge all RFSQ volunteer participants for their positive attitudes and professional application of skills. The exercise was successful in achieving many desired outcomes and will undoubtedly contribute to improving future interoperability within the Brisbane Region.

**Gary McCormack**
Acting Superintendent
RFSQ Regional Manager Brisbane.
The new Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (BNHCRC) celebrated its 1st Birthday on 1 July this year.

The BNHCRC has established a large variety of research projects that support the development of cohesive, evidence-based policies, strategies, programs, and tools to build a more disaster resilient Australia by supporting emergency services and other government and non-government agencies as they work to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from natural disasters.

As the name suggests, the new BNHCRC will be concentrating its research focus on a broader range of natural hazards that affect Australian Communities rather than bushfire research alone. The BNHCRC research program is concentrated around three major themes: and will provide mechanisms that inform Government, Emergency Services, Land Managers and Industry to facilitate better natural hazards planning, prevention, response and recovery.

The new CRC is driven by end users from emergency services, land management agencies, and non-government organisations around the country. This is to ensure that research outcomes also benefit the broader Australian community.

The new BNHCRC research program is concentrated around three major themes:
- Economics, policy and decision-making
- Resilient people, infrastructure and institutions
- Bushfire and Natural Hazard Risks

Progress on research projects has been steady and the CRC has its inaugural Research Advisory Forum in Adelaide in March this year. The forum was attended by around 170 participants and provided the first opportunity for all the CRC partners, project leaders and end users to work together and gain a complete overview of the planned research activities and commence the process of shaping the future of each of some thirty six research projects.

All the information on research projects presented during the Forum are available on the website of the BNHCRC which also includes ongoing progress reports and updates.

The Research Advisory Forum will be invaluable for ensuring each project receives regular feedback and ongoing support. Forums will be held twice a year, with each project reporting on its progress once a year.

Upcoming future events to progress CRC research will be the AFAC/CRC Conference in Auckland, New Zealand, which will also host the second Research Advisory Forum and the North Australia Fire Managers Forum in Broome, Western Australia in July. This forum forms part of the annual Bushfire Seasonal Outlook for northern Australia - the Outlook will be publically distributed as a Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC Hazard Note.


Inspector Bruno Greimel
Manager, Environmental Fire Research & Training
Rural Fire Service Queensland
May 16 saw over 200 Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ) volunteers converge on Novotel Twin Waters Resort on the Sunshine Coast for the fourth biennial RFSQ Volunteer Summit.

Feedback from previous Volunteer Summits saw the 2014 event take a different path and the nomination process asked for attendees to apply to attend in a specific role.

Six stream sessions were divided into two groups – three sessions focused on the operational side; and three sessions focused on support programs. All attendees rotated through three sessions, related to the role they nominated to attend as.

The Operational Group participated in:
- Appliance Capability Forum
- SES/RFSQ inter-operability workshop
- Brigade Mapping workshop

The Support Group participated in:
- Volunteer Recruitment presentation
- Support Ideas Forum
- Grants, Insurance, and DGR presentation

Seven key note sessions were delivered by staff and volunteers over the weekend, including addresses from the Assistant Commissioner Rural Fire Service Queensland, the Commissioner Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, and the President of the Rural Fire Brigades Association of Queensland.

Peter Jeffrey, Director of SES Support Services, delivered “SES 101: An introduction to the Queensland SES”.

Peta Miller-Rose AFSM (Bushfire Safety Officer) and Geoff Richardson (volunteer from Tamborine Mountain RFB) spoke on the importance of understanding our business and the expectations of our communities. These passionate presenters reminded us on the purpose of community messaging and the role we play both as an organisation, first responding crew leaders or incident controllers.

Andrew Sturgess (Fire Behaviour Analyst) summarised a new, specialist role within the RFSQ – Fire Behaviour Analysts. This role monitors weather and fire starts, to estimate the fire extent and likely position through time. They also advise on fire behaviour attributes (rate of spread, fire line intensity, spotting probability, density, and distance).

Most of the sessions were filmed, and the smaller-sized videos are available to download (along with the PowerPoint presentations) from the Volunteer Portal. If you have trouble accessing these videos, please send an email to rfsq@qfes.qld.gov.au and we will post you a DVD.
The Olga Wilson Firefighter Trust

In 1997, Ms Olga Wilson bequeathed funds in her Will to benefit firefighters and their families.

The benefits available through this Trust advocate our mission driven focus to support our people and our communities.

Since 1997, many full time, auxiliary and volunteer firefighters and their families have benefited from the Olga Wilson Firefighters Trust to help them through difficult times. Additionally, funds have been made available for research and development in areas where outcomes may improve the safety and wellbeing of firefighters. Support has also been provided to auxiliary stations and rural fire brigades.

A booklet is available to download from the Volunteer Portal, which includes further information to explain the purpose of the Trust and to outline the following:

• Financial assistance for firefighters and their families
• Research and Development Grant
• Professional Development Scholarship
• The Olga Wilson Award for Peer Support Officers (PSOs)
• Submissions which support groups of firefighters

This booklet includes the criteria relating to each of these benefits and how to apply for a specific benefit.

For more information, please visit the Volunteer Portal Brigade Essentials page.

Brigade Internet Banking - D3.1.1

Internet Banking is now an option for RFS brigades.

The account needs to be set up with one brigade member as an authorising person to pay accounts, and a second member to authorise or release the payment. It is also possible to have a third account holder if the brigades wish.

Each member would have their own password and access for the required role. It should not be possible for one member to fulfil both roles. Separation of duties is essential.

Thanks,
Tank Works!

Seven Rural Fire Brigades (RFBs) around the state have been selected to receive a Stockman Steel Water tank, by Tank Works.

The size varies depending on location, and are either a 53,000 or 77,000 litre tank.

The tanks will be connection to existing station roofs, allowing the tanks to collect and store rainfall. Each Stockman tank will have a 50mm Camlock or Storz fitting and cap.

At the time of writing, Woodhill RFB in South East Region and Samsonvale RFB in Brisbane Region are about to have their tanks installed. Five more tanks are in production to be installed in Far Northern, Northern, Central, North Coast, and South West Regions.

It’s competition time!

RFSQ has received a special jersey from rugby league footballer Brent Tate. This jersey commemorates the visit to XXXX Island by the 2013 Queensland Origin team for some team bonding and mental preparation ahead of the 2013 State of Origin.

To win this jersey for your brigade, simply send your best photo of your Rural Fire Brigade team to rfsq@qfes.qld.gov.au

The winner will be announced in the November edition of the Rural Fire Bulletin!
The Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation is streamlining the way gambling benefits the Queensland community with the amalgamation of the current community benefit funds. The Government has introduced legislation to amalgamate the four funding programs into one fund that will service the whole State.

**Fast Facts**

- $35,000 maximum per organisation
- Four rounds per year
- One system for the whole state

**Community organisations can have confidence in knowing the total budget for grants will not decrease with the new State-wide funding program.**

This map shows how the four funds currently fit within Queensland, the Gambling Community Benefit Fund (not shown) covers the whole State. Under the current provisions some eligible community groups apply to the relevant casino fund and the Gambling Community Benefit Fund, this means submitting more than one application.

While some organisations are ineligible to apply to the casino funds they only have an opportunity to apply to the Gambling Community Benefit Fund.

If you have any queries regarding this change, contact the Manager Community Benefit Funds Unit, Julie Koplick, on: (07) 3224 4342 or julie.koplick@justice.qld.gov.au or go to www.olgr.qld.gov.au and click on ‘Grants’.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**What does this mean for community groups?**

- eligible community organisations will have access to the same level of funding
- funding guidelines will be consistent for all Queensland community organisations
- the grant value, project, and budget eligibility will be the same for all applications, resulting in less time being spent interpreting eligibility and applying for funding
- organisations will only need to lodge an application to one fund.

**When will the change come into effect?**

The new fund is planned to be available for the funding round that opens mid-July and closes 31 August, 2014.

**I usually apply to the Jupiters Casino Community Benefit Fund, will I be worse off?**

No, by amalgamating the funds all eligible organisations can now apply for the same grant value. Currently the casino funding programs have different maximum grant values and although the new maximum is less than the current for this fund the average payment is approximately $20,000.

**My organisation is eligible to apply to a casino fund and Gambling Community Benefit Fund – do I still make two applications for funding?**

No, if your organisation is eligible you only need to make one funding application. This is now a simpler process for organisations.

**Will grants still be provided to community groups in my district?**

Yes, eligible organisations will make funding applications. An independent committee made up of community representatives from areas throughout Queensland will be charged to make funding recommendations ensuring that they are made to organisations throughout Queensland.
The history of the Service: volume two

Years of Growth: Becoming Established

An excerpt from, “From Beaters to Bambi Buckets” by Don and Daphne Greenhalgh.

Until the late 1950’s the Board and its tiny complement of Inspectors were waging a David and Goliath struggle - no more than three Inspectors in the field at any one time, together with the Secretary/Senior Inspector to cover the State. With about 200,000 square miles (about half a million square kilometres) and about 350 brigades to look after, the development of new brigades slowed through the 1960’s.

Subtle changes to the Rural Fires Act (and perhaps to the Board members) slowly moved the emphasis from enforcement to mutual cooperation.

Because we took the Rural Fires Act from being Forestry dominated (almost a bully boy attitude) to being controlled by the people who were using the fire and who had experience in the use of fire. (Norm Scott, Inspector 1961-1978)

The Board were practical people who were always alert to inconsistencies in the way the Act should be applied. Of course, the brigades and the man on the land were often in the best position to offer advice for improvements.

A small but significant change came about from input from the people ....

.... up at Gumlu, a little farming area south of Ayr and Home Hill. In those days the provisions for burning off were that you gave fourteen days’ notice of your intention to burn off within a further fourteen days. The other idea of course was the permit condition. The people decided after they had worked on it for a while, ‘Why have the permit conditions altered by having (to give) fourteen days’ notice (to give) intention to burn within the second fourteen days’. They asked to have it rescinded and it was. Now we have the permit conditions only. (Tom Lake, Inspector, 1959-1981)

It also meant that the farmers and graziers started to see the benefits of fitting into what was a set of rules that were to everyone’s benefit.

They thought that it was not a bad idea in the end. Hence the number of brigades we have got today. It was a starting point. It was not easy. Legislation they were unfamiliar with and a general rule of thumb in those days was - ‘Don’t tell me how to run my property because I know how to do it: Fire is a part of the management of the property and I am well equipped to handle it’ - and so on. In time they came around to thinking that it was a good idea to be organised and to be a part of the team and to comply more with the requirements of legislation and of course you might be able to get a few items of stuff on the cheap - in the way of subsidised equipment. (Fred Collins, Inspector 1974-1994)

The administrative framework for fire control - the Chief Fire Warden and Fire Warden systems - were now being consolidated. As part of Dick Healy’s policy of ‘getting somebody to do something for nothing’ he points out:
It was convenient and seemed a good idea to utilise Government Departments in areas where their expertise was apparent. It should be noted that the Act (or most of it - in particular the burning control) applied only in constituted Rural Fire Districts. As there was a legal interpretation aspect, it was deemed desirable to use the Clerks of the Court (then known as Clerks of Petty Sessions) to administer the Act in their districts and to this end they were appointed Chief Fire Wardens. It was not envisaged that they physically participated in firefighting (and they didn’t). It was just one more administrative job which these Officers were called upon to discharge. The Clerks of the Court District thus served as the Rural Fire District to enable the Act to apply across the State before the organisation really got going.

The Chief Fire Wardens’ role was largely that of administration. They were a senior level of Fire Warden who could be used to advise Wardens that a Total Fire Ban was in force in certain areas.

More importantly, they were able to ban the issuing of Permits to Burn or rescind Permits previously issued in the whole or part of their area. A Chief Fire Warden could also issue a Permit where the Fire Warden was absent, or one had been denied by the Warden, or could require that a Permit be issued subject to certain conditions. In the early years before the Inspectors were able to appoint Wardens across the State, the Chief Fire Warden was the main source of Permits across the more remote areas of the State. The exception to this situation was where the office of Clerk of the Court was discharged by the local Police Officer. They were frequently involved physically in directing and participating in firefighting activities.

The job of Chief Fire Warden is still carried out by the Police and Clerks of the Court in most areas. They oversee the local Fire Wardens who issue the majority of Permits to Burn.

In my District, there is a big change with the move of the Chief Fire Wardens away from the Police, or away from the Clerk of the Court. We have now generally got the urban fire stations in as the Chief Fire Warden because naturally if people can’t get onto their local Fire Warden they ring their nearest fire brigade. It is working by and large exceptionally well. A lot of these Chief Fire Wardens, in particular say at Nambour, do a tremendous job in helping people find out who their Warden is. If they find for some reason that the Warden is away, they soon let us know. (Glen Mills, Inspector 1989 - present)

Fire Wardens served their community in a different role:

Fire Wardens were much more ‘hands on’ and needed to know about the use of fire in a practical way. Forestry Field Officers were Wardens in many cases by virtue of their position but the Board was seeking responsible citizens to accept the office which was of course in the ‘fire prevention’ area. The Warden was not necessarily involved when fire was being fought though he frequently was. There were occasions, though strangely not many, where the duties of Fire Warden and First Officer (Bush Fire Brigade) were discharged by the same person. Integration of Warden and Brigade was greatly improved when the Board adopted the procedure of forming Brigades and seeking a nomination from them for Fire Warden appointees. (Dick Healy)
Understanding and Avoiding Heat Stress

Heat stress is a very common condition suffered during the performance of our volunteering activities, particularly during the warm and humid Queensland summers. Every year heat stress is high on the list of reported incidents during the busy spring and summer months. Heat stress occurs when heat is absorbed from the environment faster than the body can get rid of it. Several factors may contribute to heat stress, such as the:

- physical nature of the activity
- high air temperature, high humidity, lack of breeze, radiant heat from direct exposure to the sun
- physical condition of the individual
- fatigue

Our internal body temperature remains fairly constant even though we may be exposed to varying environmental temperatures. To keep internal body temperatures within safe limits in hot conditions, the body has to get rid of excess heat. It does this by evaporating sweat and varying the blood flow to the skin. These responses are controlled by the brain and usually occur when the blood exceeds 37 degrees centigrade. Factors that may also contribute to heat stress and dehydration include:

- inadequate cooling off or rest periods
- insufficient water consumption
- climatic conditions (such as low air movement, high humidity levels and high air temperature)
- inappropriate clothing
- poor diet, poor health, or alcohol and caffeine consumption
- medical conditions such as heart problems, diabetes, or hypertension, can significantly contribute to heat stress
- medication you are taking may affect the body’s temperature regulation
- an individual’s age, general physical fitness and weight.

Heat stress can affect individuals in different ways, and some people are more susceptible to it than others either because of an illness or medication that may encourage the early onset of heat stress. This can be associated with different effects ranging from mild heat rash or cramps through to heat exhaustion or the more severe and potentially fatal heat stroke.

Heat related illness can occur when the body is unable to cool itself adequately and body temperature rises. The warning signs to watch for include:

- painful muscles spasms or cramps
- heavy sweating
- difficulty in thinking clearly
- slurred speech
- blurred vision
- dizziness or fainting.

Heat cramps usually affect people who have sweated a lot during strenuous activity. These painful muscle cramps usually affect the abdomen, arms or legs. Cramps may be an early symptom of the more severe condition of heat exhaustion.

Treat heat cramps by:

- stopping all strenuous activity and rest quietly in a cool shady place
- increasing fluid intake using cool water
- removing outer clothing
- increasing air flow by fanning to increase evaporation.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

PPE is the last line of defence when it comes to controlling the risk of injury and one of the key control measures in preventing injury during operational activities. You as an individual and QFES as an employer have a shared responsibility to ensure your personal safety and the safety of your team-mates.

To ensure these shared responsibilities are met it is important that the applicable PPE is worn for the task and circumstances at the time. The equipment or clothing that is issued has been selected after research and trials to ensure it is fit for purpose and has been tested to and meets applicable Australian Standards. No PPE other than that approved by QFES should be purchased or used.
If the cramps continue for more than an hour you should seek medical attention.

Heat exhaustion is a serious condition that can develop into heat stroke. It is the body’s response to depletion of fluid and salt due to sweating. If a person suffers heat exhaustion lay them in the shade, remove outer clothing, provide cool water and fan to increase evaporation. If symptoms are severe or don’t improve seek medical attention immediately.

Warning signs include:
- heavy sweating
- paleness
- muscle cramps
- tiredness and weakness
- dizziness

Heat stroke is a medical emergency and an ambulance should be called and person taken to hospital. A person suffering heat stroke becomes confused, and may stagger or collapse. The skin may be either dry or wet.

Control measures to avoid heat stress

Maintaining adequate hydration is one of the most important strategies to counteract the effects of heat stress. During prolonged work in the heat our body can sweat up to one litre an hour. Unless this fluid is replaced by drinking, progressive dehydration will result. Thirst or the urge to drink may not be triggered until fluid that is equal to one to two per cent of body weight has been lost. At this level you are at increased risk of developing a heat related condition. Regular meal and rest breaks should also be taken where food must be consumed in order to replace electrolytes and maintain energy.

Ways to maintain adequate hydration and reduce the risk of heat stress:
- Start work in a well-hydrated state
- Drink regularly to keep pace with sweat losses
- Drink between 600 mls and one litre of water per hour in summer
- Preferably drink 150-250 mls of cool fluids every 15 minutes
- Avoid caffeinated and alcoholic drinks.
- Increase your intake of fluids if your urine is dark (the normal color should be pale yellow)
- Take regular rest breaks and eat food
- If you suffer dehydration take a break to rest and rehydrate

Always Remember – In order to protect the community we must first protect ourselves

Cyrel Wright
Senior Workplace Health & Safety Officer
Public Safety Business Agency

Improved weather forecasting system

The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) commenced using an improved forecasting system in Queensland known as NexGenFWS, in October last year. Since October the BOM have progressively rolled out new products and services including MetEye.

MetEye is part of the improvements available on the public web site. It is an online mapping tool similar to other platforms that most of us use routinely, where you can click, drag and zoom to move around the map. You can save your favourite locations and access 3 hourly forecasts for the next 7 days including the chance of rain, possible rainfall in mm, frost and thunderstorms as well as the standard information on temperature and humidity.

Other improvements include 7 day forecasts for most rural locations, towns and metropolitan areas.

On the registered users page, improvements include enhanced fire weather outlook images and graphical information for forecast districts, areas, and major centres.

The third way in which the NexGenFWS system enhances our capability is by providing the forecast elements directly via a FTP site. This data will be used by our GIS unit to prepare products that will improve our preparedness for weather events. The data is also incorporated into the Phoenix bushfire simulation program so that as the predicted spread of the fire moves across the landscape, the forecast weather for that time and location will be accessed to provide the most accurate information available.

This information will enable communities to better prepare for weather elements such as frosts or strong winds as well as severe weather events such as fires and floods.

Andrew Sturgess
GIFireE
Fire Behaviour Analyst
Queensland Fire and Emergency Services
Use of unregistered vehicles by Rural Fire Brigades

Section 152B of the Fire and emergency Services Act 1990 states;

152B Use of unregistered vehicles on roads

(1) This section applies if—

(a) an unregistered vehicle (the vehicle) is being used on a road by a rural fire brigade or an ES unit—

(i) for carrying persons or equipment for the purpose of preventing, controlling or extinguishing a fire; or

(ii) for the purpose of training relating to fire fighting or fire prevention; or [s 152C] Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990, Chapter 5 General, Part 3 Provisions about performance of functions under this Act, Page 184 Current as at 21 May 2014

(iii) for another purpose authorised in writing by the commissioner; and

(b) the vehicle is clearly identified as a vehicle of a rural fire brigade or ES unit; and

Example for paragraph (b) — a vehicle carrying a sign with the words ‘emergency service unit vehicle’

(c) an insurance policy of the kind mentioned in the Motor Accident Insurance Act 1994, section 23(1) is in force for the vehicle.

(2) The provisions of the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 that prohibit the use on a road of an unregistered vehicle, unless the use is authorised by a permit under that Act, do not apply in relation to the vehicle.

Note — The content of this section was previously included in section 138.

Advice received from the Queensland Government Insurance Fund states;

I have now perused the relevant Acts which deals with CTP requirements for unregistered vehicles operated by QFES.

From our discussion the one of the main concerns is whether an officer using his own unregistered vehicle in the line of duty would be covered by some sort of insurance whether it be CTP or Public Liability. In answer to this question I advice the following

Section 153D of the Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990 (Current as at 21 May 2014) states the following

153D Ownership of property

For this Act and a proceeding under any Act, the State is taken to be the owner of—

(a) premises occupied in an official capacity by a fire service officer; and

(b) anything (whether animate or inanimate) appropriated to the use of QFES; and

(c) anything, not being the private property of a person, used by the commissioner or a fire service officer in performing duties.

Therefore when a fire service officer uses an item in the performance of his duties it would be deemed to belong to the State and accordingly would enjoy the same protection as given to the Fire and Emergency Services.

We now come to Section 152B of the Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990 (Current as at 21 May 2014) which states the following
152B Use of unregistered vehicles on roads

(1) This section applies if—

(a) an unregistered vehicle (the vehicle) is being used on a road by a rural fire brigade or an ES unit—

(i) for carrying persons or equipment for the purpose of preventing, controlling or extinguishing a fire; or
(ii) for the purpose of training relating to fire fighting or fire prevention; or
(iii) for another purpose authorised in writing by the commissioner; and

(b) the vehicle is clearly identified as a vehicle of a rural fire brigade or ES unit; and Example for paragraph (b)— a vehicle carrying a sign with the words ‘emergency service unit vehicle’

(c) an insurance policy of the kind mentioned in the Motor Accident Insurance Act 1994, section 23(1) is in force for the vehicle.

(2) The provisions of the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 that prohibit the use on a road of an unregistered vehicle, unless the use is authorised by a permit under that Act, do not apply in relation to the vehicle.

Therefore subject to the vehicle meeting the above requirements it would not need to be registered and subsequently the Queensland Government Insurance Fund (QGIF) policy exclusion relating to vehicle requiring registration would not be applicable and Section 3 - General Liability of the policy would be applicable and will satisfy part (c) of Section 152B of the Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990 (Current as at 21 May 2014).

I should stress that if the vehicle is used contrary to the above there would be no cover under the QGIF policy as it would no longer be immune from the requirement of registration. An example would be taking an unregistered vehicle to the local shop to pick up milk as it would be outside part 1 (a) of Section 152B of the Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990 (Current as at 21 May 2014).

The above information should answer any questions regarding when unregistered vehicles can be driven on a roadway. The four main reference points are:

1. Is being used on a road by a rural fire brigade.
2. Carrying persons or equipment for the purpose of preventing, controlling or extinguishing a fire or for the purpose of training relating to fire fighting or fire prevention or for another purpose authorised in writing by the Commissioner.
3. The vehicle is clearly identified as a vehicle of a rural fire brigade.
4. An insurance policy of the kind mentioned in the Motor Accident Insurance Act 1994, section 23(1) is in force for the vehicle.

Note:

1. Means the vehicle is being used by a RFB. Not by a member of an RFB for purposes other than RFB business.
2. This covers use for community education, firefighting, training, mitigation burns etc. It does not cover preparing fire breaks on private property that are not the responsibility of the Brigade.
3. It must have a clear identification in the form of stickers or sign writing reading Rural Fire Service or Rural Fire Brigade.
4. The insurance policy mentioned is a third party personal liability policy and is provided by QGIF if all other criteria are being met.
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