



Director-General Michael Kinnane

In 2004–05, the world was left reeling from horrendous terrorist attacks and devastating tsunamis. Of course, more recently, Hurricane Katrina shattered even more lives.

The unfortunate legacy of such events is that emergency service organisations across the world need to significantly increase their capacity to deal with extraordinary challenges.

I am proud to say that the Department of Emergency Services is driving this trend in Australia and continues to show leadership in the planning and delivery of emergency services.

Along with the global challenges, 2004–05 presented a number of local challenges, including severe bushfire and flooding, and the tilt train derailment near Bundaberg involving 163 passengers and crew.

Our unique model of emergency services in Queensland is a *model for the times*. The integration of ambulance, fire and counter disaster and rescue services within a single department provides the foundation for the multi-service collaboration, coordination and cooperation required to plan for and respond effectively to extraordinary challenges.

During the past year, the focus for the department has been improving capability to prepare for, respond to and recover from all types of emergencies and disasters. This improved capability is underpinned by increased resources, advanced training and purpose-built infrastructure.

There has also been an emphasis on improved coordination with our government and community partners. The days of a siloed approach to the planning and delivery of government services are over. No single agency has the skills, knowledge or resources to meet the needs and priorities of the Queensland community.

Sharing resources and jointly planning and delivering key services and programs are crucial to ensuring government departments and governments at all levels respond to community issues in a timely and effective way. This is fundamentally important in the area of emergency services and community safety.

Advancements in operational capability

In 2004–05, the capacity of emergency services to deal with a terrorist or natural disaster event reached new levels. The significant advancements in operational capability made throughout the year ensure our services are prepared for any challenge—a truly all-hazards approach.

The Queensland Government's commitment of more than \$10 million to the new multi-service Special Operations Centre at Cannon Hill in Brisbane represents a major investment in our preparedness to respond to terrorist and chemical, biological, radiological, incendiary and explosive (CBRIE) events.

The state-of-the-art emergency hub is unique in Australia. It incorporates highly specialised equipment and vehicles which enable expert Queensland Emergency Response Teams to be deployed throughout the state, Australia or the Asia-Pacific region within hours of a disaster occurring.

In January 2005, four QAS paramedics—Brad Bird, Matthew Green, Gavin Leader and Geoff Dunning, along with QFRS firefighter Christopher Dowdle—were deployed to Banda Aceh in Indonesia as part of a specialist health team from Queensland. The team was tasked with providing emergency medical support to the local population following the tsunami. Their outstanding contribution under extremely difficult circumstances is a testament to the professionalism, dedication and high level of skill of our emergency services personnel.

The department's terrorism response capability has also been boosted by the purchase of new specialised appliances and caches of equipment based in Brisbane, Cairns and Townsville. Throughout the year, regular joint emergency services training courses were undertaken throughout the state, along with urban search and rescue programs for firefighters, paramedics, State Emergency Service volunteers, police and defence force personnel.

In 2004–05, QAS embarked on an ambitious reform program. The program involves roster reform to ensure the health and safety of our paramedics and workforce modelling to ensure resources match growth and demand for ambulance services. No other ambulance service in Australia has embarked on such a radical program of reform.

The reforms are part of the Government's \$100 million package over three years for staffing, vehicles and buildings, and will provide the basis for more highly skilled paramedics.

Despite rapidly increasing demand from a growing and ageing population in Queensland, our ambulance service has significantly improved its response times by nearly two percent over last year for the most serious cases (code 1). The improvements were made possible by the allocation of 100 new and additional paramedics to areas of greatest need as part of the government's 2004 election commitment.

Additionally, QAS is developing an innovative approach to the provision of paramedic services in rural and remote areas in partnership with James Cook University. Through a paramedic academic position at the Mount Isa Centre for Rural and Remote Health, QAS will work with Queensland Health to develop a model for an expanded role for paramedics in the provision of basic health care alongside other health professionals in rural and remote communities. QAS will train 20 paramedics each year for three years so they may perform a vital role in assisting remote area nurses and rural doctors with ongoing patient care.

Another of our key initiatives of the past year has been the enhancement of bushfire response capabilities in the highest risk areas of the state where bushland and urban development meet (rural/urban interface zone). The QFRS Interface Strategy incorporates funding for five extra training officers to deliver integrated training for permanent and auxiliary staff and volunteers working in the interface zone, as well as more than 50 rural firefighting vehicles and 20 firefighting trailers to support the rural fire service. The Interface Strategy also incorporates improved command and control arrangements between urban and rural volunteer fire crews and improved communications.

Another important step forward in boosting capabilities was the signing of an agreement between the department and the Local Government Association of Queensland. The Disaster Management Alliance will enhance disaster management capabilities of both levels of government, improve community safety and increase community resilience. The alliance has resulted from the productive

and collaborative relationship that already exists between the department and local government in this state.

Achieving business excellence

In 2004–05, the Premier announced the transformation of the former QFRS Academy into a multi-service training facility known as the Queensland Combined Emergency Services Academy. The academy already provides live fire and technical rescue facilities to train emergency services staff and volunteers in disciplines such as firefighting, urban search and rescue, vertical rescue and road accident rescue.

The government's investment of \$20 million over the next three years will make QCESA a national and international centre of excellence for emergency management training and community safety. The enhancements will provide a new breathing apparatus and hazardous materials training facility for QFRS and an operational scenario village for multi-service, multi-agency training of our emergency services staff and volunteers, along with police, health and Australian Defence Force personnel.

In May 2005, QAS was recognised with a bronze award in the Australian Business Excellence Framework Awards. This recognition highlights the excellent standards continually maintained by QAS and proves once again that it is one of the world's leading ambulance services. It is important to note that all three operational divisions of the department have received recognition for business excellence under the framework.

Looking ahead, the formal establishment of a statewide Indigenous Coordination Unit is a key initiative to improve the way we work to enhance community safety in Indigenous communities. Formalising the structure of the unit, which is based in Cairns, will boost the operations of the unit and achieve significant improvements in coordination of Indigenous community safety initiatives across the state. The unit provides a valuable mechanism for the department to work across all levels of government and with Indigenous communities.



Commitment to community safety

The department is continuing to lead the way in developing and implementing flexible models of service delivery that meet the needs of the diverse communities across this vast state.

Our commitment to improving community safety in Indigenous communities is demonstrated through the innovative Indigenous Australian Service Delivery Enhancement Package. Initiatives of this package in 2004–05 included the employment of an ambulance field officer in Cooktown, establishment of QAS First Responder Groups in Indigenous communities, review and evaluation of Disaster Risk Management Plans and Fire Management Plans in rural and remote communities, and continuation and enhancement of community safety initiatives and programs such as the delivery of first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) courses, the provision of first aid kits to outstations and homelands and junior safety education programs.

Setting up Queensland's first joint Emergency Service Units in the communities of Talwood, near Goondiwindi, and St Pauls, in the Torres Strait, marked an important milestone during the year. Emergency Service Units provide effective, timely and coordinated volunteer emergency services (such as State Emergency Service and Rural Fire Service) in communities where there are limited resources. These units provide new and flexible models of service delivery to assist Queensland's communities, particularly in rural and remote areas. Five additional units are planned for the coming year.

Our Emergency Services Cadets Program is improving the capability of Queensland's young people. The program develops life skills and encourages participation by young people in local communities. In the past year we established three additional Emergency Services Cadet groups and there are now 45 Cadet groups across the state with a total of 800 cadets and 250 adult leaders.

Through the Community Safety Project, the department is partnering with Queensland Police to broaden the crime prevention focus of Neighbourhood Watch groups to incorporate community safety, particularly in and around the home. The Department of Housing, through the Community Renewal Program, has joined the partnership and the project is being rolled out into targeted Neighbourhood Watch communities throughout the state. The project builds community capacity to identify and implement local solutions to local problems and demonstrates the effectiveness of building on and strengthening existing community networks.

Another practical, locally based community safety initiative is our Child Injury Prevention Project, which is jointly sponsored by the Department of Emergency Services and Queensland Health. The project aims to reduce injuries to children aged zero to four years in rural and regional areas and focuses specifically on the key areas of drowning, poisoning, burns/scalds and falls. This evaluated project is being successfully trialled in Mount Isa and Mackay.

Supporting our people

The department is working enthusiastically to lay the foundations to ensure we accelerate our representation of equal employment opportunity target groups in 2005–06. To ensure we make a real difference, we will be progressing an Indigenous Traineeship Program, a comprehensive career pathway for women and investing significant resources to attract and support equal employment opportunity target group members to help them successfully attain employment within our department.

Finally, the department is achieving so much because of the commitment and dedication of our people. I would like to acknowledge the staff, both those on the frontline and key support staff, who continually deliver world-class emergency services to the people of Queensland.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank the many thousands of volunteers who devote their time to making their communities safer. We continue to ensure our volunteers are supported and adequately resourced with vital equipment and ongoing training, and are able to respond to any challenges they face.

The *shared vision* across all the Emergency Services is *community safety and looking after people*. I am enormously proud of the full-time, part-time and volunteer personnel who devote their time to supporting others. Thank you so much for your dedication. Take care.



Michael Kinnane

