

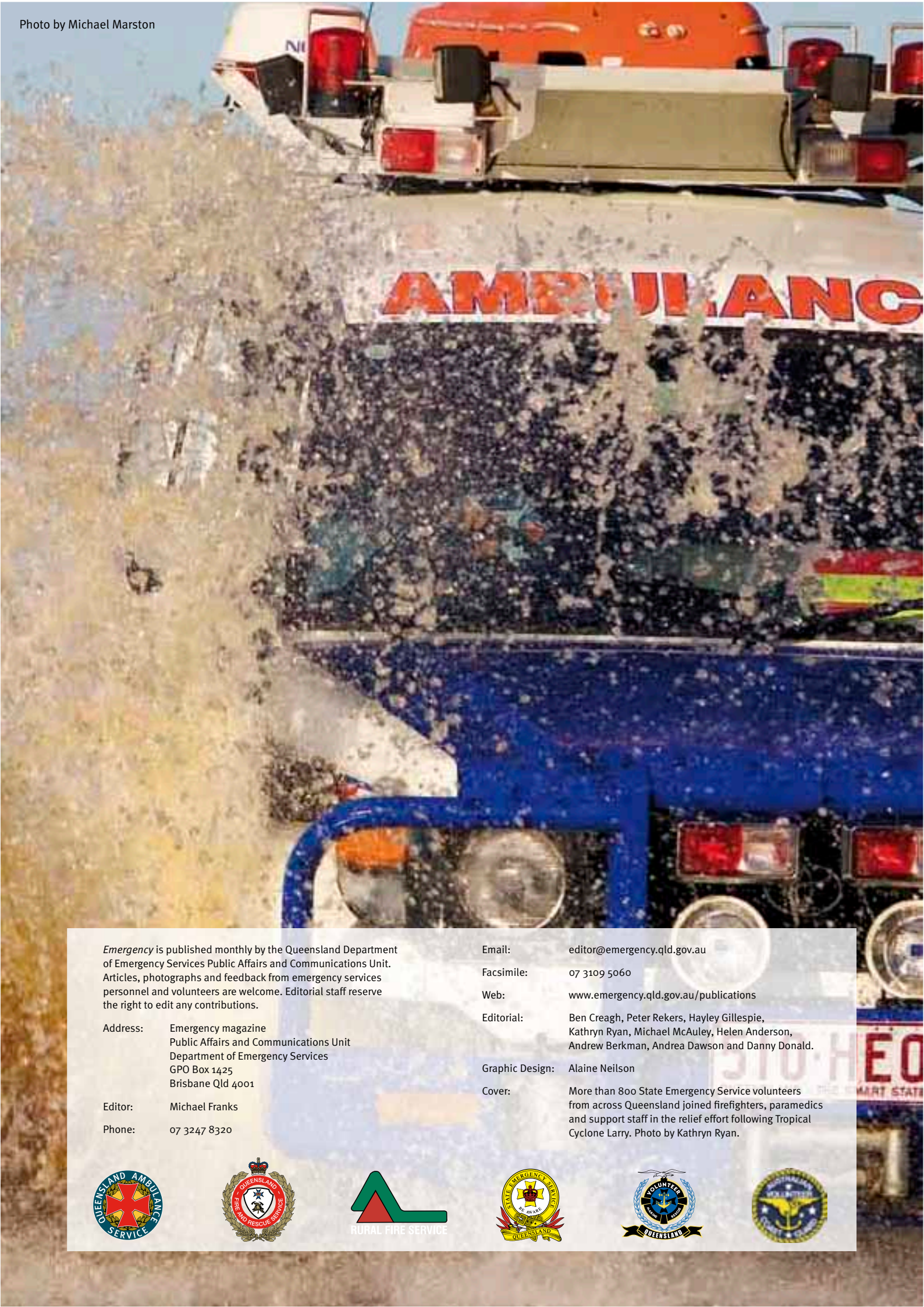
Emergency

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Cover: More than 800 State Emergency Service volunteers from across Queensland joined firefighters, paramedics and support staff in the relief effort following Tropical Cyclone Larry. Photo by Kathryn Ryan.



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From the Minister

I would like to start by thanking each and every staff member and volunteer of the Department of Emergency Services (DES) who worked to prepare for and respond to Tropical Cyclone Larry.

Despite the severity of Larry not a single person was killed or seriously injured; and the relief effort swung into action within hours of the cyclone passing the coast.

This is tribute to the work of DES. The response to the cyclone highlighted the world-class preparation and response strategies that DES has in place through the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, the Queensland Ambulance Service and the Counter Disaster and Rescue Services division, which incorporates the volunteers of the State Emergency Service.

This is a shining example of the benefits of having an integrated emergency management system.

Not only did all the DES divisions work



quickly and effectively, they also worked cooperatively with other agencies and departments.

Though the relief effort is far from over, I hope everyone who took part, in any capacity, will look back with pride that they helped to contribute to such a thorough preparation and response.

As many of you would know, Premier Peter Beattie has officially appointed Fiona McKersie as Director-General of DES. Fiona had been acting in the position since late last year.

Fiona was previously Deputy Director-General in the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and last year she was awarded an Emergency Services Medal for her long service to emergency management.

During our short time working together I have found Fiona a tireless ambassador for Emergency Services and I know the department is in good hands for the future.

Pat Purcell

New fire standards outlined

More than 300 fire industry representatives attended a seminar in Brisbane recently to learn about a new fire safety maintenance standard, how it is being implemented and their obligations.

The Fire Protection Association Australia, National Fire Industry Association and the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) organised the seminar with the support of the Property Council of Australia and the Community Titles Institute of Queensland.

Building owners and managers, fire protection contractors and practitioners, body corporate managers, resident unit managers, maintenance managers and contractors, fire protection engineers and consultants and QFRS staff attended.

Australian Standard 1851-2005 (Maintenance of Fire Protection Systems and Equipment) sets out requirements for the inspection, testing, preventative maintenance and survey of fire protection systems and equipment.

AS1851-2005 has undergone a complete revision, resulting in significant changes to the way fire protection systems and equipment should be inspected, tested and maintained.

QFRS State Community Safety Unit Executive Manager Graeme Thom said the QFRS recognised that industry representatives and building owners required assistance and time to develop a full understanding of AS1851-2005 to implement its requirements.

"The seminar, aptly titled 'Demystifying AS1851-2005', was a key component of a communication strategy designed to raise awareness and develop an understanding of the revised requirements – the introduction of which is expected to have a significant impact," Graeme said.

"One of the key outcomes of the seminar was the recognition that implementation of AS1851-2005 will require a partnership between the fire industry, building owners and their agents, and QFRS.

"We expect building owners and the fire protection industry to move quickly to adopt the requirements of the new standard, which should be implemented by June 30, 2006."

From the Director-General

As the people of Far North Queensland come to terms with the long-term impact of the devastation caused by Tropical Cyclone Larry, it is timely that I acknowledge the excellent response of our agency.

From CDRS Executive Director Frank Pagano and his team, through to our administration officers, firefighters, paramedics and State Emergency Service and Rural Fire Service volunteers, it was a tremendous team effort.

I am immensely proud of the outstanding and tireless efforts of everybody involved either directly or indirectly in the planning and provision of support and emergency relief to the affected areas.

During the response effort I witnessed many selfless acts and I would like to pay tribute to the dedication and commitment of everybody who contributed.

More than 4500 people across government were involved, including almost 2000 Emergency Services staff



and volunteers. In addition, some 600 Ergon staff and almost 100 Powerlink staff worked many hours to restore power to the devastated communities.

This disaster has provided us with an opportunity to further strengthen our State's disaster management system and our department's

disaster planning arrangements.

We will no doubt be able to draw many valuable lessons from the experiences of all of our operational and support divisions and it is important for us to use these lessons to improve our planning and preparations for future events.

Our commitment to the affected areas will continue for the foreseeable future. Frank Pagano is heading up the Operation Recovery Management Group, comprising representatives from a number of agencies.

This group will coordinate the recovery effort in support of General Cosgrove and the Operation Recovery Taskforce.

Fiona McKersie



Campaign to increase SES numbers

The State Emergency Service (SES) will launch a new Statewide recruitment campaign, after securing funding from Emergency Management Australia.

Recruitment material, including postcards, posters, media kits and recruitment kits are currently being produced, and will be distributed to all SES units throughout the State.

Individual units are being encouraged to use National Volunteer Week (May 15-21) to run a recruitment campaign including events, displays and media opportunities in their local community.

The recruitment campaign theme is based on four key motivators – adventure, community, skills, and mateship.

SES Director Eddie Bennet said the campaign would ultimately lead to an increased ability to service the community when disaster strikes.

“By increasing our SES member numbers, we will be strengthening our response to emergencies and increasing local community resilience to disasters,” Eddie said.

“Our existing members are highly

skilled, well trained and well equipped as emergency responders. They lead the way when emergencies occur in their local communities.

“But we really need to increase our member numbers to ensure we have the human resources needed to cope with another large-scale catastrophe such as Tropical Cyclone Larry.

“When Larry hit Far North Queensland volunteers came forward in droves to help out, but we want to be ahead of the next disaster and have people trained and ready to respond before the next big one hits.”

The SES currently has 8500 members. The aim of the recruitment campaign is to increase membership to 10,000 by the end of 2006.

“If we could boost our numbers beyond 10,000 we will be in a very good position to meet our operational requirements and exceed community expectations in a major disaster,” Eddie said.

“We particularly need to concentrate the recruitment in rural and remote areas.

“Most of our current members are located in the south-east pocket, and we need to make sure we have the ability to cover all 1.77 million square kilometres of Queensland soil.”

Eddie said the success of the campaign would rely heavily on local units conducting recruitment drives in their communities.

“The material being produced as part of the recruitment campaign will give units the tools they will need to recruit in their local area, but we need to have a strong presence throughout the State during volunteer week to kick the campaign off,” he said.

“Ideally I would love to see every unit in Queensland running a community event or display during volunteer week, and every member bringing a mate along to their group meeting.

“If every member identified one person who they think would be interested in joining the SES and got them to come along to a training night our numbers would increase drastically.

“After all, a big part of being involved with the SES is the mateship among our members.”

Atlas project to benefit firefighters

Firefighters will be able to better prepare for bushfires and improve operational effectiveness at incidents with the completion of 12 high-resolution A3 atlases.

The QFRS Geographical Information Systems (GIS) team is currently in the process of producing the atlases for South-east Queensland.

Risk Management GIS Unit Acting Manager Leon Bowers said the project was initiated due to a lack of suitable high-resolution topographic mapping for QFRS operational personnel.

“Currently, where high-level topographic mapping is available for the State, which is limited at best, it is often up to 30 years out of date,” Leon said.

“The agency responsible for the provision of topographic mapping products, the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, were not planning to increase their existing topographic mapping program in the foreseeable future.

“So, GIS has taken up the challenge to create the mapping. Working with NRM and GeoScience Australia for data, GIS hope to complete the 12-atlas series covering an area from the Queensland-New South Wales border north to Gympie and west to Helidon, by the end of the month.”

Leon said the GIS team looked at interstate programs to draw information from to create the atlases, which have a scale of 1:25,000.

“Each atlas page is A3 in size

and in each page spread there is a topographic map on one side and a map of new or recent orthographic imagery on the other,” he said.

“This enables the user to view features such as contours, watercourses, roads and structures on the topographic side, and also gives a ‘real world’ view on the orthographic side.

“Nine atlases of the series have been finalised and after all 12 have been completed, further high-risk areas in the State will be considered for similar atlases.”

A limited run of hard copy books is also available. However, all Rural Fire Brigades and urban stations in the atlas area will receive the maps in PDF form on CDs.

Preparation the key to cyclone response



The past couple of weeks have seen unprecedented effort from all elements of the Department Of Emergency Services.

As Acting Commissioner I have been both incredibly proud of our QFRS staff and volunteers and equally impressed with our response to an event that is not traditionally our core business.

In particular, the efforts of the team of the Far Northern

Region have been outstanding. Clearly the early planning and preparation, which began many years ago, were crucial to their success.

Their immediate response to the threat included assessing the likely damage and requesting assets from outside the region even before the cyclone directly impacted.

This involved early deployment of Urban Search and Rescue (USAR), incident management and communication staff, enabling rapid and effective support to the department and the affected communities.

Our people on the ground were involved in many varied tasks including assessing building damage, tarping and general

community assistance. The locals will remember their contribution for a long time. Behind the scenes contributors, while perhaps less visible, were just as vital to our successful work.

To me the big lesson was that it took the coordinated efforts of all the varied elements that together made up the QFRS team to ensure the success of this operation and that how if any one element had failed, so would the entire response.

Elements such as Far Northern Region’s Firecom, the urban teams, rural operations, Community Liaison Officers and USAR, being supported by staff at the State Operations Coordination Centre at Kedron and many other elements proved, not only the dedication of

the people that make up the service, but also our world-class response capability.

This team approach is our strength in all the situations QFRS faces in emergencies as well as the seemingly more mundane administrative tasks that are so essential to our long-term strength.

Our goal has been to build on the strengths offered through our focus on command, leadership and management. I believe the recent events have highlighted our ability to deliver when most needed.

My congratulations to all on a job well done and thank you for being part of the team.

Iain Mackenzie AFSM
A/ QFRS Commissioner

Front: Air Attack Supervisors
Jeff King, John Gresty and
Wayne Bates. Back: David Cant
from SA CFS and QFRS
Commissioner Lee Johnson.



SA thanks QFRS for aerial support

QFRS Air Attack Supervisors recently received appreciation certificates for their efforts in South Australia.

Due to expanded air operations activity into the Lower Eyre Peninsula in late December, the South Australia Country Fire Service (CFS) required additional qualified Air Attack Supervisors to support two fixed-wing water bombers.

“The CFS made a national request to all firefighting agencies for assistance,” QFRS Air Operations Manager John Gresty said.

“The QFRS is part of the National Aerial Firefighting Strategy which engenders cooperation and sharing between agencies.

“On the basis that we had highly qualified people and that the operation would be beneficial for QFRS, I made a recommendation to Commissioner Lee Johnson that we send five Air Attack Supervisors to coordinate aircraft operations.

“On December 28, the first officer was deployed and, based on a rotational system, we maintained continuous coverage until March 3.

“Jeff King, Brad Barnes, Wayne Bates, Bill Kennedy and myself worked in air intelligence and air attack supervision roles with the fixed-wing water bombers.”

In early March, David Cant, Manager of Aviation Services from the CFS –

representing CFS Chief Officer Euan Ferguson – presented QFRS Commissioner Lee Johnson with a plaque and the Air Attack Supervisors with a Chief Officer’s Certificate of Appreciation.

“The opportunity to work with the SA CFS was invaluable in broadening the experience of Queensland’s Air Attack Supervisors,” John Gresty said.

“We were really pleased that we were able to help South Australia, which has further strengthened the relationship between our two agencies.”

Childers coronial set for July

The Coronial Inquest into the deaths of the 15 victims of the June 2000 Childers Palace Backpackers Hostel fire has been set for July 3-7 in Childers.

The inquest will address several key fire safety issues including:

- The absence of early warning of

the fire to the occupants of the hostel;

- the adequacy of fire safety installations at the hostel;
- the adequacy of escape paths for the occupants;
- whether the legislation and administrative arrangements

put into place since the fire adequately address the issues which may be found to have contributed to the loss of life; and

- whether any persons should face criminal charges in connection with the deaths.



Peter notches up 30 years

Brisbane Region Rosters Manager Peter Sweeper was recently recognised for 30 years of outstanding service with the Queensland Ambulance Service. Peter is pictured here receiving his QAS Commissioner's Certificates for 10, 20 and 30 years of service from Brisbane Region Acting Assistant Commissioner Peter Wood.

Thoughts are with cyclone-affected colleagues



The Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) response to Tropical Cyclone Larry is another example of our organisation's ability to rapidly respond to a major disaster.

A number of our own staff who live and work in Innisfail and the surrounding areas were affected by the category five cyclone. On behalf of all QAS staff I would like to say our thoughts are with

them and their families as they begin the long recovery process.

I would also like to acknowledge the tremendous support from colleagues. Almost 100 operational staff from all over Queensland were involved in the emergency response.

These staff were supported by a total of 56 shifts at the Kedron State Disaster Coordination Centre. By all accounts this was an outstanding effort and I thank everyone involved.

It's all systems go on numerous fronts for the QAS with recruiting and e-infrastructure the current focus.

In February we launched the latest recruitment campaign targeting interstate and New Zealand Paramedics,

Patient Transport Officers and Communications Officers.

Since the advertisements have appeared in interstate and NZ publications there have been more than 4000 hits on the QAS recruiting website.

I am confident that this recruit drive will assist us to boost frontline resources to ensure staffing numbers and that Queenslanders continue to receive the exceptional patient care they have come to expect from their service.

In other areas the e-ARF and e-Timesheet pilots are now in 'live' trials and proving to be highly successful.

The e-ARF pilot being conducted at Ipswich Station is running as anticipated and crews conducting the trials have been very accommodating in their approach to the

new technology.

The SIMI Team must also be congratulated for its hard work in making this revolutionary system a reality.

In Rockhampton staff have been piloting digital timesheets. The e-Timesheets are Java-based programs that, once rolled out, will allow all QAS staff to log hours from any computer with Internet access.

The new e-Timesheets also aim to streamline payment for operational staff and work to eliminate under and over payment issues that may have occurred in the past.

I thank all staff involved in the trial for their good work and the valuable feedback they are providing the project team.

Jim Higgins ASM
QAS Commissioner

Nic Lentakis and Sally Paynter at the recent first aid training package launch at Parliament House.



New first aid packages launched

Saving someone else's life is one of the most personally rewarding feats possible, and according to Emergency Services Minister Pat Purcell, anyone can do it.

Mr Purcell launched the Queensland Ambulance Service's new first aid training products at Parliament House in early March. He said all QAS first aid courses had undergone a comprehensive review and adopted the latest lifesaving techniques and clinical industry trends.

"Any member of the public can enrol in any of the six Queensland

Ambulance Service courses, which include everything from advanced first aid to automatic external defibrillator operation," the Minister said.

"Last year alone more than 70,000 Queenslanders undertook QAS first aid training, with a number of them providing a vital link in the chain of survival during medical emergencies.

"These people saved the lives of their children and parents, but most often complete strangers."

The latest revamped QAS first aid courses include:

- Senior First Aid;
- Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation;
- Advanced Resuscitation Techniques;
- Automatic External Defibrillator;
- Occupational First Aid; and
- Advanced First Aid.

Mr Purcell said many people undertook first aid courses and never thought they would have to use their new skills.

"First aid courses are just like an insurance policy, but much cheaper," he said.

"You will never know when you'll need it – but you'll be glad you have it when the time comes."

QLAC representatives meet



Local Ambulance Committee representatives from around the State gathered in Brisbane recently for the first meeting of the 2006-07 Queensland Local Ambulance Committee Advisory Council.

Rescue chopper caseload doubles

Primary motor vehicle responses by the Brisbane-based Queensland Rescue helicopter have more than doubled in the past 12 months.

The figures, which reflect the government's decision to equip the air unit with a 24-hour doctor/Intensive Care Paramedic (ICP) crew, highlight the service's ability to respond and retrieve in critical times.

According to QAS Acting Medical Director, Steve Rashford, the figures highlight the success of the service.

"There is no doubt this is cost-effective service delivery," he said.

"We are talking about patients who are getting to hospital straight away. They are being picked up off the road and in many cases, within an hour they are being treated in a tertiary centre rather than being taken to the closest secondary hospital and then being transferred.

"In that hour, one in five of those patients is being mechanically

ventilated or receiving other major interventions not currently undertaken by paramedics."

Steve said there was no doubt the Queensland Rescue helicopter operations were second to none.

"The other benefit is that the ICPs are being exposed to a greater number of procedures, which is likely over time to increase their scope of practice," he said.

In the 12 months to February, 2006, Queensland Rescue's Brisbane helicopter responded to 431 aeromedical tasks and 109 primary medicals, including the recent retrieval of two critical stabbing victims from Bribie Island.

The base also responded to 55 primary motor vehicle accidents, including a rally car rollover in the Jimna State Forest.

Two patients were retrieved from the scene, including a female patient who was trapped in the vehicle for 90

minutes. The woman, who developed a tension pneumothorax, required extensive treatment by the paramedics and the ICP/physician team at the scene.

Steve said in addition to standard primary, aeromedical and primary motor vehicle accident responses, Queensland Rescue was tasked to retrieve paediatric and neonatal cases from across the State.

Queensland Rescue Townsville carried out 308 aeromedical tasks, 101 primary medicals and 12 motor vehicle accident responses, including the recent retrieval of a four-year-old boy from Upper Stone who was run over by a tractor.

The boy, who was taken to the Townsville Hospital, suffered head injuries but was later released from hospital.

In the same period the Cairns base responded to 102 aeromedical tasks, 75 primary and 25 motor vehicle accidents.

CDRS delivers excellent cyclone response



As the lead agency responsible for the coordination of the response to Tropical Cyclone Larry, the Counter Disaster and Rescue Services (CDRS) team has been incredibly busy for the past month.

Tropical Cyclone Larry was the largest natural disaster Queensland has experienced in more than 30 years, and I was extremely proud to see the staff from CDRS,

other DES divisions and other agencies working together to respond to the incident quickly and effectively.

And while the job has not finished, I would like to recognise the tireless efforts of all CDRS staff who managed the disaster response, working in coordination centres and on the ground to ensure a smooth response.

I would also like to make special mention of the incredible efforts of our SES volunteers from around Queensland who put their hand up to work in affected areas.

Many of the volunteers travelled long distances to be involved with the recovery effort, taking time away from

their family, friends and putting their lives on hold to assist the residents of the far north in their time of need.

To date more than 500 SES volunteers from around the State have travelled to the area to support the 330 volunteers from the Far Northern Region who responded to the disaster — the largest activation of SES volunteers in the history of the SES in Queensland.

I would also like to acknowledge the support provided by Queensland Fire and Rescue, Queensland Ambulance, Strategic Policy and Executive Services and Business Support Services staff, who also worked tirelessly

on the ground and in coordination centres to ensure a successful operation.

While CDRS staff are still very much involved with the long-term recovery effort on the ground as part of the support team working with General Cosgrove and the Operation Disaster Recovery Taskforce, the initial response phase of the disaster has concluded.

Over the next few months there will be many opportunities for us all to reflect on the response and I encourage everyone involved to contribute to debriefs and discussions.

Stephen Young
CDRS A/Executive Director



Reef rescues more common

The number of Great Barrier Reef rescue tasks has increased to the point where the Cairns Queensland Rescue (QR) helicopter now responds to at least one job every week.

According to Cairns-based QR pilot, Greg Kempton, 'traffic' on the reef now has a significant impact on the workload of helicopter rescue services in the far north.

"Certainly we are seeing more jobs. Many are dive related, but a growing percentage are related to the Irukandji syndrome, sometimes weekly during peak times," he said. In the two weeks up to March 2,

2006, Queensland Rescue Cairns retrieved a 72-year-old stroke patient from Moore Reef, a 64-year-old diver from Saxon Reef, a 68-year-old female from Wheeler Reef and a 65-year-old man with chest pains from Michaelmas Cay.

Greg said the increase in tasking had meant Queensland Rescue had a constant dialogue with dive boat operators regarding the use of their pontoons for retrievals.

"We certainly encourage the operators to talk to us and we have a very good relationship with most of the major players," he said.

"Most of the boat operators are

very professional and most are operating with semi-qualified medical officers on board."

Greg said it appeared likely the increasing workload, although seasonal, would continue and he encouraged boat operators to be aware of the likelihood of the helicopter being called in the case of an emergency.

"In most cases we will land on the pontoons however there are occasions where we have to winch directly from a vessel," he said.

"So it's certainly good to be aware of the operators and for them to have an understanding of how we work."

SES crew seeks fundraising support

The lead-up to the annual Variety Club Bash is on again but this year there's a definite orange flavour in the mix.

Goodna SES is busily preparing its entry for the fundraising event and members are calling on the State's

network of volunteers to lend a local hand as they make the trip from Cairns to Birdsville later this year.

While the crew has the funds it needs for the journey, current figures have them falling short on cash for fuel to get to Cairns where

the trip officially begins.

Goodna SES organiser Kevin Dowsett said the crew was hoping SES groups/units between Goodna and Cairns would be able to hold fundraising barbecues to help them meet the costs of fuel.





Tropical Cyclone Larry hits the far north

By Kathryn Ryan

The devastation caused by Tropical Cyclone Larry was almost indescribable.

As the cyclone ripped through towns in the Innisfail area on the morning of March 20, it left a trail of destruction that hadn't been witnessed in Queensland since the Mackay cyclone of 1918.

Homes and crops were destroyed. Fallen powerlines, corrugated iron and trees littered the streets. Residents' lives were turned upside down.

The impact zone covered an area about half the size of Tasmania.

Damage was sustained from Cairns in the north to Cardwell in the south, and inland to the Atherton Tablelands.

Towns around Innisfail, where the eye of the cyclone passed, were worst hit. Early assessments indicated that in some areas 90 per cent of homes lost their roofs or suffered structural damage.

Despite the widespread devastation and heavy post-cyclone rainfall, the initial emergency response phase of the disaster was swift and effective.

Emergency Services Director-General Fiona McKersie said the effectiveness of the response was

largely due to the collaboration between agencies.

"From the time it became clear that Tropical Cyclone Larry was developing, the State Disaster Management Group convened, bringing functional agencies involved with the management of disasters together from the start," Ms McKersie said.

"The collaboration between the various agencies proved incredibly effective, providing consistency in the operation right from the beginning.

"Counter Disaster and Rescue Services played a vital role in coordinating all agencies, and in particular the State Disaster Coordination Group did an exceptional job in coordinating the whole-of-government response from Cairns.

"On the ground the cooperation between agencies was also evident. The incident management taskforce, which comprised CDRS, SES, QFRS, Rural Fire Service, ambulance, police and defence personnel, worked in support of Local Disaster Management Groups in Innisfail and other areas, responding to more than 4400 requests for assistance in the first two weeks.

"Other government departments and private companies also provided invaluable support to the communities.

"In the long term the community will benefit from the collaboration between Commonwealth, State and local government."

As lead agency for disaster management in Queensland, CDRS initiated disaster management preparations on March 17, three days before the cyclone crossed the coast.

At that stage Larry was nothing more than a tropical depression 1400km off the eastern coast of Queensland.

By the time it became apparent that the cyclone was going to hit the coast with severe intensity, specialist crews had been deployed to the region and liaison with other functional agencies was well under way. SES crews from areas in the cyclone's path were activated and evacuations of more than 1000 residents began.

Safety and cyclone preparation messages were distributed to communities across the region through radio and television announcements. >>



» CDRS Executive Director Frank Pagano said this early intervention and management of the disaster proved effective, and ultimately saved lives.

“It’s quite astounding that a disaster of this magnitude could hit a populated area without causing any deaths,” he said.

“The outcome is testament to the fact that early warning and preparation in a disaster situation, coupled with cooperation from all agencies and the community, will save lives.”

Less than two weeks after the cyclone passed, more than 2000 staff and volunteers from DES had deployed to Innisfail and the surrounding areas to provide support to the affected communities.

Emergency services personnel assisted with everything from tarping roofs to coordinating food distribution, clearing blocked roadways, conducting building safety inspections and providing medical treatment.

Frank Pagano said the effective response from DES was largely due to extensive preparation for this type of scenario.

“We were prepared for a disaster of this magnitude to hit Queensland well before Tropical Cyclone Larry became a threat to Far North Queensland,” he said.

“In fact, as Tropical Cyclone Larry brewed off the Queensland coast there was an eerie sense of familiarity – in November 2005, CDRS staff ran ‘Exercise Weeping Maiden’, a simulation of a category

five cyclone hitting Cairns.”

With the initial response phase of the disaster over, the focus for the operation shifted to community recovery, with General Peter Cosgrove leading the Operation Recovery Taskforce, made up of a team of specialists including representatives from DES.

“Since I arrived in Innisfail after Tropical Cyclone Larry, I have been able to see both the devastation that was caused to far northern Queensland, and also the extraordinary relief effort that is well under way,” General Cosgrove said.

“The fact that no-one was killed directly due to Cyclone Larry is great proof of the fact that the people in the communities themselves, and all of the emergency services and local councils, were very well



Fiona McKersie acknowledged the outstanding efforts of everybody involved with the emergency response.

“Since Tropical Cyclone Larry hit Far North Queensland I have witnessed many selfless acts and I would like to pay tribute to the dedication and commitment of everybody who contributed to the relief effort,” she said.

“I would also like to acknowledge the tremendous response from the many staff and volunteers from across government and also from the non-government organisations who have contributed in so many ways to the relief effort.

“I would also like to express my sincere thanks to the families and friends who have supported our volunteers and staff over this trying time, and the employers who have allowed our volunteers to take time away from work to assist with the response.”

CDRS Regional Director for Far Northern Region, Wayne Coutts, also expressed his appreciation for the support emergency services personnel provided to the region.

“We have been overwhelmed by the support from volunteers and staff from around the State who have come to the affected areas or provided support in any way,” he said.

“I know for a fact that the communities they are helping in the areas around Tully, Innisfail, Babinda and up in the Tablelands very much appreciate the assistance from these groups.

“I would particularly like to recognise the crews from the areas around the cyclone impact zone. Many of those people have been personally affected by Cyclone Larry, yet they selflessly came to the aid of their community in its time of need.” ■



prepared for the onslaught.

“Now the initial relief effort in responding to the disaster is moving into the longer-term process of recovery.

“Although life is returning to normal for some, the impact of this disaster will be felt for many years, through the long-term impact on the economy, and the psychological trauma suffered by residents who have lost homes and businesses and had their lives disrupted.

“Overcoming these problems will be a massive task, but one that myself and the Operation Recovery Taskforce are committed to.”

Much of the initial response’s success can be attributed to the hard work and commitment of the volunteers and staff from all agencies and organisations.

TC LARRY FACTS

- The eye crossed the coast between 06:20 and 07:20 AEST Monday, March 20 2006
- Crossing location was at Innisfail
- Category four or five cyclone at the time it crossed the coast
- Maximum wind gusts were 240-290 km/h
- Estimated central pressure was 950 hPa
- Eye radius was 15-20km
- Radius of destructive winds was 100km



Local SES crews up to the task

The State Emergency Services deployment to the region affected by Tropical Cyclone Larry was the largest in the organisation's history – more than three times the number deployed during the Charleville flood of 1990.

At last count a total 835 volunteers had worked in the cyclone-affected areas of Far North Queensland.

At least 30 SES volunteers in the Johnstone Shire, which was the hardest hit, rode out the cyclone in their own homes, before coming to the assistance of the local community.

The shire's Local Controller Alan Green waited out the storm in Innisfail while his family were half-an-hour away in Silkwood.

Alan and his local crews, led by Mena Creek Group Leader Sam Monti, Silkwood Group Leader Pat Cassar and Innisfail Group Leader Jie Spence, were first on the ground clearing roads, tarping roofs and

getting people out of damaged houses.

Local SES stores were understandably depleted on the first day, but help was quickly on the way from elsewhere in the Far Northern Region.

"I knew the SES was a big family," Alan said. "But it was heart-wrenching when other SES volunteers turned up the morning after the cyclone having left their jobs and families to give assistance. We thought we were on our own."

SES volunteers kept arriving in waves for more than two weeks. Apart from the 326 volunteers from the Far North Region, members from 54 units across the State joined the rescue effort as part of 15 Task Force teams. "It's been a huge effort by SES volunteers both from within the region and those who have travelled to the region from across the State," SES Director Eddie Bennet said.

"There have been some wonderful stories of mateship and assistance over the past two weeks since the cyclone and all involved were a credit to their units and their communities."

The great stories ranged from the four Irish backpackers who signed up as volunteers to the elderly ladies staffing the 'soup kitchen' in Babinda or 18-year-old Jie Spence who showed maturity well beyond his years as group leader of Innisfail.

Other heroes were the local volunteers, many of whom didn't see their damaged homes in daylight for several days. Alan Green first saw the damage to his home through a video, taken by his wife.

Others, such as SES group leaders Grahame Smith (Babinda) and Sam Monti (Mena Creek), kept working in the community despite sustaining personal property losses.

– **Andrew Berkman**

USAR personnel tarp the Innisfail Catholic Parish Church during the cyclone recovery effort.



USAR teams hit disaster zone

Following the recent Tropical Cyclone Larry disaster, QFRS deployed four teams of Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) specialists to utilise their skills in the immediate aftermath, and also in the longer-term recovery operation.

The teams were made up of USAR experts from all over Queensland and complemented the existing teams from the local areas.

Heading up one of the teams was Area Director John Cawcutt, who said the deployment of the USAR crews was a good opportunity to test response capabilities and to activate the logistics and processes necessary to rapidly organise a large volume of manpower and equipment within a short period of time.

“We had already sent a team up from Brisbane to work with the guys from Northern and Far Northern regions before the cyclone hit the coast,” John said. “At that stage we did not know

whether there would be people trapped or exactly what we would be faced with so we had to be prepared for every contingency.

“Our first crews in were fully set up to be totally self-sustainable in the field, including ration packs and back-up equipment, the idea being, they don’t need anyone else to operate at full capacity, and they would not be a drain on already stretched local resources.”

The teams based themselves at a local school and once it was determined that there were no people trapped in buildings, the next priority was building assessment and tarping of damaged roofs.

Manager of Technical Rescue, Gary Littlewood, said in the very early stages of the operation, the USAR teams were supporting the Counter Disaster and Rescue Service communications team.

Shortly afterwards they were deployed around Innisfail and surrounds to mark buildings



This house, marked with a red ‘N’ for ‘No’ was deemed uninhabitable by USAR crews.

for liveability and tarping.

“The USAR teams were tasked to tarp any damaged but habitable buildings over two storeys high,” Gary said.

“The other main role was to perform building assessments on the hundreds of damaged houses and other buildings and mark accordingly with a visible ‘Y’ for yes or ‘N’ for no, to determine the habitability of the structure.”



Larry brings out best in international relations

In March this year, after 25 years of back-breaking work planting, clearing and sourcing particular species of shrubs and trees to attract rare native birds and insects, Laurie Poyner was putting the final touches to his masterpiece garden. He was getting excited knowing it was almost ready for entry into the 2006 Open Garden Scheme in the Tablelands district of Malanda.

Little did Laurie know, a monster storm brewing off the coast of Innisfail would soon destroy all he had worked so hard to achieve.

The ferocity of Tropical Cyclone Larry, the most vicious cyclone to cross the Far North Queensland coast in more than 30 years, destroyed in around two hours what had taken Laurie over a quarter of a century of gentle nurturing to create.

Laurie, huddled in his Malanda home taking refuge and listening to the destruction outside, could only helplessly wait until it was safe to

venture outside and see what had happened to his garden.

As Laurie walked outside in the aftermath he nearly broke down at what he saw. The first thing he thought was 'how am I ever going to rebuild this garden on my own?'

This was no ordinary garden either. Laurie's creation had recently been visited by The Cairns Wilderness Group and several birdwatchers clubs, who had noted and registered the presence of a number of rare birds that were attracted to the trees and shrubs Laurie had planted.

Laurie was not alone however, thanks to his local Auxiliary Firefighters headed by Captain Lorraine Van Raders.

Realising the scale of the damage, Lorraine and her husband, fellow auxiliary Rene, immediately thought of a group of visiting American students they knew of, who might be willing to pitch in and lend a hand.

And willing they were. Seventeen students from San Diego Hi-Tech International School in the United States who were in the local area on an exchange program were more than happy to offer any help they could after seeing how much damage the cyclone had caused in the area.

Maya Akinfosile, 15, of San Diego, said not one of the students shirked at the idea of rolling their sleeves up and doing some hard labour clearing branches and smashed trees from Laurie's garden.

"We were told about Laurie's situation and all the students thought it would be a really nice idea if we could do something to help people affected by this cyclone while we were out here in Australia," she said.

Certainly Laurie thought so, thanking each and every one of the students while doing a good job of holding back his emotions.

– Michael McAuley

Evacuation centres give hope to displaced

In the hours after Tropical Cyclone Larry crossed the coast, hundreds of people faced the devastating realisation that they would no longer be able to live in their homes.

With no food or water, few remaining possessions and limited amounts of cash, the displaced people of Far North Queensland congregated in a number of temporary evacuation centres operated by government agencies and volunteer organisations.

One of the busiest was established at the Innisfail TAFE College, where a team of Queensland Fire and Rescue Service officers led a cooperative effort involving the departments of Communities and Housing, Queensland Police, Queensland Ambulance, Red Cross and St John Ambulance.

Innisfail Evacuation Centre Coordinator, QFRS Area Director Jeff King, said the centre provided food, water, shelter and medical assistance to several hundred people following the disaster.

“We had more than 200 people come to the centre to get regular meals and for help with assistance claims and at times we had nearly 100 people sleeping here in temporary accommodation,” he said.

“The sleeping arrangements were very basic but it was clean, dry and people were able to access clean water and hot meals which they certainly appreciated.

“We also worked very closely with the Department of Communities and the Department of Housing to find accommodation for those whose homes were simply uninhabitable.



QFRS Area Director Jeff King worked closely with other Queensland Government agency representatives to ensure the smooth operation of the Innisfail Evacuation Centre.

“A lot of them went to Cairns, but many had jobs in and around Innisfail so we did the best we could to find them something close to town.”

Jeff said two warehouses at the TAFE college were also transformed into sorting and distribution centres for the flood of donated goods and food that poured into Innisfail after the cyclone.

It was all hands on deck as firefighters and

Red Cross volunteers worked together to sort through the donations and prepare assistance packages to be delivered to people in the outlying communities around Innisfail.

“It really was an excellent team effort by all of the agencies involved and I know it certainly made a big difference to the people that came to us for help after the cyclone,” Jeff said.

– **Michael Franks**



Firefighters and Red Cross volunteers worked tirelessly to sort through the flood of donated goods and food that poured into Innisfail after the cyclone.

All for one and one for all

Four Irish backpackers walk into a courthouse. Sound like a joke? Well it isn't.

The Nolan sisters – Yvonne, Pamela and Violet – and their friend Sharon Acheson, were backpacking their way around Australia and had arrived in Cairns when they saw the images of cyclone-ravaged Innisfail. So it was that they found themselves walking into the

Innisfail Courthouse on the day after the cyclone hit to ask how they could help.

“We saw the devastation on the television and couldn't believe what we saw,” Yvonne said.

“So we hopped in our old Ford Fairlane and went straight to the courthouse. They sent us up to SES headquarters. We registered there – got our orange overalls

and got to work.

“I even celebrated my 22nd birthday in that first week and had a great time with all the SES workers.”

The girls slept one night in their car in Innisfail so they could stay and help until a new SES friend found a house for them to stay at in Cairns.

They also appeared in a Brisbane newspaper, at an outside broadcast with a Sydney radio station and on national television on Channel Nine's *Today* program during a live broadcast from Innisfail.

“I don't know what we're going to do when we get back home to Limerick, we'll have such big heads from being such media stars here,” Violet joked.

“We ended up clearing up schools, tarping roofs and handing out tarps and food. We met some really wonderful people along the way.”



Irish angels: Violet, Yvonne and Pamela Nolan and Sharon Acheson.

Silkwood station blows in the wind



The town of Silkwood was hit hard by Tropical Cyclone Larry and despite its ambulance station losing the entire rear section of the building, it remained operational.

Extended Care Paramedic Nev Saunders was on-duty at Silkwood Ambulance Station when the cyclone hit.

“As we had the weekend to prepare, my wife and I decided that instead of seeing out the cyclone in our

house at Kurrimine Beach we would base ourselves at the ambulance station at Silkwood as I was on duty anyway,” Nev said.

“In hindsight, it was the right thing to do as Kurrimine Beach was one of the worst hit places on the coast. My wife and I huddled in the office in the back of the building – our last resort was to try and shelter under our 4WD in the front garage of the station. Thank goodness it didn't get to that.

“Once it was over we checked the building and the rear had been literally torn off. The second storey didn't look like it would have been able to stand much more – the ceiling and walls were splattered with leaves and branches – it was a mess.

“The Officer in Charge for the area, Brian McGowan, was stuck in his house – it took him two-and-a-half days to chainsaw his way out, so I decided to stay on duty until he could make it in on the Wednesday morning at 8am. We didn't have anywhere else to stay anyway.

“It is now just over two weeks and we have the power on in the office of the station thanks to volunteer tradesmen from Brisbane and the Gold Coast – we are so grateful.

“I was glad that we could stay operational during this time as so many people lost so much in our area and I know it was a comfort to them that we were still open for business.”

–Helen Anderson



The media scrum in Innisfail just days after TC Larry struck. Look very closely and you'll see that CDRS Disaster Management Officer Glenn Alderton is the centre of attention.

Media staff help spread the word

The coming and going of TC Larry was certainly no secret, as evidenced by the extensive local, national and international media coverage it attracted.

Working behind the scenes to distribute critical public safety messages and ensure a smooth flow of operational information to media outlets was the department's own team of Media Officers from the Public Affairs and Communications Unit (PACU).

Operating on a 24-hour roster, PACU officers were stationed in the State Disaster Coordination Centre in Brisbane, and on the ground in Far North Queensland, before TC Larry had even crossed the coast.

In the following 14 days, Media Officers conducted more than 450 interviews, including more

than 100 with international media organisations including the BBC, CNN, NBC and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

They coordinated more than 60 press conferences and facilitated more than 1000 interviews with operational personnel.

They also operated on the disaster ground in Innisfail and its surrounds, where dozens of journalists, television crews and photographers had gathered to chronicle the relief effort.

Parts of Innisfail became something of a 'media circus' as all four free-to-air television stations and several radio networks set up temporary bases in the town.

PACU Director Bob Hammill said unit staff had performed admirably under trying conditions.

"We have a small team and there is an expectation from media organisations that we will be available for them 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week," Bob said.

"Our staff managed a number of difficult media situations and provided support to everyone from CDRS Executive Director Frank Pagano to Premier Peter Beattie, Emergency Services Minister Pat Purcell, General Peter Cosgrove, Johnstone Shire Mayor Neil Clarke and all of the operational personnel who were deployed to the disaster zone.

"They also provided a significant amount of safety and cyclone awareness information that helped the public prepare for the event."

QAS deploys staff from across Qld

When Tropical Cyclone Larry swept through the far north, the resulting devastation not only highlighted the resilience of the people of this region, but the preparedness and professionalism of emergency services personnel.

The Queensland Ambulance Service deployed 90 people from across the State, including paramedics, officers and administration staff, to the region to assist in the relief effort.

The State Operations Coordination Centre staffed 56 QAS shifts for the purpose of providing a coordinated,

whole-of-QAS response as part of the Queensland Government and Department of Emergency Services State Disaster Plan.

Acting Deputy Commissioner Barry Malone is usually based in the far north and was overwhelmed by the support.

"QAS staff were deployed from around the State to support staff in the affected region and allow local crews to overcome fatigue," he said.

"These were difficult circumstances with many staff from other regions having to live in sub-standard

conditions as the clean-up effort continued and always with no complaints.

"Not to mention the Far Northern Region staff who had to not only cope with the impact and immediate post-impact response stage, but in some cases not being able to check on their own loved ones or the state of their own homes.

"We tend to forget these people that worked through the cyclone and I want to say it was a magnificent effort all round."

QFRS Deputy Commissioner outlines vision for the future



New QFRS Deputy Commissioner Iain MacKenzie fronts the media during the Narangba chemical factory fire of August 2005. Photo by Michael McAuley.

By Michael McAuley

Many young lads dream of becoming firefighters but few are ever able to follow through on that dream.

For new QFRS Deputy Commissioner, Iain MacKenzie, there was never any doubt in his mind that he would make it happen.

Iain's father was the fire brigade's Chief Inspector of Queensland, so he had the privilege of witnessing life in the service from a very young age.

Growing up in that environment, Iain said his path was very clear to him.

"I was only 20 when I joined and right from the start I found that the job suited me. I've always enjoyed the science of fire and studying fire behaviour, as well as methods of firefighting," Iain said.

"As my career progressed through the ranks, I became more and more focussed on finding better ways of doing old things.

"I've always been aware that I am quite a driven person and that I wanted to be involved in developing and improving on our methods. For example, in 1990 I had the opportunity to go down to Tasmania and do a course on fire investigation and bring that knowledge back.

"Shortly after that, we started doing rudimentary investigations and from that I wrote the basis of the three levels of study and developed protocols in conjunction with the police."

The other area of most interest to Iain is training and preparing staff to face all possible contingencies out in the field. He says he intends to follow this up in his new position — just as he did in his previous role as Assistant Commissioner of Brisbane Region.

"My focus has always been on combining operations with structured training programs so we can properly equip our staff with the skills to perform the job we are asking them

to do," he said.

"That is something I see as essential for the future as we respond to a changing world and strive to serve the community with the highest possible level of professionalism."

Iain said he understood there was sometimes resistance to change, especially as things are progressing so quickly in the modern world, and some believe the old methods of doing things have been working for a long time and are still relevant today.

"I think it's important to point out that I don't believe in change simply for change sake, but I do strongly believe that if something can be done better or has obviously become outdated and is no longer effective, then you should avoid being complacent or sitting on the fence over an issue — you should just get in there and fix it up," he said.

"Another thing we should always remember is that we as firefighters are here to serve the public. They

have the belief in us that we are there for them and are able to respond in their time of greatest need.

“They presume that we are fully prepared and I believe they have an absolute right to expect those things to happen. It is our job to meet that expectation at all times.”

One of his immediate key roles as Deputy Commissioner is to run the Industrial Relations portfolio. Iain cites the biggest challenge in the Enterprise Bargaining Agreement as the fact the QFRS genuinely wants to deliver the best working conditions possible for its employees within financial constraints, while also balancing the legitimate concerns of the union.

“I want to make it clear, this is not an ‘us against them’ situation. I have always been a union member myself and will continue to be because I believe in what they are trying to do, we just have to find the best balance we can,” he said.

Another area Iain is working hard on is the continuing roll out of a suite of highly specialised vehicles such as Emergency Tenders and

Command Vehicles, customised to suit the requirements of the particular area to which they are assigned.

Iain said in terms of HazMat, Road Accident Rescue or Technical Rescue, he wanted to ensure those vehicles were fitted with a cache of equipment suited to the jobs they most attend, or were most likely to attend in their areas – as opposed to the traditional ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach.

He believes no matter what rank one holds in the fire service, it is very important to stay in touch with the operational side and said he is keen to continue attending large incidents and remain involved in the development and overview of operations.

“The beauty of the QFRS structure is that every officer, every person in a senior position who wears a uniform has come from being a recruit firefighter,” he said.

“So we all know the job extremely well and nowhere along the line have we had that knowledge removed from us. We all still have that passion for operations and understand that operations are

the backbone of what we do.

“Bearing that in mind, I absolutely intend to keep going to incidents, albeit most probably the larger ones. I firmly believe it is very important to stay in touch and to see first-hand how any new trucks, operational equipment and techniques are working on the incident ground.”

There are three final points Iain believes are fundamental to the everyday running of QFRS and to each individual’s work ethic.

“In evaluating my own performance, I often come back to three basic questions I have to ask myself and they are: What services have been delivered?; what outcomes have been achieved?; and, have I built up a network around me and delivered to the community a system where the value of trust is not only implicit in the working environment, but is nurtured and encouraged as a fundamental throughout the entire service?,” he said.

“If I can answer positively to all three questions and encourage all QFRS staff to do the same, then I know our professional service delivery and the strong, positive culture of the QFRS will continue well into the future.”

Photo by Matt Hayes





Rural Operations in focus:

An interview with AC Steve Rothwell

As newly appointed Assistant Commissioner of Rural Operations, Steve Rothwell has a job that will see him lead 42,000 rural volunteers right across the State.

However, with more than 28 years of fire service experience in QFRS and the ACT Fire Brigade, and as a holder of the Australian Fire Service Medal for distinguished service, he is ready for the challenge.

Steve has been acting in the role since July 2005, and last month, was appointed permanently to the position by Commissioner Lee Johnson.

Prior to that, he was Assistant Commissioner of the South Western Region, where he was responsible for around 550 staff and an area of 400,000 square kilometres.

Emergency: As the new Assistant Commissioner of Rural Operations, what do you see as the most important issues for the Rural Fire Service (RFS) today?

SR: I believe the RFS should be taking more of a lead role in rural and iZone fire management issues as they relate to QFRS as an organisation and also to external organisations including the Australasian Fire Authorities Council. The intent is to extend that down from a State level and to implement it in a practical sense on the ground, at a regional and local level.

Another goal for the RFS is the training of all rural volunteers to a competency level of Fire Management One (FM1), which is a training program consisting of six involved modules and recognised Australia wide. There will be recognition of prior learning of course, but the goal remains to get everyone who is involved in operations trained to the same levels of competency. This is a big challenge and will take quite some time to complete, but the plans are currently in place.

I also want to improve and roll out

officer development programs for Rural First Officers.

Emergency: How are you tackling these issues?

SR: Our rural volunteers look after 93 per cent of the State. Within the iZone areas where the urban areas meet the rural, we are looking more closely at our pre-planning, relationship building and awareness of competency levels and skills that both urban and Rural Fire Service members bring to the iZone locations.

It's also about us having more of a lead role through the links we have with research and planning and through the Bureau of Meteorology in assisting regions to identify what their fire conditions are going to be like within any three- or four-day period.

If we can provide them with predictions which help them to activate their wildfire alert levels, that will help us in the activation of Incident Control Centres (ICC)

or Regional Fire Coordination Centres (RFCC), putting strike teams on standby and applying other strategies at a local or regional level.

We have the expertise and contacts within rurals to play a lead role in supporting the organisation and, more importantly, the communities within those locations.

On the question of training, we have at the moment, 42,000 volunteers on our books and we are currently going through a major data cleansing process to find out exactly who we have out there and what role they currently play.

We have some members who want to be active firefighters and some who prefer to play a support role, so our data is fairly dated. We have 15 districts and we have the data up to date in a number of those districts. When we have finished updating the data we estimate there will be about 35,000 people who want to be active firefighters so we have to get the FM1 training delivered in a prioritised and timely approach.

Once again I reiterate we will be recognising and taking into consideration any prior learning. Now this will of course take quite some time, however we are already making inroads into those numbers and we intend to ramp up this process by engaging more staff and local casual trainers who can conduct courses within their own area.

We also are also rolling out a number

of crew-leader training programs suitable for our First Officers, and the last round of courses just completed has proved very successful.

We are currently undertaking a workload assessment across all of our districts to ensure we can deliver the correct amount of training and support to our volunteers who are most in need. The way I see it, the more support we can provide those brigades, the more they will be able to support their communities in times of need.

Emergency: To help our readers understand a bit more about Steve Rothwell, can you briefly outline some of your personal interests outside work?

SR: Sure, I have just renovated a house in Toowoomba after much

hard work over many months. It's thankfully now finished and is now on the market. Apart from that, I am really looking to improve my golf handicap. I bought a new set of clubs a couple of years ago which unfortunately are still in pristine condition. So I intend to change that by trying to find time where I can to give those clubs a serious belting out on the course and put a few dents in them.

Other than that, I believe everyone should schedule in some quality time off once a year to help recharge the batteries. I picked up the travelling bug a few years ago and this year I have a trip booked to Vietnam for three weeks. It's somewhere I've always wanted to visit, and I'm really looking forward to that.

–Michael McAuley





Locals to enhance island response

By Helen Anderson

Jackie Poida planted this big 'thank-you' kiss on Fraser Island Intensive Care Paramedic (ICP) Mal Babb after he made a life-saving early-morning mission to her Waddy Point home in late 2005.

Jackie had been unable to sleep and was feeling light-headed. Thinking she was suffering from indigestion, she took a tablet to help settle her stomach.

"I thought I was just overtired. I went to bed about 2am and had a tight feeling in my chest, but I thought it was just something I'd eaten," Jackie said.

"I couldn't sleep so I got back up and popped some Panadol and still felt bad so thought I'd better wake up my partner Doug.

"I thought maybe it could be a heart attack but until you have one you don't really know what you're looking for. Doug was with me and

called Mal."

Waddy Point is a 50km journey across the beach and sand tracks from the ambulance station at Happy Valley.

"I got in contact with Mal he got there around 5am-5.15am and zapped (defibrillated) her twice and brought her back. Then he took her to the chopper around 7.30am to go to the mainland where she arrested again," Doug said.

"I've got an angel on my shoulder I'm pretty sure of that," Jackie said.

"Apparently, because of the way my heart was, if you did CPR it wouldn't have done it any good. We really needed that defibrillator and Mal to administer drugs.

"The crew on the Energex chopper was also great – holding my hand and being sympathetic. That just makes such a difference."

Jackie said the close call had highlighted the importance of having defibrillators available on the island.

"We need as many defibs on Fraser as possible," she said.

"I am looking forward to helping fundraise for more defibs for the island as that's something Mal would like.

"We are also looking at being First Responders on the island if I can get over my distaste for blood. I'd like to give it a go – I just want to be a help in some way, even if it's just fundraising and organising."

The 'First Responders' Jackie is referring to is a program aimed at improving the delivery of emergency health services across the State.

First Responders are members of communities or workplaces who volunteer to provide basic life support skills and render first aid

at emergency incidents until the arrival of professional assistance. There are presently more than 150 First Responders across Queensland.

First Responders are supported by the immediate and simultaneous dispatch of a professional ambulance crew, medical retrieval service or other emergency service as appropriate.

North Coast Region Assistant Commissioner Murray Excell has been working with Mal Babb on establishing Fraser's First Responder Program.

"Since November last year, 25 people on the island have been trained by the QAS in first aid and CPR and I was very happy to present certificates to them today," Murray said.

"P J Burns Builders have been very generous in donating five defibrillators to this program and Spectrum Data Systems International donated first-aid kits. We could not have done it without them.

"We are currently working on three sites on the island at Kingfisher Bay, Happy Valley and Eurong, with Orchid Beach and Dundaburra the next two sites we'd like to have up and running.

"We have pilots, bus drivers, resort workers – members of the

community from all walks of life working together. It is a great example of community-minded people in remote areas pulling together to make their home safer.

"And it's not only their home – but also an island visited by more than half-a-million tourists annually, including a lot of international visitors. It's a commendable effort."

Fraser Island is the largest sand island in the world, with an area of 184,000 hectares and a main beach running for 120km. This makes attending to injuries or emergencies quite a feat in itself.

Mal Babb said the island community had embraced the program enthusiastically.

"The community has been very supportive – we've got local SES people and rural fire people – the whole community is behind it," he said.

"I think the direction we are going is very positive and with the inception of the First Responder units it will complement the emergency services response on the island. It's important to have First Responders along with an ICP and the chopper – everyone complements each other – it's critical.

"Jackie was a lucky girl. Three per cent is about what we save usually – you don't see it often – it's fantastic."

Program supports rural and remote communities

As part of the First Responder Program, QAS provides First Responders with a range of education and training in accordance with QAS Clinical Practice Manual standards.

They also receive first aid kits, oxygen soft packs, automatic external defibrillators, radios, mobile phones and pagers.

More than 150 First Responders already play an invaluable role in remote and rural communities such as Cungulla, Yuleba, Tallwood, Woodgate, Imbil, Blackbutt, Cherbourg, Kenilworth, Cooyar, Kilkivan, Samford, Karragarra Island, Russell Island, Lakeland and St Pauls in the Torres Strait.

In addition to these locations, First Responders are co-located at honorary and permanent ambulance stations throughout the State.

QAS Commissioner Jim Higgins said the First Responder Program was an excellent example of QAS working with local communities to help ensure Queenslanders received the best pre-hospital care available regardless of where they live.

"Queensland is Australia's most decentralised State, with significant rural, remote and isolated communities," he said.

"This has a significant impact on the ability of the QAS to respond to patients in these communities.

"In such areas, volunteers play a crucial role in ensuring community members receive first aid in the quickest possible time.

"The program is particularly important in situations such as a cardiac arrest where every second is crucial.

"I applaud and thank all those people in isolated regions who donate their time to support the wellbeing of their community."

Photo courtesy of Fraser Photography





The Emergency Services Minister, Director-General, Commissioners and the Joint Operations Group were given a tour of the USS Ronald Reagan while it was in Brisbane.

US warship visit a success

By Kathryn Ryan

As lead agency of Queensland's State Disaster Coordination Group (SDCG), Counter Disaster and Rescue Services is involved with a diverse range of operations, from planning for and responding to natural disasters, through to coordinating multi-agency responses to terrorist attacks.

But another major role of the SDCG and CDRS was highlighted recently when the USS Ronald Reagan docked in Brisbane for a five-day scheduled port visit.

While the Australian Government is responsible for agreeing to visits by Nuclear Powered Warships of foreign allied countries, it is a federal requirement that

contingency arrangements be in place in each State and Territory in the event of an accident resulting in the release of radioactive material into the environment.

In Queensland this responsibility lies with CDRS.

As lead agency for the Nuclear Powered Warships Visits Committee, CDRS had been involved in numerous nuclear powered warship visits, dating back to the 1970s.

Since then, nuclear powered submarines and cruisers belonging to France, the United Kingdom and the United States have regularly docked in Australian ports without incident.

However, the USS Ronald Reagan was the first nuclear powered aircraft carrier to ever berth alongside a wharf in Australia.

CDRS Deputy Executive Director Stephen Young is Chair of the Nuclear Powered Warship Visits Committee and has been involved with three warship visits since he started with the division early last year.

As chair of the committee much of the responsibility for the overall coordination of this landmark visit by the USS Ronald Reagan rested with him.

"My role as chair of the committee is to make sure all functional agencies have the plans in place to



emergency services,” Stephen said. “Where a nuclear reactor is involved there are so many facets to consider, from safety to site management and radiation level monitoring, so a successful stay requires local, state, national and international coordination between government and private sector agencies. “It’s vitally important that all of the agencies pull together and move through the process in a coordinated manner so we can ensure no part of the process is missed.”

While the coordination aspect between functional agencies is essential, the Department of Emergency Services also invests significant time and resources into conducting training exercises to ensure the relevant people in each of its divisions know their responsibilities.

Iain MacCulloch, CDRS Senior Operational Officer and Executive Officer to the Chair of the Nuclear Powered Warship Visits Committee, said the department conducted at least one training exercise each year.

“One of my tasks as the Executive Officer is to prepare and conduct training exercises,” Iain said.

“Whether the exercises are run as table-top scenarios, based at

headquarters, or full field exercises, all agencies are generally involved, and they’re based on the worst case scenario, so we can be sure everyone fully understands their role in the operation.”

The coordinated approach taken by the committee, and the training and planning that had been undertaken prior to the USS Ronald Reagan’s visit to Queensland, ultimately led to a successful visit in January.

“The visit to Queensland well and truly exceeded the expectations of the US Navy and it’s quite likely that they will be returning to Brisbane because of the success of the visit,” Stephen said.

During their stay, Captain Terry B. Kraft, Reagan’s Commanding Officer, praised the efforts of all who had made the visit possible.

“Australia has always been a favourite port for American sailors,” Captain Kraft said.

“Being the first aircraft carrier to visit Brisbane is an honour, and highlights all the work that the good people of Brisbane have done to prepare for our visit.

“It is fitting that this stop marks the first foreign port of call for this warship.”

ensure a smooth and safe visit,” Stephen said.

“Aircraft carriers are exceptionally well designed and well built, so the chances of something going wrong are almost negligible, but I need to know that all the planning and background work has been done prior to arrival.”

With 20 agencies directly involved with the visit of a nuclear powered warship, this coordination role is essential.

“CDRS, Queensland Fire and Rescue, Queensland Ambulance and the SES all have roles to play during the visit, but the committee extends much further than



A radiation health officer checks a volunteer for contamination at the last nuclear powered warship scenario “Exercise Sparkle”, held in Brisbane in September 2005.

Safer Communities nominations sought

Organisations and individuals that help to build safer communities are encouraged to take part in the 2006 Australian Safer Communities Awards.

The awards, organised by Emergency Management Australia, recognise and encourage best practice and innovation across Australia's emergency management sector, business, government and community organisations.

The awards cover all aspects of community safety in emergency management – risk assessment, research, education and training, information and knowledge management, prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.

There are two categories:

- Pre-Disaster – covers projects aimed at preventing or mitigating disasters and emergencies or their effects, including preparedness activities; and
- Post-Disaster – covers response and recovery and related activities.

To ensure fair comparison, award entries are divided into eight streams. While there is no specific individual award, individuals may submit entries in one of the following streams:

- Federal and State Government agencies;
- Local Government;
- Volunteer organisations and community groups where membership is substantially voluntary;

- Private sector organisations, including government-owned business enterprises;
- Researchers and research bodies;
- Combinations of any of the above (such as joint projects);
- Projects which are of national significance or cross-jurisdictional; and
- Projects which have a community or personal safety focus.

Entries must cover completed projects substantially undertaken between January 2005 and April 2006

Queensland entries close on Friday, August 4 2006.

For further information please visit www.ema.gov.au or contact Sue-Anne Chapman at sachapman@emergency.qld.gov.au.

Quit smoking and restore balance

DES has always promoted a sound balance between work and life and keeping healthy is one way of managing everyday stresses.

Emergency services workers often find themselves in difficult situations requiring high levels of physical energy. Even if you're working behind a desk, keeping healthy helps you manage ups and downs of the working day.

The Organisational Health Unit, part of Industrial Relations and Organisational Health within Business Support Services, is presently increasing its departmental health promotional activities.

One way to enhance your health is to quit smoking.

When you quit smoking you will also reduce the risk of heart, stroke and vascular diseases. You will feel the benefits of quitting straight away as your body repairs itself.

Within two to five years of quitting, the risk of a heart attack or stroke among former smokers has been reported to approach that of people who have never smoked.

Depending on the number of cigarettes you smoke, typical benefits of stopping are:

- After 12 hours almost all of the nicotine is out of your system;
- after 24 hours the level of carbon monoxide in your blood has dropped dramatically and you have more oxygen in your bloodstream;
- after five days most nicotine by-products have gone;
- within days your sense of taste and smell improves;
- within a month your blood pressure returns to its normal level and your immune system begins to show signs of recovery;
- within two months your lungs will no longer be producing extra phlegm caused by smoking;
- after 12 months your increased risk of dying from heart disease is half that of a continuing smoker;
- reduces the incidence and progression of lung disease including chronic bronchitis and emphysema;

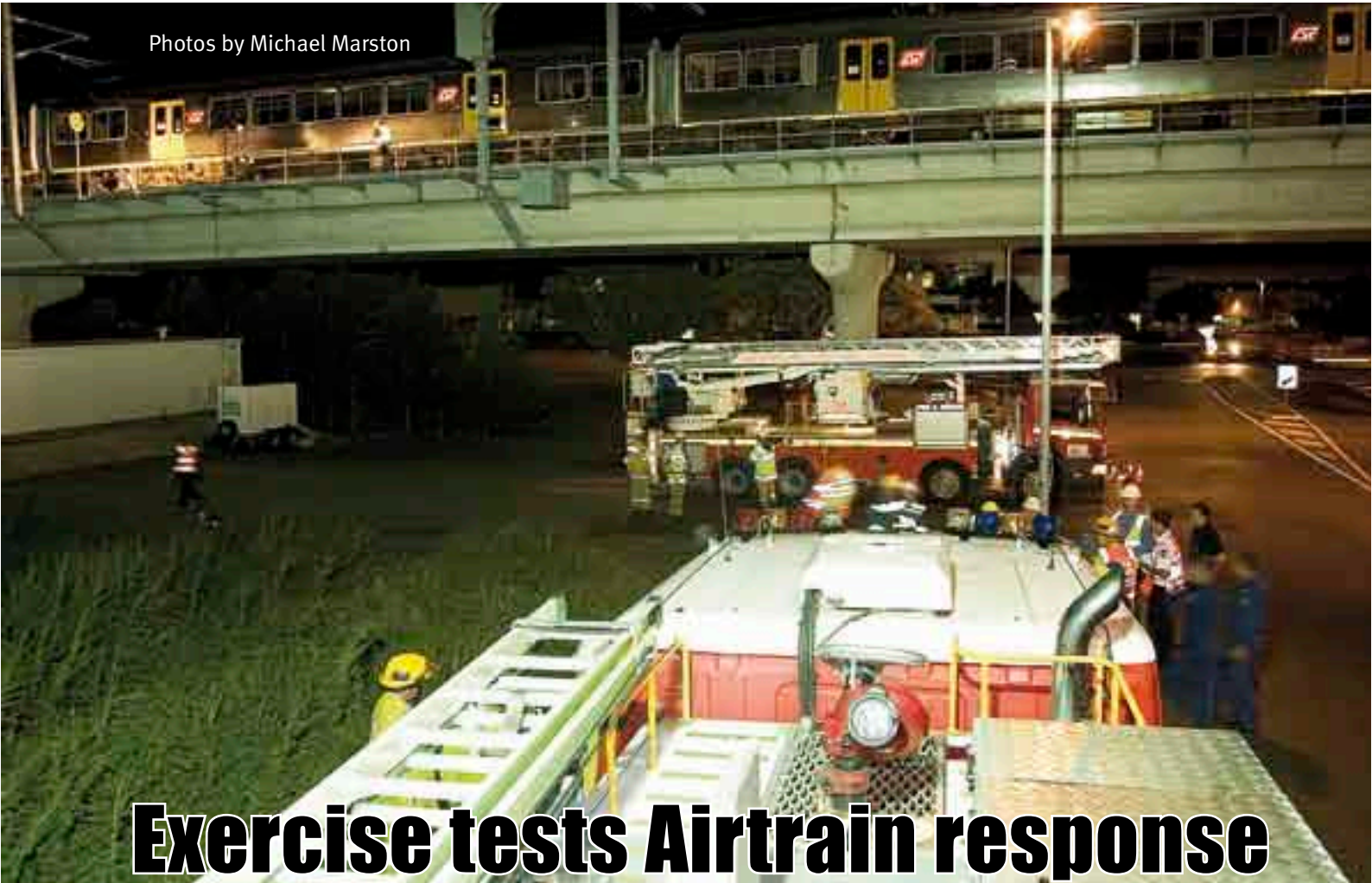
- after 10 years your risk of lung cancer is less than half that of a continuing smoker and continues to decline (provided the disease is not already present); and
- after 15 years your risk of heart attack and stroke is almost the same as that of a person who has never smoked.

There are some simple and effective ways of beating smoking that you can try. But before you do anything you should see your doctor to check on which is the best method for you.

Some good tips can be found on Quitline, which outlines four key steps:

- Find out why you want to quit – what is most important to you and be clear about your reasons for quitting;
- make a plan to help guide you – having a plan will reduce the stress of quitting;
- put your plan into action – stick to your plan, you're doing the right thing; and
- stay on track.

For more information check the Quitline website at www.quit.org.au.



Exercise tests Airtrain response

A recent training exercise at Eagle Farm involving the Brisbane Airtrain tested the Queensland Ambulance Service's State Major Incident and Disaster management process.

The scenario involved a train departing the Domestic Terminal Station at 20:02 hours. The train comprised six carriages and carried 30 passengers including two disabled people.

Paramedics, firefighters and police officers and Queensland Health workers were all involved in the exercise.

As the train moved towards the city, a defective wheel on the fourth carriage failed. This resulted in the train being derailed, a transformer dripping hot oil and the emergency egress being blocked.

According to Northgate Ambulance Station Officer-in-Charge, Teresa Powell, the focus of the exercise was not clinical.

Instead, the aim was to identify the best means of moving patients from an elevated area; access on to the tracks for emergency personnel; when to shut down the



power; how to make the area safe; and the lighting of the area.

"The role of Queensland Ambulance Service was in conjunction with Queensland Health to triage and treat patients," Teresa said.

"The initial medical team sent in to the area consisted of one doctor, one registered nurse, one Intensive Care Paramedic and an Advanced Care Paramedic who worked through the train triaging patients.

"The walking wounded were

escorted back along the track to the Domestic Terminal Station.

"They had to be particularly careful with trip hazards. More seriously injured patients were to be taken down over the side with the assistance of the QFRS rescue equipment.

"Safety was paramount for all personnel involved with this exercise. The train was on an elevated track, it was at night and there was the threat of rain."



Inferno engulfs Queensland

This was the scene that greeted firefighters when they arrived on scene, within five minutes, to this Rockhampton house fire in late February.

Rockhampton Station Officer Steve Shaw said the fire at the Koongal address was ‘roaring’ and thankfully all persons were accounted for on arrival.

The QFRS response included two pumpers from Rockhampton and North Rockhampton stations, as well as an iZone tanker carrying extra water.

“There were two gas cylinders on

the side of the house that were venting and spraying gas when we arrived,” Steve said.

“We used the monitor to knock the main fire down and our quick response enabled us to limit major structural damage.”

The blaze was so fierce that the entire yard surrounding the home was burnt out.

The crews also concentrated their efforts on protecting the house next door.

“There was small fire next door on the side closest to the main fire,” Steve said.

“We were fortunate that the exposures were about 10 metres away because the plastic downpipes on that house had melted and the plastic on the car underneath the house had also melted.”

Not only was the fire large, so was the community’s response to the blaze – Communications Centre staff fielded an incredible 23 triple-zero calls about the incident.

The large volume of calls is proof that the important ‘dial triple-zero in an emergency’ safety message is reaching Queensland communities.

Lucky escape after horse fall

A broken branch and a rugged fall from his horse put 22-year-old Crows Nest SES volunteer Matthew Herron within millimetres of death.

After a day out with friends, Matthew was riding home to his parents' property on the Darling Downs, when his horse 'Captain Starlight' was spooked by a snake.

Rearing suddenly, the horse bolted, leaving Matthew clinging to the mare's neck.

"I thought I was sort of right after a bit," he said.

"I managed to get myself almost back up but then she decided to jump a pipe and I came off hard and landed on a stump."

When Matthew stood up he found that a branch had splintered from the stump, pierced his chest and become lodged millimetres from his heart.

What happened next has stunned most who hear the story.

Realising "it didn't look too good", Matthew, a volunteer with the SES and rural fire brigade, walked to his grandmother's house.

With the stick tightly wedged and barely a drop of blood spilling from the wound, Matthew elevated the branch slightly, finding it eased the pressure in his chest.

"My grandmother was asleep on the couch and she didn't have her hearing aids in," he said.

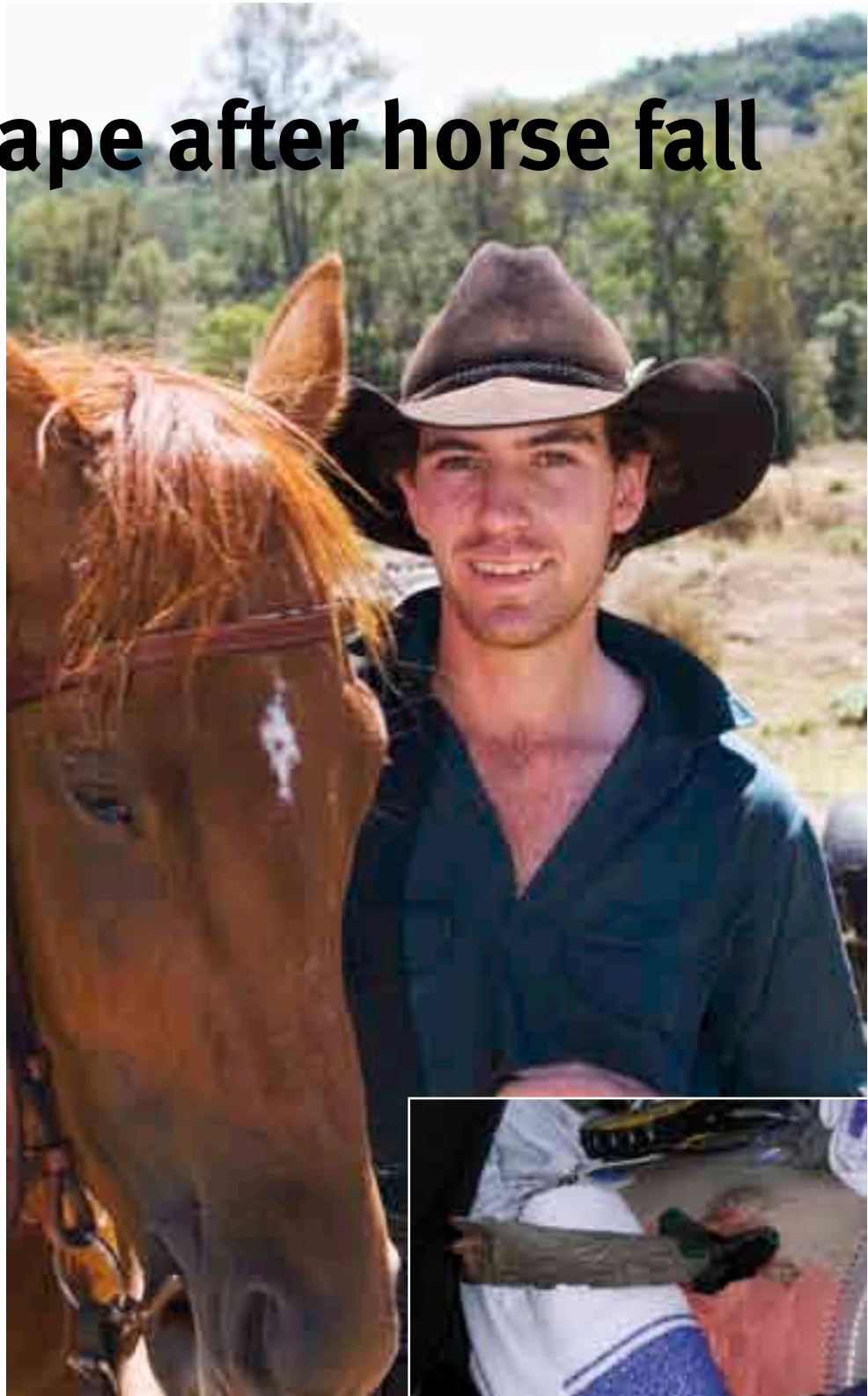
"When I came in the door, at first she thought I had a bird under my arm."

Realising his grandmother would be unable to help him, Matthew held the stick firmly with one hand, made his own triple-zero (000) call and then walked to the road to meet the ambulance which arrived at the property in less than 10 minutes.

"I was all right really until they lay me down in the ambulance," he said.

"Once they did that it was excruciating."

Queensland Rescue helicopter Intensive Care Paramedic Michael Kerr, who was on shift the day Matthew was retrieved from Toowoomba General Hospital, said staff who treated Matthew were astounded by his injury.



"The stick was pulsating with the pericardium," Michael said. "It was certainly a severe penetrating injury."

Michael recalls Matthew was alert but clearly in enormous pain when Queensland Rescue arrived in Toowoomba.

For the medical teams, securing Matthew became paramount to his survival.

Michael said the penetrating injury was so acute that even the slightest movement had the potential to cause irreparable damage.

At the Prince Charles Hospital in Brisbane, a team of specialists worked to extricate the branch and repair the damage to Matthew's lungs and chest.

Sporting scars that barely reflect the gravity of his injuries, Matthew, who is now three months post injury, is back at work.

"I am extremely grateful to everyone who helped me," he said.

– **Andrea Dawson**

Paramedics help Allan get second chance



Paramedics John Nolan, Barry Keane and Dennis Jones with Allan Parlato and wife Sue.

Allan Parlato was in the middle of his usual gym routine at Alexandra Hills in Brisbane's south late last year when he started to feel lethargic.

A perceptive gym instructor suspected Allan might need an ambulance and quickly called triple zero (000).

When the paramedics arrived and found the 57-year-old diabetes sufferer in the change room, he experienced a cardiac arrest.

"We used the defibrillator 22 times

in 38 minutes to keep Allan's heart beating and administered Adrenaline, Atropine and Lignocaine," QAS Advanced Care Paramedic Barry Keane told *Emergency*.

"We went to visit Allan in the hospital the next day and he sat up in bed and shook my hand. In my 27 years on the job I have never seen such a recovery."

Unfortunately Allan's condition deteriorated further. He arrested again and was taken to the Prince

Charles Hospital for evaluation by the Heart Failure and Transplant Teams as well as by the Mechanical Support Team.

He had suffered an extensive heart attack, leaving him with a heart so damaged that he could not survive without assistance from a mechanical device.

After careful discussion with Allan and his family, surgeons from Prince Charles implanted a Ventricular Assist Device, which kept his heart working until a suitable donor heart became available.

Fortunately a donor heart soon became available and Allan underwent his transplant. He is now walking around and even having barbecues in the backyard.

"I was so happy to see paramedics – Dennis, Barry and John – again and the wonderful staff at The Prince Charles Hospital who gave me my new heart. I just wanted to personally thank them so very much and I thank QAS for giving me the opportunity," a very grateful Alan said recently.

Director of Prince Charles' Heart Failure Service, Dr Deborah Meyers, said Allan's story was a great example of both the skill of paramedics and the importance of people choosing to donate their organs.

To register as a donor phone the Australian Organ Donor Register on 1800 777 203.

Do you have a pet project?

The Kenneth James McPherson Foundation is calling on QAS personnel to nominate for research and development recognition for the 2006 Foundation Awards.

The three Annual Award categories are:

- Outstanding Paramedic Graduate Award – \$1000 for the student paramedic shown to strive for excellence in the QAS core paramedic education program;
- Personal Development Award – \$1000 to attend a conference or similar approved activity in the

pre-hospital care or emergency medicine fields if your application is successful; and

- Research and Development Award – \$3000 to meet the costs of registration, travel, accommodation and presentation of research findings at an appropriate conference if your application is successful.

Nominations close on 31 August 2006.

Award winners will be announced at the Kenneth James McPherson Foundation Patron's Day in

October 2006.

Payroll Deductions

The Kenneth James McPherson Foundation is funded by corporate and individual donations and many QAS personnel currently donate through payroll deductions.

You can make a tax-deductible donation to the foundation through a payroll deduction of just \$2 per fortnight. You can download the form from DES Portal.

For further information contact Althea Cleland on 07 3247 8368.

Nova 106.9 announcer Emily Jade and Broncos prop Sam Thaiday with models-for-a-day Oanh Do, Natasha Walker and Sarah Carmody.

DES celebrates women's day

International Women's Day was celebrated in early March by Department of Emergency Services staff throughout the State.

International Women's Day offers women all over the world an opportunity to celebrate their achievements, reaffirm their goals and work to improve the status of all women.

The day provides the opportunity to reflect on the progress the agency has made to advance equity within DES.

This year's theme for International Women's Day was 'Women striving for a peaceful society'.

All personnel from South Western Region, South Eastern Region, Brisbane Region and Kedron Park were invited to attend the celebrations at the Kedron Park complex.

Celebrations included Tai Chi, breakfast, guest speakers, a soapbox debate and a fashion parade. Organisers thanked all who generously volunteered their time.

North Coast Region celebrated with a lunch. All the males were invited and were asked to bring a compliment with them (which they did). All who attended reportedly had a delightful time.

Meanwhile, paramedic Helen Railton, firefighter Sandy Hooper

and SES volunteer Nicole Quayle were representing the department at the Australian Institute of Management's International Women's Day lunch at the Brisbane Convention Centre.

The three women, who were pictured together in *The Courier-Mail*, were keen to spread the word that women make excellent emergency services personnel.

The department is setting some aggressive targets to enhance the representation of women in all divisions.

Through the Women's Reference Group, the department has recently released a document called

Pathways for Women.

This program provides an integrated approach to the development of women at all levels and aims to ensure all women are afforded the chance to gain the knowledge, skills and experience to progress their careers within DES.

The Women's Reference Group is also coordinating a survey, the first since 2001.

The survey will be released this month and its purpose is to identify issues of concern to women in DES.

For more information please contact Sandra Cowley at scowley@emergency.qld.gov.au.



Helen Railton, Sandy Hooper and Nicole Quayle. Photo Annette Drew, *The Courier-Mail*.

Blackout birth over in a minute

It was late on a Thursday night earlier this year when the power went out in Tracey Riley's home at Joyner, north of Brisbane. But that was the least of her problems. You see, Tracey was pregnant, and her water had just broken.

She told husband Vance to call triple zero (000).

With their three-year-old daughter Montana holding her 'Bob the Builder' torch to light the room, Vance was talked through the birth of his baby boy Jett via phone by QAS Communications Officer Glenn Hines.

"I'd only been three months in the job when this happened. It all happened so quickly, it was a first delivery for

me and I was very happy to hear of the joyful outcome," Glenn said. Paramedics from Petrie Ambulance Station, Ian Young and Bronwyn Thompson, arrived on scene in just three minutes and attended to the newborn, who had the umbilical cord wrapped around his neck.

"When we arrived the house was in total darkness so we had to do everything by torch and candle light," first-year student paramedic Bronwyn said.

"I was only seven weeks out of training – it was my first delivery and we saw the cord was wrapped around little Jett's neck – so we untangled him and had mum on

a stretcher in the ambulance.

"I think I'm attracting babies, as I delivered one by the side of the road just recently and have had a few other close calls," Bronwyn joked.

"I just want to thank the Communications Officer who kept my husband calm on the phone and the paramedics who were so fantastic in the pitch dark – I was most impressed," Tracey said.



The Riley family – Montana, Vance, Jett and Tracey – with Communications Officer Glenn Hines and Student Paramedic Bronwyn Thompson. Photo Chris Higgins, Quest Newspapers.

Neighbours avert mum's nightmare

It's every mother's nightmare. You turn your back on your kids for a second and next thing you see your 14-month-old son lying face down in the pool.

This happened recently to Carina mum Zeinab Hardwar who, pulled her son Zain from the pool and rushed to the street for help while her seven-year-old twin sons rang

triple zero (000).

As luck would have it, former neighbours visiting the street for the first time in nine months happened to be driving past. Kerry Park and Neville Beer immediately stopped and performed CPR on Zain while waiting for the ambulance.

This life-saving act was recently rewarded with an Assistant

Commissioner's Commendation at the Hardwar's home.

QAS Area Director John Bradbury made the presentation.

"This is a great example of a member of the community saving someone's life by simply knowing basic first-aid," John said.

"It is a privilege to present these commendations to Kerry and Neville and to meet the Hardwar family and little Zain, whom I'm sure would not be here if not for the efforts of Kerry and Neville."

"I cannot thank Kerry, Neville and the paramedics enough," happy mum Zeinab said.

"We have a CPR board, but I just panicked in the moment and forgot everything but to try and get help for Zain. If it was not for Kerry and Neville driving past and stopping, the Communications Officer giving advice on the phone and the quick arrival of the ambulance I have no doubt Zain would not be here.

"I thank you all so very much – you are all wingless angels."



AD John Bradbury with Zeinab Hardwar, Zain and Kerry Park. Looking on are Les Gough, Shangeetha Nava and Kevin Watt. Photo Jamie Hanson, The Courier-Mail.

Clinical Challenge

By Nathan ICP John Nolan

It is 18:00 hours and you are dispatched to a 62-year-old female complaining of muscular weakness in the limbs.

On our arrival at the residence you are ushered into the main bedroom. There you find an elderly female sitting on the side of the bed, stooped over. The patient indicates she is pain free, but was unable to straighten up. On standing, the patient is hunched over from the waist up and is not able to straighten her upper torso.

The patient indicated that on waking this morning, she tried to get out of bed but her legs were not able to support her body. Feeling tired she returned to bed and slept. At 11:00 the patient woke and was able to get out of bed and perform her normal duties. There was no recurrence of the lower limb weakness from earlier that day.

The patient then indicated that she had been feeling tired early in the afternoon, so decided to lie down and have a rest. On waking, at about 17:00, the patient found that, even though she could stand up, she was unable to straighten her upper torso and had extremely poor grip strength in both hands. The patient indicated there was no pain associated with this decreased muscle function.

The patient indicated no recent history of illness, other than a mild upper respiratory tract infection approximately one-and-a-half to two weeks ago, which cleared up within a couple of days of onset. The patient indicated that she was otherwise healthy and had never experienced this problem before.

The patient denies headaches and blurred vision. She states she does not think she was stung by anything. The patient states she had helped her husband remove an old clothes hoist from the yard yesterday and had felt tired at the end of the day.

A secondary survey found muscular weakness to the back, both arms, dizziness when standing erect and paresthesia to the feet and hands.

Her VSS revealed;

BP 182/95

RR 18/min

SpO₂=99% RA

BSL=6.8mmol

Chest is clear AE=L=R with good tidal volume

GCS 15

Afebrile

Weight = 70kg

During transfer to hospital the patient remained conscious, alert and conversant with only minor variations to her blood pressure. The patient was administered therapy oxygen and provided any other supportive care needed.

Transfer to handover at hospital was uneventful.

Questions

1. What would be your diagnosis for this patient?
2. What is your main concern with this patient?
3. What would be your treatment?

Answers next month.

Last month's answers

Remember our case from last edition, the 55-year-old who was called in as a cardiac arrest but was actually conscious on arrival?

He had a bulge in his belly that was a third kidney from a transplant nine months prior but the question was raised as to the possibility of AAA and the administration of aspirin.

As it turned out this patient had a very large pulmonary embolus. The hypotension was from acute right heart failure but he also had an increase in jugular venous pressure, acute shortness of breath and an inability to hold his saturations.

Another factor to consider was the bruises from the heparin given during his last hospital admission. Obviously the hospital was pursuing some reason for anticoagulant therapy, a DVT or PE perhaps?

These factors accompanied by the initial tachycardia and a history of chest pain should certainly raise your suspicion of a PE. That said, could a differential diagnosis include an AAA? Yes of course it could. A patient with an AAA may also present as hypotensive and tachycardic, and while it can be difficult to observe (even in a confirmed AAA) the mass was not pulsatile so it is possible and it would be in my list of differential diagnosis but it is not my provisional diagnosis.

So where does this leave us with the aspirin? There is a strong body of evidence for the pre-hospital administration of aspirin for cardiogenic chest pain but there is no prospective pre-hospital data for its use with a pulmonary embolus. Moreover, it is not listed as an indication for aspirin within the CPM, so in short, at this point it does not have a role for this patient.

– Paul Everett, ICP, Nathan



station profile

Toorbul Rural Fire Brigade

Opened in 1981, Toorbul Rural Fire Brigade recently celebrated 25 years of dedicated service to the community.

The brigade was initially started by a group of locals encouraged by the now District Inspector of Toowoomba Alan Johnson.

After enthusiastic fundraising, the shed was built by local labour under the guidance of members.

Currently the brigade has one medium and one light attack appliance and will soon have one more medium attack vehicle.

Toorbul has 36 active members to call on in times of community need.

Toorbul Brigade has supported other brigades in times of large bushfires, and over the years has sent strike teams as far afield as Kilcoy, North Stradbroke Island,

Toowoomba, Tara, Stanthorpe and Bribie Island.

In the summer of 2001-2002, Toorbul supported the New South Wales Fire Brigades in a multi-agency task force during the longest official continuous bushfire emergency in NSW, when widespread severe bushfires burned throughout the State including the Central Coast, Greater Sydney, Blue Mountains, Central West and the South Coast.

On a more local level, in October 2004, Toorbul rural volunteers donated more than 690 man-hours of their valuable time to fight fires in Kilcoy, Nanango and around Toorbul.

Toorbul is very active in the Caboolture area with district training taking place at the station.

Group activities are targeted at making the shire a safer place for the community.

Vital Statistics

Region	Southern Region, within Caboolture Rural District Office 12
Station Age	25 years
Crewing	36 active members
Resources	1 Isuzu Medium Response vehicle, 1 Nissan Light Response Vehicle



Maritime Safety Course attracts big names

In between touring the world in her 40-metre super yacht and developing documentaries about her journeys, former comedian and television star Pamela Stephenson has turned to the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service for maritime safety training.

Pamela, who is married to Scottish funny man Billy Connolly and is now a psychologist and author, had previously been unable to access a Maritime Safety Course for herself and crew anywhere throughout her extensive travels.

In February this year, after hearing about a course exactly matching her requirements, the 56-year-old attended a course conducted at the QFRS Regional Training Complex in Cairns.

The QFRS Training and Emergency Management (TEM) unit, through its involvement with the Australian Maritime Training Network and in partnership with FNQ Institute of TAFE Cairns, jointly developed the course.

The course, called Standards of Training and Emergency Management (STCW) 95 Safety at Sea, fills a niche in the market and details topics such as ship/vessel fire safety, fire extinguishment and survival at sea.

The training, provided by local qualified firefighters, includes sessions on Fire Science, Breathing Apparatus and Team Firefighting.

Cairns is the only place where the full STCW course is provided in Queensland with only two other providers available throughout Australia.

The majority of students attending this course are involved in the maritime industry across Australia, and interest is continuing to build both interstate and internationally, with students from the United Kingdom and Italy having recently participated in the program.

The QFRS, through its TEM office and in continuing partnership with the local TAFE, is also finalising the Advanced Maritime Firefighting module due for introduction in the near future.

All master mariner engineers have a requirement to do this course, which is currently being delivered in Tasmania and the United Kingdom. This course is also receiving significant interest from maritime groups nationally and internationally.

Win a Whitsunday getaway

Emergency magazine, in conjunction with the Queensland Police Credit Union, is giving away two holidays in the beautiful Whitsunday islands this year as part of our 2006 Reader Competition.

All you have to do is send us your best stories and photographs and you'll be in with a chance to win.

We'll be giving away a trip for two to this stunning North Queensland

island location to the contributor of the best written article, and a second trip for two for the contributor of the year's best photograph.

The competitions will be judged by Media Officers from the department's Public Affairs and Communications Unit.

There is a 1000 word limit for written articles, and all contributions must demonstrate

some aspect of the Department of Emergency Services working in the Queensland community.

Post your entries to:

Emergency magazine
DES Public Affairs and
Communications Unit
GPO Box 1425

Brisbane 4001

Or email:

editor@emergency.qld.gov.au

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