GRAND BEGINNINGS FOR 60 YEAR OLD BRIGADE

CAMARADERIE ON SHOW AT FIREFIGHTING CHAMPIONSHIPS

A SUMMER LIKE NO OTHER

EXERCISE EAGLES NEST TO THE RESCUE
# Incidents

From the Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner ............................................................ 3
A summer like no other ............................................................. 4
Fire a reminder to be prepared no matter the weather .......... 8
Crews tackle CBD fire ................................................................. 9
Shocked crew rescued from sinking vessel ......................... 10
Marathon mission for RAC Rescue crew ................................. 11
Team work brings blaze to a halt .............................................. 12
Lessons learnt from devastating house fire ......................... 14
Task Force Black Swan deployed during SA floods... 16

# General news

Changing false fire alarm behaviour ................................. 17
Six years in the hot seat ............................................................. 18
Celebrating the orange army on WOW Day ..................... 22
Camaraderie on show at firefighting championships .......... 23
Trailblazing women of the South West .............................. 24
Fallen firefighters remembered in WA ............................... 26
Queen of tracking retires ........................................................ 27
Female firefighting pilots leading the way ......................... 28
Taking community spirit to the next level ......................... 30
bstreetsmart – ................................................................. 32
Re-enacting road crash scenarios to save lives ................. 32
Children’s book warns of dangers of playing with fire .... 33
In the field with... Morten Boe, DFES Photographer 34
Australind cadets lend a helping hand .............................. 36
Subscribe for emergency information ............................. 37

# Training and resources

New firefighting capability in remote Kimberley .............. 38
Shipboard fire skills put to the test ........................................ 39
Exercise Eagles Nest to the rescue ........................................ 40
At His Majesty’s Service .......................................................... 42
New portal for volunteers ....................................................... 43
Snapshot of key initiatives ...................................................... 45
All bases covered with new facilities .................................. 46
South West rescue helicopter flying high with new base .... 48

# Awards and recognition

Grand beginnings for 60 year old brigade ........................ 49
Australian Honours and Awards ........................................ 50
In Memoriam ................................................................. 51
WA businesses recognised for supporting emergency services ................................. 51
Outstanding service recognised ................................. 52
From the Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner

This has included rolling out crew protection and Automated Vehicle Location systems across WA’s firefighting fleet, switching SES quad bikes to safer All Terrain Utilities, replacing firefighting appliances within agreed timeframes, and providing VMRS groups with better equipped new vessels.

Understanding that volunteers across the State are the backbone of our response, we introduced the Volunteer Sustainability Strategy last year to improve the volunteer experience and to work towards increasing retention. A range of initiatives has already begun including the Volunteer Leadership Program, and the redevelopment of the volunteer portal to better communicate with volunteers.

The presumptive legislation and equalisation of volunteer insurance is also in its final stages and is set to deliver real benefits to former and current volunteer and career firefighters. Similarly, there has been a huge amount of work put into a proposed new Emergency Services Act, which will improve community safety and better support all emergency services personnel into the future.

We’ve improved the way we provide critical emergency information to the community with the launch of the EmergencyWA website. Our operating systems have been consolidated with the continued development of WebEOC, enabling us to all work from the same page no matter which hazard we face. Soon we will also see the advent of a new computer aided dispatch platform, providing a greater coordination of resources and improved response for the people of Western Australia.

A focus on risk reduction, community preparedness and resilience has led to great strides being made. This has included the introduction of bushfire risk management planning and associated systems, as well as the development and introduction of the bushfire prone standards.

Such initiatives work hand in hand to make our communities and their homes safer.

Likewise, the commencement of Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services units operating in Indigenous communities in the Kimberley is an important advancement in building capability on the ground. The first unit, in Bidyadanga, has already started operations, and two more units are set to follow later this year.

In the training space we have made progress towards better developing our greatest resource, our people. Pathways has been introduced to provide a common framework for career and volunteer personnel to enhance their abilities in areas such as leadership and incident management, while the implementation of MyPath has been an important step in developing and retaining skilled corporate staff.

Important gains have also been made in closing the gap with Indigenous participation in our workforce. A highlight of my time at DFES is undoubtedly the introduction of the Aboriginal Firefighter Cadetship program – the first program of its kind and a great success.

These are just a handful of the complex projects that have been delivered and have had an impact, for the better, on the way we operate.

Today we are working together better than ever to protect our communities. I am proud of all of these achievements and more, and will take away many wonderful memories. I thank you all for your ongoing hard work and dedication to keeping the people of WA safe. I am confident we have laid a strong foundation for future progress and I trust that you will keep up the great work.

Wayne Gregson APM
COMMISSIONER
FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES
A summer like no other

Colder than average, wet, and with floods from the northernmost tip of the State to the south, summer brought with it extensive damage and isolation as heavy rains wreaked havoc on infrastructure and made roads impassable.

In mid-February most of the State was declared a natural disaster zone, with affected areas stretching from Kalumburu in the north to Esperance in the south. In Perth’s Swan Valley, severe flooding submerged vineyards destroying crops.

DFES personnel and volunteers worked tirelessly to resupply isolated communities, transporting supplies by helicopter and plane, as well as undertaking a month-long fuel resupply operation. Emergency services rescued numerous community members who became stranded or endangered by floodwaters.

Illustrating the sheer number of incidents, DFES issued a total of 260 flood warnings between November 2016 and March 2017.

State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers across WA were kept busy responding to more than 600 requests for assistance for flood and storm damage during the same period.

**Great Southern**

The Great Southern region dealt with its worst flooding in years. As heavy rain and wild weather lashed the area in early February, floodwater inundated towns, farms and cut off roads.

In just five days, Ravensthorpe recorded 239 millimetres, Hopetoun 160 millimetres and Ongerup 165.4 millimetres of rain.

Great Southern Superintendent Wayne Green said the amount of water and the ferocity of floods caught everyone by surprise despite preparations.

“It impacted the entire region from Katanning and Wagin in the north all the way down to Esperance,” Wayne said.

“We brought in two modified helitacs for four days during the worst of the flooding – they were valuable for reconnaissance and were a great resource to have on hand for heavy lifting of essential equipment and to assist with recovery.”

On Saturday 11 February the Phillips River and Jerdacuttup River bridges on the south coast were destroyed by rampant floods, stranding a group of 15 travellers. DFES chartered a helicopter and lifted the group to safety.

Wayne said widespread damage to the region’s road networks meant people were taking unnecessary risks.

“When access to Esperance via the South Coast Highway was cut off people started trying to force their way through water. Just a small amount of floodwater can wash your vehicle away – it’s not worth the risk.”

Main Roads estimates fifty percent of roads in the Great Southern Region were damaged by floods.

DFES issued a total of 260 flood warnings between November 2016 and March 2017.
Goldfields Midlands

Further north, in the Goldfields Midlands, heavy rain caused flooding in the Avon River catchment including Mortlock River. On Friday 10 February people in East Northam were warned to prepare for possible evacuation due to inundation.

Goldfields Midlands Superintendent Trevor Tasker said SES volunteers were crucial in their efforts to assist the community in Northam, York and Beverley.

“We couldn’t have done it without them,” Trevor said.

“Thanks to their tenacity and hard work we were able to keep people safe.”

Widespread localised flooding meant every road in the region east of Kalgoorlie was inaccessible to traffic.

In Kalgoorlie-Boulder emergency accommodation was erected for 80 residents from Tjuntjuntjara Aboriginal community who became stranded in town due to flooding. Access routes to Tjuntjuntjara, 550 kilometres east of Kalgoorlie, were cut off for up to three weeks.

“Widespread localised flooding meant every road in the region east of Kalgoorlie was inaccessible to traffic.

“We worked with contractors and volunteers from Kalgoorlie-Boulder SES to assist the community with emergency supplies after they got down to only four days’ worth of food and nearly ran out of fuel.”
Pilbara

In the Pilbara region persistent rain saturated rivers and floodways causing widespread flooding. The Great Northern Highway, the main arterial road connecting regional towns from Exmouth to Port Hedland was closed, stranding tourists and locals along the coast.

Pilbara Superintendent Peter McCarthy said people were taking unnecessary risks travelling through floodwaters, leading to an unprecedented number of rescues in the region.

The Pilbara office worked with volunteers to coordinate five major rescues.

“As an example, we had to retrieve a couple and their three year old child near the De Grey River north of Marble Bar,” Peter said.

“I think the message is pretty clear – don’t camp near flooded rivers.”

“They had been camping near the river and woke up on an island.”

DFES coordinated the joint rescue with SES Port Hedland, the BHP Billiton rescue helicopter and staff from Muccan Station.

Due to weather conditions, a small boat from the pastoral station eventually provided the best option to get the family out.

“I think the message is pretty clear – don’t camp near flooded rivers.”
Kimberley

The Kimberley region dealt with its rainiest wet season on record. During January and early February two tropical lows dumped rain on already saturated catchments in the Kimberley, pushing the Fitzroy River close to major flood levels.

The Great Northern Highway between Derby and Halls Creek and parts of Gibb River Road, as well as many shire roads, were closed. Tragically, one man drowned in the Ord River after attempting to rescue a young girl from floodwaters.

Between January and May, DFES organised 18 food and seven fuel resupplies to remote indigenous communities cut off by floodwaters, with assistance from Derby SES and Halls Creek and Fitzroy Crossing Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services (VFES).

Halls Creek VFES Captain Kevin Eldridge said volunteers loaded up planes with several hundred tonnes of fuel and food each supply run, in what was a huge logistical undertaking.

One of the biggest remote communities, Balgo, located near the Northern Territory border, was cut off by road from the outside world from mid-December to February.

Balgo Chief Executive Officer Garry Elford said getting goods in, especially fuel for the generators, eventually became a problem.

“The Tanami Road was impassable and the powerhouse got down to only having a couple of weeks left of fuel. Luckily DFES brought in some drums for us in February to tide us over,” he said.

Kimberley Superintendent Grant Pipe said none of the supply runs across WA would have been possible without the assistance of volunteers.

“I would like to thank all our hard working volunteers for their efforts this season,” Grant said.

“Their commitment and willingness to assist the community is inspiring and impressive. We simply couldn’t have done it without them.”

As the wet season wrapped up, DFES in the Kimberley, Pilbara and Goldfields Midlands were already preparing for the next.

“We will continue to work with remote communities to build greater capacity and contingency in an effort to reduce the impact on the community,” Grant said.

The team from Halls Creek VFES loading up a plane during one of the food resupply runs in the Kimberley.
Fire a reminder to be prepared no matter the weather

A bushfire that threatened homes in Upper Swan earlier this year was a dramatic reminder that fires can get out of control even without extreme weather.

The fire broke out in bushland near Bells Rapids in the City of Swan on the night of 8 January. It had been a fairly typical summer’s day with temperatures in the low 30s and a fire danger rating of ‘high’.

North East Metropolitan District Officer Craig Garrett, one of the incident controllers, said conditions weren’t immediate cause for alarm.

“Conditions were moderate when the fire was first reported, but as crews began trying to contain it the wind strengthened and changed direction,” Craig said.

“The fire escalated and for the next couple of days we were up against searing temperatures with winds gusting up to 45 kilometres an hour.”

Crews battled steep terrain and variable winds, making their work even more hazardous.

An Emergency Warning was issued around 2am on the first night as the fire came dangerously close to homes in Copley Road, and firefighters worked to protect them from ember attack.

Craig said welfare was a key focus for the Incident Management Team (IMT) due to the tough conditions.

“It was very hot, so we had to pay close attention to fatigue levels and making sure crews were well rested and hydrated,” he said.

Around 130 volunteer and career firefighters used tankers and heavy machinery to contain the fire. Some of the volunteer groups on the scene were Bullsbrook Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services, Bush Fire Brigades from East and West Swan, West Gidgegannup and Wanneroo, and Swan State Emergency Service.

Once the fire was declared a Level 2 incident, DFES worked in partnership with the Parks and Wildlife Service (P&W) and the City of Swan to get the fire under control.

The difficult terrain made building containment lines challenging and time consuming.

“This meant the risk of escape was very real and the potential threat to the surrounding community was constant throughout the incident,” Craig said.
Crews tackle CBD fire

A high-rise office building in the Perth CBD was saved earlier this year after firefighters contained a large fire in under an hour.

The fire also came close to the Great Northern Highway and east-west rail corridor, making the task even more complex.

Night shift Incident Controller A/Superintendent Peter Sutton agreed multi-agency cooperation was key to a successful outcome.

“We were able to manage the fire efficiently thanks to cooperation from local government, SES, P&W, WA Police, St John Ambulance, Brookfield Rail and others,” he said.

The fire ripped through about 130 hectares, with no properties lost, minimal impact on the nearby rail line and only minor damage to fencing and power poles.

A/Superintendent Sutton said the Incident Management Team used a combination of strategies both on the ground and in the air.

“Fighting fires in terrain like this at night is very challenging and dangerous for firefighters,” he said.

“There was a real focus on safety, and ground crews worked extremely hard overnight before firefighting aircraft could return in the morning.

“The aircraft were tasked with containing the fire at first light and the DFES Aerial Intelligence platform plotted the fire shape and helped us identify areas of concern.

“Local volunteer brigades also used portable pumps to mop up fire along the river area.”

DFES staff in the Metropolitan Operations Centre and ComCen worked behind the scenes to manage communications, logistics, public information and more.

Despite the challenging nature of the fire, crews were able to contain it within 24 hours, and control it within 48. The cause was undetermined.

Craig said the incident was good reminder for the community to be prepared throughout the bushfire season, no matter how benign the weather might seem.

“You need to prepare for the worst-case scenario and have a plan B because conditions can change quickly, and a fire can threaten lives and property without warning.”
Shocked crew rescued from sinking vessel

Emergency services responders are familiar with turning out to unexpected situations, and so it was quite a relief for Two Rocks Volunteer Marine Rescue Service (VMRS) to rescue a well-equipped vessel, albeit a few inches under water.

Late afternoon on Saturday 13 May, Two Rocks VMRS were notified by police of a distress call from a vessel which was taking on water near Map Reef.

The vessel’s crew had set off an Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) and several flares, but as the sky darkened they had exhausted their flares and waited out the search waving a torch from their slowly sinking boat.

Two Rocks VMRS skipper Brian Nalder said his main concern for the rescue was the people.

“We didn’t know whether the vessel was still floating or whether we were looking for people in the water,” Brian said.

With assistance from a WA Police helicopter and other vessels, they were able to find the distressed crew and boat approximately three kilometres from the VMRS base.

“Water was probably within an inch or two off the deck and we made the decision straight away to hook a tow rope and take the people off,” Brian said.

During the journey to Two Rocks, crewman Ned Shepard was keeping an eye on the towed boat, watching it take on more and more water throughout the hour.

“There was very much a concern that it would sink,” Ned said.

After the boat had been lifted it was discovered that the rudder shoe was torn off, bending it backwards which in turn split the hull. The split was the length of the rudder, and there was also some cracking around the keel.

Brian said the crew of the rescued vessel were very quiet and in a bit of shock after being rescued.

“They were shattered, and didn’t say much at all. We checked for injuries and they were fine,” he said.

Crewman Trevor Hutchinson said the rescue was successful because the vessel had all the required safety equipment on board and the crew used everything they had.

...the rescue was successful because the vessel had all the required safety equipment on board and the crew used everything they had.
Marathon mission for RAC Rescue crew

As critical care paramedic Ben Harris was winched down to a fishing boat from the RAC Rescue helicopter it was a race against time to rescue a 27 year old crayfisherman who had badly injured his foot.

The helicopter crew, including pilot Craig Bowman and aircrewman Garth Fitzgerald, had only five minutes to ready the patient and winch him onto the helicopter due to the rapidly fading light. The rescue was made all the more challenging due to high winds and a five metre swell.

The crew were deployed to the remote incident in Israelite Bay, 114 nautical miles east of Esperance, on Sunday 6 November following a request from the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA).

The Esperance Volunteer Marine Rescue Service (VMRS) had earlier attempted the rescue but had to turn back as the ability to stabilise the patient was judged too difficult due to the high seas.

Answering the call for help, the Jandakot based RAC Rescue helicopter crew set off and made the 600 kilometre journey to Esperance. Here they were able to rapidly refuel before heading out to sea.

After successfully winching the injured man into the helicopter the RAC Rescue crew flew back overland making a refuelling stop in a paddock east of Esperance.

DFES Air Operations personnel had urgently organised the fuel supply and Esperance VMRS and Esperance State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers transported it.

The RAC Rescue crew then carried onto Esperance, where the patient was transferred to the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) for transport to Royal Perth Hospital.

Assistant Commissioner Gary Gifford ESM said the rescue was an example of the more extreme, long-range scenarios faced by the RAC Rescue helicopter service from time to time.

“The mission was a success due to several key factors,” Assistant Commissioner Gifford said.

“Among these were the helicopter’s high tech features, such as advanced navigation systems, forward looking infrared cameras, night vision systems, the rescue winch and the on-board critical care medical capabilities on the aircraft, all which made the difficult rescue possible.

“The fishing boat was equipped with autopilot, which enabled the second fisherman on board to assist with the winching effort in the rough seas.

“Combined with this, the RAC Rescue helicopter crew’s professionalism was critical and the various agencies and volunteer groups on the ground cooperated seamlessly to make the best of the resources available and achieve the best possible patient outcome.

“It was also quite timely that members of the DFES Air Operations team had just arrived in Esperance to provide aerial firefighting response for the harvest, as this was the source of the urgent fuel supply.

“Our thanks go to everyone else who was involved in making the rescue a success.”

In all, the rescue effort took 12.5 hours.

1. The RAC Rescue crew winched a 27 year old crayfisherman to safety.

2. The helicopter made a refuelling stop in a paddock east of Esperance after performing the rescue at sea. DFES Air Operations personnel organised the fuel resupply working with VMRS and SES Esperance volunteers.

3. Race against time. The crew refuelling in the paddock before flying on to Esperance to transfer the patient to RFDS.
Team work brings blaze to a halt

Team work, interagency cooperation and good systems prevented a potentially significant incident in Rosa Brook, near Margaret River, in February this year.

Rosa Brook Bush Fire Brigade (BFB) Captain Richard Moroney has observed several Level 3 incidents in his five years as a volunteer and said the response went as smoothly as one could hope.

“Due to conditions and strong winds there was potential for this fire to escalate rapidly, impacting rural farmland, the community of Margaret River and infrastructure in difficult and inaccessible terrain,” Richard said.

Aerial firebombing support was compromised by thick billowing smoke obscuring visibility.

Shire of Augusta-Margaret River Chief Bush Fire Control Officer (CBFCO) David Holland said there was a rapid response from services and an initial period of intense firefighting, which reduced the severity of the incident.

“The firefighters managed to steer the fire around several properties and stopped it from burning into the Margaret River reserve and national park,” David said.

Richard described efforts by firefighters at one of the properties under threat.

“At one point there was a wall of flames heading for us and there were a lot of spot fires starting in paddocks.”

Lower South West Superintendent John Tillman said that the management of the fire was a credit to the shire and the CBFCO, who have been working hard to develop incident management capacity and capability.

“The skills and expertise that have been developed within the shires’ firefighting structure means that they can confidently manage incidents such as this with support from DFES and the Parks and Wildlife Service (P&W) personnel on a needs basis.”

Richard felt the inter-agency cooperation and coordination sped up the response.

“The overall response and coordination was fantastic with no shortage of volunteers or appliances including BFB, DFES, P&W, and farmers,” he said.

“The capabilities of the DFES Incident Control Vehicle, and the team of volunteers who operate it, are amazing, providing invaluable support to the Incident Management Team (IMT) in the field.”
“At the end of the day, the fire doesn’t care what colour your uniform is.”

David said the Capes Enhanced Service Delivery project, introduced after the 2011 Margaret River bushfires, resulted in additional appliances, capability and inter-agency response arrangements, and made a big impact on scaling up response.

“An O-Zone response procedure was followed with ComCen mobilising the nearest BFB, a P&W officer with an appliance, and fixed wing air support,” he said.

“We also used a number of BFB members from our pre-formed IMT to fill the key roles including the Incident Controller, Operations, Public Information and Sector Commanders.

“Everyone was able to hit the ground running.”

After the incident DFES facilitated an inter-agency debrief at the request of Augusta-Margaret River CBFCO David Holland.

“There were a number of positive outcomes highlighted, as well as a number of key lessons for future management of incidents such as this in our area,” he said.
Lessons learnt from devastating house fire

The charred remnants of a Nollamara couple’s entire lives serve as reminder of the ferocious and devastating nature of fire in the home.

Walking through the damaged home, former resident Andrew Wilkinson could not help but consider the catastrophic outcome that could have resulted from the fire.

“It was literally in a couple of minutes that the fire spread,” Andrew said.

“We were actually very lucky to escape, very lucky.”

In the early hours of May 16 as he lay in bed, Andrew felt like he was being enveloped by smoke.

After initially dismissing the smell as the smoke he had been smelling in his suburb that day, he decided to go downstairs and investigate the source.

“I got out of bed, got dressed, and it wasn’t until I got half way down the stairs that I heard that beep and I’m like, that noise, that’s a fire. That’s here,” he said.

He raced back upstairs, woke his partner Michael and grabbed the keys to their front door.

“Our place is locked up like Fort Knox at night time so I made sure I had the keys to get out,” he said.

“When Michael came down, he went into the laundry to see what was going on while I was unlocking the front door. He pushed that door open and the flames literally came out at him.”

The fire is believed to have originated in the clothes dryer.

Thankfully Michael wasn’t injured and the couple escaped safely, however they lost everything due to smoke damage.

“I don’t want anyone to experience what we’ve just gone through,” Andrew said.

“We walked away with the clothes we were wearing and that was it.”

Unfortunately their story is all too common, particularly in the cooler winter months.

Last winter fire crews battled 223 accidental house fires across the State, up nearly five per cent from the previous year.

Fire Investigation and Analysis Unit (FIAU) District Officer Andy Duckworth said the risks associated with house fires were often underestimated and could prove deadly.

“Tragically four West Australians lost their lives and another 28 were injured last winter,” Andy said.

“Unfortunately people never think home fires will happen to them but the reality is that house fires can happen at any time.”

Andy said there are simple proactive things people can do to protect their lives and property.
Most home fires can be prevented with a bit of common sense,” he said.

“Don’t leave cooking or candles unattended, always clean the lint filter in your dryer and make sure you keep all materials at least one metre away from heaters and wood fireplaces.

“It is important to clean and maintain your smoke alarm once a month, replace the batteries once a year and replace the device every 10 years – it could give you a few extra minutes to get out of your home safely if a fire starts.

“Having and practising a home fire escape plan is another important step to ensuring you and your family can get out of your home safely if disaster strikes.”

1. The heat from the fire was so intense it melted parts of the air conditioner.
2. The devastating effects of the Nollamara house fire.
3. The fire started in the laundry and quickly spread.

DEALING WITH A FIRE IN YOUR HOME

If a fire starts in your home and you can’t put it out safely:

• Contain the fire and slow it from spreading by closing the door to the room if possible.
• Alert and assist other people in the house to leave if it is safe to do so.
• To avoid breathing in smoke keep down low and close to the floor.
• Put your escape plan into action.
• Before you open a closed door, feel it with the back of your hand. If it’s hot use another way to get out.
• Leave your home and head to the safe place agreed on your plan, such as your letterbox.
• Dial triple zero (000) immediately and alert your neighbours as necessary.
• Remember, never go back into a burning house under any circumstances.
Task Force Black Swan deployed during SA floods

A severe storm swept across much of South Australia in late September 2016 causing flooding, structural damage and a Statewide power blackout, caused by transmission lines being uprooted and destroyed by destructive winds.

DFES staff and State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers lent a helping hand, assisting their South Australian (SA) emergency services colleagues respond to and recover from the severe weather event.

A contingent of 39 personnel, led by Statewide Operational Response Division (SWORD) Superintendent Amanda Williamson, left for Adelaide on Wednesday 28 September.

Personnel and volunteers from the Perth metropolitan area, South West and Lower South West were deployed to assist in Adelaide, Mount Lofty and the State’s mid-north areas.

Amanda said the deployment, named Task Force Black Swan, gave personnel the opportunity to gain valuable operational experience while practicing their skills and assisting communities under severe threat.

“We were committed to helping the people of SA in their time of need, just as they have supported Western Australia in the past,” Amanda said.

“The contingent had specialised skills in responding to flood and storm damage, including working from heights, tarping roofs and removing large fallen trees.”

“The deployment was an invaluable experience for our volunteers who had the unique opportunity to share their skills with their SA SES counterparts.”

At the end of the deployment, 38 personnel returned to Perth and were relieved by a second rotation of 33 volunteers and staff. Amanda remained as the Task Force Commander, ensuring continuity of support was provided at the highest levels to the SA Government and SES.

Among the volunteers were two father and son duos from the Bunbury SES Unit, Chris and Keaton Widmer, and Steve and Seth Turner, demonstrating their family commitment to helping the community.

1. SES Communications Support Unit volunteer Tracey Rowley, Senior Firefighter Mark Payne, SES Gosnells volunteer Paul Hollamby, SWORD Superintendent Amanda Williamson, and Doctrine Officer Natural Hazards Suzi Hayward were among the helpers.

2. SES volunteers from WA were committed to helping during the SA floods.

3. SES volunteers gained valuable experience while assisting SA communities.
Changing false fire alarm behaviour

It has been a year and a half since DFES started billing for false fire alarms, and to date over 3000 invoices have been issued.

Governance and Strategy Executive Director Sue Paterson said property managers were now familiar with the process and many were working towards reducing their false alarms.

“We are making headway,” Ms Paterson said. “We have seen a drop in the number of call-outs for false alarms, but the most pleasing aspect of the program is the cultural change with stakeholders who are fixing system faults.”

“One premises has submitted a plan to spend $50,000 to fix problems with their system, and many others are in the process of installing covers on their Manual Call Point alarms.”

After an initial reduction in false alarms, figures have levelled out somewhat but DFES’ False Fire Alarm team is continuing to work closely with property managers to identify ways to reduce false call-outs.

“The team recently participated in behavioural economics training, which gave us some great ideas on how to work with our stakeholders to help achieve a reduction in alarms,” Ms Paterson said.

“It is vital that emergency services are able to focus on real emergencies and that we reduce the number of appliances traveling with lights and sirens on the roads.”

The issue of on-billing, which is the passing on of an invoice to an individual or business, is an increasing concern. Ms Paterson said in some instances aged care facilities were passing the bills onto elderly residents because they had burnt some toast.

“It is the responsibility of the property owner to make sure that their alarms are in the right places and are properly maintained so things like burnt toast don’t become an issue,” she said.

“DFES does not support on-billing. The false fire alarm fee is about a premises fixing their systems to ensure safety for the community, not about profit.”

“Each premises receives three alarm turnovers each financial year before they are charged, so for residents who are on-billed we suggest they question the legitimacy of that bill before paying it.”

Currently there are approximately 100 out of almost 4000 Direct Brigade Alarm (DBA) premises on an intervention process.

“If a premises is on an intervention process we work with them and hold them accountable to ensure the systems are fixed,” Ms Paterson said.

The team will be looking at privately monitored alarms next.

“The false fire alarm fee is about a premises fixing their systems to ensure safety for the community.”

“What’s evident from our data is that alarm monitoring providers are being paid for monitoring but often call 000 without trying to ascertain the legitimacy of the alarm.”

Over 3000 invoices have been issued since DFES started billing for false fire alarms.

Making sure alarms are in the right places and properly maintained will help premises avoid false fire alarm fees.
Six years in the hot seat

He’s the former senior Police official who became Western Australia’s first Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner.

After six years in the top job and with his term coming to an end, Commissioner Wayne Gregson APM is retiring from the role.

But back in 2011, it was a very different organisation he walked into.

In the aftermath of the Perth Hills fires which destroyed 71 homes, Mick Keelty was appointed to lead an inquiry and released a scathing report entitled ‘A Shared Responsibility’.

Featuring 54 recommendations, it was critical of the Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA) and cited a level of culture and accountability below the standard expected of a government agency with such considerable power and responsibility.

There was an urgent need for reform of the firefighting culture in Western Australia (WA) and for the State Government to instigate a change in leadership.

In September 2011, Police Assistant Commissioner Wayne Gregson was brought in on a one year contract as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). He still remembers that first day.

“It was daunting not knowing the magnitude of what I was going to be faced with,” he said.

“There were a few interesting nights just thinking about ‘how do I approach this?’ because it’s not possible to do everything at once.”

“What also struck me was the disconnect at FESA between the operational and administrative sides of the house.”

A police officer since 1980s, Commissioner Gregson said he had no previous experience as a firefighter but was able to draw on his background in policing and his understanding of Incident Command and Control.

“It enabled me to transfer across some of the overall strategic and contextual thinking needed to look at the organisation and where it was at.

“Coming in, I felt that we needed to work towards becoming a well-disciplined, coordinated and integrated department in an environment which has many stakeholders. The heart of the challenge was really about changing the culture of the organisation.

“In achieving this I’ve been extremely fortunate to have a strong, supportive team behind me every step of the way, and helping to navigate the ship where we need to go.”

However, emergencies wait for no one. Barely two months into the job, in November 2011, career firefighters and volunteers faced another catastrophic bushfire, this time in Margaret River.
Arising from this incident, the ‘Appreciating the Risk’ report highlighted the critical roles of prevention and response and the strained relationship between FESA and the then Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC). Governance was tightened around prescribed burns by DEC.

“The relationships on the ground were probably reasonable, but those at the highest levels were not what they should have been,” Commissioner Gregson said.

“We’ve done an awful lot in collaboration with the Parks and Wildlife Service (formerly DEC) since then, committing to a Heads of Agreement for Partnership and Joint Bushfire Management – one of Keelty’s recommendations.

“This has led to a more integrated approach including measures such as the bushfire consultative committees, and joint programs and training where possible.”

Another initiative was the creation of a joint State Air Desk with DEC in 2012 to streamline deployment of the aerial firefighting fleet.

“The State Air Desk was the first tangible thing we decided to do and that was a major adjustment from how we’d always done things.”

“Making some of those changes has been a challenging process but it has been worth it – I think the relationship has never been better than what it is now.”

With one of Keelty’s key recommendations being the move from a board driven authority to a government department, the organisation was examined inside and out during Commissioner Gregson’s first 12 months, and a model for the future was decided. In October 2012 he became the first Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner in the State, accepting a five year term.

1-2 Commissioner Gregson on a station visit, August 2017.
3 Speaking to media at the Cockburn Emergency Services Complex opening in 2012.
4 Commissioner Gregson with volunteers and association representatives at the 2016 Thanksgiving Service.
That month the Emergency Services Complex opened in Cockburn and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services commenced, marking the start of a new era.

Firstly, DFES’ internal structure was overhauled to ensure Operations were represented at all levels of decision making. The focus since has been progressively on improving systems, standards and DFES’s style.

“We’ve been chipping away but always with a constant end state in mind, striving for a disciplined, collegiate view of the future and to be more receptive to innovation,” he said.

“If you want to do things better, all involved need to work together to create that environment, to be able to capture and cultivate the ideas from all levels, and then capitalise on them.”

A major initiative, launched in December 2011, was Portal2Progress (P2P), an online platform for the sharing of ideas with the aim of improving the way DFES does things.

Commissioner Gregson said P2P has now been adopted in various guises by a number of other organisations, including WA Police, and research has shown it creates greater receptivity to innovation.

“For me, the fact we’ve been able to trail blaze in organisational receptiveness to innovation is one of our key achievements during my time here.”

Whilst there is still work to do, he believes DFES is on the right path.

“The Keelty report was pivotal and was the impetus behind three long term reforms – legislative change, Bushfire Risk Management Planning and the notion of one source, one message in emergency public information,” he said.

“We’ve made significant progress on all of these fronts, and the legislative review continues to be progressed with the aim of combining the emergency services Acts into one single, comprehensive Act.

“However, the most important thing we’ve embarked upon is that cultural change of getting different groups from DFES, other government agencies and volunteer groups to work together on the same page.

“I think I’ve conveyed the message consistently that the community doesn’t care which group you come from, they just want, and expect, that we will rise to the challenge as one.”

“There have been enormous cultural changes and I’m proud of what we as a collective have achieved over the last six years, particularly how we’ve been able to shape the future of fire and emergency services in WA.

“Whilst it has been a journey of hard work and unwavering commitment, it has also been an absolute privilege to lead such a dedicated and committed group of personnel and volunteers.”

“Historically we’ve been fragmented and disparate, and to establish a separate rural fire service or sub department runs the risk of unwinding some of that cultural reform that we’ve successfully started,” he said.

“I’m very much in favour of having unity of command and purpose with the best possible people in the right place at the right time.

“At the end of the day we’re about providing community safety and we have to do that as a fleet, not a disorganised group of separate ships.”

With the impact of climate change increasing in Australia, the Commissioner sees a need for emergency management to further evolve.

“I think what we’ve seen in recent years in Waroona and Esperance is likely to become the new norm.”
"We need to realise that there is an impact from climate change and there’s still an urgent need to address mitigation, and much more to be done to build community resilience."

"At the end of the day no matter how you structure your emergency services, or how hard people work to protect the community, you can only do so much in that environment when you’re in response mode."

As for what comes next for the Commissioner, he will be spending some time with family and walking the Camino de Santiago in Spain to reflect on the future.

"Then I’ll probably go where life takes me rather than trying to steer the ship from now on."

Commissioner Gregson said he is proud of what everyone as a collective has achieved over the last six years.
Celebrating the orange army on WOW Day

Western Australia took on an unmistakeable shade of amber as Wear Orange Wednesday (WOW Day) was celebrated on 10 May.

The day is an annual opportunity to say thank you to the 2,000 State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers, who generously give up their time to respond to incidents including storms, cyclones, floods, and search and rescue missions.

In the past year, WA’s SES volunteers have spent in excess of 17,500 hours responding to more than 570 incidents, helping to keep the community safe.

A number of activities took place on WOW Day including an information stall at Curtin University and lighting up prominent locations in brilliant orange. The well-known Eliza statue in Nedlands wore an SES uniform to mark the day.

1. SES volunteers and DFES personnel from across the metro area gathered at Belmont SES headquarters for the WOW Day barbecue.

2. DFES Deputy Commissioners Lloyd Bailey AFSM and Steve Fewster, and District Officer Allen Gale, manned the barbecues to help say thank you to SES volunteers.

3. DFES and SES hosted a recruitment stall at Curtin University, including tours of the Communications Support Vehicle used during large scale search and rescue operations.
Camaraderie on show at firefighting championships

Bassendean Volunteer Fire and Rescue Services (VFRS) took out the top award for the second year running at the 114th annual WA VFRS Association Easter State Championships in April.

Held at Gilbert Fraser Reserve in North Fremantle, the championships showcased the skills that firefighters have built on for more than a century.

This year’s event featured more than 150 firefighters from 23 teams from across Western Australia. A group of formidable opponents from Victoria also travelled to compete.

Marc Papalia from Bassendean VFRS won the Champion’s Trophy to claim his ninth consecutive title.

Chase Milligan, also from Bassendean VFRS, was named the inaugural Best Female Firefighter.

The events have evolved from firefighter training exercises in the late 1800s. Teams highlighted their speed, dexterity, teamwork and leadership while using equipment such as hydrants, hoses, reels and ladders.

Results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Winner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Champion Brigade “A Class”</td>
<td>Bassendean 1 VFRS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champion Brigade “B Class”</td>
<td>South Hedland VFRS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champion Brigade “C Class”</td>
<td>Bunbury 1 VFRS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champion Firefighter</td>
<td>Marc Papalia (Bassendean 1 VFRS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beat Performing Firefighters “B Class”</td>
<td>Reece Parton (Harvey 2 VFRS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Performing Firefighter “C Class”</td>
<td>Jordan Turnock (Northam 1 VFRS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Female Firefighter</td>
<td>Chase Milligan (Bassendean 2 VFRS)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Wet hose “Y” event.
2. Showcasing their speed and agility. Volunteer firefighters in action at the 114th WA VFRS Association Easter State Championships.
3. Firefighters from Esperance giving it their all during the hose and ladder event.
4. Finishing up after hitting the target.
**Trailblazing women of the South West**

A group of dedicated female volunteers in the South West are inspiring women of all ages to join Bush Fire Brigades.

Bunbury Bush Fire Brigade (BFB) Captain Terri Kowal, Gelorup BFB Captain Glenys Malatesta, Boyanup BFB First Lieutenant Neroli Smith and Dardanup Central BFB First Lieutenant Allison Bailey have formed a close-knit bond working during some of the most devastating fires in Western Australia. From the 2011 Margaret River and Perth Hills fires to the 2015 Esperance bushfires, and Waroona in early 2016, over the past 20 years they have seen it all.

The women believe the perception that firefighting is dangerous work only for men is slowly changing, bringing even more women into the brigades.

Glenys Malatesta, who became captain of Gelorup BFB in October 2016 said many women have great motivational and leadership skills that come to the fore when looking after a crew.

“It all comes down to team morale. And I think nurturing skills play a part, because you’re looking out for everyone’s welfare,” she said.

Since becoming captain, Glenys has cultivated a strong working relationship with the Shire of Capel.

“Blokes might say that they’re stronger but I think women are great at communicating and working as a team.”
“Gender diversity creates a more flexible volunteering workforce better able to meet the demands of our evolving communities.”

"Whether male or female, young or old, it doesn’t matter in my brigade, everyone gets treated the same.”

Dardanup Central BFB First Lieutenant Allison Bailey has seen firsthand how more women are coming through the ranks in the South West. One of them is her daughter Caitlin Bailey, 20, who went through the cadet program and is now a trained firefighter.

Together, mother and daughter have fought the 2016 Waroona bushfire and also helped with mop up after the Esperance bushfire in 2015.

"It has been great to see a few more females come on board and especially the younger generation,” Allison said.

Boyanup BFB First Lieutenant Neroli Smith said it is heartening to see more women becoming involved in traditionally male dominated areas.

“It’s not just Bush Fire Brigades, women are in the police force and the military as well. The blokes that don’t like it are the minority,” she said.

Neroli decided to become a volunteer firefighter 25 years ago when her family home was destroyed in a bushfire. She is still dedicated to protecting her local community.

In April Neroli was called out in Boyanup several times in the middle of the night to deal with fires, but said she does not mind.

“Volunteering is still the best thing you could ever do. No paid job can ever give you the same feeling,” she said.

“Blokes might say that they’re stronger but I think women are great at communicating and working as a team,” she said.

DFES’ Manager of Strategic Volunteer and Youth Programs Jennifer Pidgeon said women bring new viewpoints and skills to firefighting, which enable volunteers to better serve their community.

“Gender diversity creates a more flexible volunteering workforce better able to meet the demands of our evolving communities,” she said.

Veteran of 23 years, Bunbury BFB Captain Terri Kowal, said she has worked hard to achieve an inclusive and welcoming brigade in Bunbury. She tells a story of a recent recruit, a woman in her sixties with a fear of fire.

“She joined thinking she’d be making sandwiches and throwing sausages on the barbecue,” she said.

“After a while we encouraged her to come out to some burn offs and she loved it. Now she’s fully trained and comes out with us to the fire ground.

“Whether male or female, young or old, it doesn’t matter in my brigade, everyone gets treated the same.”

Dardanup Central BFB First Lieutenant Allison Bailey has seen firsthand how more women are coming through the ranks in the South West. One of them is her daughter Caitlin Bailey, 20, who went through the cadet program and is now a trained firefighter.

Together, mother and daughter have fought the 2016 Waroona bushfire and also helped with mop up after the Esperance bushfire in 2015.

“Whether male or female, young or old, it doesn’t matter in my brigade, everyone gets treated the same.”

Dardanup Central BFB First Lieutenant Allison Bailey has seen firsthand how more women are coming through the ranks in the South West. One of them is her daughter Caitlin Bailey, 20, who went through the cadet program and is now a trained firefighter.

Together, mother and daughter have fought the 2016 Waroona bushfire and also helped with mop up after the Esperance bushfire in 2015.

"It has been great to see a few more females come on board and especially the younger generation,” Allison said.

Boyanup BFB First Lieutenant Neroli Smith said it is heartening to see more women becoming involved in traditionally male dominated areas.

“It’s not just Bush Fire Brigades, women are in the police force and the military as well. The blokes that don’t like it are the minority,” she said.

Neroli decided to become a volunteer firefighter 25 years ago when her family home was destroyed in a bushfire. She is still dedicated to protecting her local community.

In April Neroli was called out in Boyanup several times in the middle of the night to deal with fires, but said she does not mind.

“Volunteering is still the best thing you could ever do. No paid job can ever give you the same feeling,” she said.
Fallen firefighters remembered in WA

Western Australia’s emergency services community honoured firefighters who made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty, at an International Firefighters’ Day commemoration on Sunday 7 May.

The service at the Firefighters’ Memorial Grove in Kings Park was open to all current and retired DFES personnel, volunteers and members of the public who wished to pay their respects. For the first time the Parks and Wildlife Service firefighters took part in the memorial.

During the ceremony Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner Wayne Gregson APM recognised the devotion firefighters have for the community.

“Firefighting is not merely a job or volunteering role, it is a calling, a constant challenge to be accepted, a test of resolve, courage, and strength of body and mind,” Commissioner Gregson said.

“My gratitude and utmost respect extends also to the partners, families and friends of our firefighters, for your understanding and support makes a world of difference.”

“We have been fortunate this last bushfire season to have experienced neither the loss of lives or homes to bushfire and for that I am thankful.”

“However, recent years have been extremely challenging and those losses are still felt deeply, both by many in the community and in emergency services, particularly those who volunteer in their own communities.”

As the names of the fallen were called out in Memorial Grove a brass bell sounded. A final bugle call was followed by one minute silence as the crowd reflected in silent memory of their loved ones.

Wreaths were laid as the WA Fire and Emergency Services Band played, including one by Minister for Emergency Services the Honourable Fran Logan MLA.

“There are more than 24,000 dedicated men and women currently serving in WA’s career and volunteer fire services who put their lives on the line for their communities every day,” Mr Logan said.

“It is observed each year on 4 May, with the annual Perth memorial service held on the first Sunday of May. Memorial services were also held in parts of regional WA, including Bridgetown and Busselton.”

“International Firefighters’ Day was instituted after the deaths of five firefighters during a bushfire in Victoria in December 1999.”

“A special service was held in the Firefighters’ Memorial Grove in Kings Park.
Queen of tracking retires

She’s short and stout, with an almighty snout. After five years of service, the world’s only Welsh Corgi tracking dog, Manhon, is retiring. She was recently awarded the State Emergency Service (SES) 5 Year Medallion at a ceremony held by DFES.

Manhon’s handler Glenys Nottle said it was a special day for the little dog that no one thought could do it. Her exceptional nose has been put to the test in a wide range of search and rescues over the years, and she has assisted WA Police in finding missing and injured people throughout many parts of the State.

“She’s one in a million,” Glenys said. “I couldn’t have asked for a better tracking dog and I’m really proud of her and all the hard work she’s put in.”

She still remembers Manhon’s last direct find. It was a search for a 61-year old man with Down Syndrome who had gone missing from High Wycombe. As usual Manhon went straight into it, nose down, tail cocked, with her ears rigidly vertical. She found him 800 metres into parkland.

“It was a very quick search. To this day I can’t believe she pulled it off,” Glenys said.

“It was the kind of search you dream of. Manhon just took off around the corner all of a sudden and there he was.”

“She might not always be able to get in everywhere because of her short legs, but Manhon will tell you if the person you’re looking for is on the other side of the fence, and she is always right.”

“Manhon proved us wrong and we were flabbergasted when she passed with flying colours,” Leonie said.

Statewide Operational Response Division (SWORD) Superintendent Amanda Williamson bestowed the 5 Year Medallion on Manhon at Bayswater Riverside Gardens, pinning it to her bright orange working vest.

SES WA Canine Unit leader Leonie Briggs said that Manhon will be sorely missed, but she readily admits that when Glenys first approached her about assessing the Corgi she had her doubts.

While Alsatians, Border Collies and Labradors are renowned for their work as tracking dogs, short statured Corgis are not. But what the pooch lacks in size she makes up for with smarts.

“She’s one in a million, I couldn’t have asked for a better tracking dog and I’m really proud of her and all the hard work she’s put in.”

She thanked the fluffy tracker for her service to the community and wished her well in retirement.

“Manhon will be happy as long as she gets a game of ball in the morning before kibbles, and of course the occasional treat from the grandchildren,” Glenys said.

1 After five successful years of service with the SES, Manhon is hanging up her orange vest.

2 SES canine handler Glenys Nottle and Manhon with Superintendent Amanda Williamson at Bayswater Riverside Gardens.
Female firefighting pilots leading the way

When it comes to taking to the skies to combat fires, women are still few and far between. However, Captain Natalie Jones from Montana and pilot Alba Castellanos from Spain are paving the way for others to get in on the action.

From Greece and Turkey to the United States and Australia, they travel the world fighting fires in one of the world’s largest firefighting helicopters, the twin-engine Sikorsky S-64E Aircrane.

As the only female Aircrane pilots currently working for Erickson Aviation, the first opportunity to work together was in March 2017 in Western Australia on the Aircrane Georgia Peach, which is contracted to DFES.

Meeting them at Serpentine Airfield south of Perth, they said it was great to be able to share some of their experiences.

Alba, 43, a former professional musician, fell in love with flying after tagging along with a friend who was crop dusting near the Spanish coast.

“That sensation of flying was awesome and especially feeling the hover which is different from fixed wing. It just touched me in such a way that it became a love story for me,” Alba said.

“...and especially feeling the hover which is different from fixed wing.”

After completing flight school in Madrid she worked in South America, flying passengers in and out of the jungle for oil and gas companies.
This is Alba’s first time in Western Australia, however she has been with Erickson for two and a half years and has worked extensively in Greece fighting wildfires.

“There is a lot of sea exposure and winds in Greece. Sometimes you are picking up water from the sea and then climbing up because it is quite steep and you are on full power, full of water just going up and down cliffs all day.”

Natalie, 38, worked in Australia during the 2016 Waroona bushfires.

“That was a pretty extensive fire season and we were down there with all the other aircraft trying to be effective,” she said.

Natalie dreamed of learning to fly since high school but it was not until after university, when she was working a desk job, that she took the plunge.

“I found a little one man operation that was doing flight instruction and during the introductory flight he let me take the controls. From that point on I was hooked,” she said.

“It is one of those things you absolutely fall in love with once you do it.”

After ten years in the industry and four and a half with Erickson, Natalie says she still gets a thrill flying the Aircrane during a bushfire.

“Heading towards a fire you see the smoke plume and where the wind direction is coming from,” she said.

“You start setting up how you are going to make your approaches into your drop patterns, looking to see is anyone down there because this beast can carry a lot of water.”

Both Alba and Natalie said it was still rare for women to fly large helicopters, but knowing someone else has made it in the industry can be a great encouragement.

“I have had a lot of other female helicopter pilots who have reached out to me to and asked – how did you get to where you are because I want to do that too,” Natalie said.

Did You Know?
The Erickson Aircrane, Georgia Peach, weighs almost nine tonnes, can hold 7,650 litres of water and deliver up to 90,000 litres an hour. Using a snorkel it takes 40 seconds to pump water from a pond and just 18 seconds from the ocean.
Taking community spirit to the next level

Volunteer Sandra Lymbery has brought the emergency services in Coral Bay together under one roof – Coral Bay Combined Emergency Services.

Coral Bay is a tropical paradise renowned for its proximity to the stunning Ningaloo Reef.

But beneath the surface of this world renowned holiday town beats the heart of a close-knit community. A passionate group of volunteers keep the town safe, whether it is dealing with road crashes, marine rescues or the aftermath of a cyclone.

Sandra Lymbery is one of those community heroes. A volunteer for 16 years, she is the Administration Officer for the Coral Bay Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services (VFES), Secretary and Treasurer for the local Volunteer Marine Rescue Services (VMRS), and a driver for St John Ambulance.

Sandra and her partner Bernard Vale, Commander of the VMRS, made the move north 19 years ago and they have become seasoned volunteers.

“We decided to step up and volunteer because we could,” Sandra said.

“You might be tired after being up all night waiting for the Royal Flying Doctor, but in the end I enjoy doing it and it’s nice to help people.”

She has also brought all the emergency services together under one roof – Coral Bay Combined Emergency Services.

“We were all having separate meetings and it made no sense in such a small community. I instigated one meeting for everything and now we can achieve more,” she said.

Coral Bay Combined Emergency Services share a purpose-built shed where they conduct training and house their vehicles and vessels. A few years ago, with the help of funding from Royalties for Regions, the group purchased a one bedroom donga with a kitchenette and an admin office.

“It’s very useful when there’s a cyclone, especially when you have to be up every four hours for teleconference briefings.”

 “…if there’s anyone interested in becoming a volunteer, we’re always looking for new people.”
“I coordinate the call outs for VMRS and VFES and usually have the on call phone for the ambulance five to six times a week.”

“We’re also able to offer it to people who are in town for emergency services training.”

When there is an emergency in Coral Bay, Sandra knows where everyone is at any given time and who to call on.

“I coordinate the call outs for VMRS and VFES and usually have the on call phone for the ambulance five to six times a week,” she said.

While the town boasts access to the Ningaloo Reef from the beach, and beautiful diving, snorkelling and fishing spots, the ocean sometimes takes a tragic toll.

Over the years Sandra has coordinated and been called out to countless incidents, and she said it really makes you appreciate how fragile life can be. She will often help tourists and people impacted by trauma and illness with the practical side of things like insurance and travel arrangements.

Sandra and her fellow volunteers have been recognised for their work many times. In 2015 when Cyclone Olwyn devastated Coral Bay, volunteers pulled together and had the town up and running in just six days, relocating 80 residents.

Sandra and fellow volunteer Frazer McGregor, Officer in Charge of Coral Bay VFES, were awarded the VFES Award for Excellence for their selfless service.

Despite the time and commitment it takes to volunteer Sandra said she still enjoys it.

“And if there’s anyone interested in becoming a volunteer, we’re always looking for new people,” she said.

Sandra Lymbery is a finalist in the 2017 Volunteer Marine Services Awards (VMRS) for Outstanding Individual Contribution. Coral Bay VMRS is a finalist for Outstanding Group Operations.
It is night time and three teenagers are speeding to get home on time from a party.

A mobile phone is being shared around. Suddenly, there is a flash of light followed by a screeching crash. In a matter of seconds James is dead, Claire is trapped and injured, and the driver, Andrew, is unconscious. On the side of the road a motorcyclist is also unconscious, his broken body twisted.

The crash, based on real events, was re-enacted at Perth Arena in front of 8,700 high school students for the annual RAC bstreetsmart event in March.

DFES career firefighters and other emergency services personnel worked with young actors to show what happens at a road crash.

Last year 195 people lost their lives on WA roads, with 17 to 19 year olds overrepresented in that figure.

“We stabilise the vehicle and extricate people using tools such as the Jaws of Life,” Garth said.

Road crashes are an all too familiar scene for Western Australian firefighters who attended approximately 2,900 road crashes in 2016 alone.

DFES Rescue Manager Garth Lawrence said the role of firefighters at a road crash was hazard management.

DFES Rescue and First Aid Officer Russel Jones said road crash rescue is a fairly big part of the job as a firefighter.

“It can be quite stressful if people are badly injured,” Russel said.

“It’s all about team work. The goal is to work with St John and police and to make the scene safe so no one gets any further injuries.”

DFES, WA Police, Royal Perth Hospital and St John Ambulance worked with young actors to show what happens at a road crash.

Last year 195 people lost their lives on WA roads, with 17 to 19 year olds overrepresented in that figure.

RAC Chief Executive Officer Terry Agnew said he hoped this year’s bstreetsmart event, which targeted distracted driving, would help reduce the fatality and injury rates of young Western Australians by promoting safe behaviour among drivers, riders and passengers.

Kye Livermore, a Year 11 student at Chisholm Catholic College, said hearing people talk about their car crash experiences made him more aware of his own actions.

“Even minor choices can have big effects, like driving five kilometres over the limit or driving through puddles,” he said.

The event is run with the help of DFES, WA Police, Royal Perth Hospital and the Theatrical Response Group.

“We stabilise the vehicle and extricate people using tools such as the Jaws of Life.”
Children’s book warns of dangers of playing with fire

Written by volunteer firefighter and Juvenile and Family Fire Awareness (JAFFA) Support Officer Chris Cairns, the book calls on young readers to share in Aaron’s promise to never to play with lighters again.

Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner Wayne Gregson APM said that young children don’t always realise or understand the lifelong consequences of playing with fire.

“Aaron’s Promise is aimed at children between four and eight years old and tells the tale of a young boy whose curiosity has disastrous consequences after finding a lighter at the park,” Commissioner Gregson said.

“It’s normal for children to be curious about fire, however when their curiosity gets the better of them it can result in heartbreaking consequences including serious burns and devastating damage to property and the environment.

“This is where a well written book with beautiful illustrations can reach children in ways that adults sometimes can’t, reinforcing how dangerous playing with fire is.”

Commissioner Gregson said that every year there are hundreds of fires caused by children playing with fire.

“In the past three years over 800 bushfires and 145 structural fires have been caused by people under 18 – these are preventable fires that put the community at unnecessary risk,” he said.

“DFES has a number of educational programs and resources to educate young people about fire safety, and Aaron’s Promise is just one more tool to increase awareness.”

Aaron’s Promise will be distributed to local government libraries and primary schools, to parents of young children who are referred to the JAFFA Program and to firefighters delivering the Firefighter School Visit Program.

The book educates young children on the dangers of playing with fire.

The book is also available to download at dfes.wa.gov.au/schooleducation/parents.
In the field with…
Morten Boe, DFES Photographer

As a DFES photographer he has captured everything from house and structure fires to hazmat incidents, and some of the biggest bushfires in Western Australia.

Senior Firefighter Morten Boe from Fremantle Fire Station is one of seven operational firefighters called on to document incidents for DFES, both large and small.

“It’s a relatively new initiative, sending off-duty operational firefighters to the fireground to photograph events as they happen,” Morten said.

His photos depict not just career and volunteer firefighters at the firefront, but people behind the scenes like the incident controller and the logistics team, paramedics, police and locals preparing food and getting water.

“I feel quite privileged being called out to an incident to capture it from all aspects.”

With 23 years’ experience as a firefighter, Morten said it is sometimes hard to be at the fireground as an observer, but he likes to think of himself as an extra set of eyes.

“When you’re a trained firefighter you can go to places people normally can’t venture into. Because safety is your priority you’re looking at an incident not so much as a hungry photographer – you’re observing. It’s a real privilege.”

“I feel quite privileged being called out to an incident to capture that event from all aspects.”

“As a photographer you observe a lot as you drive around the perimeter of a fire. You get the big picture of what’s going on.”

This unique perspective behind the scenes can be emotional and gruelling.

“I was in Yarloop in January 2016 when the fire became catastrophic and I knew this was different to anything I’d experienced,” he said.

Morten had been driving around the boundary of the fire earlier that afternoon and came to Yarloop at sunset.

“The winds were going every which way, there were embers flying around and I was observing what side of the road to be on and which side of the fire to be on knowing that I didn’t want to get caught out.”

When he eventually returned to Yarloop his lens caught the devastating aftermath of the fire.

“It was eerie. Where I previously stood was a town and next time 80 per cent was destroyed.”

Would he still recommend other firefighters with photographic skills to become DFES photographers?

“Definitely. It’s a worthwhile initiative to be involved in.

When you’re a trained firefighter you can go to places people normally can’t venture into. Because safety is your priority you’re looking at an incident not so much as a hungry photographer – you’re observing. It’s a real privilege.”
1. Eerie scene after the Waroona bushfire.

2. Scene from the Waroona bushfire.

3. The Waroona fire as it crosses Forrest Highway.

4. Remains of a railway track after the 2015 Boddington bushfire.

5. Mother and son defending their property, Waroona.

6. Having a rest in the shade during a quiet moment, Boddington.
Australind cadets lend a helping hand

The hardworking emergency services cadets of Australind Senior High School (SHS) worked up a sweat when they dedicated a day helping rebuild the Forest Edge Recreation Camp.

The camp, located on Weller Road in Waroona, was almost completely destroyed by the Waroona-Yarloop bushfire that wreaked devastation in the area in January 2016.

Australind SHS Emergency Services Cadet Unit (ESCU) leader Ross Hillier said the cadets were among thousands of Australian school children who had attended the camp in previous years.

“We held a camp there some years ago and were going to make another return visit but the fires made short work of those plans,” Ross said.

“I saw a news story about the devastation the bushfire caused and the huge task that lay ahead to rebuild the camp.”

“It seemed like a perfect opportunity for the unit to assist at Forest Edge since we had enjoyed camps there in years past, and to reinforce our cadets’ core values of community service and social responsibility.”

Around 30 cadets and six instructors were involved with the rebuild effort, digging holes for future tree planting near the new dormitory and cleaning up trees and branches around the camp. Some older cadets also assisted sub-contractors on the day with activities such as hanging doors.

Ross said many members of the local community had come forward to help and the cadets were proud to be a part of the initiative.

“The students had a great day and are looking forward to revisiting Forest Edge for a cadets’ camp later in 2017,” he said.

Other community minded activities the cadet unit participated in during 2016 included the Cancer Council’s Relay for Life, the Bunbury ANZAC Day night vigil and ANZAC Dawn Services in Bunbury and Brunswick.

“I saw a news story about the devastation the bushfire caused and the huge task that lay ahead to rebuild the camp.”
The multi-hazard EmergencyWA website, launched in October 2016, now enables you to subscribe to alerts relevant to your region.

The new alert feeds, including emergency warnings, Total Fire Bans and Fire Danger Ratings, are available now at emergency.wa.gov.au/#about.

DFES Media and Corporate Communications Director Hannah Tagore said this would enable people to stay informed about conditions in their local area.

“By subscribing to the automated feeds, community members can have the information that is relevant to them delivered straight to their inbox,” Hannah said.

“Warnings are based on the best information available at the time, however people also need to stay alert, pay attention to their surroundings, and check a range of sources during an emergency.”

“EmergencyWA has already improved the way we deliver warnings and is providing more information than ever before, however it can’t replace common sense.”

Since the website was introduced, more than 2,000 alerts have been issued and it has been visited more than three million times. Traffic to the site peaked during the Statewide flooding in February, with more than 300,000 visitors and more than one million views in the week Monday 6 to Monday 13 February 2017.

Other features of the website include:
- A live feed of emergency incidents reported to DFES, meaning you can find out about a fire as soon as it is reported via triple zero (000);
- Critical warnings about fires, floods, storms, earthquakes, cyclones and hazardous material incidents;
- Warnings and prescribed burns information from DFES, local governments and the Parks and Wildlife Service;
- A map-based home page with search and filter options which makes it easier to find warnings relevant to your location; and
- Links to resources and other agencies to help you plan, prepare and recover from natural disasters.

EmergencyWA was developed in collaboration with the Parks and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Meteorology and Geoscience Australia to improve the delivery of high quality, relevant information to the public during emergencies.

Stay up to date
- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Stay connected to your community, get prepared together, talk to your neighbours and stay in touch with family and friends.
- Listen to ABC radio bulletins and other emergency broadcasts in the media.
- Take action for your safety at the first sign of a fire or emergency.
- Visit EmergencyWA at emergency.wa.gov.au/#about and subscribe to alerts for your area.
- Follow DFES on Facebook and Twitter, and link up with other social media sites relating to emergencies in your area.

Community members can now also subscribe to receive alerts for their area on the EmergencyWA website.
New firefighting capability in remote Kimberley

In a first, three indigenous communities in the Kimberley region will start operating Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services (VFES) units this year.

DFES Kimberley Superintendent Grant Pipe, who has been managing the project, said it is an initiative driven by need.

“We have 96 aboriginal communities in the Kimberley and all of them have anecdotal evidence of fire in the community. Being so remote they just don’t have the capacity to respond to incidents,” Grant said.

The first VFES unit commenced operations in June in Bidyadanga, Western Australia’s largest indigenous community. The township is located 190 kilometres south of Broome and is a regional service centre for surrounding outstations. During law time and ceremonies the population of 750 residents swells to 1,500.

District Officer Lee Vallance who has been working on the project has provided training for fourteen community members from Bidyadanga’s municipal services and local Karajarri rangers.

“Both groups have taken on the mantle of protecting the township. The rangers are part of the Kimberley Land Council facilitated by the Kimberley Ranger Network,” Lee said.

“They are highly regarded in the community and are seen as role models and mentors.”

“DFES already utilises their skills as they provide fire mitigation as part of their work on country.

Upskilling them to fight bushfires as well as defensive structure firefighting benefits the whole community,”

Bidyadanga Police Officer in Charge Senior Sergeant Chris Fox said the presence of the VFES unit increased the ability for the community to fight fire in the township and surrounding area.

“This is a big deal for people in Bidyadanga and it’s a great opportunity for them to come together and meet with and learn from the rangers in a different social setting,” he said.

“We have a lot of fires around the community, and whether they’re controlled fires or lit by residents to assist in hunting or clearing the land, the rangers are kept very busy.”

The unit will operate out of a property which DFES has fitted out with firefighting equipment and protective personal clothing. A new light tanker was delivered in May.

Lee said they were also encouraging other members of the community to join the unit and to increase awareness of fire behaviour.

“There are fire problems in the area due to high fuel loads and the need to cook in the open,” he said.

“We will be returning fortnightly to these communities to provide training and support.”

Two more VFES units are due to start operation in Beagle Bay and Djarindjin on the Dampier Peninsula later in the year.

The Bidyadanga VFES volunteers have been trained by DO Lee Vallance (far right) and are taking on the mantle of protecting the township.
Shipboard fire skills put to the test

Ship fires are not something firefighters deal with every day. But when they do happen they require crews to reassess their conventional firefighting methods in favour of shipboard fire skills.

Boarding a ship is much like entering a miniature city, complete with fuel farms, a power plant, accommodation blocks, a restaurant and a warehouse. Not to mention the obstacle course of narrow passageways and small compartments.

In October 2014 a fire swept through an empty livestock ship in Fremantle Port causing millions of dollars of damage. More than 100 firefighters from stations across Perth battled the blaze.

To keep shipboard firefighting skills up to date Welshpool Fire Station organised an inter-agency training exercise with the Royal Australian Navy in May this year.

All Navy personnel are trained in fighting fires at sea where land based techniques may not be as effective.

Welshpool Station Officer Jamie Anderson coordinated the training exercise with the Navy’s School of Survivability at Fleet Base West on Garden Island.

“It was a good refresher on shipboard firefighting incorporating compartment fire behaviour,” he said.

“The Navy has a dedicated three storey mock up ship with hatches, doors and narrow corridors. One side is entirely dedicated to firefighting.”

Drills during the day included simulations of a galley fire where a deep fat fryer exploded, an out of control engine room fire and a rubbish room fire.

Training also involved tackling one compartment fire, then increasing the intensity by dealing with two compartment fires simultaneously and then the final challenge of three.

Firefighters from Welshpool C Platoon were instructed by Warrant Officer Marine Technician Mark Karslake to conduct door entries.

The Navy also demonstrated their thermal lance cutting tool which they use to cut holes in the ship to apply water to the compartment.

“It was valuable to be able to train with the Navy and share our knowledge. This will enhance our skills should we be called out to a shipboard fire,” Jamie said.

Newburn District Officer Tony Nicholas said the training exercise was a step towards building inter-agency relationships with the Navy.

“Sharing skills and knowledge will improve the service both DFES and the Navy provide to the community,” he said.

“Warrant Officer Karslake welcomed future training opportunities for DFES career and volunteer firefighters.”
Exercise Eagles Nest to the rescue

A boat is ablaze in Geographe Bay. Several 000 callers report the incident and note that they can see a life raft being deployed from the burning vessel.

The next call comes from the people on the raft. Two of them have burns and are in shock, a third has suspected spinal injuries. They also report that they have been separated from their kids, who may still be on board the burning vessel.

This was one of the scenarios during a large scale inter-agency training exercise held in Dunsborough in May this year.

DFES Air Operations, Busselton and Naturaliste Volunteer Marine Rescue Service (VMRS), the Bunbury based RAC Rescue helicopter, WA Police and St John Ambulance took part in the large scale joint exercise.

Air Operations Officer Troy Stubberfield said exercises such as these allow emergency services personnel and the rescue helicopter crew to practice working together under different conditions.

“Helicopter winch operations are an important part of sea rescue and the only way an aircraft can retrieve an injured person from a vessel unless there is a helipad,” he said.

“During the exercise we winched people from three vessels – the life raft and the Busselton and Naturaliste VMRS vessels.”

VMRS participants practiced fire suppression, injury management and the transfer of patients to the helicopter. When they reached shore they worked with St John Ambulance.

The second scenario of the day involved a man overboard after an altercation on a fishing boat.

As crews completed the training for the evening and were returning to base, Busselton VMRS assisted with a real time rescue towing a recreational vessel which had lost power back to shore.

Critical Care Paramedic James Vine extracting a casualty from the life raft.
1. Naturaliste VMRS Rescue 1 vessel preparing to receive the paramedic from the RAC Rescue helicopter.

2. Naturaliste VMRS Rescue 1 having her antennas adjusted before heading back to shore.


4. Peter Kalb casts off at the start of the exercise.

5. Critical Care Paramedic James Vine.

6. Looking over the rescues.

“Helicopter winch operations are an important part of sea rescue and the only way an aircraft can retrieve an injured person from a vessel unless there is a helipad.”
At His Majesty’s Service

What do you do when one of Perth’s most iconic features is in danger of burning, with patrons inside and several employees missing?

For DFES this scenario was played out in December with a complex building exercise taking place for the first time at His Majesty’s Theatre in Perth.

Perth, Daglish and Fremantle Fire Stations were involved in the exercise including the new Communications Support Vehicle (CSV).

A/District Officer Steve Rogers, who oversaw the exercise, believes it is of vital importance that these types of enactments are carried out in buildings of this nature throughout Perth.

“In this instance it was a chance to set up and test our procedures in an historical building, and with a theatre there are different risks, such as a basement, higher seating areas and an audience to worry about,” Steve said.

“It’s also about making sure our procedures not only match for a high rise or complex building, but also for historical type buildings.”

To help portray a realistic scenario, smoke machines, rescue dummies and actors re-enacting casualties were used.

Manager of Communications and Programming at the Perth Theatre Trust Shauna Weeks said it was a great opportunity to test the theatre’s emergency procedures in a hypothetical situation, and it was something they were enthusiastic to do.

“I was really surprised by how calm everyone was. We were quite nervous to begin with as we have never had an exercise like this before,” Shauna said.

“For the first time our business systems and infrastructures were tested beyond fire alarms and practice evacuations.”

“The calm manner in which the firefighters carried themselves, their excellent communication and willingness to work with us as we pushed the exercise to its fullest extent gave us immense confidence in DFES and our staff.”

“We feel really confident about being able to protect our amazing heritage and guests at the theatre should we ever need to.”
New portal for volunteers

A new Volunteer Hub will be available in 2018, replacing the current Volunteer Portal.

The hub will be an important resource for volunteers to access their personal volunteering profile and history, volunteer support services, key information, documents and DFES systems.

Anna Sobczyk from the Strategic Volunteer and Youth Programs team said it was designed based on input from over 140 volunteers across Western Australia, who are an essential part of the project.

“It’s 100 per cent volunteer focused,” she said.

The new portal will take into account the varying needs of regional and metropolitan volunteers across all emergency services.

Anna and Strategic Volunteer Coordinator Andrea Dinse have been visiting regional volunteers to build awareness of the project.

“It will be intuitive to use and provide an opportunity for volunteers to collaborate with each other and share their knowledge,”

Anna said the plans for the new hub have been well received.

The Strategic Volunteer and Youth Programs team will continue working with volunteers throughout the project.

DFES will host a special Thanksgiving Prayer Service in October.

It is being held in recognition and appreciation of the vital role that Western Australia’s fire and emergency services play in protecting local communities.

The church service, which is open for community members to attend, will also thank families and loved ones for their wonderful support.

The service will be multi denominational and a unique opportunity for everybody involved in the State’s emergency services to join together and give thanks.

Service of Thanksgiving

Date: Sunday 15 October 2017
Time: 5pm – 6pm followed by a light supper
Location: St George’s Cathedral, 38 St Georges Terrace Perth
Dress: Dress uniform or smart casual
RSVP: To rsvp@dfes.wa.gov.au by Friday 6 October.
Automatic Vehicle Location

Since October 2016, approximately 1,500 Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) units have been installed on operational vehicles across the State. Including GPS tracking, AVL provides real-time visibility and automated features that enhance crew safety.

An additional 400 portable AVL units have been deployed to regional locations to ensure local government, contractor and farm vehicles can also be tracked.

The AVL system will provide incident controllers and command staff with increased awareness of where operational vehicles and crews are during large scale emergencies, enabling better support for crew safety and decision making about deployments.

Incident Action Plans

Revised Incident Action Plans (IAP), developed in conjunction with the Parks and Wildlife Service, have been in use since the 2016/17 bushfire season. They have been designed to be scalable with the tempo of the incident and has a focus on the end-user resulting in a more practical and usable tool. The IAP focuses on informing responders at the incident rather than an Emergency Operations Centre situation report.

The revised plans were presented at the 2016 Operations Forum, Level 3 Incident Controller Forum and Level 3 State Bushfire Pre-formed Team Workshops.

Additionally, the Operations Pre-start Book has been developed for first arriving appliances to capture critical information in advance of a formal IAP.

Communications Support Vehicle

A new incident management support vehicle, complete with the latest communications and satellite technology was formally commissioned by DFES as an operational appliance at a launch on Thursday 27 July 2017.

Known as the Communication Support Vehicle (CSV), the appliance’s primary communications equipment is independent of land based telecommunications infrastructure. This enables it to provide communications to emergency services personnel or communities in isolated locations or where mobile networks are congested or not available.

The CSV is a long-wheel based van which provides an internal office space with two workstations and a complete suite of real-time mapping and incident management systems. It also has an independent power supply, and is interoperable with WA Police and other response agencies.

Most notably, the satellite communications capability provides the required bandwidth for real-time streaming of vision from the incident site, which can be viewed at operations centres across the State.

The CSV has been handed over for permanent assignment to the Communications Support Unit, one of five volunteer units within the Statewide Operational Response Division (SWORD). It has already been put to good use at many incidents across WA including a bushfire in Upper Swan Valley in January, and multiple land searches in May and June.

Enquiries about accessing the CSV can be directed to SWORD@dfes.wa.gov.au.
key initiatives

Restricted Access Permits
A new initiative has been established to simplify the process for people to enter areas impacted by an incident. The Restricted Access Permit (RAP) system enables residents, business owners and utility companies to apply for permits to access pre-determined areas of the incident ground when there is an urgent need to return, such as to manage livestock or check on infrastructure when it is deemed safe to do so.

There have now been 120 State Emergency Service volunteers from Northshore, Wanneroo-Joondalup and Cockburn SES units trained to issue the permits during incidents. The RAP cache contains permits, tablets for recording information, tabards and vehicle stickers. Further information can be found on the DFES website under Regulation and Compliance, including a video and fact sheet.

Shared CAD platform
DFES has signed a contract with Motorola for a new computer aided dispatch (CAD) platform, which will be shared with Western Australia Police (WAPOL).
Replacing the current platform which is close to the end of its lifecycle, the joint CAD will enable a greater exchange of information and improved coordination of resources across DFES and WAPOL, and minimise risk in the delivery of information. The move also brings with it economies of scale due to the sharing of network, infrastructure and ongoing support costs, which aligns with the objective of the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer.

By having an existing platform customised to suit DFES’ needs it will also stabilise cost and increase value for money.

The combined project team are working hard to successfully deliver the platform prior to the 2018/19 fire season. Once in place it will mean an enhanced quality of service and information for career and volunteer personnel, and an improved emergency services response for the community.

Logistics Support Container
The logistics support container has arrived and is ready to be put into operational use. A combination of a mini hardware outlet and corner store rolled into one modified 20 foot container, it may be deployed early in an incident at the request of the Incident Management Team. For smaller incidents, such as a land searches, the container can provide augmented logistics support over and above what is held on brigades, groups and units’ vehicles and trailers.

SES volunteers Bryan Davies (front) and Ron Davey, and State Operations Logistics Manager Lyndon Jackson in the new logistics support container.
All bases covered with new facilities

Fire and emergency services around the State have been boosted with the opening of new and upgraded facilities throughout the last year.

State-of-the-art Fire and Rescue Service stations in Albany and Bunbury, completed at an estimated cost of $7 million and $7.2 million, are both providing firefighters with an excellent base to serve their communities.

Funded by DFES through the Emergency Services Levy (ESL), the purpose-built stations include large appliance bays, increased training facilities, and improved accommodations with the ability to meet extra demand for staff and equipment in the future.

The facilities are contributing towards a more efficient and coordinated response to emergencies including fires, road crash rescues and chemical spills, ensuring the growing regional communities are better protected than ever.

A new $1.4 million State Emergency Service (SES) base was also opened in Bunbury, providing a modern and well-equipped headquarters to better support the SES volunteers who give their valuable time to help the community.

The Bunbury SES Unit has played an essential role for more than 54 years, responding to storms, undertaking searches and providing vital support during bushfires and other emergencies. The new base is designed to accommodate current and future needs and will serve as a nerve centre for emergency response in the City of Bunbury and the South West.

New collocated facilities were also completed for the Gosnells SES and Bush Fire Brigade (BFB), as well as Harvey SES and Harvey Hills BFB.

Other new and upgraded bases finished this year include those for the Darling Range, Ocean Farms, Vasse, Meckering, Scaddan, Coomberdale, East Nannup, Inkpen, Lake Clifton and Boddalín/Noongar BFBs, and Pemberton Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service.

The Cantonment Hill Signal Station in Fremantle was restored for use as a radio communications facility by Fremantle Volunteer Sea Rescue Group (FVSRG). Other improved or new facilities for Volunteer Marine Rescue Services have included those in Broome, Geraldton, Margaret River, Kalbarri, Rockingham and Busselton.

Funding for these improvements is largely facilitated by DFES through the ESL, with the BFB and SES facilities funded from the ESL via the Local Government Grants Scheme.

Additional funding contributions are given by a range of other sources, from Commonwealth Government programs through to local business donations. The new volunteer facilities are made possible with the support of local governments and the dedicated efforts of volunteers.
Senior Firefighters Craig DeLandgrafft and Claude Niemann, Station Officer Andy Sears and Senior Firefighter Clint Bradford out the front of the new Albany Fire Station.

The new Bunbury SES facility will serve as an emergency response centre for Bunbury and the South West.

Inkpen BFB in the Shire of Northam has a new facility with two appliance bays and other amenities. Ocean Farms BFB received a new station to operate from.
A new rescue helicopter base was opened at Bunbury Airport on Wednesday 14 December 2016.

The purpose built facility houses the State’s second RAC Rescue helicopter, which has flown more than 420 missions since it commenced operations from a temporary base in February 2016.

The new facility includes modern engineering workshops, training rooms with a flight simulator, six crew dormitory rooms, wireless blood bank monitoring, planning and operations rooms, and an automatic weather station, as well as a rescue winch simulator which is currently being installed.

Deputy Commissioner Steve Fewster said the new base was an invaluable community asset, which will improve access to emergency medical care for people living and travelling in the region.

“The RAC Rescue helicopters respond to a range of incidents including road crashes, farming accidents and marine rescues,” Deputy Commissioner Fewster said.

“Getting emergency medical care to badly injured people as quickly as possible is key to saving lives and improving patient outcomes.”

Between February 2016 and June 2017, the Bunbury based RAC Rescue helicopter flew more than 1,170 mission hours, travelled more than 110,000 kilometres and transported 237 patients.

Assistant Commissioner Operations Capability Gary Gifford ESM said the new Bunbury base will help to ensure the operation of the RAC Rescue helicopter service network is optimised.

“The design of the base involved consultation which included DFES, St John Ambulance, CHC Helicopters and aircraft maintenance engineers,” Assistant Commissioner Gifford said.

“It is also able to support aerial firefighting, intelligence, police and other agencies’ aircraft if necessary.”

The new base was designed, constructed and operational in less than 300 days. It received two 2017 Master Builders awards including the Construction Excellence for a Commercial Industrial Building over $2 million in the South West, and overall Best Commercial Project.

Both the Perth and Bunbury based rescue helicopters are managed by DFES and are sponsored by the RAC.

The new base was made possible by $6.91 million in funding through the State Government’s Royalties for Regions program.
Grand beginnings for 60 year old brigade

The West Swan Bush Fire Brigade’s (BFB) first ever task was extinguishing fires at the Australian 1957 Grand Prix, and the diversity of jobs has continued over the next six decades.

Recently the brigade celebrated its sixtieth anniversary, providing an opportunity to look back at the brigade’s foundations and also to its future.

Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner Wayne Gregson APM said the brigade had come a long way since attending incidents with their own tractors and trailers at the 1957 Grand Prix.

Today, West Swan BFB has added to its primary response role and is an established regional support unit, flexible and ready to respond to the needs of the whole State.

Commissioner Gregson said that as the West Swan area had become increasingly urbanised the brigade had evolved and adapted with it.

“The brigade has provided vital support to operations in the Swan region, including fighting fires in grasslands, native bush reserves, pine and native forests, national parks, urban, rural and semi-rural subdivisions, as well as blazes impacting major rail and highway infrastructure,” he said.

Commissioner Gregson highlighted the brigade’s commitment to helping out in other parts of the State, attending fires in Margaret River and Yarloop in recent years.

“I know the career firefighters at Ellenbrook Fire Station in particular are appreciative of the significant role West Swan BFB play in the City of Swan and surrounding areas, and their readiness to work together effectively towards a common goal,” Commissioner Gregson said.

West Swan BFB Captain Rudi James said the brigade works closely with the city’s brigades, along with neighbouring Ellenbrook and Midland career stations, and focuses a lot of their energy on community engagement.

“In the 2015/16 season we were one of the most active brigades in the State with some of the highest volunteer hours,” he said.

“We have done more than a dozen community events so far this year, and we have a brigade that really enjoys this aspect of volunteering.”

A relatively young brigade, the average age of members is in their thirties. However the brigade also has a group of experienced, well-established members with 15 years of service or more.

“We’re looking forward to many more years of service to the community,” Rudi said.
Australian Honours and Awards

The prestigious Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM) and Emergency Services Medal (ESM) recognise distinguished service by volunteer or career members of an Australian fire or emergency service.

Only a limited number of medals are awarded each year. This year’s recipients were announced on Australia Day and the Queen’s Birthday by the Governor General, Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd).

Congratulations to the below recipients.

**Australian Fire Service Medal**
- Mr Paul Barker AFSM – DFES, Station Officer (Driving Instructor)
- Mr John Tillman AFSM – DFES, Lower South West Superintendent
- Mr Stephen Treeby AFSM – Mandogalup Bush Fire Brigade long serving member

**Emergency Services Medal**
- Mr Phillip Bresser ESM – Mandurah State Emergency Service, Deputy Manager
- Mr Jeffery Howe ESM – Two Rocks Volunteer Marine Rescue (VMR) Service Commander and VMR Association WA Commander
- Mr Christopher Johns ESM – Albany Volunteer Marine Rescue life member

To read the full citations please visit the Governor General’s website gg.gov.au/australian-honours-and-awards

Her Excellency the Honourable Kerry Sanderson AO presented the Australia Day Honours at Government House in April to recipients. Pictured here with Mr Paul Barker AFSM.

Mr Jeffery Howe ESM will be presented with his medal at the Queen’s Birthday Honours Investiture Ceremony in September.

© Community Newspaper Group
Sincere condolences go to the family, friends and colleagues of these personnel who have passed away.

Colin Ashworth – Northam Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service and retired Northam Fire and Rescue Service firefighter
Peter Collie – Armadale Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service (Life Member), former WAVFRS Association Executive Member
Donald Coventry – Katanning Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service (Life Member)
Earle Crook – Binningup Bush Fire Brigade (retired)
Steve Escudier – Canning State Emergency Service (retired)
Doug Forsythe – Mandurah Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service (Life Member)
Peter Collie (Life Member)
Donald Coventry
Earle Crook
Steve Escudier
Doug Forsythe
Peter Collie
Donald Coventry
Earle Crook
Steve Escudier
Doug Forsythe
Peter Collie

WA businesses recognised for supporting emergency services

Sixty-eight Western Australian businesses and self-employed volunteers were recognised in November 2016 for the vital role they have played in supporting fire and emergency services volunteers throughout the past year.

Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner Wayne Gregson APM said the Volunteer Employer Recognition Awards recognise employers whose sacrifices enable their staff to respond to emergencies.

“In the past 12 months emergency services volunteers responded to over 9,500 fires, 5,500 searches and rescues and 168 hazmat incidents across the State,” Commissioner Gregson said.

“Without volunteers our capacity to respond to these incidents would be dramatically diminished.”

“In turn, volunteers rely on their employers to allow them the flexibility to respond to an incident at a moment’s notice, have adequate rest afterwards and attend training.

“Self-employed volunteers also bear the costs of being unable to work when attending an emergency and this has a direct impact on their business.

“It would be extremely challenging to provide emergency services to the whole State without the support of employers and I thank them for their valuable contribution.”

The awards were presented across Gold, Silver and Bronze categories.

One recipient of the Gold award, the Margaret River Vet Hospital allowed its Practice Manager to attend 81 incidents including deployments to the Esperance, Waroona and Pinjarra bushfires.
Outstanding service recognised

The efforts of exceptional fire and emergency services personnel were celebrated at the annual award ceremonies held during the 2016 WA Fire and Emergency Services Conference.

### Firefighting Awards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Award</th>
<th>Recipient</th>
<th>Finalists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western Australian Career Fire and Rescue Service Award</td>
<td>Stuart Parks, Station Officer at Midland Fire Station</td>
<td>Paul Barker, former Station Officer (Driving Instructor) at Fire and Emergency Service Academy Greg Henry, then Senior Firefighter at Perth Fire Station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australian Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service Award</td>
<td>Anthony Crudeli, Mullewa Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service</td>
<td>Warren Day, Busselton Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service David Hughes, Dalwallinu Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray Lang Bush Fire Service of Western Australia Award</td>
<td>Blake Halford, Gibson Bush Fire Brigade</td>
<td>Angus Hay, Sawyers Valley Bush Fire Brigade Ian Hollick from Lower Chittering Bush Fire Brigade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australian Fire and Emergency Services Award</td>
<td>Jack Jones, Onslow Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services</td>
<td>Edward Hughes, MAPS-WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Keillor Award</td>
<td>Keith Squibb, Hedland State Emergency Service</td>
<td>Phillip Bresser, Mandurah State Emergency Service Lyn Lucas, Wagin State Emergency Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Achievement Award</td>
<td>Bunbury State Emergency Service</td>
<td>Broome State Emergency Service Management Team Mandurah State Emergency Service Rescue Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFES Award for Outstanding Individual Contribution</td>
<td>Barbara Walton, Mandurah Volunteer Marine Rescue Service</td>
<td>Paul Breland, Naturaliste Volunteer Marine Rescue Service Zac Slaughter, Port Hedland Volunteer Marine Rescue Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Marine Rescue Services Award for Outstanding Group Operations</td>
<td>Port Walcott, Volunteer Marine Rescue Service</td>
<td>Albany Volunteer Marine Rescue Service Kalbarri Volunteer Marine Rescue Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Transport Award for Excellence in Marine Safety</td>
<td>Walpole Volunteer Marine Rescue Service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commanders Award</td>
<td>Lancelin Volunteer Marine Rescue Service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFES Award for Youth Achievement</td>
<td>Ryan Godfrey, Busselton Volunteer Marine Rescue Service</td>
<td>Ryan Hardwicke, West Pilbara Volunteer Marine Rescue Service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### State Emergency Service Awards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Award</th>
<th>Recipient</th>
<th>Finalists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peter Keillor Award</td>
<td>Keith Squibb, Hedland State Emergency Service</td>
<td>Phillip Bresser, Mandurah State Emergency Service Lyn Lucas, Wagin State Emergency Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Achievement Award</td>
<td>Bunbury State Emergency Service</td>
<td>Broome State Emergency Service Management Team Mandurah State Emergency Service Rescue Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Achievement Award</td>
<td>Mary-Therese Shanks, Mandurah State Emergency Service</td>
<td>Laura Grabazon, Rockingham/Kwinana State Emergency Service Rebecca Linkel, Augusta/Margaret River State Emergency Service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Volunteer Marine Rescue Services Awards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Award</th>
<th>Recipient</th>
<th>Finalists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DFES Award for Outstanding Individual Contribution</td>
<td>Barbara Walton, Mandurah Volunteer Marine Rescue Service</td>
<td>Paul Breland, Naturaliste Volunteer Marine Rescue Service Zac Slaughter, Port Hedland Volunteer Marine Rescue Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Marine Rescue Services Award for Outstanding Group Operations</td>
<td>Port Walcott, Volunteer Marine Rescue Service</td>
<td>Albany Volunteer Marine Rescue Service Kalbarri Volunteer Marine Rescue Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Transport Award for Excellence in Marine Safety</td>
<td>Walpole Volunteer Marine Rescue Service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commanders Award</td>
<td>Lancelin Volunteer Marine Rescue Service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFES Award for Youth Achievement</td>
<td>Ryan Godfrey, Busselton Volunteer Marine Rescue Service</td>
<td>Ryan Hardwicke, West Pilbara Volunteer Marine Rescue Service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>