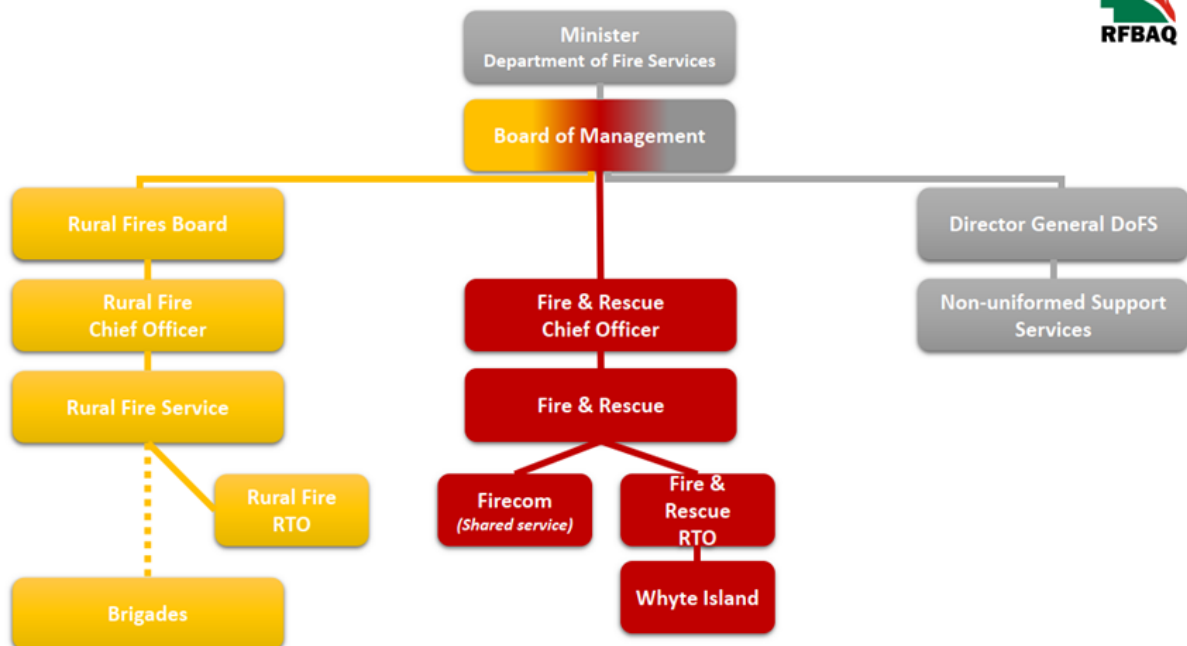


General Manager's Report FOR OCTOBER 2025 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

In 2020 the RFBAQ called a special general meeting to discuss structural change options for the QFES/RFSQ

The majority of representatives voted for option 3, which was the call for a Department of Fire Services.

Department of Fire Services



The resulting letter that Ian Pike AFSM sent to then Premier Palaszczuk in August 2020 listed the reasons for the call to change the system -

By looking at the structure you can clearly see the disconnect and how The QFES has ballooned into a department that has increased the number of employees at the expense of frontline service provision.

This QFES driven structure has led to multiple failings in support for the 1,400 Rural Fire Brigades that defend 93% of Queensland.

Major failings such as 'Regionalisation', the Blue Card rollout debacle, the disempowering of Brigades to put 'fire on the ground' during fire season, Rural Fire paid staff not industrially allowed to progress beyond the rank of Superintendent in the regions, the dismal build numbers of Rural Fire trucks, the complete lack of legislative support for volunteer firefighters and that out of the \$750.4 million (Qld Budget SDS 2019/20) estimated in the QFES 2019/20 budget, Rural Fire is begrudgingly given \$39.1 million (QoN 2019/20 Estimates).

The lack of funding for frontline services is not replicated within The QFES, as there has been an increase in media and Frontline Enabler (Support) staff of 98 FTE over the last 3 years (QoN 2019/20 Estimates).

To empower the Brigade Members, Brigades and Rural Fire Service staff and ensure that 'Rural Fire' is supported and enabled by a model that meets both current needs and future community requirements the RFBAQ recommends a restructure of fire services in Queensland.

At a Special Meeting of the RFBAQ held on Saturday 1st August there was overwhelming support for the creation of a Department of Fire Services.

Of note, at the Special Meeting, not one RFBAQ Representative voted in support of The QFES in its current structure.

The result of this RFBAQ call for change was the 2021 KPMG review into the QFES, and in October 2022 the then Minister, Mark Ryan announced the start of work towards creating a fire department that would be equally owned by RFSQ and Fire & Rescue.

Here we thought we saw some light at the end of the tunnel.

July, August and September 2023 saw very worrying information coming in from uniformed and non-uniformed staff regarding the drafting of the new legislation, and we saw the leadership of the QFES being sidelined and ill-conceived and industrially self-serving change being thrust into the foundations of the soon to be rebuilt department.

This was so evident that at the 2023 RFBAQ Annual General Meeting that Ian Pike AFSM, RFBAQ President proposed the motion that –

That the RFBAQ write to every registered political party in Queensland prior to the 2024 State Election calling for a commitment in the next term of government for a fully independent Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ).

For the RFSQ to have a Chief Officer, from a brigade background, who reports directly to the Minister.

For RFSQ to have a separate legislation and budget and for the reformed RFSQ to be comprised of rural fire brigades, Fire Wardens and rural fire staff.

Rural Fire Service staff are to provide support and training to the brigades and their members. These brigades and support staff help landlords mitigate risk from bushfire, respond to fires and other emergencies, provide education to Queenslanders relating to fire and perform other rescue functions as delegated by the Chief Officer of the RFSQ.

This was seconded by Ian Swadling AFSM and was passed unanimously.

A week is a long time in politics and things can move very quickly if it is politically expedient. In December 2023 Annastacia Palaszczuk resigned, a new Premier, Stephen Miles was sworn in, the Left faction of the ALP had the power, Mark Ryan was gone from Fire, Nikki Boyd was in, Greg Leach departed as Commissioner, Mike Wassing went to QRA, Joanne hung on, trying to do her best and Steve Smith was appointed acting Commissioner. What we had agreed to with the Government was thrown in the bin and no correspondence would be entered into.

The new legislation was rammed through Parliament by the former government, with the Katter Party and LNP voting against merging RFSQ and F&R into the new entity.

The light at the end of the tunnel went out.

November 2024 and a new Government is elected, a new Minister is appointed, and the Volunteering Inquiry commences.

September 2025 and the Volunteering Inquiry has been handed down and it is the most damning report into the fire service and its leadership that I have ever read.

The Government has three months to develop a policy for volunteering and to come up with a pathway to support the 1,400 brigades that defend 93% of Queensland.

Let us hope that the light at the end of the tunnel this time is not a train.