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1
Background, Objectives and Methodology
Background and Objectives

- Volunteers are critical to the successful delivery of frontline services and are essential in building community capacity and enhancing community resilience. Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) has approximately 42,000 dedicated volunteers across the state in the State Emergency Service (SES), Rural Fire Service (RFS), Research and Scientific Branch network, and Technical Rescue Unit.

- The volunteer base is largely made up of the RFS and SES with approximately 36,000 and 6,200 volunteers respectively.

- Across both of these services, the contribution of volunteers is vital in ensuring positive community outcomes, and as such it is imperative that the views and opinions of the volunteer base is heard. Only in this way can QFES understand the satisfaction of its volunteers, how it is performing in supporting them in their volunteer role and what can be done to improve their volunteer experience.

- In 2016 TNS has been commissioned to follow up and build on the 2014 survey it conducted to ascertain current levels of satisfaction and opinion on the support provided and organisational practices and processes.

- The findings of the 2016 volunteer survey are contained within this report.

The overall aim of the research is to: Provide Queensland Fire and Emergency Services with robust measures of volunteer satisfaction with the services provided in order to provide direction and understanding as to what, if any, issues exist and how volunteers can be better supported in the future.
Methodology

Who did we survey?
- Volunteers in Rural Fire Service (Northern)

How many responses did we receive?
- n=304 (maximum margin of error at 95% confidence interval is ±5.6%)

When did we interview?
- 11 July – 23 August 2016

Sampling strategy
- Contacts from the QFES Volunteer database were emailed with an invitation to complete the survey. The survey was also distributed via hard-copy on request and at SES training nights, and a link to the survey was also placed on the QFES website.

Interview methodology
- Online, self-completed interview. Average questionnaire length 10 minutes.

Weighting
- No weighting was applied

This research was carried out in accordance with ISO 20252
The questionnaire covered the following content:

1. Screener questions
2. General satisfaction
3. Perceptions of RFS
4. Recruitment
5. Leadership
6. Workplace conduct policies and procedures
7. Inclusion
8. Information and Communication
9. Recognition
10. Training and development
11. Intention to continue volunteering
12. Demographics
Reporting Notes

- While the online survey required a forced response for each question, some respondents who completed a hard copy of the survey skipped certain questions. As such, sample sizes may vary slightly throughout the report.
- Where a total satisfied score is reported, this is calculated as the sum of satisfied + very satisfied.
- Where a total dissatisfied score is reported this is calculated as the sum of dissatisfied + very dissatisfied.
- These aggregated scores may not always add exactly to the individual percentage scores reported due to rounding.
- For single response questions, the sum of responses may not always add exactly to 100% due to rounding.
- Where questions have more than one response allowed, the sum of responses may add to more than 100%.
Detailed Findings
2.1 General Satisfaction
B1. How satisfied are you in general with the experience of volunteering with the Rural Fire Service?
BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304)
Reasons for satisfaction with volunteering experience (%)

B1. How satisfied are you in general with the experience of volunteering with the Rural Fire Service?
BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304)

B2. Why are you <insert satisfied or very satisfied as appropriate>?
BASE: Those satisfied with volunteering experience (n=245)

- I feel I contribute to the community: 79%
- I am able to use my skills in a productive way: 48%
- I have learnt new skills: 42%
- I meet great people: 39%
- It is a challenging and new experience: 30%
- I feel valued: 29%
- It enhances my ability to gain paid employment: 4%
- Other: 1%
- Don’t know: 2%
- Refused: <1%

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Reasons for dissatisfaction with volunteering experience (%)

B1. How satisfied are you in general with the experience of volunteering with the Rural Fire Service?
BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304)

B3. Why are you <insert dissatisfied or very dissatisfied as appropriate>?
BASE: Those dissatisfied with volunteering experience (n=27*)

*Caution: small sample size – results should be interpreted as indicative only

- There is a lack of communication (41%)
- There is conflict within the environment (37%)
- I don’t feel valued (33%)
- The unit is too unprofessional (33%)
- My skills are under utilised (26%)
- There is too much red tape (19%)
- There is too much time wasted (19%)
- There is not enough training (19%)
- I don’t feel like I make a difference (7%)
- Other (33%)
- Don’t know (0%)
- Refused (0%)

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2.2 Perceptions of RFS
Perceptions of RFS (%)

Old fashioned / outdated
- Left anchor selected: 12%
- Neither selected: 44%
- Right anchor selected: 45%

Not ready for change
- Left anchor selected: 14%
- Neither selected: 35%
- Right anchor selected: 51%

Exclusive
- Left anchor selected: 14%
- Neither selected: 37%
- Right anchor selected: 49%

Poor reputation with the community
- Left anchor selected: 6%
- Neither selected: 13%
- Right anchor selected: 81%

Diverse
- Left anchor selected: 40%
- Neither selected: 38%
- Right anchor selected: 22%

Innovative
- Left anchor selected: 30%
- Neither selected: 31%
- Right anchor selected: 39%

Reactive
- Left anchor selected: 28%
- Neither selected: 23%
- Right anchor selected: 50%

Relaxed
- Left anchor selected: 47%
- Neither selected: 38%
- Right anchor selected: 15%

Professional
- Left anchor selected: 66%
- Neither selected: 26%
- Right anchor selected: 8%

G1. You will now be shown pairs of words / phrases that people have used to describe the Rural Fire Service. For each pair, please select which word or phrase you feel best describes the Rural Fire Service. You may also select 'neither' if you feel neither word is an appropriate description.

BASE: RFS respondents  - Northern (n=304 for each)
NOTE: Bold text represents the word/phrase more often selected
2.3 Leadership
Perceptions of leadership in RFS – Top 2 (rated “Quite a lot” or “A great deal”)

D1. To what extent do you feel supported in your volunteer role in the Rural Fire Service by each of the following? BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304 for each)

D2. And to what extent do you feel the following resolve conflict? BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304 for each)

D3. And to what extent do you feel the following model effective leadership skills? BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304 for each)

D4. And to what extent do you feel the following value your input? BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304 for each)
Perceived level of support in volunteer role by... (%)

**First Officer**
- Not at all: 6
- Just a little: 6
- A moderate amount: 14
- Quite a lot: 24
- A great deal: 37
- Don't know: 4
- Not applicable: 9
Total: 62%

**Brigade Management Committee**
- Not at all: 8
- Just a little: 8
- A moderate amount: 16
- Quite a lot: 26
- A great deal: 27
- Don't know: 8
- Not applicable: 7
Total: 53%

**Area Training and Support Officer**
- Not at all: 8
- Just a little: 12
- A moderate amount: 19
- Quite a lot: 28
- A great deal: 22
- Don't know: 8
- Not applicable: 3
Total: 51%

**Brigade Training and Support Officer**
- Not at all: 8
- Just a little: 11
- A moderate amount: 19
- Quite a lot: 25
- A great deal: 25
- Don't know: 6
- Not applicable: 6
Total: 50%

**Area Director**
- Not at all: 11
- Just a little: 11
- A moderate amount: 18
- Quite a lot: 27
- A great deal: 18
- Don't know: 12
- Not applicable: 4
Total: 45%

---

D1. To what extent do you feel supported in your volunteer role in the Rural Fire Service by each of the following?
BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304 for each)
Perceived ability to resolve conflict by... (%)

D2. And to what extent do you feel the following resolve conflict?

BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304 for each)
### Modelling of effective leadership skills by... (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Not at all (1)</th>
<th>Just a little (2)</th>
<th>A moderate amount (3)</th>
<th>Quite a lot (4)</th>
<th>A great deal (5)</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Officer</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Training and Support Officer</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brigade Training and Support Officer</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Director</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brigade Management Committee</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Top 2** (rated 4 or 5 out of 5)
- First Officer: 56%
- Area Training and Support Officer: 45%
- Brigade Training and Support Officer: 44%
- Area Director: 42%
- Brigade Management Committee: 40%

D3. And to what extent do you feel the following model effective leadership skills?
BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304 for each)
D4. And to what extent do you feel the following value your input?

BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304 for each)
Perceptions of organisational culture (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1 - Not at all</th>
<th>2 - Just a little</th>
<th>3 - A moderate amount</th>
<th>4 - Quite a lot</th>
<th>5 - A great deal</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is a strong sense of team work in my RFS brigade</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is strong culture of team work in my local area</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation is sufficiently focussed on its people during times of crisis</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation is sufficiently aligned with my personal values</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation is sufficiently focussed on its people in its day-to-day management approach</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There have been positive changes in the organisation’s culture over the past 2 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D5. Thinking about the organisational culture in the Rural Fire Service, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?
BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304 for each)
2.4 Workplace Conduct Policies and Procedures
Perceptions and understanding of workplace conduct policies and procedures (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have a good understanding of the organisation's expectations of my behaviour</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand the Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My immediate supervisor is approachable and readily available to me to hear about workplace conduct behaviour issues</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I am able to resolve a workplace conduct issue or conflict locally</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to find out about the various processes relating to workplace conduct matters</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I received education on matters relating to workplace conduct for behaviours</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My immediate supervisor is capable of resolving a workplace conduct issue quickly</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident that if I reported a workplace conduct or behaviour issue, there are safeguards in place to ensure that I would not face retaliation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Agree: 87%

Total Agree: 75%

Total Agree: 73%

Total Agree: 72%

Total Agree: 71%

Total Agree: 68%

Total Agree: 64%

Total Agree: 59%

F1. Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with these statements about the Rural Fire Service's policies and procedures. Please note for these questions your immediate supervisor refers to the next person in line through the chain of command.

BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304 for each)
Perceptions of ... (%)

**F2. And to what extent do you agree with the following statements?**

**BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304 for each)**

- **Individuals are challenged when exhibiting unacceptable behaviour**
  - Total Disagree: 14%
  - Total Agree: 62%
  - Distribution: 4, 10, 10, 47, 14, 9, 5

- **Individuals are held accountable for their actions**
  - Total Disagree: 16%
  - Total Agree: 60%
  - Distribution: 5, 11, 15, 39, 20, 6, 3
F3. During the last 2 years have you witnessed any such bullying in your Rural Fire Service volunteer environment?
BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304)
F4. And during the last 2 years have you been subject to any such bullying in your Rural Fire Service volunteer environment?
BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304)
2.5 Inclusion
E1. Thinking about possible barriers to inclusion within the Rural Fire Service, which, if any, of the following have been barriers to your inclusion?

BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304)
2.6 Information and Communication
H1. How satisfied are you with the general information received from the Rural Fire Service during the year? Note: This does not refer to in field communications or calls for service.

BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304)
Reasons for dissatisfaction with general information received (%)

1. How satisfied are you with the general information received from the Rural Fire Service during the year? Note: This does not refer to in field communications or calls for service.

   BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304)

2. What is the main reason for your dissatisfaction with general information received from the Rural Fire Service during the year?

   BASE: Those dissatisfied with general information received (n=20*)

*Caution: small sample size – results should be interpreted as indicative only
H3. What current methods do you use to access and keep up to date with information relating to the Rural Fire Service?

BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304)

Current information access methods (%)

- **Email**: 76%
- **Word of mouth**: 41%
- **Internet**: 40%
- **Paper based**: 38%
- **Text messages to phone**: 28%
- **Portal**: 25%
- **Social media (Facebook /Twitter-@QFES /Instagram)**: 25%
- **Noticeboards / announcements**: 12%
- **Other**: 1%
- **None of the above**: 1%
H4. And what is your preferred methods to access and keep up to date with information relating to the Rural Fire Service?
BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304)
### Desired frequency of service updates via each method (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>fortnightly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>As available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper based</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portal</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text messages to phone</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word of mouth</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noticeboards / announcements</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HS. And how frequently would you like to receive updates / information via your preferred method of communication(s)?

BASE: Those who preferred each method (Paper based n=96; Portal n=76; Internet n=106; Email n=233; Social media n=63; Text messages to phone n=95; Word of mouth n=81; Noticeboards/announcements n=24*)

*Caution: small sample size – results should be interpreted as indicative only
2.7 Recognition
11. Which of the following forms of recognition is most important to you?
BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304)
2.8
Training and Development
Satisfaction with training over the past two years (%)

11% Very dissatisfied
43% Dissatisfied
26% Neither
3% Satisfied
4% Very satisfied
69% Don't know

J1. How satisfied were you with the training provided for your volunteer work with the Rural Fire Service over the past two years?
BASE: RFS respondents- Northern (n=304)
Reasons for dissatisfaction with training (%)

- There was not enough training: 44%
- The trainer was not effective: 22%
- The location of the training was not convenient: 16%
- The timing of the training conflicted with work and other commitments: 13%
- The training was not necessary to undertake my volunteer role: 6%
- There was too much training: 3%
- The training was too long: 0%
- Other: 31%
- Don't know: 0%

11% Dissatisfied

J1. How satisfied were you with the training provided for your volunteer work with the Rural Fire Service over the past two years?
BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304)

J2. What are the main reason/s for you dissatisfaction with your training?
BASE: Those dissatisfied with training (n=32)
2.9 Recruitment and Intention to Continue Volunteering
C1. How did you first learn about volunteer opportunities with the Rural Fire Service?
BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304)
C2. What factors motivated you to volunteer with the Rural Fire Service?
BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304)
K1. Do you intend to continue volunteering with the Rural Fire Service?
BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304)
K2. What is the main reason/s why you do not intend to continue volunteering?
BASE: Those who do not intend on continuing volunteering (n=9*)
*Caution: small sample size – results should be interpreted as indicative only

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**Intention to continue volunteering (%)**

- Yes: 91%
- No: 5%
- Don't know: 3%
- Prefer not to say: 1%

**Reasons for not intending to continue volunteering (%)**

1. Lack of leadership / direction: 33%
2. Lack of communication: 33%
3. Lack of equipment/uniform: 33%
4. Not enough time / busy with other commitments: 22%
   - It is a waste of time: 22%
   - I don’t like the culture: 22%
   - Too much red tape: 22%
5. Out of pocket expenses: 22%
6. Lack of training: 22%
7. Life changes caused me to leave: 11%
   - Changed jobs: 0%
   - Moved locations: 0%
   - Lack of diversity of role: 0%
8. Other: 44%
Respondent profile
Respondent Profile (1)

**Gender (%)**

- Male: 75%
- Female: 24%
- Prefer not to say: 1%

**Age (%)**

- 16-24 years: 6%
- 25-34 years: 9%
- 35-44 years: 12%
- 45-54 years: 27%
- 55-69 years: 35%
- 70+ years: 10%
- Prefer not to say: 2%

**Employment Status (%)**

- Full time: 40%
- Part time: 9%
- Self-employed: 29%
- Retired: 14%
- Student: 2%
- Not working: 6%
- Prefer not to say: <1%

**Highest level of Education (%)**

- Less than year 12 or equivalent: 21%
- Year 12 or equivalent: 12%
- Certificate level including trade: 28%
- Diploma / Advanced Diploma or equivalent: 16%
- Bachelor Degree or equivalent: 13%
- Post-graduate Degree or equivalent: 6%
- Other: 5%

**Personal Identification (%)**

- Aboriginal: 1%
- Torres Strait Islander: 1%
- Non-English Speaking background: 3%
- Person with a disability: 3%
- Person with a diverse sexual or gender identity: 0%
- None of the above: 92%
- Refused: 3%

---

Demo7. What is your gender? BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304)
Demo5. What is your age? BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304)
Demo2. What is your current employment status? BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304)
Demo1. What is the highest level of education that you have completed? BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=302)
Demo8. Do you identify as any of the following? BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304)
Demo 3. How long have you been volunteering with the RFS? BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304)
A3. And which position do you currently hold? BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304)
A4. On average, across the last 2 years, approximately how many hours per months did you spend volunteering for the RFS? BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304)
A5. To what extent does your employer support you volunteering? BASE: RFS respondents - Northern (n=304)
Thank you

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