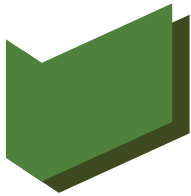


**R** People.  
**U** Partners.  
**O** Community.

# Engagement Strategy





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# Foreword

## The Queensland Fire and Emergency Services' (QFES) Engagement Strategy delivers on our commitment to achieve accepted outcomes through engagement.

QFES strives to build on its long-standing role in supporting community safety and resilience through leading a range of safety campaigns and initiatives. These initiatives are most effective when we commit to engaging when important decisions are made.

Strategy 2030 outlines how QFES will support Queensland communities into the future. At the core of Strategy 2030 is a vision of connectedness, which can only be achieved through effective engagement.

Engagement is the way of the future. It helps us make better and more sustainable decisions and enables capable communities to take positive actions.

Our people, partners and Queensland communities expect they will have a say in the matters that affect them. With the emergency services sector and society in general changing so rapidly, we have an excellent opportunity to adapt our approach to engagement and commit to more participatory methodologies.

We first need to engage our people, then reach out to our partners and together we engage our communities. We will listen, learn, and co-design solutions more than ever before.

### True engagement occurs when we:

- grow our engagement commitment
- align our engagement across services
- ensure consistency
- reduce duplication
- ensure our people, partners and communities know what we do, why and when
- continually engage during and outside of emergencies
- gain critical input from our stakeholders to prepare for and make decisions
- build support from stakeholders.

“We first need to engage our people, then reach out to our partners and together we engage our communities.”

Strong engagement requires a coordinated approach, including aligning engagement efforts, and sharing and pooling information and resources.

Whether consulting internally on a project, collaborating with stakeholders about a new policy, educating communities about safety or anything in between, there is so much we can achieve together when we engage with professionalism and enthusiasm.

### Michelle Tayler

Executive Director  
Organisational Engagement  
Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

# Strategy 2030



## Our commitment to engagement underpins QFES' future service delivery model.

Strategy 2030 sets out our future, in which there is a strong sense of community connectedness and increased collective capability.

By engaging at all levels we will fulfil our Strategy 2030 vision: A connected and capable Queensland in the face of emergencies and disasters.



“It is only through collective action that we can achieve our vision for a strong and connected Queensland.”

QFES Strategy 2030

## Engagement and the 2030 Guiding Principles

**Capable communities** will be achieved by connecting with local communities and partners to develop knowledge and practical skills to maximise community capability.

**Interoperability** will be achieved by engaging with our people and our partners to ensure seamless service delivery.

**Intelligence** will see us share information with our people, partners and communities so we can make better decisions together.

**Sustainable** economic, environmental and social outcomes will be achieved by joining with stakeholders to co-develop and achieve local solutions.

**Adaptive** engagement will be a critical component of building trust, working together and ultimately enhancing our collective ability to manage the unexpected.

## Engagement and the QFES Values

**Respect** We will respect people's input, suggestions, time and confidentiality.

**Integrity** Our engagement will be ethical and honest, with transparency about our objectives.

**Courage** We will have the courage to ask meaningful questions and seek input into important decisions and activities.

**Loyalty** When engaging and making decisions we will understand that our stakeholders are loyal, and sometimes that may present conflict during engagement. We aim to overcome this through respectful engagement.

**Trust** Effective engagement is built on trust, so we are committed to investing the time needed to build genuine relationships with our people, partners and communities.

# Understanding engagement

## What is engagement?

The following definitions are used throughout this strategy:

### Engagement

is working with stakeholders to inform our decisions and actions so QFES and Queensland's communities are connected and capable.

### Stakeholders

are those individuals, groups or organisations who have a stake in our work, who are affected or could be affected by our activities, decisions and services. Stakeholders include our people, partners and communities.

### Our people

includes our QFES workforce (all staff and volunteers).

### Partners

are those departments and organisations who are also involved in the emergency management sector or work with QFES in any capacity.

### Community

may refer to a group of people who reside or work in a common place, or a group of people who have common interests or characteristics (for example youth or remote communities).

### Communication

refers to all the ways we inform, talk to or have conversations with our stakeholders such as emails, newsletters, website content, Response Magazine, face to face meetings, teleconferences, forums and workplace and community gatherings. Communication can be informal or formal.

## As a member of QFES I will...

**Share** information for operational excellence.

Ensure engagement includes meaningful **two-way communication**, where insight is gained through listening to and hearing the other party.

**Embed engagement** into daily work, always ensuring our people, partners and the community are considered.

### **Drive engagement.**

Ensure engagement is **targeted**.

Use this strategy when I am making a decision or working towards a **behaviour change**.

# Key principles

**QFES has committed to the following key principles for effective engagement.**

#### **We will be:**

- committed to delivering a planned and coordinated engagement process with a focus on continuous improvement
- inclusive, clear and concise in our engagement design, approach and processes
- proactive in our approach, providing early and ongoing engagement opportunities

- transparent in stating our engagement objectives and intentions, and the challenges and opportunities we need to address
- diligent in providing feedback and communicating outcomes following engagement activities
- appreciative and respectful of the ideas, intelligence, opinions and positions offered and the needs of all parties involved
- innovative in developing new ways to work together to enhance relationships, deliver accepted outcomes and ultimately help build connected and capable communities
- targeted and local (place-based approach) to ensure we engage with stakeholders about matters that are important to them using suitable channels at an appropriate time
- focused on gathering local intelligence to enable better and more sustainable decisions.



# Engaging with purpose

## Successful engagement starts with establishing a clear purpose – the ‘why’.

For QFES, our purpose for engagement generally fits into one of two categories:

### **Purpose # 1: Better decisions underpinned by local intelligence and relationships.**

We want valuable insights and input from key stakeholders to help us make an important decision.

### **Purpose # 2: Positive action from our people, partners and communities.**

We want to encourage people to take a particular action or change a specific behaviour for an accepted outcome.

## It's our responsibility to engage

### It is important our engagement work links to identified community and corporate risks.

*The Disaster Management Act 2003* and national and state resilience strategies recognise engagement is an essential part of disaster management. Effective engagement will ultimately enhance community resilience.

This is achieved by increasing community understanding of local risk and disaster events, and providing adequate information on how the community can take steps to plan for and be prepared for such events.

While we cannot prepare every individual for every event that may occur, in partnership

with others in the emergency management sector, we have a responsibility to build strong, connected, capable and adaptive communities.

Awareness and education is important, but the responsibility we have runs deeper. It involves gaining community involvement in disaster management before, during and after an event occurs.

A partnership approach will allow us to develop local services, strategies, processes and actions that are relevant and delivered in a way that is suitable for that community.

# Benefits of engagement

## Continuous and effective engagement will:

- help us perform better and ensure appropriate service delivery
- help us make better decisions if we gain input and insights from the people who have an interest or are going to be affected by the decision
- increase the likelihood of people taking actions if we inform, educate and influence them with clear, concise and relevant information
- build trust and transparent relationships
- allow people with diverse views and knowledge to contribute, achieving more innovative approaches to opportunities and challenges
- achieve objectives that cannot be reached by acting alone.

**Effective engagement starts with a mindset that our people and stakeholders have valuable insights and contributions that will help achieve positive outcomes.**

We will achieve more by working together than we can ever achieve working alone.

Why, where, when, how and who we engage will depend on the opportunity or challenge we are presented with. No single engagement technique or approach will suit every situation.

The most appropriate engagement technique will be determined by the matter at hand, objectives and goals, stakeholders and available resources.

Often we will be a participant in engagement rather than the driver. In these cases our commitment to the principles of effective engagement remain.





# Who is responsible?

**We are all responsible for engagement. Across the department, engagement specialists are available to support the development of tailored plans and help design effective engagement tools.**

The delivery of effective engagement activities is a shared responsibility and is reliant on a growing network of capable and enthusiastic personnel from across the department.

It's important that we all know and play our part in connecting with our people, partners and communities, and work together to ensure a seamless experience for all.

Participant trust, involvement and action often correlates with who the engagement activity is delivered by, so it's important we consider these factors when deciding who will take the lead.

Whenever possible we will encourage local personnel and networks to engage as QFES, with support if needed, to achieve local solutions.

We encourage our people to embrace the opportunity to enhance everyday work by incorporating engagement in the way we do our business and ask leaders to embed engagement into everyday processes.

# Embedded engagement

**Embedded engagement is where we weave engagement principles, theories and practices into our business and service delivery models.**

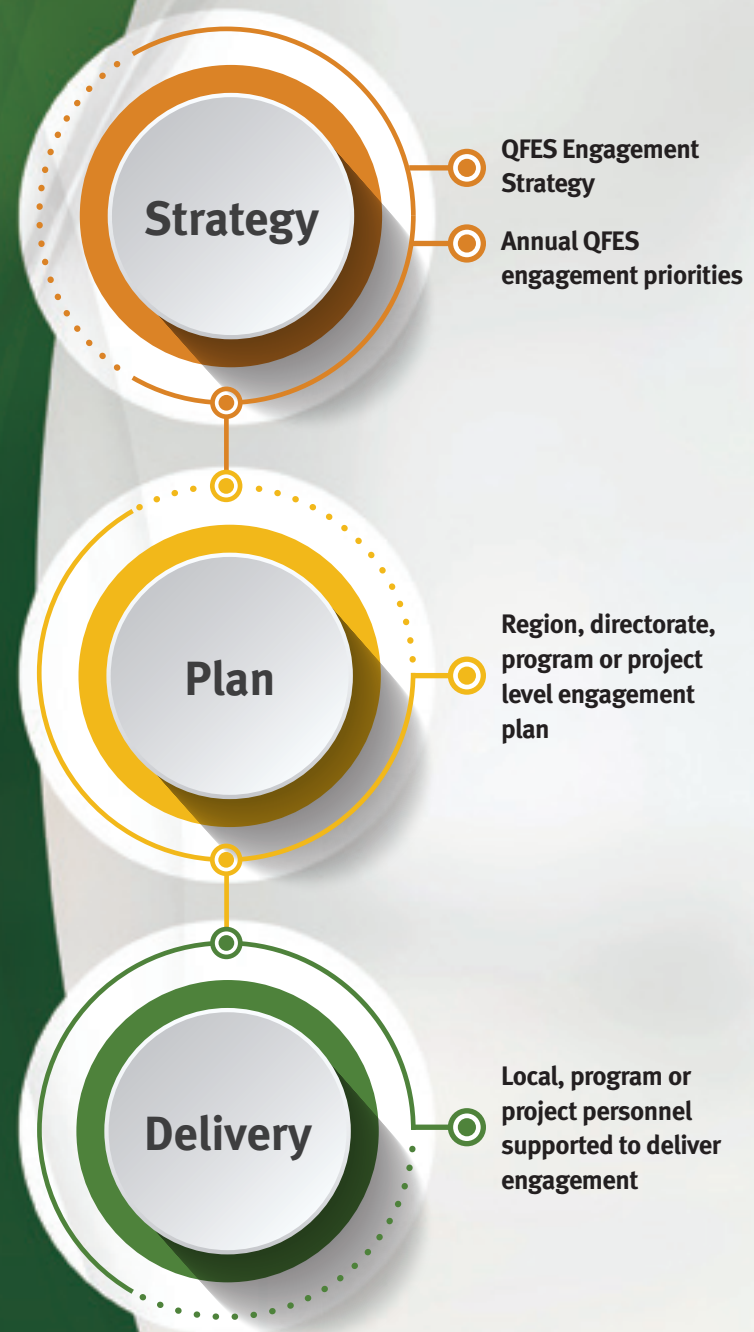
This will see a proactive rather than reactive approach to allow the early identification of opportunities and issues.

Early engagement should be part of decision-making processes, policy or strategy development, change campaigns or corporate activities.

**To embed engagement into QFES, we will ensure the principles outlined on page 6 are entrenched in:**

- operations
- corporate planning
- governance
- process
- policy
- roles and resourcing models
- training
- funding.

While the principles of effective engagement will be embedded across departmental activities, engagement-specific documentation will help operationalise this Engagement Strategy.



# Who we engage

Our engagement approach works on the assumption that those who may be affected by an outcome often have an interest in being part of the process, and will be more committed to an outcome if they have contributed to it.

We recognise not everyone wants to or has capacity to be engaged about every decision or matter. That means we need to be targeted in our approach and accept representative views rather than 100 per cent participation. In this way we will minimise the risk of engagement fatigue and ensure we make decisions in a timely manner.

## **We will engage our people, partners and community with the:**

- right messages
- right engagement opportunities
- right group of people
- right channels
- right time.

Engagement is inherently personal: we engage with real people, who each have unique histories, experiences and circumstances that will influence their views.

As such, we will be thoughtful, respect their inputs and be grateful for their willingness to participate.

# When, where and how we engage

**Alignment is key.** As a large and geographically dispersed organisation, coordination is key to our ongoing engagement success.

To achieve this, a system will be developed to provide visibility of engagement activities at the state, regional and local level, ensuring alignment between:

- **Initiatives** – to reduce duplication, share information and insights, and identify opportunities for joint engagement
- **Services** – to present together as QFES while embracing and respecting individual service culture
- **Timing** – to improve efficiency and participation, and reduce engagement fatigue
- **Message** – to achieve consistency
- **Approach** – to deliver on our principles for effective engagement.

## When we engage

The timing of engagement is critical, with activities ideally woven into every phase of a project, program or decision.

In cases of stakeholders being identified as ‘involve’, ‘collaborate’ or ‘empower’ on the stakeholder engagement spectrum (page 15), we will aim for end-to-end engagement where we reach out to our stakeholders early and repeatedly, from inception to delivery.



## Where we engage

We will be considerate in choosing where we engage with our people, partners and communities, looking for opportunities to reach people where they already gather (whether physically or online) where possible.

## How we engage

There are many engagement techniques that effectively provide opportunities for participation including:

- ✓ workshops
- ✓ surveys
- ✓ meetings
- ✓ emails
- ✓ media
- ✓ social media
- ✓ internal corporate communications.

We are building innovative techniques that encourage meaningful participation including:

- online collaboration platforms
- participatory and experiential activities.

We recognise people have multiple priorities so where possible our engagement will be short, sharp and clear.

Participants who invest their time and energy into engagement activities have an interest in the outcomes. Where possible we will close the loop, providing feedback about the decision made and why.

## Disaster Management Cycle

In the disaster management context, we will engage with our people, partners and communities throughout the disaster management cycle.



# The role of our stakeholders

(our people, partners and communities)

Often we engage with the purpose of enabling positive action from our people, partners and communities.

**Our people and partners play a critical role in this process.**

Our partners may:

- ✓ lead our engagement activities at the grassroots level
- ✓ partner with us to co-design our engagement work
- ✓ become advocates for our work
- ✓ proactively identify needs or opportunities for community action.

QFES will sometimes be a stakeholder in engagement processes run by our partners and communities. In these cases we commit to being a proactive and supportive stakeholder.



# Level of stakeholder participation and the engagement commitment:

When we're engaging with the purpose of making better decisions underpinned by local intelligence and relationships, we involve stakeholders in our decision-making processes.

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) uses a participation spectrum to define a stakeholder's role in the engagement process. This is helpful to us when defining what level of engagement we will use.



## Inform

We will keep you informed.

**Example:** newsletter



## Consult

We will listen to you, acknowledge your input and provide feedback.

**Example:** survey



## Involve

We will ensure your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed.

**Example:** workshop



## Collaborate

We will seek your advice and innovation in forming solutions and incorporate your recommendations into solutions as much as possible.

**Example:** taskforce



## Empower

We will implement what you decide. You will make the final decision.

**Example:** Decision-making board

Reproduced (adapted) with permission from IAP2.

**Note:** as we change our level of participation, the goals and promises of the previous levels also apply.

# The QFES engagement approach



staff  
volunteers

local governments  
other Queensland state government  
departments and organisations  
federal government  
unions and associations  
industry bodies and counterparts  
media  
not-for-profits  
business groups  
community groups

physical communities (place-based)  
interest or common characteristic  
communities, for example:

remote  
culturally and  
linguistically diverse  
youth  
elderly  
disability  
mobile







We first engage

# Our people...

We have thousands of dedicated staff and volunteers across the state who know our business very well, and work tirelessly to build strong Queensland communities.

We will embrace the wealth of knowledge, skills and diverse thinking available through our workforce.

Engaging with our people about the issues that matter most to them, as well as the issues that are important to their community and QFES, will help us make informed decisions about our future.

Face-to-face workshops, surveys and interviews with our staff and volunteers have provided insights into how we should be engaging with them more effectively.

## Key insights include aspirations for:

- a more collaborative culture, where our people can genuinely provide input and inspire constructive continuous improvement
- more efficient internal engagement, where corporate initiatives align their engagement activities and meet local requirements
- building on the internal and local knowledge that already exists, while continuously challenging our own assumptions of what communities want and how they act
- a targeted approach, serving information and engagement opportunities to the people who are affected by the outcome rather than a broad-brush approach
- more opportunities to work together to engage external stakeholders including communities
- better appreciation of time and operational priorities
- engagement planning and materials support
- clear articulation of engagement expectations and responsibilities
- better sharing of case studies to drive continuous improvement
- leveraging 'public value' to enhance localised services (three services working together across one department = better resources).

# ... then reach out to **Our partners...**

**We are one of many organisations involved in the emergency management sector. We can achieve better outcomes by working with our partners than we could achieve working alone.**



By engaging key partners in the development of this Engagement Strategy, we understand their preferred approach to future engagement.

## **Key insights include aspirations for:**

- a more proactive approach, where our partners are engaged deliberately about the matters that may affect them and their local community or members
- early and ongoing engagement from the time a project, program or initiative is being considered through to delivery and evaluation
- meaningful opportunities to contribute to important decisions
- coordinated engagement, by giving our people visibility of broader engagement activities to ensure consistency and limit duplication.

# ... and together, we engage **Our communities**

There is no such thing as a 'standard' Queensland community, with each community across the state offering a unique set of factors that makes it special.

Sometimes the greatest engagement occurs at the back of a truck in an un-structured way.

**QFES Regional Engagement Workshop Participant**

Our locally-based approach to engagement recognises this diversity and appreciates that targeted engagement activities are required to ensure communities are engaged on the matters relevant to them.

QFES personnel are highly trusted members of their community, providing an excellent starting point for genuine community and stakeholder engagement.

We value this unique opportunity and empower our people to connect with their communities at a local level.

To ensure effective community engagement we will support our people by providing awareness of engagement techniques and training opportunities.

We will also provide our people with a consistent suite of engagement materials that offer flexibility so they can be customised to ensure local relevance.



We value the respect and history each of our operational streams have within their local community. However, where possible for community engagement activities before, during and after emergencies, we encourage a joint QFES approach.

Effective community engagement can be achieved through both formal, planned activities and informal activities.

### **Our community engagement work incorporates the three principles of the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience Community Engagement Framework:**

1. Understand the community: its capacity, strengths and priorities.
2. Recognise complexity.
3. Partner with the community to support existing networks and resources.

With these principles in mind, we will engage with the community to:

- encourage prevention of and preparedness for emergencies
- assist with response to and recovery from incidents
- gain insights into emergency management related community trends
- develop meaningful relationships and trust
- provide insights into decisions that will affect them.



# Examples

We will engage about a wide range of topics to ensure we make better decisions and enable positive actions. The following table provides examples of some of the topics we will engage our stakeholders about (noting this is not an exhaustive list).

## Better decisions



**Inviting our people to have input into policy, procedure, strategy or legislation development or review.** Example: activities to allow our people the opportunity to inform continuous improvement initiatives.

**Inviting our people to co-design and assist with implementation of corporate or operational changes.** Example: inviting users of personal protective equipment to have input into the scoping, procurement and roll-out of new equipment.



**Working with other organisations involved with emergency management to co-design and co-deliver changes in the emergency management sector.** Example: seeking early and ongoing input from all tiers of government and the emergency management sector regarding legislation and key policy changes.

**Seeking early collaboration with partners about significant industrial, operational and ongoing changes.** Example: meeting with unions and associations throughout the process of developing a new policy or process from inception to implementation and evaluation.



**Encouraging local community input into important decisions that will affect them.** Example: inviting community members to help us shape our service model to ensure it's relevant to the unique circumstances of that community.

## Positive actions

**Generating interest among our workforce to increase participation in an initiative or activity.** Example: broad campaign to encourage our people to participate in health and safety initiatives.

**Changing the way someone thinks or acts.** Example: targeted activities to ensure specific workgroups understand Strategy 2030 principles, can contextualise the information to their circumstances, and can adapt their work approach if needed.

**Co-designing and delivering a new program or initiative.** Example: joint projects with other state and local government departments to identify risk and implement local solutions to help build capable communities.

**Working with a community to educate them about a specific risk and working collaboratively to mitigate risk.** Example: providing communities with the information they need to make informed decisions about their safety before, during and after an emergency, in an engaging and memorable way.

# Key references

**This Engagement Strategy has been developed in collaboration with the QFES workforce and representatives from partner agencies.**

Sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed to the strategy through their stories and insights about current and previous engagement, and their aspirations for our future engagement model.

The process gathered insights from more than 100 people, including:

- workshops with QFES personnel from state and regional areas in all divisions
- interviews with key stakeholders representing unions, associations and local governments.

Thoughts, concepts and theories were also sourced from the following documents:

AccountAbility, *The AccountAbility 1000 Stakeholder Engagement Standard*, 2018.

Aslin and Brown, *Towards Whole of Community Engagement: A Practical Toolkit*, Murray-Darling Basin Commission, 2004.

Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience, *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience: community engagement framework*, 2013.

Department of Premier and Cabinet, *The Queensland Plan – Queensland’s 30-year vision*, Brisbane, 2018.

International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), *Planning for Effective Public Participation*, 2018.

National and state resilience strategies.

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, *Disaster Management Act 2003, Queensland Parliamentary Counsel*, 2003.

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, *QFES Volunteerism Strategy*, Brisbane, 2018.

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