

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & EDUCATION > BUSHFIRE-READY NEIGHBOURHOODS NEWSLETTER



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Helping Tasmanian communities work together to prevent, prepare for and respond to bushfires.

This edition features:

- TFS online educational resources
- Welcome Selina Young, CDO of the South
- Reflections on the Black Summer bushfires
- Guide to burning heaps safely
- Bushfire-Ready Carers and Community Care
- Ansons Bay – Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods in Action

TFS online educational resources for adults and children learning at home



School fire education

Home fire-safety giveaways, publications, resources and more for teachers, parents and students.

tfseducation.com.au



TFS Kids

Children play-watch-explore-learn about TFS and home fire safety.

tfskids.com.au



Disaster Resilience Education Tasmania

Aims to educate students about the fundamentals of disaster and emergency resilience and encourage their participation in the development of safer communities. The five lessons of the DRET unit link to the Australian Curriculum for students in years 5 to 8 in the learning areas of Humanities and Social Sciences, Geography, Science and Health; in the capabilities of Literacy, Personal and Social Capability; and the cross-curriculum priority of Sustainability.

disasterresiliencetas.com.au



Tasmania Fire Service

fire.tas.gov.au/brn

Welcome Selina Young

Selina Young has recently joined the TFS Community Development and Education Team as Community Development Officer South, while Lesley King is in a project manager role working on a project about home fire risks in the community.

Selina has relocated to Tasmania from Western Australia, with her partner and dog soon to join her. Selina comes to TFS with experience working in community development and recreation for local governments throughout New South Wales and Western Australia for many years.

For the last seven years, while living in Western Australia, Selina has been working at the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES). Selina was based in Kununurra for two years as the Natural Hazards District Officer and more recently as the Community Preparedness Advisor for the South West WA. Selina's roles in DFES has involved working across a variety of hazards including bushfire, home fire safety, storms, floods, cyclones, tsunamis and earthquakes. As the Community Preparedness Advisor, she has worked with regional emergency services volunteers and local communities to understand their risks and prepare for emergencies.

During major bushfires, Selina has also worked in the Incident Management Team in Public Information, including community liaison in evacuation centres, providing incident



Selina Young

information to the local community and supporting people who have been impacted by bushfires.

Selina was also a trainer for DFES and the State Emergency Service (SES) in various training programs; she has been a volunteer with her local SES unit since 2011. Welcome to Tasmania and TFS, Selina!

Peter Middleton, Coordinator Community Development

Guide to burning heaps safely

Now we are in the autumn period, many will be considering managing

vegetation hazards by burning heaps or piles of leaves, branches and logs. The Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods website features a video guide to burning heaps safely.

It's important that everyone prepares their property ahead of the bushfire season. However, many people who prepare their property by burning hazardous vegetation do it unsafely. Many fires become out of control due to human



error and neglect. This can have devastating effects on bad fire weather days.

Use this guide to help you be safer when burning your heap.

bushfirereadynighbourhoods.tas.gov.au/content/guide-burning-heaps-safely



Reflections on the Black Summer bushfires

Bushfires across most of Australia – especially the fires on many parts of the mainland – dominated news coverage last summer. Some of the things I’ve watched, read and heard about have prompted me to reflect on what individuals and communities can do in the face of bushfires of this scale and intensity.

We have seen loss of life and large-scale property. Firefighters and communities have been caught by surprise by the intensity and speed of the fires, and there has been much debate on alleged ineffective firefighting strategies and the need for more hazard reduction burns. Whole communities were isolated for days and weeks during and after the fires passed, with many roads blocked, limited food supplies and telecommunications down. We saw communities coming together to support each other during and after the fires, the overwhelming resilience of affected communities, and the generosity of the broader Australian (and international) community.

Black Summer headlines

Queensland’s early bushfire season prompts call for emergency plans in suburbia

NSW bushfires were ‘like a demon attacking’, Mogo survivor says after evacuating to Batemans Bay

Bushfires cut off Bendalong and Manyana from the world for days but the community banded together

Bushfire survival stories emerge from New Year’s Eve blazes in Victoria’s east

Bushfire survivors call for more fire preparedness support for people with disabilities

Are hazard reduction burns effective in managing bushfires? The answer is complicated

It’s fair to say that the bushfires of last summer have been a wake-up call for many. Who could have imagined it happening in Australia – the Navy being called in to rescue people from the beach, stranded because of a bushfire!

One of the things I have been reflecting on is the importance of a multi-pronged approach to reducing bushfire risk. On its own, any one strategy to manage bushfire risk is unlikely to be successful without other complementary strategies being implemented as well.



Fingal complex fires, January 2020

Thinking about it from the perspective of Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods, the fires this summer highlight the importance of **strong community networks** to bring the community together before, during and after a bushfire, to boost preparedness efforts, to help the community keep each other safe, make sure people who need help are not left behind, and to provide support after the fire has passed.

They also highlight the importance of **preparedness at the individual and household level – preparing properties for bushfire** and creating a bushfire survival plan. The impacts of the fires have highlighted that people need to be proactive and prepare themselves and their properties for bushfires. Despite heroic efforts, firefighters are not always able to protect properties (and at times whole communities) due to the intensity and speed of the fires; previous hazard reduction burns did not always help to reduce the intensity and speed of the fires.

The Black Summer was a stark reminder that when it comes to bushfire safety, **we all play a part**. It is no longer enough to rely solely on the efforts of a long list of government stakeholders to reduce bushfire risk including local government authorities, Parks and Wildlife Service, Sustainable Timbers Tasmania and the Tasmania Fire Service.

A critical element of bushfire safety is individuals, communities and households preparing themselves and their properties for bushfires. As we say in Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods:

Individuals > TFS > Communities > WE ALL PLAY A PART

*Brett Patterson
Community Development Officer, North West*





Ansons Bay – Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods in action

As Round 3 of Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods nears its end, Ansons Bay remains a significant priority for the Northeast District. This area has been a BRN target community for two years, and in this time significant work has been done by the community to identify their bushfire risk and begin the process of engaging stakeholders to work towards reducing these risks.

Numerous stakeholders have collaborated to address some of the most urgent issues for the community, including Parks and Wildlife Service, Break O’Day Council, tourist operators, federal government and Telstra representatives, private land owners, neighbouring brigades, TFS District staff, holiday house owners and residents – all with the goal of achieving a more resilient Ansons Bay community.

The community quickly identified the need for improved telecommunications in the area, which has limited mobile reception available. Residents have formed a working group to address this issue and have conducted several meetings with Telstra and government stakeholders. This will be a slow process, but with community support, thorough engagement and a collaborative approach, progress is being made.

Another issue for Ansons Bay was the declining membership of the Volunteer Fire Brigade. The community has now come together to ensure the survival of their

brigade. With support from TFS Operational Training staff, the District Officer, Rick Mahnken, and Group Officer, Rodney Moore, the community was able to recruit over 20 new members. Today the brigade has 20 operational firefighters who have completed level 1 training in under 12 months. Not a bad achievement for the community in a short period.

A number of residents have taken up the Volunteer Community Engagement Officer role. These members continue to undertake development in the engagement and community fire safety roles to build a safer, more resilient community.

Work will continue with this wonderful community who have come together with a set of common goals. They are working hard together to achieve the best outcomes for the community. Bringing people together to work collaboratively, identify strategies, engage stakeholders and achieve outcomes is community engagement.

I’m looking forward to the next stage of community and brigade development with Ansons Bay residents and shack owners.

David Cleaver, Community Development Officer, North



Bushfire-Ready Carers and Community Care: Supporting people of increased vulnerability to prepare for the threat of bushfire.



'Everyone is both vulnerable and resilient. Everyone has a unique combination of capabilities and capacity to prepare, cope and recover from disaster, which means they are vulnerable and resilient in different ways. Individuals with high vulnerability experience disproportionately higher social and economic costs from disasters.' (*Profiling Australia's Vulnerability. National Resilience Taskforce, 2018*)

Children and those individuals who are frail, injured, and elderly, socially isolated or have some level of cognitive and/or physical disability living in a high bushfire risk area have increased vulnerability to the threat of bushfire. Either because they do not understand their level of risk, or because they are less able to physically or mentally prepare and withstand a bushfire and its associated hazards. These people are unlikely to have the skills or capacity to prepare and defend their home. They may also lack an understanding of the need for a leave early plan and an emergency backup plan. Their survival may depend on emergency services, family, friends, neighbours, volunteers and/or a care worker.

BRN ran a Bushfire-Ready Carers and Community Care (BRCCC) project in the Huon Valley and Kingborough municipal areas. It focused on the role that carers, volunteers and community service providers who support people in a community or home setting can play in bushfire preparedness. The project aim was to build their confidence to assist a client, neighbour or family member to prepare and practise a leave early Bushfire Survival Plan.

Thirteen bushfire-ready workshops were delivered to 122 people. These carers, volunteers and home care workers were responsible for visiting or supporting approximately 716 people living in areas of varying bushfire risk. Feedback from participants about the benefits of the training included: "The info session and workshop was really good. I am glad I participated. It definitely got me thinking. Very helpful, really exposed how unprepared many of my clients are."

www.bushfirereadyneighbourhoods.tas.gov.au/bushfire-ready-carers

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The feedback and advice provided by project participants have resulted in a Bushfire-Ready Carers Kit. The kit uses existing resources and presents them as a 'toolbox' or 'kit' to help carers, volunteers and workers assist a resident living in a high bushfire risk area.

Volunteers, carers and workers can use these resources to:

- Identify if a resident's property has a bushfire risk
- Assist a resident to undertake a self-assessment, with critical questions that need to be covered for preparing an emergency plan
- Become familiar with key bushfire concepts, terminology and TFS bushfire emergency advice
- Assist a resident to complete a leave early plan.

Bushfire-Ready Carers Kit

Step 1 - Identify bushfire risk:

TasALERT RiskReady tool can identify natural hazards and provide information about a property's bushfire risk. You can print a property report of the result to help with your planning process.

Step 2 - Do a self-assessment:

Understand an individual's risk factors: The People at Increased Risk in an Emergency guide is for community service providers. It helps them consider and

address factors that can increase a person's level of risk in an emergency. This resource includes an emergency risk self-assessment tool for individuals.

Step 3 - Bushfire facts:

BRN Bushfire Essentials flyer provides key bushfire information, such as the definitions of Fire Danger Ratings and explanation of bushfire Alerts and Warnings.

Step 4 - Complete a leave early plan:

The TFS Leaving Early plan template can be used by carers, volunteers and workers to assist the resident with the details of their plan. The BRN online plan tool www.bushfirereadyneighbourhoods.tas.gov.au/create-your-bushfire-survival-plans is another template format for a plan.

There are **regional Community Development Officers (CDO)** that deliver the Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods program in targeted high risk communities. Agencies delivering volunteering programs, Home and Community Care, My Aged Care and NDIS packages can be supported by a CDO to provide bushfire-ready sessions and engage with carers, volunteers and workers on what key information and resources can assist them when speaking about bushfire emergency planning with residents.

Lesley King, Project Manager



Tasmania Fire Service

TasFire

EQUIPMENT

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