



# WORKING WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES

to be bushfire ready.

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Tasmania Fire Service



## **BUSHFIRE READY NEIGHBOURHOODS (BRN) IS A TASMANIA FIRE SERVICE (TFS) COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAM WORKING WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES TO BE BUSHFIRE READY.**

The program recognises that individuals, communities and government all play a part and share responsibility to prevent, prepare for, respond and recover from bushfires and other natural hazards.



### **THE BIGGER PICTURE**

#### **WHAT IS SHARED RESPONSIBILITY?**

Shared responsibility recognises that we all play a part when it comes to preparing for bushfires – individuals, communities and government. At a local level this means residents are encouraged to take responsibility for learning about, preparing for, responding to and recovering from bushfires.

#### **HOW DOES BUSHFIRE READY NEIGHBOURHOODS WORK?**

TFS Community Development staff engage with identified communities. Communities are selected based on bushfire risk, capacity and community interest. Community Development staff tailor various bushfire education events and activities unique to local needs, recognising that there is no one size fits all approach. The aim is to provide relevant information so that individuals can develop their own bushfire survival plan and be better prepared for the bushfires season.



## HOW ARE COMMUNITIES SELECTED?

Communities are selected through a process of consultation with stakeholders such as the State Fire Management Council, TFS staff/volunteers, community leaders, community groups, local government, Parks and Wildlife Service and many more. Once the locations are identified a Community Development Officer initiates an engagement process that is community led. Staff work with that community to develop relevant bushfire education activities with the aim of building a sustainable approach to shared responsibility in bushfire preparedness.

## WHAT DOES BUSHFIRE READY NEIGHBOURHOODS LOOK LIKE IN MY COMMUNITY?

The way the BRN program is implemented is determined and led by the community. The program may include activities and events such as:

### COMMUNITY FORUMS AND INFORMATION SESSIONS

Community forums and information sessions can be an introduction to the BRN program. This is a way for individuals to connect with their local community and learn about bushfire preparedness, gather TFS resources and explore ways for the program to be part of their community.

It is also an opportunity to hear from other organisations such as the Parks and Wildlife Service, Forestry Tasmania, Councils, TFS staff, volunteer brigades and other groups.

### WORKSHOPS

Workshops aim to assist in developing an understanding of what a bushfire may be like. This supports people to make appropriate decisions for their circumstances, and includes looking at the implications of leaving early and/or staying and defending, ultimately breaking these actions down into practical tasks people can do to prepare themselves.

Workshops offer an engaging and interactive time for locals to get together explore preparing for bushfire for themselves, their families, their homes and their neighbourhood. Individuals and groups may like to look at developing a Bushfire Survival Plan, ultimately ensuring people will be as prepared as possible.

### PROPERTY ASSESSMENTS AND FIELD DAYS

The purpose of a property assessment is to identify the hazards and risk to a property if a bushfire should impact on it.

Property Assessments looks at 8 key areas:

- Defendable space
- Vegetation management
- Water supply
- Access – in and out for you and for fire trucks
- House maintenance and improvements to resist ember attack
- Maintenance activities
- Awareness of personal capacity
- Potential hazards on your property.

The benefits are that once hazards are identified, people can plan and undertake the necessary steps to make their property safer from bushfire.

Field days can consist of practical demonstrations of different forms of firefighting equipment, fire brigade demonstrations and bushfire scenarios.



Helping Tasmanian communities to work together to prepare for bushfires

### WOMEN'S PROGRAMS

Bushfire research has shown that when faced with the threat of a bushfire females are more likely to leave, especially where children are involved. However when asked about developing a bushfire survival plan, generally women had not planned to know when to leave early, where to go and what to take.

Women's programs can include group meetings and activities that cover preparing yourself and your family, understanding Fire Danger Ratings and Alert Levels, developing a Bushfire Survival Plan, working through a 'leave early' checklist and the development of an emergency kit and more.

## FOCUSED ACTIVITIES

Bushfire Ready Neighbourhoods embraces the complete diversity of any given community. Community Development Officers work to adapt programs to reflect the values, needs and environment of that community.

Examples of this may include:

- Working with culturally and linguistic diverse groups
- Programs for people who have a disability
- Workshops tailored to older people
- Individual support when required and more.

## BUSHFIRE READY NEIGHBOURHOOD GROUPS

BRN groups are formed when small groups of people living in high risk areas take responsibility for their own safety and work together to develop plans of actions to suit their lifestyle, environment and values. These groups can be supported by the Community Development Officer to implement strategies relevant to their communities. Examples of group activities may include: phone trees, establishing working bees, accessing resources for community members and more. TFS can assist with continuing support so that the group is self-sustaining over a longer period.



For more information contact a Community Development team member in your region:

### South

**Peter Middleton**

Community Development Coordinator

### South

**Lesley King**

Community Development Officer

### North

**David Cleaver**

Community Development Officer

### North/North West

**Suzette Harrison**

Community Development Officer



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