

COMMUNITY EDUCATION > BUSHFIRE READY NEWSLETTER

Issue 8 • 1967 Bushfires 50 Year Anniversary Edition • February 2017



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*I lived through
the London
Blitz during
the war but
it wasn't as
frightening
as this.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF MRS MARJORY WOOLFORD

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

Welcome to edition number 8 of the Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods newsletter.

The theme for this edition is reflecting on 50 years since the 1967 Black Tuesday bushfires and tips to be bushfire-ready today.

- '67 Bushfires Storymap
- Bushfires Then and Now Vox Pop
- Managing a Defendable Space
- Phone Tree Network: Your Community Early Warning System
- BRN Team: Winner of IPAA Best Practice Award
- Stop Arson Campaign

'67 Bushfires Storymap

The 7th of February marks 50 years since southern Tasmania experienced devastating catastrophic fires when 110 separate fire fronts burnt through 2,640 square kilometres of land within 5 hours. There was extensive damage to agricultural property and parks areas, as well as public infrastructure, properties and many small towns. The worst of the fires was the Hobart fire which encroached upon the city of Hobart.

The fires claimed 62 lives in a single day and there were 900 injured and thousands of people were homeless as a result of the fires. The total damage amounted to \$40 million in 1967 Australian dollars value. In terms of both loss of property and loss of life, the Black Tuesday bushfires in 1967 are considered one of the worst disasters to have occurred in Australia.

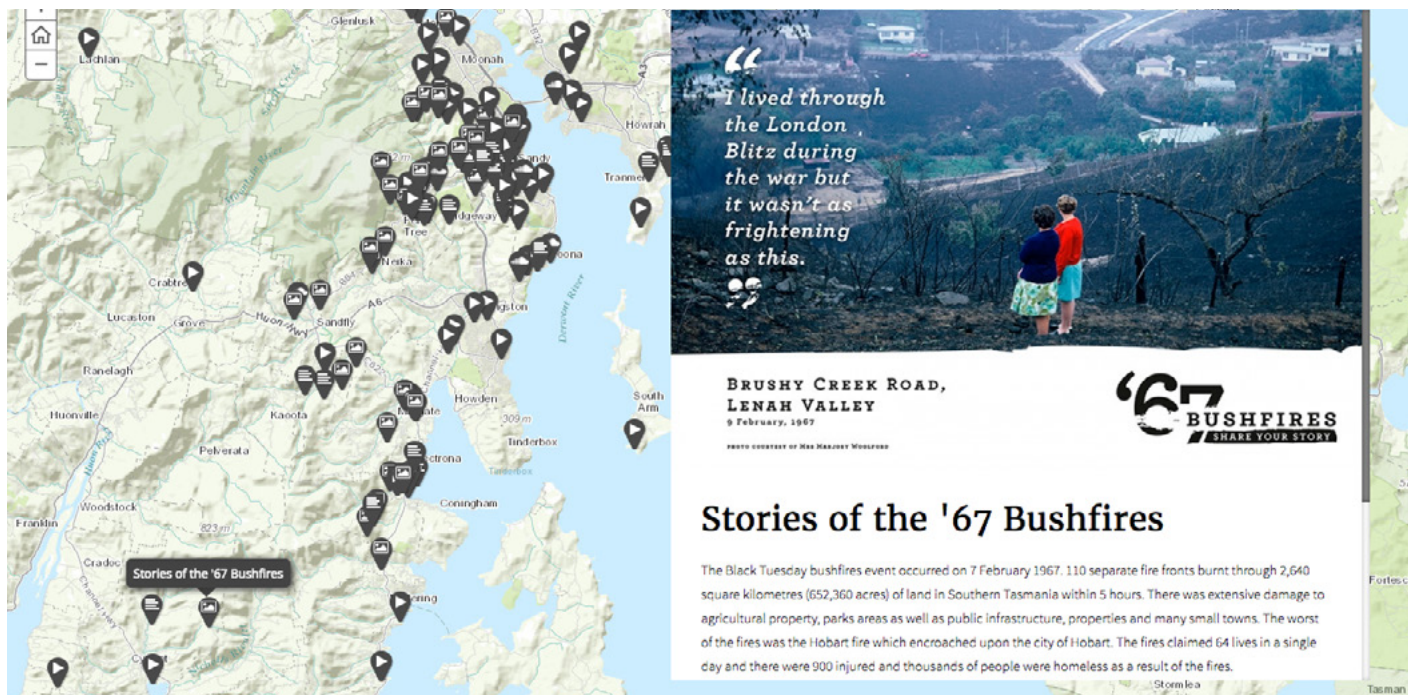
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Tasmania Fire Service

fire.tas.gov.au/brn

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The '67 Bushfires Share Your Story project started in December 2015 to collect people's stories with a video booth. Beginning at the Taste of Tasmania Festival in Hobart, it then travelled around Tasmania for 12 months to various events and venues, collecting a range of video stories from people who have a Black Tuesday tale to tell.

Alan Gifford recalls in his story that "the morning's weather was sinister" and Andrew Weidmann adds that it was "a superhot day by lunchtime, the sky was vivid red."

Gary Armstrong was a student at Snug Area School and describes that "the school was evacuated into the assembly hall and we could see the fire directly out the window burning buildings." Julie Fisher was also at school that day and recalls "the sky became dark red and the sun became dim, breathing was difficult and we were told to get under our desks and wait".

Michael Swanton in Lenah Valley at the time of the fire remembers, "I couldn't believe the amount of smoke and the smell of fire." I looked up to see a fireball 30 metres long and in a microsecond it moved across hilltops, then a brick homestead imploded."

People's accounts of the Black Tuesday fires are not only focused on fighting the fires, close escapes, tragedy for some and survival of the day, but also the recovery of coping with such a devastating event, of rebuilding and the support of their local community and others across Australia with emergency relief.

These and many other stories feature on an online Storymap which contains 96 video stories, 29 written

letters and stories, 10 audio stories along with maps and many photos of the bushfires and the damage. The various digital stories range from 1 to 12 minutes long and collectively there are over 8 hours of stories on the map.

The virtual Storymap is free and accessible to view online at www.fire.tas.gov.au/brn/67fires

People are still able to contribute their story to this digital collection by going to the Tasmania Museum and Art Gallery in Hobart 'One hell of an inferno: the 1967 Tasmanian bushfires' exhibition until the 19th March. The 'Share Your Story' video booth will feature in the exhibition during this time and the recorded digital stories will then be added to the Storymap.

This project has been made possible through partnership with Bendigo Bank, TasNetworks, ABC, Cascade Brewery, Hydro Tasmania, Brighton Council, Kingborough Council, Derwent Valley Council, Glenorchy City Council, Huon Valley Council, Clarence City Council and over 30 venues and events across Tasmania that featured the video booth.

To view all '67 bushfire anniversary commemoration events, go to the '67 Bushfires anniversary events calendar www.hobartcity.com.au/67bushfires.

For more information about the '67 Bushfires Storymap contact Lesley King on 1800 000 699.

If this experience has left you feeling distressed, please contact Lifeline by calling 13 11 14 anytime or chat online at www.lifeline.org.au/gethelp

Lesley King, Acting Coordinator Community Development



Bushfires Then and Now Vox Pop

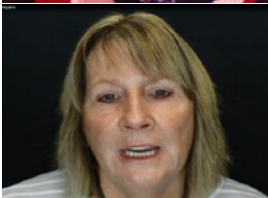
People who survived the 1967 Black Tuesday bushfires share what they have learned about living in one of Australia's most bushfire prone areas. These stories were collected in the touring video booth as part of the '67 Bushfires Share Your Story project. Their full accounts can be viewed on the '67 Bushfires Storymap at www.fire.tas.gov.au/brn/67fires.



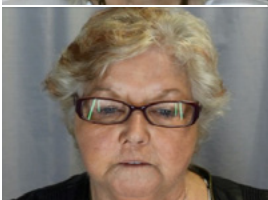
Denis Turner survived the bushfires in Flagstaff Gully. "Something that we can all learn about bushfires and what to do; I say that prior preparation, planning and practice prevents loss... communicate with each other, manage hazard reduction activities and by all means get involved in your local community in fire preparedness."



Harley Stanton's family orchard was affected in Allens Rivulet. "The bushfires were something I will never forget...it is something that people need to take account of in terms of being prepared for the future. I am so happy that the Tasmania Fire Service is now doing more in fire retardation and burning off so we don't suffer that type of experience again."



Peta Kelly was in Campania at the time of the fires. "I realised how bad it had been and Dad had been out fighting the fires and had saved the house, and then I realised how close I'd come to losing my father. The message is, although it's hard to stay in contact and things are much better now, keep in contact when fires are about."



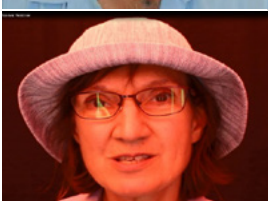
Annette Dare experienced the fires in Mountain River. "I survived it, unlike a lot of people. I still to this day will not go through thick smoke on the side of the road...I say to people, never take a fire for granted. They say stay in your car...we couldn't stay in the car, we couldn't breathe...very horrific day, very bad memories and hopefully nothing that bad happens to anybody again."



Barry Lathey saved buildings on fire in Mount Lloyd. "The fires, the damage and the lives that were lost seem to be too soon forgotten. We are in a similar state now with the vegetation on the ground for a repeat of that devastating '67 fire day."



Charles Beamish had a farm in Elderslie. "One of the things I have learned from it...was that prevention is better than cure and from then on I have always eaten around my house and sheds with the sheep, very close to the ground, so the fire can't run on it."



Ann Cloudsdale narrowly escaped the fires at Fern Tree. "We were lucky, I now realise what a risk it is to live in a bush setting and one needs to be very respectful of the threat of fire, what a strong force it is and in many cases uncontainable by man."

Lesley King, Acting Coordinator Community Development



Managing Defendable Space for Bushfire Risk

Defendable Space is an area of ground around a building where you or firefighters can safely work during the protection stage of a bushfire. It also gives you property a fighting chance if you leave early. Leaving early is always the safest option.

The amount of defendable space you need will vary depending on several factors:

- Fire Danger Ratings (FDR)
- Topography (slope of ground)
- Vegetation (type, density, dryness)



The amount of defendable space in this image MAY be suitable under lower FDR, but you will struggle to defend it under a higher FDR. Defendability will be improved if there is managed vegetation modified in the outer area.

Fire Danger Ratings (FDR)

FDRs are the measure used to identify the predicted severity of bushfires in certain weather conditions. The simple rule is, the higher the FDR, the greater the defendable space required.

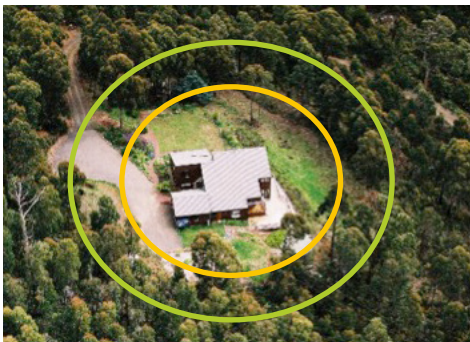
Topography (slope of ground)

Slope will intensify fire behaviour as fire burns uphill significantly faster than on flat ground. If your property is on sloping ground with vegetation on the lower area, you will require greater defendable space on the bottom side of your house.

Vegetation Type

Homes with too much vegetation close to them are difficult to protect from bushfires.

More information about defendable space is available in the TFS publication Bushfire Survival Plan available at fire.tas.gov.au/publications.



David Cleaver, Community Development Officer (North)

Remove ground fuel similar to this picture. This will limit the ground fire activity and allow you to control spot fires and embers.

Check out the BBQ Fire Safety Fact Sheet, visit www.tfseducation.com.au/resources/publications An initiative from the Risdon Vale Volunteer Fire Brigade in collaboration with Community Fire Safety.



Neighbourhood Phone Tree Network: Your Community Early Warning System

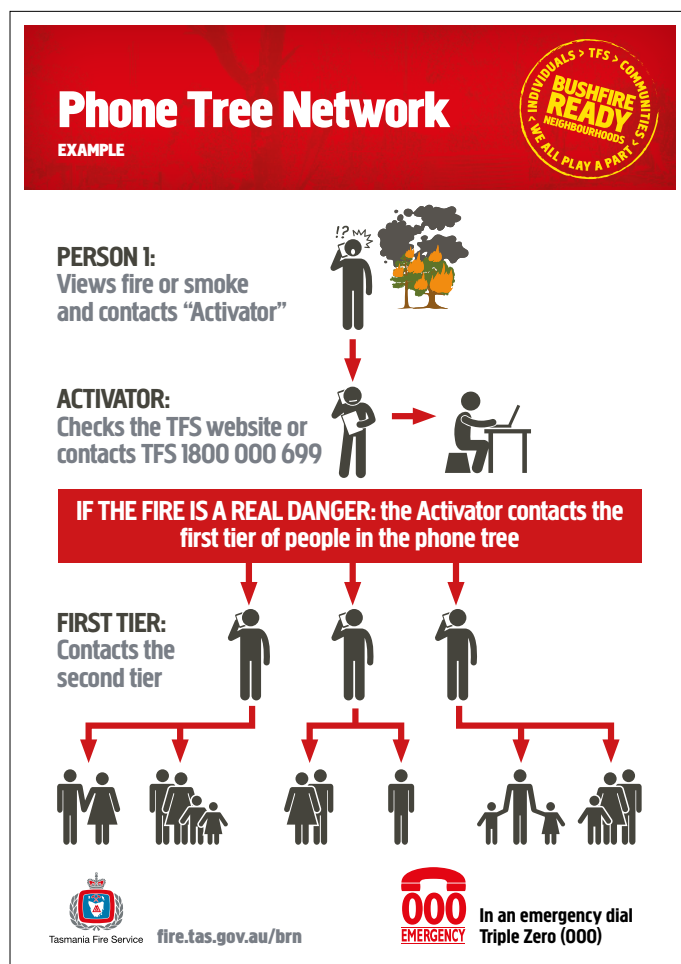
We live in one of the most bushfire-prone parts of the world. You don't have to think too far back to think of how fire affects Tasmania. Of course with the 50-year anniversary of the 1967 Bushfires, January 2013 south-east fires and the recent fires of January 2016 in the north-west that changed the Tasmanian landscape, we cannot afford to just think 'it will never happen to me'.

It is so important to prepare yourself in whatever way works for your community. Obviously the first thing is to prepare your personal Bushfire Survival Plan, so that if the time comes you are ready and your decisions are made well in advance of a fire event. There are lots of other creative ways I have discovered that communities use to help them be aware in advance of a crisis. One of those is the development of a community owned and operated phone tree system. I have mentioned phone tree systems in other articles and interestingly they are gaining popularity with most communities I work with. I thought it might be a good idea to explain a little more of what a phone tree is...

Primarily a phone tree is an early warning system. It is a structure that a community puts in place to help them be more proactive about their responses to emergencies or hazards in their area. Phone trees are unique to an area. For example; Golden Valley have produced a complex phone tree that covers 110 properties involving an activator, group and team leaders, while the Sisters Beach Road group phone tree involves only a small portion of properties and is linked to both Boat Harbour and Sisters Beach. Jackeys Marsh has approximately 30 properties and uses handheld radios. So you can see there is not a 'one size fits all' approach to the development of a phone tree.

The Phone Tree Network image is one example of how a phone tree could work. As you can see, it gives a fairly clear description of the process to follow when 'Jo' is out for a drive or walk and notices smoke or fire. What is important to remember is that the phone tree, whilst incredibly useful in a wildfire event, is primarily for early warning to your neighbours.

The objective of having a phone tree is so that community members can be more responsive and proactive about the shared responsibility for identifying and responding to risks and hazards, so that in the event that something happens, Jo knows what to do. This is also a great tool for developing situational awareness and provides more time for acting on your Bushfire Survival Plan.



There are many community phone tree networks in place around Tasmania, some include; Sisters Beach Road, Banksia Park, Weegena, Golden Valley, Jackeys Marsh, Fern Tree, Neika, Kettering, Lucaston, Franklin, Lower Longley, Mt Arthur Lilydale and Toby's Hill Cygnet.

If you want more information, the Golden Valley community have a website designed specifically about the development of their phone tree. You can access this information at www.ourphonetree.com and more on the Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods section of the TFS website www.bushfirereadyneighbourhoods.tas.gov.au/community-phone-tree

Suzette Harrison, Community Development Officer (North/North West)



2016 IPAA Award



Lesley King- A/Coordinator Community Development, Sandra Barber- A/Director Community Fire Safety, Peter Middleton- A/Manager Community Development & Education, David Cleaver- Community Development Officer-N, Chief Officer- Chris Arnol (absent- Suzette Harrison, Community Development Officer-N/NW)

The Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods team was judged against 15 public service nominations and in December was announced as the winner of the Institute of Public Administration Australia (IPAA) Tasmania Branch Award for Best Practice in the Public Sector for 2016.

“The program has used a resource to risk model to deliver a more effective service and is seen as a leader in the sector of public administration contributing national tools used by other fire agencies interstate. There is clear improvement in service delivery to the local communities through strong engagement, clearly measured change behaviours in bushfire preparedness activities and high levels of evaluation. This program has won national awards and an international award for community engagement and is well deserving of this award.” President IPAA, Tasmania.

Stop Arson Campaign

Crime Stoppers, Tasmania Fire Service and Tasmania Police have joined forces this summer to help combat the scourge of arson and its devastating effects on Tasmanian communities.

Arson is Australia’s most costly crime

- **Over 1/3 of fires** attended by the Tasmania Fire Service are deliberately lit
- It is a crime which puts people's lives at risk and can result in **death or injury**
- Arson damages **communities, businesses and the environment**
- **Bushfires** represent the highest mass risk to our communities
- Property and bushfire arson occurs **all year round**
- **Diverts emergency services** from other emergencies
- Bushfires **kill and injure** wildlife and domestic pets

Arson vigilance is a shared community responsibility

To find out more visit: www.crimestopperstas.com.au



WATCH THE '67 BUSHFIRE STORIES ON THE STORYMAP AT fire.tas.gov.au/brn/67fires



Tasmania Fire Service



1800 000 699

fire.tas.gov.au/brn

communityed@fire.tas.gov.au



Tasmania Fire Service



alert.tas.gov.au



Tasmanian Government