

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & EDUCATION > BUSHFIRE-READY NEIGHBOURHOODS NEWSLETTER



Issue 16 • Partnering-up Edition • September 2019

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

Welcome to edition 16 of the Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods newsletter.

This edition features:

- Introducing the new Northwest Community Development Officer

- Volunteer community engagement in practice
- Bushfires-Flood-Storm: Students actively participate in disaster resilience in their households, schools and communities
- A volunteering journey from the fireground to community engagement in bushfire preparedness
- Bushfire Season Outlook September to December 2019.

Introducing the new Northwest Community Development Officer

Brett Patterson has joined the Community Development and Education unit of TFS while Suzette Harrison is working in a different role in the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management. Brett and his family have relocated from Victoria to Tasmania so Brett can take up the Community Development Officer role in the northwest of the state.

Brett has worked in training and community development in Melbourne and overseas. For a number of years he lived in Southeast Asia working on community disaster risk reduction and school preparedness projects in the region. The aim was for the community to understand their disaster risk and take action to be prepared. The main focus was encouraging residents to 'Know the Risk', 'Know the Warning Signs', 'Prepare a Plan', and 'Prepare a Grab Bag'.

More recently Brett has worked with families in Victoria from multicultural backgrounds, gaining an understanding of the barriers to accessing services, and working with colleagues to develop strategies to reduce some of these barriers. Before that, Brett was delivering and pre-departure training to international aid volunteers to help them prepare for living and working overseas.

Brett will continue working with central north and northwest communities in fire safety and will be regularly



Brett Patterson

visiting round 3 Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods in Liffey Valley, Reedy Marsh, Granville Harbour, Marrawah, Squeaking Point and Zeehan. Welcome Brett to Tasmania and to the TFS Community Development team.

Peter Middleton, Coordinator Community Development



Check out the TFS Community Engagement Facebook Group, on Facebook search: 'TFS Community Engagement'



Tasmania Fire Service

fire.tas.gov.au/brn



TFS volunteers Kayla, Steve, Tami and Kevin were part of the TFS community engagement team at AGFEST

Volunteer community engagement in practice

Community engagement about fire safety is fundamental to the success of minimising bushfire risk in Tasmanian communities. Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods is a dedicated community engagement program that is partnering with TFS volunteer fire brigades and 'at risk' communities to achieve positive outcomes. Volunteer community engagement has always been seen as an important component of bushfire safety alongside firefighting. Together, they assist with achieving successful outcomes, as seen across Tasmania during the 2019 bushfires.

Kelso Fire Brigade Chief, Steve Masters, recently reported that in the 2018-2019 fire season there was a 50% reduction in small fire calls in the area. This outcome reflects the Kelso Brigade's community engagement efforts with local residents on fire safety. Steve and the brigade have carried on the Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods program in their area and have conducted successful community engagement and education activities with residents on the safe use of fire, bushfire preparedness and planning.

Steve and the brigade at Kelso are a great example of how community engagement can reduce the workload for volunteers, add to fire safety and help the community work together to reduce their bushfire risk.

Kelso Brigade members have embraced the skills of community engagement with Steve and 2nd Officer Kevin Cleaver providing valuable assistance at the Tasmania Fire



AGFEST and the TFS volunteer community engagement team members Tami, Kayla, Cherrie, Dave and Alicia

Service's fire safety display at the 2019 AGFEST. They worked alongside TFS staff and several other volunteers demonstrating their engagement skills with a large audience that was keen to hear from them.

Beaconsfield Fire Brigade members Tami Long and Kayla Richards have accessed opportunities to enhance their community engagement skills. Tami and Kayla attended AGFEST for three days and quickly settled into the role.

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Volunteer community engagement in practice

They were supported by Simon from St Patricks River Brigade, Alicia and Bronwyn from Evandale, David from Frankford/Birralee, Jeff from Lilydale and Cherrie from Hadsphen. These volunteers provided fire safety information to the public and gained community engagement experience. Over 800 people were engaged at the TFS stand at AGFEST this year, triple the previous year's attendance. This was made possible due to the outstanding work of these TFS community engagement volunteers helping out over the few days.

Tami and Kayla have continued their work in community engagement in their community by hosting an Open Day at Beaconsfield Fire Station. They also attended this year's Emergency Services Conference as engagement volunteers, working with the community development staff to talk to attendees about the volunteer community engagement role. More recently, they attended a Family Fun Day hosted by Flinders Island Aboriginal Association Inc. (FIAAI) at Kings Meadows YMCA. They spent the day talking with families about home fire safety and the importance of smoke alarms in bedrooms.

This year, I have spent many days working with community engagement volunteers from across the northern region.



TFS volunteer community engagement team member Simon providing safety information

The skill level, enthusiasm, dedication and knowledge displayed by everyone has been reassuring and exciting to experience. It reinforces our belief that our TFS volunteers continue to display high standards in the work they do in protecting communities.



Tami and Kayla from Beaconsfield Brigade hard at work with the community at the recent FIAAI Family Fun Day



David Cleaver, Community Development Officer North



The enjoyment of being a volunteer community engagement officer

In 2018 I became a member of the Beaconsfield Fire Brigade. In this time I have enjoyed being a part of a great team and community, and acquired many new skills.

In March, with the help of other members and the guidance of Community Development Officer David Cleaver we organised a very successful Open Day at the Beaconsfield Fire Station. This resulted in increased community awareness of fire safety and raised interest in volunteering with the brigade.

After enjoying the contact with the community at the Open Day, Kayla Richards, Nathan Hodge and I attended a community market at Sidmouth where we talked to families about home fire safety and bushfire preparedness. During the day we ran games, competitions and a treasure hunt for the children, and we received very positive feedback from the community.

Our interest in community engagement was now ignited, so we took up the offer to volunteer at the at this year's AGFEST TFS fire safety display to see how things were done and what else we could learn. I enjoyed my time at AGFEST and learnt new skills and methods. Most importantly, we learnt that it is all about how to approach people, know what to say and how to answer their questions so they understand.

We have attended several events as part of the Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods program and we will be attending the upcoming Community Engagement Volunteers workshop to further develop our skills.



The best thing about being part of the Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods program is learning about community education and engagement, taking what I learn back to my brigade and encouraging my brigade to become more involved in the community.

I would like to thank Todd Russell, the Brigade Chief of the Beaconsfield Fire Brigade, and David Cleaver. I recommend anyone interested in community engagement to get in touch with the TFS community development staff to find out more.

*Tami Long, Firefighter & Community Engagement Officer
Beaconsfield Fire Brigade*

Property preparedness videos

Now is the time to be preparing your property for the upcoming bushfire danger period. The BRN website has a series of video guides on the eight aspects of property preparedness. www.fire.tas.gov.au/brn



Bushfires-Flood-Storm: Students actively participate in disaster resilience in their households, schools and communities

Natural hazards, such as storms, floods, and bushfires, are common in Tasmania and can result in widespread damage and disruption. Resilient communities understand their risk and are well prepared to reduce the impact of these local hazards. The term ‘natural disaster’ suggests that disasters are inevitable and that there is little that can be done to reduce their impact. Disaster resilience education supports learning about how disasters can be prevented. Disaster resilient communities not only understand their local hazards, but they take action to reduce the impact of these hazards. They follow safety advice and warnings and respond safely during an emergency.

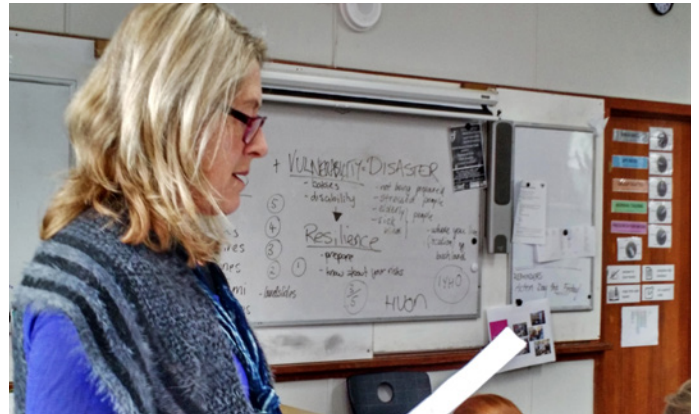
A new Tasmania disaster resilience education resource will enable children and young people to actively participate in the disaster resilience of their households, schools and communities.

Collaborations with the TFS Community Development and Education unit and the Bushfire Risk unit, the State Emergency Service, Tasmania Department of Education staff, the Department of Premier and Cabinet, municipal emergency management staff, researchers on child-centred risk reduction, teachers, students and parents were critical to the development and testing of the new Disaster Resilience Education Tasmania (DRET) resource which will be available at www.disasterresiliencetas.com.au

Children and young people are frequently overlooked when it comes to disaster resilience, but research shows that if they are provided with the necessary guidance and support, they can increase their own safety and the safety of others. Tasmania’s new disaster education resource, DRET, aims to teach children and young people the fundamentals of disaster resilience and encourage their participation in the development of safer communities in Tasmania.

DRET is a web-based teacher delivery package and has been designed so that educators have all the information, resources, activities and assessment in one place. It therefore enables teachers to deliver the DRET unit confidently for the best possible learning experience for their students.

The five lessons of the DRET unit link to a number of Australian Curriculum subjects for students in grades five to eight. In the five lessons, students and educators explore



Teacher, Janet Harrington, and 24 students in a Year 7 class at Huonville High School were a case study group during the consultation phase of the resources development



Students of Year 5/6 class at Leighlands Christian school in Ulverstone were one of five schools testing DRET and providing feedback for the final version

local natural hazards and the occurrence of disasters in Tasmania. The five lessons are 1. What is disaster resilience? 2. Our local hazards, 3. Disaster risk and vulnerability, 4. Becoming disaster resilient, and 5. Taking action.

Students who complete the DRET will understand what being disaster resilient means for individuals and communities, they will be able to identify local natural hazards and they will begin to understand key concepts of prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.

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Bushfires-Flood-Storm: Students actively participate in disaster resilience in their households, schools and communities



DRET online teacher delivery resource homepage image (www.disasterresiliencetas.com.au)

DRET helps them understand how mitigation, planning and emergency drills can help them be safer in a disaster emergency, and they learn where to find Tasmanian emergency information to help them respond safely to floods, storms and bushfires impacting their local community.

The DRET teacher delivery resource, www.disasterresiliencetas.com.au, will be launched in October 2019 on the International Day of Disaster

Reduction. We expect educators will begin delivering the disaster resilience education lessons from term one in 2020.

TFS acknowledges Victoria CFA and SES as the original developers of the disaster resilience education resource from which DRET has been adapted. For more information on the Victorian Curriculum Natural Hazard Resilience Package head to disasterresilience.com.au/

Lesley King, Project Officer, Disaster Resilient Schools



TasFire

EQUIPMENT

Is your business or home safe from bushfire?

We have a range of products to help protect you and your home from the threat of bushfires.

- Fire extinguishers
- Firefighting pumps and hoses
- Personal protective equipment
- Knapsacks and drip torches
- And more.

Check out our products online at tasfireequipment.com.au or visit one of our stores. Hobart, Youngtown or Burnie 1300 008 337

A volunteering journey from the fireground to community engagement in bushfire preparedness

I have been an accredited bushfire hazard practitioner since the beginning of the building for bushfire compliance requirements in 2012. Before that I worked as a building designer for 20 years. I joined the Grove Volunteer Fire Brigade shortly after starting my training as a bushfire hazard practitioner. I joined up because I wanted to gain a greater appreciation of fire behaviour and a better understanding of the resources used to fight fire. I also joined because I wanted to give back to my local community and share the knowledge I have learned as a bushfire hazard practitioner.

I am not as young or strong as I used to be, and I no longer have the stamina to spend an entire shift on the fireground lugging hoses around. However, I still want to be an active TFS volunteer and be involved in protecting life and property from the risks associated with bushfire. Recently I became more involved in community engagement and since October 2018 I have assisted in several Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods community engagement activities. These have included property preparation sessions, bushfire-ready sessions and local community expos. I really enjoy being involved in community engagement and I come away from each event feeling that I have made a difference.

I am passionate about empowering individuals and community groups to take responsibility for their bushfire safety by putting preventative measures in place. I believe that through education, residents can make informed decisions about protecting their property and their lives.

Unfortunately, some residents are under the misguided impression that there will always be adequate resources that will arrive in time to protect them if they are threatened by bushfire. Through engagement we can educate residents on the importance of taking responsibility for reducing their bushfire risk on their own property and we can encourage community members to work together to reduce bushfire risk at a local level.

I think it is important to emphasise the message of the resident's responsibility to reduce the fuel loads on their property. Doing this decreases the risk of fire spreading to neighbouring properties and increases the chance of a fire being contained before it gets out of control.

Recently I directed two property preparedness sessions in Mountain River and Crabtree. It was very rewarding to provide guidance to the community members who



Suzie leads a discussion on hazard management on properties in Mountain River workshop

attended the sessions. They were eager to learn how to make their properties more defensible. I met some lovely people at both the sessions who were genuinely concerned about bushfire risk and wanted to know how to make improvements. I also noticed some added benefits. The property preparation sessions gave residents an opportunity to meet their neighbours and recognise that their bushfire preparedness benefits the broader community.

I think the most important aspect to educate people about at property workshops is defensible space. It doesn't matter how fire-resistant a building is or how much firefighting water is available; if there is no defensible space and the surrounding vegetation is being compromised then the integrity of the building is weakened. This makes it too difficult to defend the building and it will put their family's lives and the lives of the firefighters at risk. Another important factor shared in these sessions is that residents can help to keep firefighters safe at their property by providing adequate space for emergency vehicles, a good water supply, and of course defensible space.

When it comes to some tips and tricks to community engagement, I have learnt to make my presentations as engaging as possible. I use real life examples and experiences to reinforce the information so that it is relatable and personal.

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A volunteering journey from the fireground to community engagement in bushfire preparedness

One of the most difficult things is to get people to commit to using their property for a preparation session or to attend a bushfire-ready session. So, if someone shows interest, make sure that you follow up with them and hopefully get them to commit to a date and time. Using local noticeboards, letterbox drops and social media are effective ways to promote upcoming events. Reinforcing these written notifications using word of mouth can help promote events. For example, encourage interested community members and local brigade members to spread the word.

In my experience, community members are far more aware of the risks nowadays, they are keen to learn about

bushfire prevention measures and they want to be active in reducing their risk. Volunteer brigades should embrace the opportunity to harness this community eagerness and educate residents on how best to protect themselves and their properties. Understanding bushfire risk and taking steps to reduce risks benefits the entire community.

The TFS Community Development & Education unit is a great bunch and they are very supportive. They have lots of resources they can provide to volunteers to help make community engagement activities a success.

Suzie Gifford, Volunteer of the Grove Fire Brigade.

Bushfire Season Outlook September to December 2019

The seasonal bushfire outlook for the period from September to the end of December 2019 was launched recently at the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council's (AFAC) annual conference in Melbourne.

The outlook for Tasmania is:

“for the early part of Tasmania’s fire season, most of the state has normal fire potential. The western half of the state is wet, but the east is drier than normal, especially between the Forestier Peninsula and Scamander. This eastern dry area has above normal fire potential. Without significant rain in the coming months, this area will expand. As in recent years, increased fire activity is likely in this dry strip before December and will require considerable response efforts. Eastern peat soils will be susceptible to fire and will burn to depth, with traditionally wet or damp gullies already dry. The fire season in the remainder of the state will commence more normally, in late spring or early summer, and provide good conditions for planned burning” (BNHCRC 2019).

The message is clear, now is the time to prepare.

Peter Middleton, Coordinator Community Development

AUSTRALIAN SEASONAL BUSHFIRE OUTLOOK: AUGUST 2019

OVERVIEW

The 2019/20 fire season has the potential to be an active season across Australia, following on from a very warm and dry start to the year. Due to these conditions, the east coast of Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania, as well as parts of southern Western Australia and South Australia, face above normal fire potential.

This August 2019 Australian Seasonal Bushfire Outlook covers all states and territories. It provides information to assist fire authorities in making strategic decisions such as resource planning and prescribed fire management to reduce the negative impacts of bushfire.

Bushfire potential depends on many factors. The volume, location and timing of rainfall are critically important when estimating vegetation (fuel) volumes and growth. The climate outlook for the next few months is also a crucial factor. Of particular interest are the future tendencies of Pacific sea surface temperature associated with the El Niño-Southern Oscillation, as well as the Indian Ocean Dipole, major climate drivers over Australia. Other less quantifiable factors, such as the distribution and readiness of firefighting resources, are also considered.

The Australian Seasonal Bushfire Outlook: August 2019 is developed by the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC, AFAC, the Bureau of Meteorology, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, the New South Wales Rural Fire Service, ACT Emergency Services Agency, ACT Parks and Conservation Service, Country Fire Authority, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning Victoria, Tasmania Fire Service, Country Fire Service, Department of Fire and Emergency Services and Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions Western Australia, and Bushfires NT.

RECENT CONDITIONS

Seasonal fire conditions are a function of fuel amount and state, and seasonal

Above normal fire potential
Normal fire potential

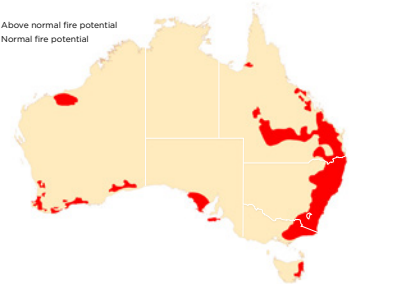


Figure 1: AUSTRALIAN SEASONAL BUSHFIRE OUTLOOK AUGUST 2019. AREAS ARE BASED ON THE INTERIM BIOGEOGRAPHIC REGIONALISATION FOR AUSTRALIA AND OTHER GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES.

weather conditions. The year to date has been unusually warm and dry for large parts of Australia. For January to July, rainfall has been below to very much below average over much of Australia (Figure 2, page 2). It has been the fifth-driest start to the year on record, and the driest since 1970. This is especially the case over the southern half of the country, which has experienced the driest January to July on record (January to July 1902 is the second driest). Areas of above average rainfall are largely confined to central Queensland, extending to the coast.

Some areas, such as New South Wales into south eastern Queensland, are into their third year of dry conditions. It will take a number of months of above average rainfall to remove the deficiencies which are in place, meaning that general landscape dryness is likely to persist for many areas.

The warming trend means that above average temperatures now tend to occur in most years, and 2019 has followed this pattern. Across Australia, temperatures for

January to July have been very much warmer than average (2nd warmest for this period on record, 1.46°C above the 1961-1990 average), with daytime temperatures the warmest on record (1.85°C above the 1961-1990 average, see Figure 3, page 2). Summer 2018/19 was exceptionally warm (2.14°C above average, over 0.8°C greater than the previous warmest summer on record). These high temperatures add to the impact of reduced rainfall, and increase evaporation, further drying the landscape and vegetation.

As might be expected given the broad climatic factors, an early start to the fire season has been declared in many areas across eastern Australia. The dry landscape means that any warm and windy conditions are likely to see elevated fire risk. Countering the climate signal, poor growth of grass and annual plants means that vegetation loads are reduced in drought affected areas.

Fire season severity is increasing across southern Australia as measured by annual (July to June) indices of the Forest Fire

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