

# COMMUNITY EDUCATION > BUSHFIRE READY NEWSLETTER



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## BRN Round 2 communities commencing – 2016 to 2018

Photo: Peter Middleton,  
Tasmania Fire Service

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

Welcome to edition number 6 of the Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods newsletter.

The theme for this edition is stories from Round 1 of Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods.

- BRN Round 2 communities commencing – 2016 to 2018
- Take advantage of expert advice for your own peace of mind
- BRN in the North/North West
- A golden corner of Tasmania where golden things have happened
- Stronger working relationships with Community Engagement Officer role
- Tasmanian floods & preparedness across all hazards

For more information on how to contact the team visit [www.fire.tas.gov.au/brn](http://www.fire.tas.gov.au/brn)

Following the success that Round 1 of the Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods program has had with communities across Tasmania, the BRN team is now embarking on Round 2.

Results collected of targeted community engagement activities for Round 1 of the BRN program 2014-16:

- A total of 3756 people have participated in targeted BRN community engagement activities from September 2014 to April 2016
- Over 50 communities have taken part since BRN began in 2009
- The busiest time of year for BRN community engagement activity is August to December – before the traditional peak of the bushfire season
- Some other key BRN activities have included: Tourism Visitor Information Network project; 1967 Bushfires – Share your Story project; development of educational resources; and community liaison during the bushfire season.

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Tasmania Fire Service

[www.fire.tas.gov.au/brn](http://www.fire.tas.gov.au/brn)

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- Round 2 will include targeted engagement with 22 Tasmanian communities/areas:

South	North	North West
Nicholls Rivulet	Cape Barren Island	Squeaking Point
Campania/Native Corners	Upper Scamander	Sisters Beach
Dolphin Sands	Stieglitz	West Coast (focus on Zeehan)
Sandford/South Arm	Fingal	Cowrie Point to Rocky Cape area
Magra	Derby	King Island
New Norfolk area	Bellingham	
Maydena	Greens Beach/Kelso	
Tasman Peninsula – Eaglehawk Neck; Koonya; Nubeena & Taranna	Jackeys Marsh	
	Rowella/Kayena/Sidmouth	

Peter Middleton, Community Development Coordinator, Tasmania Fire Service

## Take advantage of expert advice for your own peace of mind



Photo: Lesley King, Tasmania Fire Service

Chair of the Hobart Fire Management Area Committee, Axel Von Krusenstierna, addresses the group of neighbours at the Leslie Vale property assessment workshop in 2015.

The Kingborough areas of Leslie Vale and Longley/Lower Longley were identified as being high bushfire risk in Round 1 selection of the BRN program. These communities sit on the southern foothills of Mount Wellington and have rural/semi-rural steep sloping terrain with approximately 272 families living on acreage properties, many having large animals such as llamas, horses and livestock. There are numerous no through roads and many are single lane and unsealed.

The program's engagement approach was to help people to understand how their geographic location, weather, house/property building materials and orientation, garden features/landscaping, bushfire history, family circumstances, animal management and level of bushfire preparedness all contribute towards their level of bushfire risk.

As the Community Development Officer in the South, I engaged local community members in a range of activities and workshops to enable them and their families to be more bushfire prepared. A series of engagement for 2 years included involvement of the local volunteer fire brigades and other key stakeholders, providing localised bushfire behaviour and response information in bushfire survival plan workshops, property assessment field days, brigade station open day, chats at the local pub and an outdoor event at the park, to name a few.

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Here, two community members, of Leslie Vale and Lower Longley, share with you their BRN experiences and how it has benefited their families to be better prepared for the bushfire season.

*Lesley King, Community Development Officer (South), Tasmania Fire Service*

*A stand-out event was a neighbourhood property assessment workshop. As a group we visited 2 properties to compare and contrast various elements. The most valuable outcome of the day was a precise understanding of how 'ready and prepared' each individual property actually was. Most of us had read the literature from the Tasmania Fire Service and had worked to clear our land, prepare our equipment and plans, set up our watering systems and so on. Now we had the expertise of Tasmania Fire Service staff and our local fire brigade on site to talk about a range of risks and hazards. Most interesting was learning from the local firefighters what they do in emergency response when a fire happens in the area.*

*We were advised of which potential hazards we needed to remove and were also congratulated upon the work we had done! While improving our understanding of bushfire risk we also felt more comfortable and confident through being properly informed.*

*I highly recommend attending a property assessment day if you have the chance. Get to know your local brigade and take advantage of their expert advice for your own peace of mind.*

*Janet Harrington, Leslie Vale*



Photo: Lesley King, Tasmania Fire Service

*Residents and Sandfly Brigade Chief Scott Fairbrother have a chat about mobile firefighting equipment in Lower Longley 2015.*

*In Lower Longley over twelve months my partner and I participated in seven workshops on bushfire preparedness. We were loaded with information, we had talked between ourselves about what we might do and use of our current equipment.*

*We ended up committing 2 months to establishing our plan, preparing equipment and our property. Part of our planning was assessing the property for what we needed to do. This ranged from reorganising shed contents and storing valuable items in the 'safest' sheds, building modifications such as ember proofing, removing fibreglass skylights, installing downpipe valves and installing a mobile water firefighting system.*

*We bought some large wheelie bins and made up evacuation kits. These contain items deemed necessary to be able to support and care for the dogs, horses and livestock. They include first aid materials, fencing materials and tools for establishing temporary electric enclosures using solar powered energiser, emergency feed sufficient for a week and equipment for watering stock.*

*Our own evacuation kits include a document folio containing all of our various insurance policies, all documentation associated with ownership and veterinary history of our animals, and other important legal documents. With this we have also stored our "stay and defend" equipment including a water sprayer unit for use in the roof cavity, two full sets of personal protective equipment/clothing and a hand/battery powered torch and radio.*

*We then set to test and trial our preparations which included loading the evacuation supplies into the horse float, connecting and running the generator, connecting and running the water pump with the two fire hoses, including checking their reach up both sides of the house and down to the stables.*

*The peace of mind from doing all of the above is significant. We have recently experienced two fires that threatened our property and in both cases we were able to run through our decision tree and respond in a calm and rational manner.*

*I understand how hard it can be to mobilise yourself to physically prepare for an emergency situation. However, it is something you should do. We each have to take responsibility for our own safety and that of others for whom we are responsible. I urge you all to make your preparations.*

*Kirsten Kuns, Lower Longley*



# A golden corner of Tasmania where golden things have happened

During late 2014, Suzette Harrison (Community Development Officer – North West/North) visited our little corner of the world at Golden Valley, just outside Deloraine. Little did we realise that this was going to be quite a turning point for our community.

Being relatively new to Golden Valley and living in a country bush setting, I wanted to learn everything I could about bushfire readiness. The Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods program was very informative and certainly set the scene for what I needed to do to prepare our property for the fire season.

In June 2015, we were asked by Suzette if anyone would put their hands up to help put together a 'phone tree' for the community of Golden Valley. Three of us were keen to help, so we had our first meeting to put our ideas down on how we were going to do it, and one of our local volunteer firefighters supplied maps so we could work out the areas to include in the phone tree.

We set out into our respective neighbourhoods and began to doorknock over 100 homes to collect the information we needed for the phone tree. We had some brainstorming sessions to try and work out how to pull it all together. I put all the information into a database, ran it through 'mind mapping' software, and came up with what we believed was going to be a simple and efficient way to cover so many residents effectively.

Suzette developed a 'phone tree prompt' card with the key information the caller needed to pass on for continuity and speed. Our phone tree system has an 'Activator' who contacts 'Group Leaders' who then contact 'Team Leaders' who then contact residents. For complete

details and information about how we set it all up, see our webpage at [www.ourphonetree.com](http://www.ourphonetree.com)

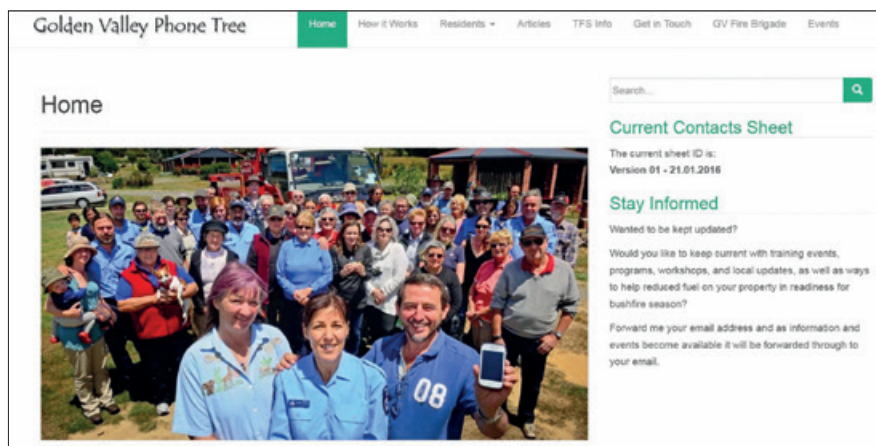
In early December, we conducted our first trial run of the phone tree. We managed to contact over 80% of residents within 35 minutes. We were amazed at just how well it went. There were a few small areas that needed polishing, but overall... what a great first result!

Then we launched our Community Phone Tree and Suzette organised information packs for all the residents. In early January, we were about halfway through distributing the info packs when we were suddenly informed of the bushfires that began at Lake Mackenzie. Before we knew it, we were on high alert. I then received a call that there was a fire nearby. I contacted TFS to confirm if it was registered. At that point I immediately activated our phone tree.

Over the following weeks we had community debriefs about the fires. The feedback regarding the phone tree was amazing. Everything was so positive – people felt prepared, ready and safe, knowing that we had something like this in place. Since that time we have had more residents sign up and become part of the phone tree.

As a community we are looking out for each other, but I feel it has also brought us closer together too. After experiencing what we went through, I encourage communities to put together a phone tree. It does take a bit of work, but the benefits certainly outweigh the effort. For any other community looking to develop their own, please use any and all information from the website to help you.

Tony Deckers – Golden Valley – [www.ourphonetree.com](http://www.ourphonetree.com)



Excerpt from Golden Valley community Phone Tree website



Photo: Suzette Harrison, Tasmania Fire Service



# Stronger working relationships with Community Engagement Officer role

Falmouth Fire Brigade, located on the East Coast of Tasmania, has recently passed their 20 year milestone. They have also passed a few other milestones in recent times.

Falmouth and Four Mile Communities were involved in Round 1 of Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods with ongoing work in the community to build resilience against bushfire.

Much of the ongoing work is being carried out by Falmouth Brigade's Volunteer Community Engagement Officer, Lou Keady. With support from Brigade Chief Shannon Hibbard, Lou is well placed within community circles to build strong working relationships between the Brigade, community and TFS as she is well known for her many other community roles. Falmouth Brigade is always looking at new ways to involve the community, and this is a great step in that direction.

Volunteer Community Engagement Officer positions are a hugely valuable asset to brigades. Lou doesn't participate in normal brigade emergency operations, which means she is free to concentrate on community work, leaving other members free to focus on their roles within the Brigade.

Targeted recruiting has been recognised as beneficial within TFS as the search for volunteers gets harder as communities change and adapt to new challenges.

Volunteer community engagement is an effective way for brigades, already pressed for time, to interact with community members in preparedness, around the home and community.

With support from Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods staff, brigades who recruit Volunteer Community Engagement Officers can continue to build resilience within their communities to better defend against bushfire and other emergencies.

Many brigades have members who choose to take on this role following years of operational work; they may want to remain involved in the brigade but no longer want to attend emergency calls. If your brigade is interested in recruiting a dedicated Volunteer Community Engagement Officer, we are happy to discuss the process with you.

*David Cleaver, Community Development Officer (North), Tasmania Fire Service*



*All photos: David Cleaver, Tasmania Fire Service*



# BRN in the North/ North West

Round 1 of the BRN program across the North/North West region has come to a close. Over the two year period, Suzette Harrison (Community Development Officer – North West/North) has engaged with Sisters Beach/Rocky Cape area, Strahan, Weegena, Golden Valley and Jackeys Marsh.

Community forums were held across each area and attendance varied. The aim of the forums was to begin with the message, 'We all play a part'. Shared responsibility was the platform on which all other activities occurred and involved key stakeholders who came along to talk to the broader community about what they are doing in the bushfire risk management area. These stakeholders included, but were not limited to: TFS District Officers, Field Officers, TasFire Equipment, Department of Primary Industry Parks, Water and the Environment Vet Officers, regional Council representatives, Red Cross Emergency Services Coordinator and more.

Some of my highlights working with these communities range from: meeting a couple where one person had a significant disability and assisting them to develop their Leave Early Plan and evacuation kit; supporting Jackeys Marsh in pre-season mitigation activities; Weegena's Bushfire Survival Planning workshop; communicating the Strahan's Community Protection Plan; and the development of the Sisters Beach/Banksia Park Phone Tree and the Golden Valley Phone Tree.

It is so encouraging to know that, of the 5 areas that I worked with, 4 of these communities either have or are working to complete a phone tree system to support their ability to be warned early.

I have learnt just as much from the communities I have engaged with as I hope they have from me, and I am looking forward to getting to know all new communities as Round 2 begins.

*Suzette Harrison, Community Development Officer (North West/North), Tasmania Fire Service*



Photo: Department of Police, Fire & Emergency Management

## Tasmanian floods & preparedness across all hazards

*The flooding rains that have drenched eastern Australia have tragically left several people dead and several more missing in New South Wales and Tasmania. This is an all-too-common story – flooding rains are a major cause of deaths around the globe.*

Since 1994, Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC has studied the trends and causes of deaths due to natural disasters. Recent research into flood fatalities in Australia from 1900 to 2015 is revealing some important insights.

A report by Dr Katharine Haynes published in 2016 argues that many of these deaths are avoidable in a paper titled: 'An analysis of human fatalities from floods in Australia 1900 to 2015'. See here to read the article: <http://theconversation.com/flood-deaths-are-avoidable-dont-go-in-the-water-60615>

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