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Issue 1- December 22 2014

Welcome to the first Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods (BRN) newsletter.

2014 has seen the launch of the Tasmania Fire Service Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods program.

Helping Tasmanian communities to work together to prepare for bushfires.

In this edition:

- [Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods is helping Tasmanian communities work together to prepare for bushfires](#)
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Program staff include:

- Peter Middleton- Community Development Coordinator
- Suzette Harrison- North West Community Development Officer
- Lesley King- Southern Community Development Officer
- David Cleaver- Northern Community Development Officer

For more information on how to contact the team [click here](#).



Tasmanian communities to work together to prepare for bushfires

A targeted community development program.

Some of the community bushfire activities include:

- information sessions;
- community forums;
- workshops;
- field days;
- bushfire rehearsals;
- women's programs;
- bushfire ready neighbourhood groups;
- and property assessments.

Building on a successful community development pilot 2009-2013, the program focuses on building a shared responsibility approach to bushfire preparedness through recognising that individuals, communities and the Tasmania Fire Service all play a part.



The program aim is to build resilience and capacity in bushfire prevention and preparedness in Tasmanian communities at risk to bushfire through a sustainable community development approach.

For further information regarding the evidence base and research guiding the programs work please click [here](#).

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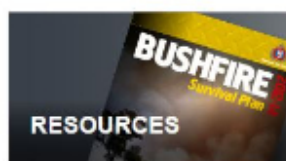


EVENTS

Bushfire Survival Plan Workshop: Lower Longley & surrounding areas

December 20th, 2.00pm
Enquires to:
Lesley.King@fire.tas.gov.au or 1800 000 699

[Read more>](#)



RESOURCES

Publications and Links

For a full range of fire safety [publications](#) that are prepared by Tasmania Fire Service and other organisations as well as [links to further information](#) on other websites.

[Read more>](#)



ALERTS

Bushfire & emergency notifications

Follow this link to see [current fires](#) and their status.

For other [emergency incidents](#) click here >>

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New BRN Program Section of TFS Website Goes Live

Visit the new section of the TFS website by clicking here-

www.bushfirereadyneighbourhoods.tas.gov.au

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The purpose of this section of the TFS website is to provide up to date information about the program and in particular:

- About us- what is the BRN program? What is the research that is guiding our work?
Useful links;
- News- program specific and bushfire education news;
- Safety information- including links to the Tasmania Fire Service website and Community Protection Planning;
- Community events- program events- what's happening; what activities does the program offer; what are the priority communities for the program;
- Publications and resources;
- Contact us- Community Development Team and TFS regional offices; feedback.

If your community is conducting bushfire education activities let us know as we would like to help promote through the TFS website.

Jump online and have a look and let us know what you think.



Research helps TFS win 2014 State and National Resilient Australia Award

Pictured above left to right: Dr Mai Frandsen- University of Tasmania; Sandra Barber & Peter Middleton- TFS Community Education

The Tasmania Fire Service has recently been awarded the State and National Resilient Australia Award for their Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods program, backed by CRC research. The national award builds on a State Resilient Australia Award that was presented in September.

The Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods program focuses on building a shared responsibility approach to bushfire preparedness. It is conducted by TFS, and developed in collaboration with the University of Tasmania and the Bushfire CRC.

The Resilient Australia Awards, coordinated nationally by the Attorney-General's Department, recognise best practice initiatives that build disaster resilience in Australia. Representatives from TFS and the University of Tasmania accepted the overall award for a State/Territory program from Federal Minister for Justice, Hon. Michael Keenan.

TFS Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods program coordinator Peter Middleton said "this is national recognition of an action research project that is now driving the TFS program and leading the way nationally in community engagement for bushfire".

"The program is now operating in many parts of the state and takes a community development approach to building community capacity for bushfire prevention and preparedness.

"The program's vision is that we all play a part in being bushfire-ready individuals; TFS and communities through sharing the responsibility and taking ownership of the bushfire risk at all levels.

"The success of the pilot would not have been possible without a collaborative partnership between TFS and UTAS which commenced in 2009. This collaboration and pilot program was published as part of Dr Mai Frandsen's doctoral research thesis entitled Promoting Community Bushfire Preparedness- Bridging the Theory- Practice Divide" said Mr Middleton.

<http://www.bnhcrc.com.au/news/2014/research-helps-tfs-win-national-award>

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Focus on the North and North West

The BRN roll out has begun in Golden Valley, Jackeys Marsh, Weegen, Strahan and Sisters Beach. Key stakeholders have been identified and met with, all brigades have had presentations on the BRNs process in the area they respond to and Community Forums have been completed.

A community under the spot light – Sisters Beach'

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National Park, with a population of 439 as identified in the 2011 census.

Sisters Beach is known for its beautiful beach, the bushy environment that has native plants such as the Patterson's Spider Orchid and the rare Saw Tooth Banksia (*Banksia Serrata*) which is only known to occur naturally in Sisters Beach, Dip Road and the Rocky Cape National Park, and has a history that highlights 8,000 years of Aboriginal heritage involving the Raverloihenna people. Sisters Beach has full time residential home owners, holiday shacks and a cohort of tourists that visit the region staying in local accommodation enjoying the summer treats of the area.

The Sisters Beach area has small pockets of residential properties on the access road in, including Banksia Park and Lake Llewellyn. The lush bush environment and the seaside lifestyle are drawcards for the community enjoying the combination of a sea change and tree change combined.

The Sisters Beach community are very passionate about their patch but also understand some of the challenges and risks they live with including; one access road in and out, a lack of mobile phone access in certain spots in the town, and the ongoing requirements of preparing for bushfire in a stunningly beautiful heavily vegetated environment.

The Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods program has begun in this area and so far the Community Development Officer has established connections with people in the area, has met with the local Fire Brigade to discuss involvement and a Community Forum has taken place involving key stakeholders to discuss how we can 'all play a part' in the shared responsibility of living in a high risk environment. The more a community can be informed, the better prepared they can be and consequently develop more resilience to bush fire as a part of living in Tasmania's natural environment.

Volunteer Community Engagement Officer

For many years TFS has been providing high quality bushfire information, which has led to an increase in awareness of bushfire risk and intention to take appropriate action. However, there are still many households in Tasmania that are not prepared for bushfire. Research conducted by the Bushfire CRC has shown that simply giving or distributing information about what to do is not enough for everyone in the community to prepare for hazards, particularly low frequency hazards such as bushfires.

A feature of the Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods program is to increase the capacity of some members of our career and volunteer brigades to work with their communities to increase their resilience.

Following the roll out of the TFS Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods program we have upgraded the position description for a volunteer role to assist, engage and work with

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communities by making positions available for those who wish to be TFS members within a volunteer fire brigade but are not interested in firefighting, feel like a change or want to contribute to their community in an alternative way.

A suitable person would be required to undertake a minimum training level of Brigade Induction with remaining firefighting training being optional unless the member wishes to undertake operational roles also. Follow up training in community development is planned. A Volunteer Community Engagement Officer will hold normal membership of the brigade and may be operational or non-operational within the brigade.

Community development is a successful and cost-effective approach for changing behaviour, by accessing existing community networks and resources and supporting communities to develop specific local strategies. This approach is supported by national and international research from other areas including health promotion and adult education.

Some of the bushfire preparedness activities may include community forums, workshops, field days, bushfire rehearsals, women's programs, Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhood groups, and property assessments.

For further information regarding this exciting role, please contact a member of the Community Development Team by [clicking here](#).



Shared Responsibility

The 2009 Victoria Bushfires Royal commission declared that State Government, local governments, emergency and land management agencies, communities and individuals share a responsibility for bushfire awareness and safety.

At a local level this means residents living in bushfire-prone areas need to take the initiative in learning about, preparing for and responding to bushfires. They must update and refresh their bushfire knowledge regularly, to make sure they are as well prepared as possible during each bushfire season. As an example, a group of residents in Neika, south of Hobart, are doing just that.

This group has successfully met for the past 15 years, all thanks to the commitment of one

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Twenty two residents of a densely forested narrow no-through road also benefit by having a local volunteer fire brigade member, who lives on their street, assist them with bushfire survival information such as defensible zones around dwellings and the correct water tank fittings for brigade truck's access.

Each year a focus is on new information, equipment and technology available for bushfire mitigation and survival preparations. Apart from getting together for a social chit-chat and checking all contact details on the register are correct, this year's annual pre-season meeting will focus on social media, specifically how to access and use the Tasmania Fire Service Facebook page and smart phone apps to keep up to date with bushfire warnings and alerts in the area. A Community Development Officer from the Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods program attended the meeting to chat with residents and assist with information.

This Neika residents' bushfire group is just one of many local grass-roots solutions that demonstrate sharing responsibility with others enables individuals to have a better chance to learn about, prepare for and respond to bushfires.

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