



## Dolphin Sands Community Association

### Fire Expo

Sunday, January 14, 2024

**David Galloway**, DSCA President, welcomed everyone and explained the purpose of the day was to ascertain how the community can better support fire-fighters in their role. We understand that fire is inevitable, but we want to minimise its effects so that we can enjoy this beautiful part of the world. David thanked everyone for attending.

**Steve Barrett** provided a tour of his property. When the Barretts moved to the area, they were determined to build a bushfire-safe house. They spent a lot of time planning the design, which made the building phase relatively easy.

Key features:

- Sprinklers protecting the north side and roof of the house, run by pumps with an independent power source - 14KW battery which can pump for ~15 hours.
- Pumps supplied by tanks & bore.
- Pumps can be operated manually or remotely from anywhere in the world via [Hydrawise](#).
- Rooftop planting of fire-resistant plants such as succulents.
- Sprinklers are only turned on when fire is reasonably close.
- All pipes underground
- Double-glazed windows
- Gravel area around dwelling, with green lawn to the north.
- Technology ~\$500; battery ~\$13000

Next, we toured **Gynes Isherwood's** property. Gynes recognises that no amount of preparation on his land will stop a fire. However, reducing fuel loads and creating 'insulated' pockets of vegetation helps to improve the defensibility of the property. He sees marram grass as his greatest enemy and is involved in an ongoing process of reducing and thinning out high-risk areas. He's encouraging fire-resistant plants such as pigface, club rush, rhagodia etc.

Key features:

- Cleared nature strip as first line of defence

- Cleared area either side of the driveway for additional defence and safer vehicular access or exit
- Sprinkler system circling shed and house connected to 20K litre tank, serviced by a spear. Aim is to reduce the risk of spot fires caused by embers.
- Individual sprinkler coverage is ~15m but wind direction could affect this significantly. Can turn off individual sprinklers (if time allows) to concentrate water resources on direction of fire front.
- Diesel pump with push button start & remote control, with its own specific solar panel to maintain battery charge. Can dispense 20K litres in 30 minutes.
- 10K litre tank and fire hose to protect west wing of the house, which is a significant risk
- Cleared corridors between coastal wattle along the western border
- Removal of truck loads of old, burnt tree timbers
- Garage – easily accessible laminated bushfire checklist, appropriate clothing including goggles and air filters purchased from TFS
- Pantry – bags prepared for immediate departure with toothbrush, passport etc.

**Mark Klop, Senior District Officer, East Coast District, Tasmania Fire Service**

- When replacing water tanks, use galvanised or steel tanks, not plastic. For existing plastic tanks, create a barrier, eg evergreen vine to provide shelter from radiant heat and embers. Barrier should not be in direct contact with the tank. Instead, leave a gap, eg 1-2m, between the barrier and the tank.
- During bushfire, embers hit buildings then drop down to form a bed of embers. So, it's best not to use flammable materials near buildings.
- Pine bark and other mulches smoulder for a long time after a run's been through. Need to be vigilant for a week or so after a fire.
- Cleating breaks in the vegetation stops the momentum and veracity of a fire.
- Isolated trees, eg gums, can act as ember barriers. However, it's vital to clear 'ladder fuels' – growth from ground to 2-3m up the tree.
- Sprinkler systems – need water supply to maintain sprinklers for a long time; it's important not to turn them on too early. Wobble heads with bigger droplets can be more effective, especially in windy conditions.
- Use fire-proof gutter guard.
- Re ember attack, consider the most fire prone areas, eg dog doors (metal is better).
- November bushfire: began on a Sunday afternoon. Fire-fighting aircraft are contracted from mid-December for 70 days. This period hadn't started during the last fire. So, TFS had to rely on resources from around the state. Aircraft have to be landed by last light (45-minute flight time from Hobart). On the Sunday afternoon when the fire began, there was insufficient time for aircraft to return to Hobart, get set up for fire fighting (with buckets etc), and then get to the fire.  
Fire investigation has been completed – started by use of power tools. Mark emphasised the need to be extremely vigilant when using any power tools outside, eg grinders, mowers, whipper snippers, and have a water source close by to extinguish any spot fires. It also helps to have a 'spotter'. You can also register your activity if you are doing major work outside. Ring 1800 000 699.

The [TFS website](#) has a wealth of useful information, such as community protection plans, bushfire plans etc. Website is being improved and the fire permit system is being updated.

Mark explained the difference between Nearby Safer Places and evacuation centres. Nearby Safer Places – are areas where you will be safe from fire. However, you are likely to be uncomfortable and will need to be self-sufficient – you won't get fed etc. TFS will try to ensure you are kept informed about the fire's movements. TFS will do their best to protect the area and get everybody out. ***There are no Nearby Safer Places in Dolphin Sands.***

Evacuation Centre – Swansea Town Hall – provides assistance eg cup of tea, food, somewhere to sleep. Council are working on improving their facilities so that they are ready for evacuees.

#### **Frank Bishop**, Facilitator, Red Hot Tips, TFS

- [Red Hot Tips](#) is a free service to rural landowners to assist with fuel reduction
- Aim is to provide a flexible one-stop shop to share knowledge and resources with landowners.
- Used to only provide service to large landowners but now supports people with 5-acre blocks or larger. Can also support groups of landowners collectively.
- Information about planned burns, fuel moisture content, soil dryness index, mapping systems, flora & fauna values, best practice in fire breaks & drainage etc
- Burn plan writing workshops, training & fireground safety, mentoring & coaching

#### **Kelvin Jones**, Swansea Volunteer Fire Brigade / Glamorgan Springbay SES

- Property numbers need to be prominent and clearly visible. Many fire fighters come from other brigades and have little knowledge of the area.
- Large fire-fighting appliances need a hardstand to access property, so they can turn around and leave.
- If you're on-site during a fire, unlock gates.
- Water tanks need s Storz fittings; lots of older tanks have 1.5 inch fittings
- Well prepared properties help take pressure off local brigades.
- TFS relies on people being self-sufficient. On catastrophic fire days, it may be challenging to get access to any fire-fighting resources.
- When calling in a fire, provide as much information as possible. This information can help to escalate the call.
- Ensure driveways are clear – 5m each side of driveway
- Steve, Wes & Gary are happy to inspect properties to provide advice
- DSCA emergency messaging service system works well
- If not prepared to defend property, leave early
- Local volunteers will do everything they can with available resources

The Dolphin Sands Community Association (DSCA) are grateful to everyone who attended our fire expo, especially TFS staff and volunteers. We'd also like to acknowledge Steve & Gynes for sharing their properties with us and for everyone who is doing their best to prepare their property for bushfire. Finally, thanks to Paul & Paula Hanson for hosting the BBQ.