

## Living with fire at Dolphin Sands

The Dolphin Sands community lives with the perpetual threat of fire. When our beautiful peninsula was developed in the 1960s, highly flammable species – coastal wattle and marram grass – were introduced. In combination, these species create an incendiary environment. Of course, we're blissfully unaware of this when we fall in love with the area and buy our properties. The dawning realisation that we're living in an area of extreme bushfire danger, due to the legacy of some unfortunate decision in the 1960s, comes later.

In Dolphin Sands, fires start easily and spread rapidly. In August 2019, a fire started on a still and frosty morning due to salt build-up on a power pole transformer, causing it to arc and ignite nearby marram grass. Just prior to the Australia Day weekend this year, sub-contractors using an angle grinder ignited marram grass that was apparently some distance away from where they were working (an ongoing fire investigation will determine the exact details).

Our property is next door to where the sub-contractors were working and, as we were downwind, the fire quickly spread to our place. Dolphin Sands community members responded rapidly to help us defend our home and garden, while fire-fighting crews prevented the fire from spreading any further than our property. Light planes and helicopters water-bombed the boundary between us and our neighbour (on the other side from the fire). We believe that the clearing done along our boundary (by both our neighbour and ourselves) assisted with this endeavour.

Because we live in Dolphin Sands, my husband and I prepared our property for bushfire. We had a fire-fighting pump and fire hoses ready to use and plenty of water on hand. We cleared either side our driveway (thanks to a DSRA grant from the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal) as well as a large zone around our home and garden, leaving established trees but clearing around them and removing their lower branches (to a height of 2m). This meant that the fire that approached the house was quite close to the ground and slow moving which meant we could easily and safely defend our house. Our structures, animals and vegie patch all survived. TFS and Parks crews handled the far more dangerous fire generated by coastal wattle and marram grass on the dunes.

We're immensely grateful to the emergency service personnel and community members who supported us and the broader Dolphin Sands community by containing the fire so successfully. The outcome could have been so much worse. And I urge everyone to prepare your property for bushfire. Local TFS volunteers are willing to visit your property to advise you about bushfire preparation.

Robyn Moore

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