



## Tuross Head Rural Fire Brigade

If one clear message comes through from John Schauble's excellent book, "The Australian Bushfire Safety Guide" (2004), it is that everyone needs "to be self reliant". Do not rely solely on the fire brigade turning up on your doorstep just when you desperately need them – "their objectives will be strategic rather than specific". He goes on to say that you should "develop a strategy for protecting yourself, your family and your property. Gather as much information, equipment and support necessary to plan a defence of your property or make plans for an early evacuation". Ian Mannix, in "Great Australian Bushfire Stories"(2008) quotes the

Tasmanian Fire Commissioner, John Gledhill, who believes that "emergency services have unintentionally served to disempower people in the community, encouraging citizens to believe emergency services can deal with any threat. People have to take responsibility (and) this involves making decisions about whether to abandon property or to stay and defend it".

So how do you go about gaining all the required knowledge, skills and equipment. Of course the easy answer would be "join your local Rural Fire Brigade", and this would be certainly useful, but could potentially defeat the purpose of learning how to defend your own family and property (we've all read stories of firemen losing family, friends and property whilst being away fighting fires elsewhere)! As a start, reading books such as those mentioned earlier would set some on the right path. For others, attending one or more directed information sessions at your local Fire Station, or some larger centre, would be more useful. Earlier this year Tuross Head Brigade members started developing plans to hold these sessions and would now like to get some feedback to discover if any locals would be interested in attending. Now that the bushfire threat seems to have abated it is an ideal time to start planning for the "what if ..." that may occur at any time, but usually in summer. Schauble has quite a useful "seasonal checklist" in his book outlining "some of the tasks that need to be considered" and perhaps not surprisingly he starts the list in autumn!

It's now in your hands. Please contact any members of your local Brigade to indicate your interest in these sessions ... and if you don't know anyone else in the Brigade, ring me on 44738671.

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