

## Getting Ready for a an EI Nino Summer

Chair: Malcolm Hackett OAM

Presenter: Craig Lapsley



We'll begin the presentation with an address by Craig Lapsley. Thank you Craig.

Good evening. Thank you, Malcolm. I've been quite impressed by the efforts of Malcolm and the team of what they've been able to do. Max has been exceptional in bringing this all together.

I'll take you through what is bushfire safety planning in particular, about what people need to do, what you need to do with your assets, and what actions you need to take. I'll try to make it as practical as that. It's great to talk about these things but also important to get to the actions that we can do, and we can do with others to improve our safety and improve the greater safety.

One of the key things is about us as an individual, we as a family member and we as part of a community. It all comes back to your capability and your capacity to do things. It's one thing to think it through but it's also the reality of "What can I do? What physically can I do? What do I need other people to do for me? What can I do for other people?" So it's understanding and being very realistic about what you are able to do at a time of need but importantly in the planning and preparation stage. We're really talking in this webinar about planning. There's another webinar where we will talk about what happens the night before an extreme weather day, the day of, and so on.

Obviously where you live is very important. And living in different parts of Australia, think about your environment, think about your household, the location where you live. You look around it every day and you go "Okay it's a great day today but tomorrow morning you'll walk out and think okay what is it when it's a nice warm day with a bit of a breeze, it's that fire day that really is going to challenge all of us to be able to do the right thing.

The planning for that is really important which means that it's not only about you. It's about what you do collectively together. We need to drive things as individuals but it is what we do as a group of people. And if you haven't got that group of people directly around you, how do you gather those people? So who is it? Your family that live with you? Friends who can support you, or family members that don't live with you, about how they can help you. And quite often it's not always about family, it is about the friend's network or the network in the community that's really important.

And it's also about where other people live. So you look at your location but then you stop and go "I've got elderly parents, I've got friends who live somewhere else in a fire area or will be in a fire area." So it's not just about your location alone. And the other one that's really important is in the summer period. You think about it, what happens in December? What happens in January February and March? And there are certain things that come around, school holidays for example. So we get to the middle of December and all of a sudden, we're in school holidays and then it's Christmas so you either go somewhere or people come to you.

And you think "Okay. The one week of the Christmas New Year period where am I?" Or is it longer where you are somewhere else? Then it comes to mid-January. Some go back to work, some are still on holidays. So the family environment is different. And then school comes back in and you get

into a more regular sequence of issues around February and March. And we know that with climate change or the challenges of fire that the frequency of fires and the intensity of fire has changed and that's a global issue.

Then talk and think through who's got special needs. Tonight we will talk about that in another segment. Special needs can be many things to many people. Am I immobile? Have I got a language barrier? Am I able to do things as fast as I used to do? Have I only got one vehicle in the family? So all of a sudden my mobility, my ability to communicate my ability to do things or other people's ability to do things that you may need to help is as critical.

Then you get to animals. And it's easy to talk about pets but it's a bit broader than just pets, it's about animals. What goes on with your companion animal? What goes on to the size of a pet or an animal? What goes on through your livestock? And it goes on and I'll talk about some of those in the action side of it.

That's probably a summary of what we can do as individuals. Think about our capability, our family's capability, our friend's capability. Then it comes to the assets. What do you own? Or what's a physical asset that you've got control of? Where do you live? The property that you're residing in, what bushfire protection systems does it have? Or as important, what does it need? What are some of the things you can do to supplement the bushfire protection systems of your property?

And if you've got them, maintain them, how to operate them successfully. And we can get into a lot of issues around how sophisticated some of these systems can be or how basic they need to be. But the systems around your property are critical.

If you own a business, what is it about your business? It's not only your home environment, where's your business? Where's those people that you work with or you employ? Where are the people coming from or too? How do you operate your business in a time of bushfire? You need to plan that. You need to think through what are some of the issues around your business and how it's going to operate in those critical days where you've got extreme fire danger being predicted. And that needs a plan, just like your home. Just like your recreation life needs a plan. You need one about your business or your employment.

Then it comes to vehicles. A lot of people have the need to tow a vehicle. You tow a caravan. Caravans are fantastic in the sense that you can put many things in a caravan and put it on the night before and tow it out of the bushfire area and you've got your home on wheels.

Towing a vehicle when it's the last minute can be quite dangerous. They're not easy to manoeuvre, they can get caught in the wrong spot when you're trying to turn around. It's got to be thought through, and that's the same with horse floats or trailers. When you're talking about a caravan or a load of horses, it needs to be done in a way that's well planned and thought through.

Holiday home. So it's not about your primary place of residence but what happens about your holiday home? The home that either you're going to reside in or you might have other people to reside in. And a lot of people today have them on Airbnb or other sort of service. That adds a level of responsibility to you when you've got other people staying in your property. And I'm sure if you've got a holiday home that you're renting out, do think it through but it can be quite stressful to think about other people in your property in a place that is in a high fire risk area.

Don't underestimate insurance. Read insurance policies. Make sure you talk to an insurance broker or the insurance company about your policy. It gives you a lot of satisfaction to know exactly what's happening in an insurance policy to give you a level of comfort but also give you that level of resilience. One of the key things about being resilient is being insured. The financial side of

resilience is fundamental about where you go and how you're challenged through these periods. So don't underestimate what it means to be well insured and to understand insurance. That is not the last-minute thing. It's something that's needs to be thought through.

Now to finish off I'll talk about some of the actions. Actions to me is where it really does matter. We can talk about it but what are the things we can do or we can do with others, to make sure that we are better prepared and ultimately are resilient? A number of the things I've just talked about you can turn into actions. Build a plan. We all say it's time to build a plan, but to build a plan means you need to walk your property and you need to talk. Talk to neighbours. You need to talk to friends. You need to talk to family members. Don't do it by yourself, it's about inclusion. It's about making sure that you take the time to include others and listen to what others have got to say and obviously you'll contribute significantly to that plan and that process.

A household plan is critical, as is making a plan where you work. If you're an employer of others make sure you have a plan for what they need to do. I'm not going to go element by element because it's well documented by many. But as Malcolm said in the introduction this webinar is about information that you need to tailor to suit your needs, your capabilities, your assets, your position and your location.

Talking to neighbours and the community are fundamental. I think we get lost sometimes in the word community. Community can be a very generic word. Think about your neighbourhood, think about the house next door and across the road. Who are your neighbours? What is your neighbourhood? And what's the plan for that? To know or have some idea of what they're going to do, or what's in their plan. Their bushfire safety plan is important. Some of them may need some level of assistance in building the plan let alone executing the plan.

Holiday homes. Family members that live away from you in high fire risk areas. Think through and prompt them to have a plan and their plan might be part of your plan. To have parents or children, or close family members living in another area, all of a sudden that could prompt you of how it fits into your plan and you might be going to them in a time of need. If you're not mobile or you have some special needs as a person it takes time to think it through, it takes time to action those things.

So what are you going to do with someone that has a mobility issue? What if someone's in a wheelchair? What are you going to do? How do you move these people around? It will be stressful if it's left late.

And again animals - size of animals, large or small pets, companion animals compared to domestic pets, show animals. All of a sudden you've got an animal that has been so much part of your life that and it's a show animal. It has a personality that's part of your personality. What are you doing with livestock? And there's some very good advice about how to deal with animals. It's well researched that we don't do much or we leave our decisions late because of animals or people that have got special needs and that they need to be thought through so they are not left late.

The information we've talked about is available on all the fire service websites across Australia. Your personal plan versus your property plan. Really important things. What's the personalities of the family going to do versus what is the property plan? Build the plan about the people to meet the circumstances, as I said before it could be the day of the week. So school days between Monday to Friday versus a weekend, sport recreation on the weekend. It could be by the month depending on what happens in December versus January, February or March.

And I'll leave you with what I call the 6 P's. The 6 P's is a very simple thing you need to build into the plan. It's about people and pets, papers, pictures, phones, and phone numbers. We've all got

phones and everything's in the phone, but where's the papers i.e. passports, birth certificates? Those things that are probably kept in your safe or somewhere secure. Where are they and can you grab them easily that you can pick them up and go? Where are those critical pictures or photos on the wall? And are they that important that you need to take them with you? Have written phone numbers and addresses.

And there's also other important documents about insurance and other things so the papers become quite critical. And although I'm sure you've got them gathered somewhere you'd be surprised the amount of people that haven't got those. Prescriptions, medication and eyeglasses. Think about anything that needs a prescription. So any medication you need that needs a prescription because you may be away from home for 24-72 hours. A personal computer, a laptop. How much is stored in those things today that you just need to pick up and take with you? Or you have it stored the critical information onto a stick or on a cloud environment or a server that's away from you?

Then it's about your personal devices, wheelchairs, a cane or a stick, a walker or those other people around you that need those things to work well. And then we live on plastic cards these days but don't only rely on plastic cards. You need to have some cash with you to make sure that when the plastic card electronic systems are down you can pay.

The 6 P's is people and pets', papers, pictures, phones, prescriptions, personal computers, personal assistant devices and the plastic cards and other things around you.

I'll finish by saying that any plan is a good plan. But a plan that's been thought through and discussed with others and involved others is critical, Do it more than once. It's a great idea to sit and do a plan and put it aside and then come back and revisit it and add to it. Add to it, socialize it, discuss it. You don't have to get hung up on the plan but it is something that if you do right you'll feel a lot more comfortable, you'll feel a sense of achievement and you'll certainly feel the sense that you're on top of something that it can be quite challenging. So I might leave it there Malcolm. Thank you.

## **Malcolm**

Thanks Craig and thank you particularly for joining us whether very late at night or very early in the morning in California, it's very much appreciated. I've thought about this stuff a fair bit over the last few years and you've already got me thinking in a different way about some things I need to do. I hope that's been the case for other people.