

Nicola Cusworth
Chair, Economic Regulation Authority
Perth BC, PO Box 8469
PERTH WA 6849

Dear Ms Cusworth,

Review of the Emergency Services Levy

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Economic Regulation Authority's Review of the Emergency Services Levy (ESL). Red Cross welcomes the Review, recognising that the process provides an important opportunity to ensure that future activities funded through the ESL support community disaster resilience, in effective and sustainable ways. The intent of this short submission is to briefly introduce our Emergency Services program, and to express our interest in further participation in the Review process.

Red Cross, nationally and internationally, has a long history of working with communities to contribute to emergency management planning and activity, investing significant organisational internal funds to support our activities. Our activities are delivered through the mobilisation of over 7,000 community-based volunteers across the country, supported by over 70 staff, drawing upon our experience of previous emergencies both nationally and internationally and through strategic partnerships, such as with the Australian Psychology Society and Save the Children.

Traditionally, the focus of emergency management activities in Australia has been on the preservation of life, hazard management and mitigation and the replacement of physical infrastructure impacted by emergencies, including roads, buildings and equipment. This approach, unfortunately, overshadows the complexity inherent in the consequences of loss and the severe disruption that emergency events have on an individual's life and livelihoods. Red Cross recognises that the impacts of disasters extended beyond survival from the hazard impact, to being able to cope with the medium and longer term disruption that an emergency can cause to an individual's life and community functioning.

As a humanitarian organisation, and auxiliary to government in the humanitarian field, the role of Red Cross in an emergency is to provide support to individuals and communities to reduce the impact and effects of a disaster. This means Red Cross works to:

- assist people to psychologically and emotionally prepare for emergencies;
- provide psychosocial support to people during an emergency;
- ensure that people's basic needs are met; and
- support and promote community led recovery.

Red Cross views emergency preparedness, relief and recovery as being interlinked and interrelated. How prepared a person is for an emergency can affect their relief requirements and also how well they recover.

The *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* (2011) emphasises the need for all levels of government, businesses, not-for-profit sector, community and individuals to work collectively to build disaster resilience across the country, recognising that there needs to be 'greater emphasis on community engagement and a better understanding of the diversity, needs, strengths and vulnerabilities within

communities'.¹ Resilience is a very broad concept, however, that cannot be delivered to, or done 'for' communities.

For the purpose of Red Cross' Emergency Services program, Red Cross utilises the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' definition of resilience:

The ability of individuals, communities, organisations, or countries exposed to disasters and crises and underlying vulnerabilities to:

- *anticipate*
- *reduce the impact of*
- *adapt to*
- *cope with*
- *and recover from*

*the effects of adversity without compromising their long term prospects.*²

Red Cross utilises a community-centred, resilience approach in our preparedness, response and recovery programs and activities, acknowledging that there is always 'capacity' in people and communities. This approach recognises the importance of enabling individuals and communities to build upon inherent capacities, rather than solely relying on external interventions to overcome vulnerabilities.

Individuals and communities are the starting point for building disaster resilience, based upon their existing strengths and relationships. At a practical level this means working in partnership with the community, building on existing networks, resources and strengths, identifying and supporting the development of community leaders and empowering the community to exercise choice and take responsibility. It means adopting flexible approaches in the way agencies communicate with, and within, communities. It also requires decision makers to recognise the fundamental role of social capital and social resources in building disaster resilient communities, and supporting communities to lead their own recovery journey.

Therefore, any future funding program for activities across prevention, preparedness, response and recovery should:

- support community and non-government partners in emergency management to actively participate in emergency planning and resilience building activities across the emergency management spectrum;
- acknowledge that the impacts of disasters extend beyond survival from the hazard impact, with preparedness and recovery activities that support recovery from the psychosocial impacts of disasters, not just physical loss; and
- be long-term, recognising resilience building requires a long-term commitment from all partners, and that an individual's recovery journey can be complex, non-linear, and take many years.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide feedback. If you require more information, please contact me at efuery@redcross.org.au or on 9225 8865.

Yours sincerely,



Erin Fuery,
State Manager (WA), Emergency Services

10 March 2017

¹ Council of Australian Governments (2011), *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience*, p. 2

² International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2014), *Framework for Community Resilience*.