Economic Regulation Authority,

I believe that the current allocation of ESL funds are inequitable distributed between various volunteer emergency services. At the moment the Bush Fire Service (BFS) is managed by Local Government and there is a severe restriction on what ESL (LGGS) can be used to purchase but there is no such restriction on the Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service (VFRS) which is directly managed by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services.

I use as an example the purchase of uniforms other than Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). In the BFS no uniforms other than PPE can be purchased using ESL such as dress uniforms, yet from time to time there is a need for dress uniforms for BFS volunteers to attend official functions, conferences and parades, etc. BFS volunteers have to personally purchase these items or occasionally the supporting Local Government will use rate payers funds to purchase these items, which in a way increases the rate payers ESL contribution. In the case of the VFRS a volunteer is automatically provided with these clothing items regardless of there being a request or need for the items. I am not suggesting that all volunteers should automatically be provided with these items but both volunteer services should be provided for on a need basis from ESL funds.

There are other items were both services are treated differently often with the BFS required to raise funds or donations or forced to use rate payers funds in order to purchase necessary equipment.

There is a publically available list of what items are eligible and ineligible for the BFS using ESL funding in the Local Government Grants Scheme Manual on the DFES website but there is not a publically available list of items that are eligible and ineligible for VFRS. I believe that this differential treatment of two volunteer services both funded by ESL is inequitable and contributes to the wide held belief that the BFS is treated as the poor country cousin!

Cheers, Ross.

Ross McDougall
Chief Bush Fire Control Officer, Denmark
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