

Emergency Services Levy Review - Draft Report

Attention: Robert Püllella

Dear Robert,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the ERA's Emergency Services Levy – Draft Report. The City wishes to provide the following comments on the draft report.

1. Whilst the City initially expressed a view that local governments should have no involvement in collecting the Emergency Services Levy, the City accepts that the current method of distributing ESL invoices with rate notices is efficient. However, the City believes that payments should be remitted directly to the State Government as it is the collection of money and remittance of funds collected to the State that results in costs to local governments.
2. The City supports an external review of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services' structure, resources and administration costs to determine whether services are delivered efficiently. The lack of transparency around the setting and distribution of the ESL leads to a lack of incentive for DFES to operate efficiently.
3. The City supports use of the ESL to fund prevention undertaken by DFES, bush fire brigades and SES Units, however, suggests that this needs to include prescribed burns, and chemical and mechanical clearing. Without mitigation works, particularly fuel reduction works, being funded through the ESL, it is unlikely that there would be any significant increase in bushfire risk mitigation undertaken by local governments.
4. The City supports the ESL being used to fund the full cost of Community Emergency Services Managers in local government. Currently, the City employs its own Emergency Services Coordinator whose role is almost identical to that of a CESM without any contribution from the State Government. DFES still regards and treats this officer as a CESM and despite the City requesting to enter into an agreement with DFES in relation to this officer becoming a CESM, DFES has not agreed to enter into a funding arrangement.
5. The City notes that the report recommends that the ESL be used to fund DFES administration costs but not administration costs associated with bushfire brigades and SES units. This appears to be an inconsistent approach in that the administration costs of one element of emergency services is funded by the ESL yet the administration costs of other essential emergency services are not simply because those elements sit within local governments. The City contends that a consistent principle ought to be applied in respect of administration costs.
6. Recommendation 17 of the report suggests that new emergency services legislation should clarify the extent to which DFES and local governments are obliged to undertake prevention activities and whether these activities may be funded from the ESL. The City's position on this recommendation would largely depend upon the responsibilities assigned to local governments and whether or not they would be funded through the ESL.
7. Recommendation 36 of the report suggests that local governments should be required to publish their bushfire risk management plans and treatment strategies. The City would only support this recommendation if it related only to bushfire risk management plans relevant to local government owned land. The notion of local governments preparing tenure blind bushfire risk management plans is flawed as many State Government departments and private land owners are not interested in participating in the process and there is no capacity for local governments to force them to do so.

Should you have any queries regarding the City's comments please don't hesitate to contact me on 9397 3010.

Regards,

Grant Bradbrook
Acting Chief Executive Officer

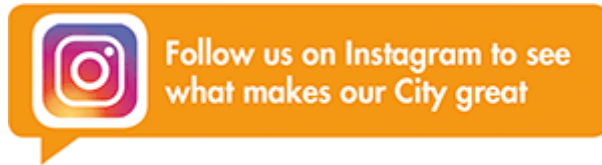


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