

Economic Regulation Authority Received	
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Action Officer	

The Bushfire Front Inc

Motto: "Those who desire peace must prepare for war"

P.O. Box 1014 Subiaco WA. 6904

Email: yorkgum@westnet.com.au

The Director
Economic Regulatory Authority
PO Box 8469, PERTH BC
WA 6849
For attention: Leonie Browner

Dear Madam,

Response to the Review of the Emergency Services Levy (ESL)

The BFF strongly supports the following points made by the ERA in its draft report, and recommends that they be carried through into the final report and then adopted by the State Government immediately.

1. ESL funding should be more transparent and independently managed.
2. The accountability for ESL expenditure should be clarified.
3. An independent agency should advise the Minister for Emergency Services on the quantum of the ESL and provide an investment framework to guide how ESL funds should be spent.
4. Oversight of the ESL should be transferred from DFES to the Office of Emergency Management and the OEM should be separated from DFES and report directly to the Minister for Emergency Services.
5. ESL funds should not be used to finance recovery from disasters.
6. The ESL should continue to be used to fund front line services of DFES, volunteer Bush Fire Brigades and State Emergency Service units, as well as the salaries of LGA community emergency service managers.

All of these are sound points.

On the other hand we are gravely disappointed that the ERA did not support the use of ESL funds for fire damage mitigation through fuels management. There is no doubt whatever that control of fuel loads is the key factor in reducing the impact of bushfires. The experience of the Forests Department and the Department of Conservation and Land Management from 1961 to 1990 clearly demonstrated this fact. The BFF believes that reduction of fuel loads through prescribed burning and other appropriate measures, especially on private land and miscellaneous public reserves, is a legitimate charge against the ESL.

We are also disappointed that the ERA did not take the opportunity to recommend a functional and financial management review of DFES and its use of ESL funds. Damning information was provided on these issues in the "stocktake" review last year by SEMC. Taxpayers have a right to expect that Government agencies are using our limited resources efficiently.

Yours sincerely

Roger Underwood
Chairman
August 8th, 2017

For more information on bushfire management and current issues please visit the Bushfire Front website at www.bushfirefront.com.au