

32-34 Georges Bay Esplanade

St Helens Tasmania 7216

T: 03 6376 7900

ABN 96 017 131 248



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Tasmania Fire and Emergency Service Bill
GPO Box 123
Hobart, TAS 7001

To whom it may concern,

The Break O'Day Council have taken the opportunity to closely examine the reforms proposed in the draft Tasmania Fire and Emergency Services Bill, which includes a new funding model. At the outset we would like to express our extreme disappointment at the manner in which the State Government and the agencies involved have handled this matter.

It is apparent that there has been a lack of detailed consideration given to the impact of the proposed changes. There has also been a lack of transparency in relation to the financial modelling and financial outcomes of the proposed changes.

Council would like to make the following points in relation to the proposed changes. We are keeping our narrative brief and to the point as we don't believe that Council resources should be wasted on a detailed response until the State Government addresses the wide range of matters involved in this process with full transparency and sufficient detail to enable an informed decision to be made.

Overall Approach

1. Fully support an appropriately funded and resourced TFS and SES
2. There seems to be a focus on rural communities paying for large fires which are occurring on Crown Land and Forestry Plantations – what contribution is the State Government making?
3. Volunteer Brigade communities are different to Urban Brigade communities, the response time is quite different and the quality and level of equipment is also quite different – there needs to be a differential in the Levy.
4. What is the value proposition for ratepayers? If costs are to increase, then the State Government needs to explain how service standards will be improved in line with the cost increases proposed.
5. Under the two models, what specific benefits would our community receive from each one? It appears it's not about service levels, far more focused on achieving a given amount of revenue. So regardless of the model and revenue raised, service standards remain much the same.
6. Clarification is required that full responsibility for SES resourcing will now shift to the State Government and local Councils will no longer be responsible for funding and providing infrastructure to local SES Units.

7. What is the State Government going to do to communicate and sell these changes to the Tasmanian community? Once again Local Government is going to be attacked by the community over this and wear the brunt of dealing with the complaints. The State Government agencies have an extremely poor track record of dealing with this situation.
8. How will the State Government ensure that Insurance companies provide a premium reduction reflective of the Fire Levy appearing on Insurance policies?

Funding Model

1. There is a lack of information on the Total Revenue take under the different models compared to current situation.
2. We support a differential model reflecting the Rural and Urban distinction.
3. Why don't the State Government use the same revenue raising powers as they use for Land Tax to levy this themselves.

Proposed Model Implementation

1. TFS maps defining the current levy model for the different fire levy types are outdated and difficult to obtain.
2. Relying on the Valuer-General land use codes to apply the correct levy – Break O'Day currently has ratepayers using the sheds erected on their blocks as part time shacks or residences – the Valuer-General applies a vacant land use code. The cost to defend these structures would be comparable to defending a residence but they would not be paying a levy that reflects this cost. The same will apply to vacant blocks with caravans with amenity sheds.
3. Council will be relying on the Valuer-General land use codes to identify the levy – not always up to date information and the only way to identify urban and rural is R1 = Urban - R5 = Rural.

As stated above, State Government agencies have a very poor record when it comes to communication in general and once a decision is made, it will be local Councils who will feel the brunt of the community's anger as it will be on our Notice of Rates & Charges. No matter the explanation provided, the State Government will not be dealing with the large number of complaints and queries from ratepayers, Council staff in the first instance will be dealing with this. The State Government needs to take full responsibility for the situation they are creating and ensure that the change is communicated to every ratepayer through a direct communication from the State Government on the change.

Yours faithfully,



John Brown

General Manager