



1 September 2020

Mr Michael Blake
Steering Committee Chair
Fire Services Act Review

Via email: Michael.blake@dpfem.tas.gov.au

Dear Mike

FIRE SERVICES ACT REVIEW

Thank you for your recent presentation on the current status of the review into the Fire Services Act. Whilst much of the Act is not relevant to Local Government, I would like to submit comment from the Devonport City Council on two particular matters, as detailed below.

Fire Services Levy

Council consider the current property based fire levy, collected by local government is not equitably applied across all land owners. As fire fighting methods evolve and career brigades continue to work more closely with volunteer bridges the justification for varying fire levy rates no longer exists. Significant resource and cost can be incurred in fire response at any location across the State whether that be a structure fire in an urban area or a grass fire in a remote rural location. The existing variance in rate is inappropriate and unfairly burdens those in urban fire districts.

Council accepts the collection of a fire rate is simplified for the community through collection as part of local Council rates and is willing to continue to raise the rate in this manner, but on the provision that a standard “postage stamp” rate is applied across the State. If the current variance in rates remains, Council is strongly against continuing the current collection process, which results in distorted and inaccurate comparisons being made between “Council rates” (total rates bill) across urban and rural municipalities.

An increased effort should also be made by the State Government to better inform and educate the community of the “fire levy” component of local Council rates.

SES Funding

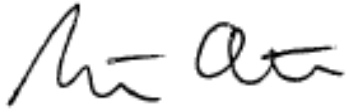
Local Government currently provides a small amount of funding to local SES units. The level of funding is poorly defined and largely influenced by the discretion of each Council. Given the total value of this funding is minimal, Council can understand the logic of removing this inefficient funding source from Local Government and replacing



it with an equivalent increase in one of the other primary SES funding streams. The transfer of SES plant and equipment assets currently owned by local government is also supported.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any queries in regard to this feedback.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Atkins', written in a cursive style.

Matthew Atkins
GENERAL MANAGER

Enquiry Officer: Jacqui Surtees
Direct Line: 0364 240560