

EMERGENCY SERVICES LEVY — LOCAL GOVERNMENT GRANT SCHEME

997. Hon RICK MAZZA to the minister representing the Minister for Emergency Services:

I refer to the 15 September 2019 ABC news article “Volunteer rescue groups call for greater share of ratepayer-funded Emergency Services Levy”.

- (1) How are ESL funds calculated for allocation to local governments?
- (2) Will the government give further attention to the system of grants distribution through councils to reduce red tape?
- (3) If yes to (2), how and when; and, if no to (2), why not?
- (4) Considering the increase in the ESL to raise an estimated \$120 million for the establishment and operation of the Rural Fire Division, what progress has been made in establishing the ESL referral and grants advisory committee, as announced by the Premier in the 13 April 2018 media statement “Rural Fire Division to drive new era of enhanced bushfire management”?

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question, on behalf of the Minister for Environment. The Minister for Emergency Services has provided the following answer.

- (1) Funding for bush fire brigades and State Emergency Service units is allocated via the local government grant scheme process in which local governments apply for an operating grant and a capital grant for each service. Capital grants are allocated based on scheduled fleet replacement life cycles and local government requests for facility, fleet and equipment. Requests are assessed against statewide priorities. Operating grants are calculated using the average of the past two years acquitted expenditure—actual expenditure trends—and the current year allocation indexed at the prevailing cost escalation index.
- (2)–(3) An LGGS working group comprising representatives from the Western Australian Local Government Association, the Association of Volunteer Bush Fire Brigades, the State Emergency Service Volunteer Association and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services has been established to provide a consultative forum between stakeholders for matters pertaining to the LGGS. The main function of the group is to promote and provide open dialogue with the aim to make the LGGS process more streamlined, democratic, visible, sustainable and fit-for-purpose. To date, two meetings have been held with the following focus areas identified and actioned that include: LGGS transparency and communication improvements; operating grant baseline budget establishment, the review methodology used to determine allocation; LGGS manual for capital and operating grant, to review the descriptive and prescriptive nature of the guidelines; and, review of expenditure item eligibility. A series of meetings is planned for the remainder of 2019 to complete this work with outcomes to be included in the 2020–21 LGGS process.
- (4) The ESL referral and grants advisory committee is in the final stages of establishment and it will be in place for the next budget process.