



To: All Local Governments **From:** Susie Moir, Resilient Communities Policy Manager

Date: 20 May 2022

Reference: 05-024-02-0059SM **Priority:** High

Subject: Proposed Advocacy Position on Arrangements for Management of Volunteer Bushfire Brigades

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| Operational Area: | CEO, Emergency Management |
| Key Issues: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">The Association is consulting the Local Government sector on a proposed Advocacy Position on the arrangements for management of volunteer Bush Fire Brigades.Responses to the proposed Advocacy Position Paper are requested by 8 July 2022.Sector feedback will inform a final position to be considered by WALGA State Council in September 2022. |
| Action Required: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Local Governments are encouraged to provide a written response or submit a response through the survey.A formal Council resolution will assist the Association understand the sentiment of the sector. |

Background

Western Australian Local Governments have extensive roles and responsibilities embedded in the State Emergency Management Framework across the emergency management spectrum of prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery. Under the *Bush Fires Act 1954*, Local Governments have responsibility for bushfire and the management of volunteer Bush Fire Brigades (BFBs). 111 Local Governments manage 563 BFBs involving approximately 20,000 volunteers.

As part of WALGA's 2021 Emergency Management Survey, Local Governments were asked about their level of satisfaction with current arrangements for managing BFBs. 92 Local Governments (69 of which manage BFBs) provided the following feedback:

- 93% were not wholly satisfied with the current arrangements for the management of BFBs; and
- 51% expressed that their Local Government does not support the requirements for Local Governments to manage BFBs.

The State Government is currently drafting the *Consolidated Emergency Services Act* (CES Act), which consolidates the *Fire Brigades Act 1942*, *Bush Fires Act 1954* and *Fire and Emergency Services Act 1998* into a single piece of legislation, anticipated to be released as a Green Bill for consultation in early 2023.

The introduction of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2020* has also shone a spotlight on Local Government responsibilities for managing volunteer BFBs.

Comment

The development of the CES Act represents a important and timely opportunity for the sector to determine its position on the management of volunteer BFBs. An endorsed advocacy position will guide the Association in its engagement with the State Government on this issue.

WALGA has prepared the attached proposed Advocacy Position for the sector's consideration.

An six week period for sector consultation is designed to enable Local Governments to engage with relevant stakeholders, including volunteers, and for Councils to consider their position. Feedback on the proposed position will be reviewed and inform a final position to be considered by WALGA State Council in September 2022.

Further information

Please contact WALGA's Resilient Communities Policy Manager, Susie Moir smoir@walga.asn.au or 9213 2058.