

Question on Notice
No. 38
Asked on 12 February 2014

DR DOUGLAS asked the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services (MR DEMPSEY) -

QUESTION:

With the potential closure of many Gold Coast Fire Brigades due to the unwillingness of the Gold Coast City Council to continue a levy because of the new State Emergency Services Levy, what contingency plans does the government have to provide bushfire protection to those rural areas that will be left unprotected?

ANSWER:

On 1 January 2014, the Gold Coast City Council became the only Queensland council to discontinue this funding. As you are aware, the council was our brigades' sole source of operational funding. I can confirm that the Gold Coast City Council is in no way prevented from collecting the rural fire levy to fund the operational costs of the Gold Coast Rural Brigades.

The Gold Coast City Council has historically played an integral part in funding and supporting volunteer emergency services such as the State Emergency Service (SES) and rural fire brigades. Last financial year, for example, Gold Coast City Council collected \$760,000 to fund rural fire brigades on the Gold Coast.

Indeed, it is implicit within Section 128A of the *Fire and Rescue Act 1990* that councils provide such support. Legislative provisions empowering councils with the means to generate funds for this purpose have been in effect since 1999, following an extensive consultation process with local councils.

The Queensland Government continues to support the tireless work of our volunteer brigades. Since coming to government in 2012, we have boosted funding to fully cover brigade vehicles, essential equipment, training and communications.

The EMFRL was not introduced to fund our rural firefighters but rather is an emergency levy, designed to provide the best emergency resources for all Queenslanders.

Disasters happen anywhere, anytime and we need to be in the best position to manage and help the communities affected. The levy will be used to fund things like swift water rescue crews; Careflight and Queensland Government

rescue helicopters, emergency assistance grants for people affected by natural disasters and recovery work after a disaster.

The EMFRL ensures all Queenslanders are contributing to our emergency services and this is a more equitable system of sharing the costs. By no means should local councils view the EMFRL as an excuse to abrogate their own responsibilities.