



DIRECTOR SHIRE SERVICES REPORT

10th October 2006

DSS7 NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE
FILE: 441 APV {Folio No. *}

SUMMARY:

Reporting on a proposal to transfer mobile fire assets from Council to the NSW Rural Fire Service.

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DESCRIPTION:

Council has received a letter and a copy of a Position Paper from the Local Government Association of NSW and the Shires Association of NSW concerning a suggestion that mobile fire assets (not buildings) be transferred from Councils to the NSW Rural Fire Service. A copy of the letter and position paper is attached at [Appendix C](#). The period for Councils to respond has been extended to 31 October 2006.

Currently under section 119 (2) of the Rural Fires Act fire vehicles are vested in Council. The purchase of vehicles is funded under the Rural Fire Fighting Fund with Councils contributing 13.3% of the cost. Vehicle specifications must at all times be consistent with specifications issued by the Rural Fire Services.

Fuel and maintenance operating costs are fully subsidised by the Rural Fire Service. Service Level Agreements provide that fire plant at all times remain in the custody of the Rural Fire Service and be housed in Brigade facilities.

Questions have been asked by auditors and insurance brokers as to whether in fact Council has an 'interest' in the vehicles.

It would appear that there is little merit in Council retaining ownership of the fire vehicles. Recommendations for replacement of vehicles are now proposed by the Rural Fire Service and must be consistent with specifications issued by the Rural Fire Service. Council has input, and would still retain that input, via the budget

estimates that are proposed by the Rural Fire Service and which require the endorsement of Council.

Currently only minor repairs and servicing of fire vehicles is undertaken by Council's fleet workshop. If the vehicles were transferred to the Rural Fire Service, this service could still be provided to the Rural Fire Service.

REPORT IMPLICATIONS:

- *Environmental*

Nil

- *Social*

Nil

- *Economic (Financial)*

The financial implications of the following recommendation would be minimal as Council would continue to fund the replacement of new vehicles by way of 13.3% contribution.

- *Policy or Statutory*

Legislative amendments to Rural Fire Act would be required in order to transfer ownership to the Rural Fire Service.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Local Government Association of NSW and the Shires Association of NSW be advised that Council is supportive of the proposal to transfer ownership of fire vehicles from Council to the Rural Fire Service.

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A P Vermeulen
DIRECTOR SHIRE SERVICES