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10 September 2024

**Inquiry into assets, premises and funding of the NSW Rural Fire Service  
Public Accounts Committee**

By email: [pac@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:pac@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Chair

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Public Accounts Committee Inquiry into assets, premises and funding of the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS).

Please see below responses to questions on notice taken during the hearing.

The CHAIR: When local councils receive that list and there are inaccuracies, are you aware whether councils report those inaccuracies back up to the OLG or to the RFS so that the RFS records can be corrected?

DAVID REYNOLDS: I don't believe there's a formal process for that. I'd have to take that on notice.

...

The CHAIR: Just to repeat the earlier point: You're not aware of any feedback loop?

DAVID REYNOLDS: I'm not aware of a formal feedback loop, Mr Chair. I'm happy to take on notice if there's anything there but, really, it's almost as though it's a—and I don't want to discount the effort—courtesy that the list is provided to assist councils with their on-the-ground work.

**LGNSW response**

Councils have long expressed concerns that the data provided by the NSW Government for the stocktake of RFS mobile assets is inaccurate, incomplete and unreliable. Direct feedback from councils to LGNSW on the reliability of the RFS asset data includes the following:

- The RFS moves [assets] between LGAs on a regular basis, and therefore assets may be located in any of the [LGAs in that RFS] command.

- There was no confidence in the data as there was a lot of data missing from this register. Data missing included acquisition date, acquisition value, disposal date, disposal value, transfer dates between districts, useful lives. Everything needed to undertake appropriate asset accounting.
- Council does not have access to all of the assets held by the RFS so there is no way the data can be verified by our staff.
- List did not detail a couple of [assets] from 2 years ago and in the end they were located outside of the Shire.
- The data provided by RFS found two vehicles no longer in our LGA. One was sold and one transferred to another LGA.
- Plant not available at the locations detailed for inspection, old plant previously disposed of still included on the list provided, plant identified that wasn't included on the list provided.
- We have received the [stocktake] information but it is not accurate, and the trucks in some cases are not where they are meant to be (kept on private property and not in fire sheds for example. [This is] one of the reasons why we didn't do the stock take).
- We could not find 4% of the stocktake.
- Found equipment from other council areas, could not find all the equipment on the list: presumed to be out in the paddock with a harvester. No value for certain classes of equipment. Equipment held on private property. needed to engage Group Captains to gain access.

LGNSW is aware that councils provide feedback on inaccuracies to their RFS district office. However, these assets will continue to be acquired, relocated and disposed of by the RFS, meaning that any council stocktake will soon become outdated.

The local government sector maintains that that councils should not be required to undertake the stocktake given that:

1. councils do not own RFS assets, nor do councils have any say in their acquisition, deployment or disposal,
2. many councils do not have the expertise to conduct the stocktake of specialised equipment
3. the data provided through the OLG from the RFS detailing the assets is unreliable and inaccurate.

Dr DAVID SALIBA: What's the value of these assets? I know people can't qualify it right now but what's the assumption there?

SHAUN McBRIDE: I don't have the figure on the top of my head.

Dr DAVID SALIBA: Ballpark? Are you talking hundreds of millions?

SHAUN McBRIDE: Hundreds of millions, yes.

Dr DAVID SALIBA: Billions or hundreds of millions?

SHAUN McBRIDE: I'd have to take that on notice.

#### LGNSW response

The list of RFS assets made available to the local government sector is inaccurate and unreliable. Further, the data does not provide current valuations for any of the assets. Instead, the information provided is the new replacement cost, not the depreciated value.

As such, councils do not have any data on the current value of RFS assets state-wide. Anecdotally, estimates place the value in the hundreds of millions of dollars, and perhaps even up to \$1.5 billion.


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Thank you again for the opportunity to provide evidence to this inquiry.

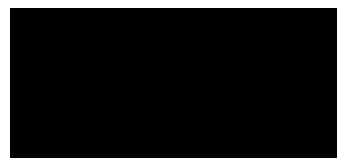
LGNSW reiterates that councils are not criticising the core operations or performance of the RFS. LGNSW is of the firm view that the management and ownership of the 'Red Fleet' assets sits with the NSW Government, and specifically the RFS. This reality needs to be properly reflected in the Rural Fires Act 1997 to ensure that accountability and responsibility for the RFS are fully aligned.

For further information, the committee secretariat is welcome to contact LGNSW Director Advocacy on [REDACTED] or at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

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Cr Darriea Turley AM  
President

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Mr David Reynolds.

Mr David Reynolds  
Chief Executive