

**Submission
No 2**

ASSETS, PREMISES AND FUNDING OF THE NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

Organisation: Cobar Shire Council

Date Received: 28 March 2024

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“Regional Centre in Western NSW”

28 February 2024

The Chair, Public Accounts Committee
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Chair,

Inquiry into assets, premises, and funding of the NSW Rural Fire Service

I refer to the terms of reference for the inquiry into assets, premises and funding of the NSW Rural Fire Service and provide my submission in accordance with these terms.

There has been a protracted conversation across NSW with wide industry acceptance, other than the Audit Office of NSW, that mobile and other fire-fighting assets cannot be deemed to be Council assets. This stance of vesting assets in Council, applies more funding pressure on Council, even though Councils do not have effective management or control of these assets. A Position that Cobar Shire Council supports.

The management of premises is more straight forward in the assessment that Council has control of the asset by virtue of the location and use of the buildings, however we believe that the contribution of the emergency service through the annual levy on Council should be our total contribution to fire protection for the area.

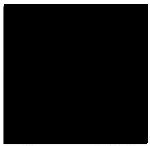
The management of Rural Fire Service is a state responsibility that has become more governed by policy and less by the service levels set by local Councils. The statewide focus and direction of assets in the service through incident response and future demand modelling by the Rural Fire Service further evidences the lack of Council control.

The costs associated with the Rural Fire Service provision in Cobar Shire Council, have more than doubled since 2018/19. As a rural Council with very limited rate revenue the capacity for ratepayers to fund these levels of service is limited.

The 2022/23 year accounted for \$650,278 expenditure on the Rural Fire Service for Cobar Shire Council with an actual cash cost of \$398,387. This equates to 15.17% of the general rate revenue for the same period. To give more context this is more than Council spends on Library services, swimming pools or youth services.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission and hope that this review will seek to streamline the Rural Fire Service under the full auspice of the NSW State Government and hope this will result in future cost savings for all users under a simplified management approach.

Yours sincerely,



Cr Jarrod Marsden
Mayor