



FIRE SERVICES - PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE LAUNCHES MODELLING REPORT

Today the NSW Public Accounts Committee released a consultant's report showing the impacts of introducing a levy on property for funding fire services.

The consultants, Professional Financial Solutions (PFS), matched information about current household and business contributions to information about land values.

PFS then modelled different options for property levies to show how much this would cost business and residential property owners inside and outside the Greater Metropolitan Area. The first three options were based on each group's

- benefit received from fire services
- service received from fire services and
- use of fire services

A fourth option combined the other options to increase the numbers of property owners who would be contributing less than they do now.

The Committee's Chairman, Matt Brown MP, said "Professional Financial Solutions have done an outstanding job of modelling the amount that would need to be paid if the current funding arrangements were changed.

"Clearly some of the options are better than others for different parts of the community.

"Because it costs more to provide services for non-metropolitan areas, the user pays option shows much higher costs for country property owners than for the city. Under the beneficiaries pay option, there are higher costs on commercial property owners than householders.

"The combined option has the highest percentage of people who would be paying less under a property levy. The model shows that at least 60 per cent of business and 75 per cent of residential property owners would be paying less."

The Committee has decided that all groups and individuals expressing interest in this inquiry should have the opportunity to comment on the consultants' report.

These comments would assist the committee in developing recommendations about the best way of funding fire services in New South Wales.

The Committee will hold a launch of the report in Parliament House on Monday 29 March.

"I encourage everyone with an interest in the issue to read the report, come along to the launch of the report and ask the consultants questions," the Chairman said.

Comments should be forwarded by 16 April 2004.