

## **Disaster funding**

**The effectiveness of the present system is lost for several reasons, first it appears that centralisation has caused people out of touch or under political pressure to make decisions on management problems in areas in which they have little or no experience**

**Risk some measures include the protection by all of their own property including Government this is not only clearing trees rubbish etc, but drains for water .Insurance Companies should levy higher rates on those that do not follow guidelines set out by appropriate authorities. Also Government should not pay out for homes etc that had not taken precautions. Local Government should be responsible for allowing situations such as Margaret Ricer to occur.**

**The funding arrangements should be Local, State and Federal  
Locals should build their own resilience.**

**Savings would be huge if more locals were allowed to take part not discouraged as is the case is now.**

## **Dealing with the letter of the Treasurer**

**In 5 years 200 lives have been lost and the costs to yhe Federal govt has been 12 billion dollars but this is only 75% of cost and does not include State and Local Government costs which one assumes would be another 25% i.e \$ 4 billion, this alone does not total the costs because the amount spent by volunteers is not included. This means that each State has an average spend of about 3 billion plus the amounts it is putting**

**into bodies such as fire , SES etc,Departments that could and should be reduced in size or got rid of altogether..**

**The next matter is the disruption to the communities and I believe this is where the preventive action should start with education and local population all being given the task of setting the ground work .The old motto "prevention is better than the cure" could be adopted and most of this can be shown that it will save everybody in the future Governments and insurance being the main area of saving.**

**Federal finances should be aimed at prevention and only provide money for disasters if State and Local Governments can show that they have done as much as possible on the prevention of any event occuring.**

**With regard to planning for land use, the last few years have shown how Local Government has made allocations without proper thought going into the types of sub-divisions allowed two of those that stay in my memory are Margaret River and Toodyay.**

**On the subjects of previous reports it may be that the members of those reports could be called to give evidence as from personal experience Governments do little study of these and tend to only listen to their advisers who in many cases have no management background on the subject.An example of this is the slow approach by Government to the Kelty Report on the Armadale fire and the response by the various Departments to the issues involved.**

**The planning of infrastructure and management of that infrastructure surely is basic work which Governments both State and Local have neglected despite Kelty's report.**

## **Scope**

**1. It would appear that as with many other aspects of funding this matter has had increases far beyond any Governments projections and the real source of the expenditure should be stripped to bare bones and thought through not by Parliaments but by practical managers to reveal where the prevention could be instituted. This examination in itself could show that much of this work could in the future be left in the hands of community members on a voluntary basis as occurred in the past.**

**2. The above suggestion thus leads into the risk area and the role that should be paid by firstly individuals with their own preventive actions which could be varied depending on the location but some of the areas that come to mind are insurance and Local Government.**

**With insurance many suggestions have been made but the industry appears to believe that they could either reduce profits or make it too hard to implement them. For instance in areas where housing is surrounded by trees in close proximity the rates should increase by a significant amount so the purchaser realises that to have this type of foliage and expect insurance cover it is expensive.**

**With Local Government providing only one road into the subdivision they and their insurance company should carry most of the burden especially if the local part of the land, roads parks etc have not been kept in order.**

**There are a number of other examples that could be given, but my major thrust is that the solutions start mainly from the**

**lowest level because if it is realised there, it will escalate and despite the moves by Governments volunteers enjoy their job and cost a lot less. It should be remembered that Local Government set up under the Bushfires Act the local brigades and have a duty of care to ensure safety of lives and property including road access for volunteers that may be asked to put out wildfires**

**3. Taking in mind No 2 I believe the inquiry should try and contact people at the lowest level and ask them what they think explaining both the costs and potential savings to them!**

**There happens to be a number of concerned individuals and groups such as Locals Against Wildfires, Bush Fire Front who already are willing to do their best to mitigate the risk.**

**4(a) Improved mitigation is the first move and the relationships can be sorted out between the various bodies especially if they are prepared to talk and in particular listen. They all have to believe money is not the solution but it is people on the ground and people with the relevant management skills.**

**These skills include the knowledge of local conditions, roads, tracks, burnt areas, water points plus local communications (wireless units) which in most cases are not known or seemingly neglected by centralised bodies.**

**An example of this is WA was acknowledged as a world leader some 20 or so years ago with its Forest Department program and Bush Fires Board was run by people who had knowledge of rural problems and a acceptance of proper management.**

**The change to a centralised Board now Department has done more damage to lives and property in the last 10 years than was seen in the previous 50 years.**

**Victoria is another example of centralisation taking over from locals and at a great price one only has to look at the lack of roadside burning and the level of bush left with out proper management.**

**(b)The right incentives can be put in place by helping the locals, one idea that was put to a committee of mine was that Local Government check all the machinery used by volunteers annually (in some areas there are 200 units) this surely would save the expenditure of new vehicles being provided some of which are alledged to have faults.This check need not go as far as declaring a bush fire vehicle unfit just because its wind screen wipers did not work (as has happened in the past).**

**The arbitrary age of the machine should not be not considered but fitness for the job is the main factor and many farm vehicles would not suit city jobs but are ideal for the rough work of rural areas (and most are being supplied free).Consider this against the cost of new units ranging from \$140k to \$400k and many of the larger ones are unsuitable for bush areas and virtually only used as water tanks or town protection.**

**The Basics should be for the education of the population into the history of previous land management by indigenous persons and early settlers,a good reference for this is a book by Bill Gammege. All the population from school age to Members of Parliament Parliament should have this knowledge and this would help to eliminate the media push by**

**some groups peddling the wrong information. In fact in some cases some information had to be withdrawn when given to a committee as the committee had firm evidence that this information was false.**

**©Mitigation costs will vary initially quite high, because of the lack of implementation over the last 20 years or so. Most areas will be at local level for instance burning debris alongside roads will attract the people adjoining and many of them would do as they did in the past provide without charge their labour and their plant. Again using local Parks and Reserves could be prescribed burnt at regular intervals leaving those that are managing major parks the State Governments to carry out reductions at intervals similar to the old Forest Department scheme. Main Roads, electricity lines, railway lines should also be included in the State Program, these bodies should carry the same liability as individuals and Local Government.**

**While the bushfire scene is one I have some knowledge of surely the flood scene could be handled in a similar vein with local communities cleaning out river beds etc to stop water build up. Maybe as Wilson Tuckey did in Carnarvon Local Government could also help by building levees in the optimum places for drainage.**

**Many ideas could be obtained from locals once they and their children become involved, too often over the years all these simple tasks have been taken away by Governments thinking they know best but in reality not achieving the aims and costing the taxpayer dearly.**

**(d) Land use planning needs to be controlled severely so all areas are protected before the right to proceed are**

**established. I believe there are enough rules already, but they are being circumvented by developers and councils both groups with the public, have to be educated in this area.**

**(e)Funding should be at a local level and it should be realised that it will take a number of years before all the population becomes use to this fact. This granting of funds has to show the improvements and if after that time grants to areas that have not produced a workable mitigation scheme their funds should be reduced.In other words it would be up to the locals to initiate their own methods as long as the results could be audited to a high standard. This of course would have the effect of stopping amalgamation of Local Government which in itself increased costs which has been shown in several States already.**

**Savings by the use of locals and volunteers should in each area be put aside into a type of future fund until a set target is reached after which funds earned could be returned to the local area for improvements in various local institutions,clubs etc..The future fund would be left accumulating interest for use in any drastic disaster that its trustees believed it warranted in the future.**

**Publications I believe could back this submission**

**1. Writings by Gommage on the indigenous land holders land management.**

**2 W.A. Report of the Honorary Royal Commission into the CALM Act 1984.**

**Recommendations no's 2,11,22,23,37-40,43,44,45,46,60,72.**

**3 WA report into Fire Review Panel 1994**

**Pages 1-5**

*I can provide copies if you need them.*