



Gladstone Regional Council

Council Policy

Title	RURAL FIRE BRIGADES FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS
Policy Number	P-2019-02
Business Unit/s	FINANCE, GOVERNANCE & RISK OPERATIONS
Date of Adoption	
Resolution Number	
Review Date	
Date Repealed	

1.0 PURPOSE:

To detail the arrangements for the financial support of the various Rural Fire Brigades within the Council region.

2.0 SCOPE:

All Rural Fire Brigades within the Council region.

3.0 RELATED LEGISLATION:

- *Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990*
- *Local Government Act 2009*

4.0 RELATED DOCUMENTS:

Nil

5.0 DEFINITIONS:

To assist in interpretation of this policy the following definitions apply:

- **"Advisory Group"** means an Advisory Group known as the 'Gladstone Regional Council Rural Fire Finance Group' established by Council as an advisory group comprising representatives from Council, the Rural Fire Service and Rural Fire Brigades within the Council region.
- **"Area Director, Rural Fire Service "** means the employee of the Rural Fire Service appointed by Queensland Fire and Emergency Services to manage the Rural Fire Service, Gladstone Area.
- **"Council"** means Gladstone Regional Council.

- **"Chair"** means an elected representative of Council (a Councillor) appointed by Council as the Chair of the Advisory Group.
- **"Group Officer"** means the member of the Rural Fire Service as elected by members of Rural Fire Brigades of a Rural Fire Brigade Group to assist in administration matters and to represent the Rural Fire Brigade Group.
- **"Local Disaster Coordinator"** means the Local Disaster Coordinator as appointed in accord with the *Disaster Management Act 2003*.
- **"Rural Fire Brigade"** means a group of persons registered as a rural fire brigade under the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990* with responsibilities under the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990* for an area within Council's area.
- **"Rural Fire Brigade Group"** means a number of Rural Fire Brigades within the Council region functioning as a group for administrative purposes.
- **"Rural Fire Service"** means *Rural Fire Service Queensland*.

6.0 POLICY STATEMENT:

6.1 Advisory Group

6.1.1 Composition, Meetings and Functions of the Advisory Group

The Advisory Group established by Council has the following membership:

- An elected representative (a Councillor) as Chair;
- The General Manager Finance, Governance & Risk of Council;
- The Local Disaster Coordinator of Council;
- The Disaster Response Specialist of Council;
- The Area Director, Rural Fire Service, Gladstone Area;
- The Group Officer of the Port Curtis Rural Fire Brigade Group; and
- The Group Officer of the Miriam Vale Rural Fire Brigade Group.

6.1.2 Frequency of Meetings of the Advisory Group

The Advisory Group shall meet as and when required in order to perform its function.

6.1.3 Functions of the Advisory Group

The Advisory Group shall operate in accordance with the following arrangements:

1. No levies as such are collected on behalf of Rural Fire Brigades;
2. Funding provided is done by way of donation from the general rate;
3. Brigades provide appropriate reports and documents to the Area Director, Rural Fires for consideration. These include financial statements, operational plans and future programs;
4. The Area Director, Rural Fires recommends funding allocations at a meeting of the GRC Rural Fires Finance Group;

5. This group then determines, on the advice of the Area Director and following subsequent discussion and agreement, the funding amounts recommended to be provided to each brigade;
6. Leftover monies are then kept in “reserve” for contributing towards funding major items of equipment such as vehicles or for assisting with the provision of plant and equipment in fire emergencies.

6.2 Council Funding Provision

6.2.1 Guiding Principles

- a) Council funding provision is founded on the basis that it is unreasonable to expect volunteers to fundraise in order to provide an emergency service (in its entirety), particularly given the statutory training and subsequent administrative requirements pertaining to volunteers.
- b) In recognition of this foundation principle Council accepts its obligations to provide funding towards Rural Fire Brigades as a donation for the following areas:
 - I. Operational Expenses
Primarily, funding is provided towards the operational expenditure of Rural Fire Brigades. Brigades will receive funds each year for operating expenses only. Such expenditure includes telephone, electricity, fuel and other costs associated with running a Rural Fire Brigade and maintaining an ability to respond to fires as required.
 - II. Asset Maintenance
If Brigades identify as part of their forward planning, a requirement to undertake significant maintenance or upgrade to their facilities and/or assets, funding allocation will be provided subject to the availability of funds.
- c) As the Rural Fire Service has advised that the State will now fully fund the replacement of fire fighting vehicles and appliances for Rural Fire Brigades no Council funding will be allocated towards this area.
- d) Consideration will be given to contributing toward the cost of acquiring a suitable Operational Support Vehicle if a demonstrated need exists.
- e) Whilst Council may collect levies via its rating powers under the *Local Government Act 2009* for funding for Rural Fire Brigades, no levies will be raised by Council on behalf of Rural Fire Brigades.
- f) The level of Council funding provided will take into consideration recommendations provided to Council by the Advisory Group.
- g) The Advisory Group will review funding annually and make recommendations to Council for any amended funding at least annually.
- h) Council will determine the total annual funding provision as part of its annual budget deliberations and any amendments to funding.

6.2.2 Requests for Additional Funds

In the event that a Rural Fire Brigade is likely to exhaust their funds due to unbudgeted extraordinary expenses (such as unbudgeted repairs to equipment) or unexpectedly high fuel costs due to a heavy demand fire season, a request for additional funding is to be lodged with the Area Director Rural Fire Service with notification to the relevant Group Officer. The requests will be considered by the Area Director Rural Fire Service who will prepare a report to the appropriate Council Officers on the request for an additional funding allocation. Subject to the availability of funds from within the Capital and Contingency Reserve for Emergency Services, Council may consider the additional funding request and arrange payment within 14 days of approval, if provided.

6.2.3 Carry-forward on Unutilised Council Funding Allocations

Any unused moneys allocated to the Rural Fire Brigades as at 30 June will be carried over to the following financial year and be kept in reserve for contributing to future equipment acquisition, including operational support vehicles, or for funding the provision of Council plant and equipment in fire emergencies.

6.2.4 Payments

When budget allocations have been approved by Council for disbursement, they will be disbursed in accord with Council's Procurement Policy and Financial Delegations. Such disbursements will be by way of Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) to the Rural Fire Brigades' nominated bank accounts.

6.3 REQUIREMENTS OF RURAL FIRE BRIGADES

To be eligible for funding allocation under this policy, Rural Fire Brigades must comply with the following requirements:

6.3.1 Documentation

- a) Brigades must provide appropriate reports and documents to the Area Director Rural Operations for consideration and collation when requested in each year for the previous financial year as follows:
 - A copy of the Annual General Meeting minutes of the Rural Fire Brigade where the audited statement of accounts (Profit and Loss and Balance Sheet) for was adopted;
 - A copy of the Rural Fire Brigade's audited statement of accounts (profit and Loss and Balance Sheet) for the most recent financial year;
 - A 1-year operational plan for the next financial year (July to June);
 - A 3-year management plan (including estimated cost of capital items required); for the next 3 financial years (July to June); and
 - A financial budget for next financial year (July to June).
- b) The information and documents provided by the Rural Fire Brigades to Council are utilised by Council as documented evidence for auditing purposes for the expenditure of public monies.

6.3.2 Provision of Bank Details

- a) As payments to Rural Fire Brigades are made by Council via Electronic Funds Transfer, Rural Fire Brigades must supply Council with their bank details to ensure payment can occur.
- b) Details required include the name and branch of the financial institution, the BSB number and the account number.
- c) Any changes to the bank and/or account details are to be notified to the Council at the earliest opportunity.

6.4 REQUIREMENTS OF THE RURAL FIRE SERVICE

6.4.1 Documentation

The Rural Fire Service is to supply Council with copies of the funding submissions and associated documentation provided by the Rural Fire Brigades as detailed in section 6.3.1 with such documentation to be provided prior to commencement of the next financial year (July to June).

6.4.2 Recommendations

The Area Director Rural Fire Service will make a recommendation to the appropriate Council Officers regarding the total funding required for next financial year based on the submissions by the Rural Fire Brigades. This is provided by way of a summary of the funding submissions in a spread sheet or similar format identifying operational and other costs.

7.0 ATTACHMENTS:

Nil

8.0 REVIEW MECHANISM:

This policy will be reviewed when any of the following occur:

1. The related legislation or governing documents are amended or replaced; or
2. Other circumstances as determined by resolution of Council or the CEO; or
3. Three years from date of adoption.

TABLE OF AMENDMENTS			
Document History	Date	Council Resolution No.	Notes (including the prior Policy No, change/s, etc)
Originally Adopted	4 May 2010	10/149	
Amendment 1	5 November 2013	G/13/1775	Formerly Policy P-3.11.02
Amendment 2	15 December 2015	G/15/2712	Formerly P-2013/24
Amendment 3			

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER