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Local Government New Zealand
te pūtahi matakokiri

Fire Legislation Review

Local Government New Zealand Position Statement

Suggestions for Moving Forward

Local Government New Zealand is committed to continued work on the fire legislation reviews, and proposes the following steps as a means of progressing the issue:

- Parallel and simultaneous review of the Forest and Rural Fires Act 1977 and the Fire Service Act 1975 as the most effective means of addressing the local government sector's concerns about equity of funding and a consistent and unconditional legal mandate protecting all fire-fighters.
- Consideration of measures to improve rural sector's access to national funds for equipment and funding, independent of any decision to join the National Fire Service. One possible measure would be an increase of the Rural Fire Grant to pay or to cover at least non-fire rescue roles. Further analysis of the current funding system is needed to ensure that all landowners pay their relative fair share (depending on risk and services delivered).
- A clear mandate (and legislated liability coverage) for all fire and rescue personnel is needed. Currently there is no mandate for any fire fighter to attend non-fire rescue and emergency incidents. Rural fire fighters often attend non-fire rescue situations as a first responder (particularly in isolated rural communities) and this activity needs to be provided for in legislation. There is a concern that to date this mandate has been conditional on the discretion of the National Fire Service.
- Further consideration of a regional collaborative model to help with regional planning, the development of regional strategies and linkages with civil defence and emergency management groups (Regional Fire Plans).
- Maintenance of the present dual system with flexibility to allow those councils who wish to join the national fire service, to do so, while ensuring that those who do not still obtain an adequate mandate, and suffer no significant resourcing disadvantage.
- Local government remains of the view that major change to the existing structures, functions and systems of fire organisations is not necessary. Evidence shows that the current system is working but that there needs to be some legislative changes to resolve issues of equity and mandate (as outlined above).

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