



COMPENSATION OF EMERGENCY SERVICES VOLUNTEERS

Policy statement

- 1. The association does not support government incentives to individuals based on time spent volunteering.*
- 2. Bushfire Volunteers strongly encourages all levels of government to remove all disincentives to emergency services volunteering.*

Rationale for this policy

It is often said the number of people willing and able to volunteer in Western Australia's emergency services is in decline. Bushfire Volunteers and others also agree that the enormous value of our emergency services volunteers is often under-estimated or overlooked.

In order to address these two issues and ensure a sustainable volunteer workforce, it is occasionally argued that government should pay a wage or other direct incentive to individuals for time spent volunteering with an emergency service.

The association does not support personally incentivizing volunteering in this way for reasons including:

- The very definition of "volunteering" requires non-payment to those donating their time.
- A critical and unifying feature of WA's Volunteer Bush Fire Service culture is the universal acceptance that no-one participates in pursuit of extrinsic reward.

Bushfire Volunteers does, however, strongly advocate for government intervention to remove disincentives that may be a barrier to an individual donating their time and skills as an emergency service volunteer.

There are currently many direct and indirect disincentives and potential barriers to participation including:

- Volunteers' out-of-pocket expenses (eg fuel, personal vehicle use etc) incurred while volunteering
- Inconsistent provision of uniforms, tools, training, infrastructure etc between services
- Lack of basic facilities such as toilets, showers, washing machines, water, power at Brigades
- Personal and property safety and security concerns
- Lost wages and potential for conflict with employers regarding time/wages during an emergency
- Poor understanding and/or acceptance of Bush Fire Service culture
- Rigid, cumbersome and bureaucratic policies and procedures that burden (rather than support) volunteers going about their work

Policy adopted date:	24 November 2019		
Requires periodic review?	NO	Date of next review:	N/A