



ACT Government

BUDGET 2006-2007

MEDIA RELEASE

No. 48

NEW LEVY TO BETTER MEET COSTS OF FIRE SERVICES

The ACT Government will introduce a fire levy and false alarm call-out fee in the 2006-07 Budget to better reflect the costs of providing fire protection services to the Canberra community, Minister for Emergency Services Simon Corbell said today.

Mr Corbell said a fire levy of \$84 would be included in future general rates notices. People on a pension and disadvantaged households would have the rate reduced by 50 per cent.

“At present, the ACT is the only jurisdiction in Australia — with the exception of the Northern Territory — that does not charge a levy for fire or emergency services,” Mr Corbell said.

“In each of the States, the levy represents the main source of funding for those services.

“The new ACT fire levy will ensure that charges better reflect the cost to government of providing fire protection services. It is particularly necessary in the ACT which, when compared to other jurisdictions, has a significantly lower capacity to raise revenue for essential services.”

The levy was expected to generate \$20 million in revenue per year.

Mr Corbell said a false alarm call-out fee would be charged for third and subsequent false alarms resulting from the same system fault. The fee would be charged at a rate of \$200 for residential and community properties and \$500 for commercial properties.

“Every day, the ACT Fire Brigade incurs high costs in responding to system-initiated false alarms. An average of 13 such faults occur each day,” he said.

“In some cases, the Fire Brigade responds repeatedly to false alarms at the same property, due to system faults that have not been corrected. The new false alarm call-out fee will help recover the costs incurred.

“It is also aimed to encourage property owners to properly maintain their alarm systems to ensure that the ACT Fire Brigade is not diverted to false alarms when a real emergency could be occurring somewhere else.”

Mr Corbell said the fire levy and false alarm fee would ensure that the ACT's fire protection services remained among the best in the nation.

“Due to our small size, the cost of providing fire protection services in the ACT is considerably higher than in other jurisdictions,” he said.

6 June 2006

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“These new charges will allow the ACT to maintain a high-quality, and more affordable, emergency services.”