

Councils want \$180 fire levy on owners

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COUNCILS across the state want householders to cough up more than \$400 million a year – \$180 per household – to pay for the state's fire brigades.

Traditionally, councils and insurers have picked up most of the \$484 million tab for the Rural Fire Service and the NSW Fire Brigades, which operate in urban areas. The NSW Government pays the balance.

But in a submission to a State Government review of taxes, the Local Government and Shires Associations had advocated a levy on property owners to cover the cost.

In the submission, secretary general Bill Gillooly said the current method was "lacking in transparency, accountability and equity".

"The associations are advocating a property valuation-based levy model to replace the existing fire services levies on local government and the fire services levy on insurance policy holders," he wrote.

This position was shared by the insurance industry, he said.

The move was attacked by the Urban Taskforce, a peak body of developers, which said the change pushed by local government and the insurance industry would hit every home owner.

Urban Taskforce chief executive Aaron Gadiel said the council move was blatant greed.

"Local councils are tripping over themselves in their latest grab for cash," he said.

"I acknowledge that they're being creative but when will this stop? Making householders pay another half a billion dollars in property tax is the same as increasing land tax by 30 per cent. This review of state taxes should be about making new homes more affordable – not slapping on extra taxes."

He said the latest council push came after Camden Council tried to impose a levy on new homes earlier this year to pay for council-run facilities such as wellness and massage facilities, beach volleyball courts and yoga and Pilates facilities.

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