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Civil Service Association of WA

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DEC budget is all smoke and mirrors

The Barnett Government's new fire preparedness program at the Department of Environment and Conservation is all smoke and mirrors according to the Community and Public Sector Union/Civil Service Association.

Money for the program is being siphoned from the government's across-the-board cutbacks which means a lot of work conducted by DEC staff may not get done.

"Staff are already at flashpoint with the lack of support they are receiving from the Barnett Government and this latest announcement will just add to their strain," CPSU/CSA Branch Secretary Toni Walkington said.

"It's a robbing Peter to pay Paul exercise."

The State will put \$26.583million into the program between now and 2015-16 but at the same time it will strip \$25.784million from DEC's bottom line under the guise of an efficiency dividend.

On top of that the \$300million Savings Across Government plan will take a further \$753,000 from the department's coffers over the next four years.

"Given the total outgoing figure is \$26,537,000 the total increase over four years is a paltry \$46,000 which is nothing to get excited about."

Ms Walkington said serious questions needed to be asked.

"The public needs to know about the impacts on programs and services.

"Despite the government saying they are responding to the Keelty report after the devastating bushfire in Margaret River last November they are clearly not."

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One of the key recommendations in the report tabled in Parliament earlier this year was to make succession planning a priority and to look at options to attract and retain Department of Environment and Conservation staff.

The 72-page report also said the government needed to review how the salary levels of staff matched the decision making required in major activities such as prescribed burns.

“We hope the government will still follow through on this recommendation but we are yet to see proof of that in this week’s budget papers.

Year	Fire preparedness	Efficiency Div & Savings Across Govt.
2012-13	\$5,800,000	\$3,750,000 + \$108,000
2013-14	\$6,725,000	\$5,503,000 + \$180,000
2014-15	\$6,925,000	\$7,327,000 + \$235,000
2015-16	\$7,133,000	\$9,204,000 + \$230,000
Total	\$26,583,000	\$26,537,000

FOR COMMENT:

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