

- 2026 ELECTION PRIORITY -

Emergency Services and Volunteer Fund reform

Rural and regional communities are unfairly impacted when policy decisions are made that are inequitable, poorly implemented and result in Statewide opposition

Why reform to the emergency levy is needed

The Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund (ESVF) levy is placing a growing financial burden on rural communities, including East Gippsland, where residents already face higher costs associated with disaster risk, insurance and access to services.

While the Victorian Government has announced a temporary two-year freeze on levy rates for farmers, broader concerns remain about the structure, equity and long-term affordability of the levy.

Rural councils and communities have raised concerns that the current model does not adequately reflect capacity to pay or regional risk exposure, resulting in disproportionate impacts on rural ratepayers and local economies.

Our community is asking for

This initiative supports Rural Councils Victoria's and other local governments' advocacy for reform of the ESVF levy, with a focus on improving fairness, transparency and long-term sustainability.

Key actions include:

- A review of the levy structure to better reflect regional capacity to pay
- Greater transparency in how funds are collected and distributed
- Long-term reform beyond the current temporary freeze
- Pursuing bipartisan reforms to develop long-term solutions for emergency services funding

Background

This initiative supports Rural Councils Victoria's coordinated advocacy for a fairer, more transparent and sustainable ESVF levy model. Rural councils and communities have raised concerns that the current approach does not adequately reflect capacity to

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pay or regional risk exposure, resulting in disproportionate impacts on rural ratepayers and local economies.

While Council strongly supports the vital role of emergency services volunteers across East Gippsland and the State, the policy is inequitable, poorly implemented, and has placed pressure on volunteers, volunteer organisations, rural communities and local governments as the mandated levy collection agency.

The Emergency Services Volunteer Fund levy is a tax. It funds services that should be supported from consolidated revenue, as such its collection would be better suited with the State Revenue Office, not local councils.

The levy places a disproportionate burden on Victoria's primary producers and rural communities. Local government and our communities were not adequately consulted on a reform that directly affects them.

More information

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