

Reference: ASCC/VW  
30 June 2025

The Hon. Jaclyn Symes MP  
Treasurer of Victoria  
Via email: jaclyn.symes@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Minister,

### Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund

The Councillors of the Alpine Shire had a public discussion about the Emergency Services and Volunteer Fund (ESVF) Levy at our last Council meeting. We let our communities know that we would write to you to express our concern about the roll out of the ESVF in its current form. Our communities have let us know that they are concerned about this new levy, which is a significant increase over the Fire Services Property Levy it replaces.

Whilst we recognise the need to fund vital emergency services, the levy being introduced is not a fair model as it targets farmers and other businesses, including small businesses disproportionately. We have further concerns about adding this extra charge to the increasing cost of living burdens we are all experiencing and which may perversely affect those most in need of support, particularly those renting housing or other premises, as the cost is passed on.

We also recognise the need for the State of Victoria to recover economically from the funding opportunities provided for local economic stimulus after COVID 19, bushfires, floods and for Alpine Shire also landslip and road closures. We thank you for the significant support we have received but seek a more balanced approach for this recovery.

Our concerns also include that the burden of collection of the levy is upon Councils, including reputational damage, that the roll out is rushed, not well defined and will cost Councils, such as to redesign rates notices. Importantly Councils are not currently protected from shortfalls should rate payers not pay the levy. This has the potential to reduce the capacity to deliver important local government services, particularly for Councils already in a deficit situation and with increasing materials and services costs.

We urge a review of the Emergency Services and Volunteer Fund Levy to seek a way to more fairly distribute the charges and to enable consultation with Local Governments and communities around implementation and equity. A suggestion is to stagger introduction of the levy allowing time for such a review. Building on the moratorium for primary producers this year a 50% reduction for all other ratepayers would alleviate some of our immediate concerns.

Other matters we suggest should be reviewed, include the collection method and the exemption process.

Thank you for your assistance with this matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'S. Nicholas'.

Councillor Sarah Nicholas  
Mayor

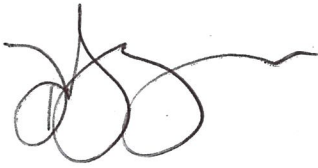
Councillor Peter Smith  
Deputy Mayor

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Councillor John Andersen

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Councillor Dave Byrne

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Councillor Gareth Graham

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Councillor Jean-Pierre Ronco

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Councillor Noah Tanzen

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