

DRAFT MAV State Council Motion

1. Name of Motion

Motion to Condemn the Emergency Services and Volunteer Fund

2. Motion (250 words)

That, while MAV acknowledges the importance of adequate funding for emergency services, MAV condemns the Emergency Services and Volunteer Fund (ESVF) for the following key reasons:

- The disproportionate impact of the ESVF on primary producers
- The obscenely steep increase imposed onto all ratepayers
- The ongoing expectation that local councils act as the collection agency for a state-imposed tax

The ESVF variable rate for Primary Production properties is nearly 3 times the Fire Services Property Levy (FSPL) rate. The exorbitant impost on primary producers penalises the very people who make the biggest contribution to the emergency relief and response efforts in regional and rural areas.

3. Submitted by (Council name)

Ararat Rural City Council

4. Other supporting councils (please list, optional)

Mansfield
Moorabool
(more to be added)

5. Please attach written confirmation from supporting councils

(Letters to be obtained prior to submitting this motion to MAV)

6. Is this motion supported by resolution of Council? Yes/no

yes

7. If yes, please insert date of resolution

25/02/2025

8. Does the subject matter of this motion have state-wide significance to local government?

Yes

9. If yes, briefly describe how this motion impacts the sector as a whole

Local councils are currently tasked with collecting the FSPL and the ESVF, which creates a significant administrative burden on local government and as the collection agency.

Council staff bear the brunt of disgruntled ratepayers when they see the increased total bill on their rates notice, yet none of the ESVF is guaranteed to be spent in the municipality where it is collected.

12. Please provide the rationale for your proposed motion (up to 350 words)

From 1 July 2025, the Fire Services Property Levy (FSPL) will be replaced by the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund (ESVF).

For most property sectors in Ararat Rural City, the ESVF is close to double the existing FSPL variable rate (cents per \$1,000 CIV). For the Primary Production properties, the rate is nearly tripled.

In dollar terms, the Ararat Rural City Council collected approx. \$2.7 million of FSPL in 2024/25 for the State Government. In 2025/26, the ESVF would be over \$5.5 million from the Ararat Rural City alone, an increase of \$2.8 million. Most of this (88% or approx. \$2.5 million) would be paid for by Primary Production properties.

The exemption for active emergency services volunteers and life members provides little relief for many of our local farmers. Their primary place of residence is often on a separate title to their farm or they have multiple properties that have been acquired over the years or generations.

For example, an Ararat Rural City farmer and active emergency services volunteer paid approx. \$27,000 in total for the FSPL in 2024/25. In 2025/26 under the ESVF, this farmer

would be required to pay over \$77,000. The exemption due to being an active volunteer would only save them \$1,300.

Our ratepayers in Pomonal have been impacted by two significant bushfires in less than 12 months. First in February 2024 where the 45 homes that were lost have not yet been rebuilt, and again by the recent bushfires in the Grampians. The recent bushfires prevented the local tourism businesses from being able to trade during their busiest time of the year, meaning they lost thousands of dollars worth of stock and they missed out on building up their cash buffer for the quieter times. One of these commercial businesses will be charged over \$4,000 in ESVF charges, nearly double what they paid in FSPL in 2024/25.

The ESVF is a poorly formulated revenue system with little regard for the financial impact and circumstances of those who will incur the greatest cost due to this change. The ESVF should therefore be condemned.