

**September 10, 2025**

**Statement: Victorian businesses cannot endure any additional costs!**

In December 2024, the 2024 – 2025 Budget Update came with an announcement from the Victorian Government that the Fire Services Property Levy (FSPL) would be replaced with an Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund (ESVF). This came into effect from 1 July 2025. With annual rates currently being received around the State this extra levy is being felt especially by those who own or rent commercial businesses. We acknowledge that in the year ahead all primary production properties situated in a drought area will have the levy held at the old rate as a support measure.

Our members are reporting that business across the state are experiencing tough trading conditions and increased operational costs. The EVSF levy will add significantly to the “cost of doing business” in Victoria with commercial properties expected to see an average increase in the levy of 63%. We are seeing business communities under serious threat; they cannot afford any additional costs. A sample of VRCA members advise average increases across the following sectors hospitality 114%, professional services 112%, retail 60% and manufacturing 34%.

Rural Councils Victoria has highlighted that this new levy will take \$139 million from rural communities annually.

“We question the Government’s consultation process around this introduced levy and wonder whether engagement with a range of businesses was undertaken. It is very clear to our members that this increased levy will add significantly to financial stress in the current environment.”

Victorian Regional Chamber Alliance members implore the Government to acknowledge the current crisis in our business communities and explore ways to make doing business easier and cheaper!

Regional and rural communities are grappling with unique challenges bushfires, flood, drought, increased insurance and energy costs, poor accessibility to both roads, rail and public transport. This is just another example of this Government’s inability to appreciate and acknowledge the very real crisis in our state.

Chambers of Commerce which themselves are under threat are witnessing firsthand the exhaustion and mental health issues of our business owners and farmers each and every day.

**Regards,**

**Jodie Gillett**



Chair, Victoria Regional Chamber Alliance

**For all enquiries, please contact the Commerce Ballarat office on 03 5333 3233**

