



## MINUTES

**SCHEDULED MEETING OF MOIRA SHIRE COUNCIL  
HELD AT COBRAM CIVIC CENTRE PUNT ROAD,  
COBRAM,  
WEDNESDAY 28 MAY 2025**

The meeting commenced at 5:00PM

**PRESENT** Chair Administrator Graeme Emonson PSM  
Administrator Susan Benedyka

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Matthew Morgan - Chief Executive Officer  
Bryan Sword - Director Sustainable Development  
Thomas Lyle – Acting Director Infrastructure  
Scott Williams - Director Community  
Amanda Finn - Manager Governance, Risk & Performance  
Beau Mittner – Manager Finance  
Nancy Mustica - Coordinator Governance & Risk

### RECORDING

Consistent with Council's Live Streaming and Publishing Recordings of Council Meetings Policy, Council officers have been authorised to record the public session of this meeting using an audio-visual recording device.

### LIVE STREAMING

Council meetings are lived streamed and recorded to allow those interested to view proceedings access to Council decisions and debate without attending the meeting in person.

### 1. WELCOME CALLING TO ORDER – CEO

### 2. PRAYER

Almighty God we humbly ask you to guide our deliberations for the welfare and benefit of the Moira Shire and its people whom we serve.

Amen

### 3. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS

We, the Moira Shire Council, acknowledge the traditional owners of the land upon which we meet and pay our respects to their Elders both past and present.

### 4. APOLOGIES / LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Nil

### 5. DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Nil

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**6. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**MOTION:**

ADMINISTRATOR SUSAN BENEDYKA / CHAIR ADMINISTRATOR GRAEME EMONSON

That the minutes of the Scheduled Council Meeting held on Wednesday, 30 April 2025 and the minutes of the Unscheduled Meeting of Council held on Wednesday, 14 May 2025, as presented, be adopted.

(CARRIED)

**7. ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSES**

**Chair Administrator Graeme Emonson**

I had the pleasure of attending the Wangaratta Police Service Area's Neighbourhood Policing Forum on 1 May at the Cobram Civic Centre. This was an opportunity for local Police together with regional command to engage with the community on recent crime statistics, Policing priorities and future initiatives. I would like to thank Divisional Area Commander Joy Arbuthnot, Inspector Ash Mason and Senior Sergeant Nathan Ractliffe for their initiative in hosting this forum in Moira.

In addition to this, Council, in partnership with local Police, conducted our second Community Safety Forum for 2025 in Numurkah on 20 May. This again was a great opportunity to engage with local residents about safety issues that matter most to them at the local level. We thank the Numurkah residents that participated in this important engagement.

In the last month Bega has announced the proposed closure of its Strathmerton manufacturing site, with closure aimed for mid-2026. This will impact approximately 300 staff and is obviously devastating news for our region. We have been working very closely with Bega management, Regional Development Victoria, the Minister for Regional Development and local Members of Parliament to mitigate the impacts of the proposed job losses, including understanding opportunities for redeployment, retraining and bringing forward investment in other industries to create job opportunities. Our position in all these discussions is that we need to see local jobs created to replace local jobs lost. We have also been meeting with members of the Strathmerton Community Planning Committee to understand local community impacts, and we thank these members for their time and efforts to date. We look forward to continuing to work closely with them.

I had the pleasure of participating in a simultaneous children's story reading at the Cobram Library on 21 May. This initiative was conducted across Australia and New Zealand and involved the same book being read to children simultaneously. This initiative highlights the importance of reading to children in their early years to develop literacy skills. It was a fabulous opportunity to share the children's book titled *The Truck Cat* with thirty 4-year old preschoolers.

On 22 May I had the great pleasure of conferring Australian Citizenship on eight Moira residents who have chosen to make Australia their permanent home. Citizenship Ceremonies are always a wonderful celebration with the recipients, their families and supporters. We congratulate our newest Australian Citizens for taking this significant step and look forward to their continued contribution to our communities.

CEO Matthew Morgan and I attended the State Council of the Municipal Association of Victoria on Friday 16 May. The State Council meeting enables all Victorian councils to come together to discuss matters of mutual interest and to advocate for better outcomes for local government.

Finally, I would like to thank those members of the Moira community who have engaged in the consultation on Council's draft strategic documents which are now available for community input. The suite of strategic documents set out the blueprint for Moira's future. They include our

long-term financial plan, the 4-year Council Plan, a long-term Asset Plan and a Rating and Revenue Strategy. We have undertaken an extensive community engagement approach over the past month including through print and radio media, social media, and in-person pop up sessions in our major towns. I want to thank the many Council staff who have been involved in the preparation of these key documents and in leading the community engagement. We look forward to now considering the community's feedback before finalising these documents in the next month.

### **Administrator Susan Benedyka Community Catchups**

Over the past month, we've had the pleasure of meeting with local communities in a relaxed, informal setting. These events allow residents to meet the Administrators and CEO, hear about Council initiatives, and share their concerns. The catchups were held in:

- Cobram (6 May)
- Yarrawonga (13 May)
- Bearii (14 May)
- Numurkah (20 May)
- Nathalia (27 May)

A variety of issues were raised, ranging from local projects and community-led ideas to specific requests for council action. The Bearii catch-up was particularly memorable, with 8 dedicated community members engaging in meaningful discussions. A thank-you card from a Cobram attendee summed it up perfectly: *"Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be heard in a friendly environment ..."*

Thank you to all community members who take the time to meet with us in this way. We really appreciate the matters you bring to our attention, and we look forward to continuing to work with you and for you.

### **Tiny Towns Funding Announcement**

On 9 May, Minister for Regional Development Jaclyn Symes visited Waaia to announce the success of 159 projects funded under round 2 of the Tiny Towns Fund, worth over \$5.1 million. Tiny Towns funds are provided for selected projects in rural and regional towns of fewer than 5,000 people. Waaia's successful project will fund a mural on the grain silo, adding to the renowned Silo Art trail. Tungamah also received funding for seating and BBQ areas in a Community Gathering Park. Well done to both communities! There is so much work that goes into these applications and to coordinating so many elements of the projects. It was wonderful to share in the very heartfelt and positively emotional response of members of the Waaia committee who did so much work over a two-year period to have this successful outcome. Thank you to our dedicated community team at Council for their work assisting the communities with their applications.

### **Youth Council**

I had the privilege of spending time with the Youth Council during their team building and leadership training on 9 May. Their enthusiasm and growth are inspiring, and I look forward to seeing them continue to thrive and make a difference in our communities.

### **Moira Community Leadership Program Graduation**

On 21 May, Chair Administrator Emonson and I celebrated the graduation of the Moira Community Leadership Program. This program empowers local leaders to build skills, networks, and resilience, equipping them to navigate challenges and contribute meaningfully to their communities. So empowering to hear the transformative journeys shared by the participants. Looking forward to their contributions. Congratulations again.

### **Nathalia Senior Citizens Birthday**

It was a joy to join the Nathalia Senior Citizens in celebrating their 56th anniversary on 22 May. The event highlighted the importance of community connections, and it was wonderful to hear from so many people who cherish the facilities and companionship offered by the Senior Citizens.

### **Volunteer Celebrations**

As part of National Volunteer Week, thank-you luncheons were held in Yarroweyah, Wunghnu, St James, and Picola. I attended events in St James (21 May) and Picola (22 May), where we celebrated the invaluable contributions of our volunteers. The dedication and commitment of volunteers makes all our communities stronger, and these events were a heartfelt opportunity to show our appreciation. Again, my thanks to the wonderful Moira Shire team who created these events as a way of expressing our thanks.

### **Yarrawonga Rally Against Family Violence**

On a more somber note, I attended the rally against family and gender-based violence in Yarrawonga on 10 May. Hundreds gathered on the foreshore to stand against violence towards women. It was one of many rallies held around Australia on that day. The rally was a powerful reminder of the ongoing work required to combat violence in all forms.

## **8. EXECUTIVE REPORTS**

### **Chief Executive Officer – Matthew Morgan**

Understanding our local and regional economy and how we can strengthen this remains a key focus, and there's a few things I'd like to highlight, particularly in light of the Bega Strathmerton announcement last month and the announcement that Brown Rugose has again been detected in seedlings at Katunga Fresh.

We are actively monitoring both situations. With regards to Bega we are actively working with RDV and Bega as well as connecting with the local community at Strathmerton to understand what supports are required and which agency is best suited to assist. With regards to Katunga Fresh, we've reached out, however everyone is in a holding pattern at the moment until there is clarity around how the situation will be managed under national guidelines.

The *economic accord* between Moira, Campaspe and Greater Shepparton has now been formally passed by all three Councils, this is a symbolic milestone which embodies the desire to work collaboratively to grow our regional economy.

Alongside this I with this I met with the CEOs of the Councils and representatives from RDV to discuss our collective approach to economic transition in the GMID, particularly as a result of water buy backs – and the focus will be on understanding the barriers to business and industry and looking at ways to make business more sustainable and reduce cost inputs such as electricity, gas and understand how we can address workforce and workforce housing issues. So more to come in this space in the coming months.

We continue to meet with large businesses and industry within our district, to understand the current economic environment and what opportunities and challenges the future holds. This month we visited Linton Ryan at Ryan's Meats – a great local success story of a family business that has continued to evolve and grow over many years and now employs over 140 staff in Nathalia. Last month we visited Saputo and Flavorite and we have more visits scheduled with businesses over the next 6 to 8 weeks.

The Goulburn Partnership meeting was held in Numurkah this month and I presented an overview of Moira, our current challenges and the future opportunities to the partnership group, alongside updates from Mike Nichols from Flavorite and Michael Crisera from Fruit Growers Victoria.

In addition to this I've attended many community focused events including the Community Leadership Program Graduation (Cobram), Community Panel Visioning session (Cobram), Community Safety Forum (Numurkah), Waaia Silo Art Tiny Towns Announcement (Waaia). I've also attended numerous Industry and stakeholder meetings including attending the MAV State Council meeting in Melbourne, MRGC CEOs meeting.

This month we also had two cohorts of staff attend On Country Cultural Awareness training at the Dharnya Centre in Barmah, hosted by Yorta Yorta Aboriginal Corporation including joining the Kingfisher experience. This is an incredibly important part of our organisational and personal learning around Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal people's experience and will help underpin the commitments that we will be making in the Reconciliation Action Plan which is currently nearing completion.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the ESVF (Emergency Services Volunteer Fund) levy that has now passed into legislation. I note that we do have some public questions about this tonight. We remain respectful of the need for sustainable funding for emergency services, and this was evident when we met with the local SES unit here in Cobram several weeks ago, however we don't agree with the way the ESVF will be imposed.

Our advocacy as a sector will continue via the MAV and RCV and as a Council we've written to the Minister for Emergency Services to request a meeting to understand how the additional levy funds from our district will be used and what guarantees we can seek to ensure that funding comes back to our local units where it is very much needed.

A reminder that we have a considerable amount of strategic documents out for consultation at the moment, including the Council Plan, Financial Plan, Annual Budget, Asset Plan and Revenue and Rating Plan. Please do head along to Moira Matters and take a look at these important strategic documents, they will set our course and direction over the next 4 years.

I'd like to acknowledge the significant amount of work being completed by our Council teams at the moment, a lot of it is visible and we can see (such as in the parks and public spaces which are being presented very well at the moment) and much that we can't see. There is a lot going on, we have a lot of community consultation and engagement going on and we encourage everyone to provide their feedback.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge Fiona Shanks and her contributions over the past 8 months as Director Corporate Performance, Fiona left us this month. Fiona is an experienced local government professional, and we were lucky to have her join us here at Moira, however I respect the personal circumstances behind Fiona's decision to step down and we wish her all the best for the future.

### **Thomas Lyle – Acting Director Infrastructure**

Council remains committed to fostering strong community connections through meaningful initiatives that enhance local spaces and encourage engagement. As part of Reconciliation Week, efforts are underway by Council's operational team to plant semi-mature trees across several towns, contributing to environmental sustainability and cultural recognition. From Cobram's Indigenous tree garden to revitalised green areas in Yarrawonga, Tungamah, Numurkah, and Nathalia, these projects reflect Council's dedication to creating welcoming, shared spaces for residents. Additionally, smaller tube stock plantings will involve local schools, allowing children to take an active role in shaping their environment.

The first of many worksites for the Numurkah Levee Stage One has been successfully completed. We sincerely appreciate the community's support in adapting to the changing conditions, even as the well-loved walking tracks along the river undergo temporary closures. Council remains committed to keeping residents informed throughout the project's progress by utilising various communication methods, including the Council's website, social media, and local newspapers. To stay connected and receive the latest updates on the Numurkah Levee project, we encourage residents to subscribe to our social media channels or visit the Council's website.

Council values its strong partnerships with contractors, recognising their essential role in delivering successful community projects. The Yarrawonga Five Ways intersection upgrade, Nathalia Harcourt Street, Numurkah Levee, and Wunghnu Road projects exemplify the shared commitment between Council and its partners to achieving meaningful community

improvements. While these projects bring long-term benefits, Council acknowledges the disruptions infrastructure works can have on daily life and sincerely appreciates the community's support throughout their delivery.

### **Bryan Sword – Director Sustainable Development**

#### **Bundalong Structure Plan**

Community consultation is commencing for the Bundalong Structure Plan. Consultation dates are:

- Thursday 12 June 2025 5-7pm - Dan Cronin Recreation Reserve Public Hall
- Friday 13 June 2025 9-11am - Watts in Bundalong Café
- Tuesday 17 June 2025 June 6 -7.30pm - Online Session

### **Emergency Management**

- Moira Municipal Fire Management Plan has just received its Statement of Assurance at the Regional Emergency Management Planning Committee.

### **Scott Williams – Director Community**

We recently celebrated National Volunteers Week with events in St James, Picola, and Wunghnu—thank you to everyone who joined us to recognise our incredible volunteers.

We also held the Local Safety Forum in Numurkah—a big thank you to all who attended and contributed. The next forum will be held in Nathalia this August.

Here in Cobram, we celebrated the Community Leadership Program graduation and also welcomed our newest Australian citizens at a ceremony last Thursday evening—congratulations to all!

A big shoutout to our Communications, Engagement, and Governance teams for their work engaging the community on the Council Plan, Budget, Financial and Asset Plans, and the Rating and Revenue Plan.

There's still time to provide feedback via Moira Matters.

Looking ahead:

- The Moira Jobs and Careers Expo is on Thursday 19 June at the Cobram Civic Centre from 11am to 4pm.
- For Men's Health Week, we're teaming up with NCN Health and Yarrawonga Health to shout breakfast for the blokes—free coffee and egg & bacon rolls at locations across the shire from 3 to 12 June.
- And as part of National Reconciliation Week, we're welcoming Isaiah Firebrace to the Cobram Library on Friday 30 May at 11am for a special reading of his book *Come Together*. It'll also be live-streamed to Nathalia, Numurkah, and Yarrawonga Libraries.

FILE NO:  
4. CUSTOMER FOCUSED AND RESPONSIVE

ITEM NO: 9.1.1  
(MANAGER GOVERNANCE, RISK &  
PERFORMANCE, AMANDA FINN)

## MOIRA2045 COMMUNITY VISION

### Executive Summary

The draft *Moira2045* Community Vision was prepared in accordance with section 88 of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) and Council's Community Engagement Policy.

A Community Panel was established in November 2024 and worked with Council to undertake the development of the Community Vision through a series of workshops using a deliberative, community-centred approach. The final *Moira2045* Community Vision is now ready for consideration by Council.

### MOTION

ADMINISTRATOR SUSAN BENEDYKA / CHAIR ADMINISTRATOR GRAEME EMONSON

That Council:

1. Commend and thank the 18 members of the Community Panel for their collective work in developing the *Moira2045* Community Vision,
2. Acknowledge that *Moira2045* Community Vision will replace *MoiraVision2035*, and
3. Adopt the *Moira2045* Community Vision that was developed in accordance with Section 88 of the *Local Government Act 2020* and Council's Community Engagement Policy, as tabled.

(CARRIED)

FILE NO:  
5. TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE  
GOVERNANCE

ITEM NO: 9.1.2  
(MANAGER FINANCE, BEAU MITTNER)

## REVENUE COLLECTION AND FINANCIAL HARDSHIP POLICY

### Executive Summary

The purpose of the *Revenue Collection and Financial Hardship Policy* (Policy) is to ensure Council is meeting its legislative requirements in the collection of Council rates, fees, and charges, whilst ensuring flexibility is afforded to those members of the community experiencing hardship, and payment methods implemented align with the evolving needs of the community.

This report seeks Council adoption of the final Policy following conclusion of the community engagement process.

### MOTION

CHAIR ADMINISTRATOR GRAEME EMONSON / ADMINISTRATOR SUSAN BENEDYKA

That Council:

1. Note the feedback received during the community engagement process, and write to the submitters thanking them for their submission and advising how the matters they raised have been considered,
2. Adopt the *Revenue Collection and Financial Hardship Policy* as presented in Attachment 1, and
3. Revoke the *Financial Hardship Policy*.

(CARRIED)

FILE NO:  
1. A WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE PLACE

ITEM NO: 9.2.1  
(MANAGER COMMUNITY WELLBEING,  
HOLLIE BARNES)

## WELLBEING FOR ALL AGES ANNUAL REVIEW 2024

### Executive Summary

Moira Shire Council adopted the *Wellbeing for All Ages Strategy 2021 – 2025* in October 2021. In accordance with the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008, Victorian Councils are required to review their plans annually.

This report details the 2024 review of Moira Shire's *Wellbeing for All Ages Strategy 2021 – 2025* and outlines the high-level actions that have been implemented to support the priority areas of the Strategy. There are no recommended changes to the strategy as a result of this review.

### MOTION

ADMINISTRATOR SUSAN BENEDYKA / CHAIR ADMINISTRATOR GRAEME EMONSON

That Council:

1. Note the *Wellbeing for All Ages Strategy 2021 - 2025 Annual Review 2024*, as presented in Attachment 1; and
2. Acknowledge the positive work that has been completed in order to deliver on the objectives of the *Wellbeing for All Ages Strategy 2021 – 2025* including through strong collaboration with our community partners.

(CARRIED)

FILE NO:  
5. TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE  
GOVERNANCE

ITEM NO: 9.3.1  
(DIRECTOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT,  
BRYAN SWORD)

## PLANNING PERMIT APPLICATION 5/2023/269 - RESIDENTIAL VILLAGE - BREARS ROAD, YARRAWONGA

### Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to refer Planning Permit application 5/2023/269 to Council for decision. This application seeks approvals relating to the staged use and development of a Residential Village on land located on the north-east corner of the intersection of Brears Road and the Murray Valley Highway, Yarrawonga.

The subject site is located across the Low Density Residential Zone (LDRZ) and the Rural Living Zone (RLZ) and is partly affected by the Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO) and Floodway Overlay (RFO).

The proposal consists of the development of 205 dwellings along with a community center, a well-being center and recreational facilities for residents of the proposed village. The proposal will involve the creation of an internal road network and requires the removal of native vegetation and alterations to existing easements and infrastructure for raw water and electricity supply, drainage and access across the subject site in favour of nearby properties and relevant service authorities.

The application has been publicly advertised, which resulted in a total of 20 objections, including one from DEECA as the 'owner' of the adjoining Crown land to the north of the subject site. At the time of writing, five of the objections have since been withdrawn, resulting in a total of 15 outstanding objections to the application.

The main issues raised in the submissions relate to the density of the proposed use and development and character of the area, traffic impacts, a shortfall in car parking requirements, amenity impacts, waste management, impacts on local services and infrastructure including a raw water pipeline passing through the subject site, amenity and traffic impacts during construction works, and native vegetation removal. Other concerns raised relate to aboriginal cultural heritage, the 'transportable' nature of the proposed dwellings and the personal housing situation of current residents onsite.

The application has been referred externally to the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP), the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GBCMA) and the Country Fire Authority (CFA), and internally to Engineering, Environmental Health, Sustainability and Economic Development.

All external authorities have responded by providing conditional consent to the application. Internal department responses also provide conditional consent to the application.

The application was amended on the 9<sup>th</sup> April 2025 under Section 57A of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 in order to remove a sixth property, 52 Brears Road, Yarrawonga, from the application to align with the Cultural Heritage Management Plan approved for the proposal. Updated documentation reflecting the removal of this property has been provided accordingly.

The application has been assessed against the relevant policies and the provisions under the Moira Planning Scheme (the Scheme). On balance, it is recommended that the application be approved and a Notice of Decision to Grant a Planning Permit be issued.

FILE NO:  
5. TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE  
GOVERNANCE

ITEM NO: 9.3.1  
(DIRECTOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT,  
BRYAN SWORD)

**PLANNING PERMIT APPLICATION 5/2023/269 - RESIDENTIAL VILLAGE - BREARS  
ROAD, YARRAWONGA (cont'd)**

**MOTION**

CHAIR ADMINISTRATOR GRAEME EMONSON / ADMINISTRATOR SUSAN BENEDYKA

That Council;

1. Having considered Planning Permit application 5/2023/269 on its merits and the objections received, resolve pursuant to Section 61(1) of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 to grant a permit and to subsequently issue a notice of decision to grant a permit for the use and development of the land for the purposes of a residential village subject to the conditions in Attachment 1, inclusive of the following amendments;
  - (a) Condition 2(iii) be amended to require the provision of a minimum of 31 formal visitor car parking spaces on site;
  - (b) Condition 4 be amended to remove the word 'collector'.
  - (c) The third sentence in condition 9 be amended to provide 'unless otherwise agreed in writing by the owners of the raw water supply pipeline, the works must only be carried out between 15 May and 15 August in any calendar year.'
  - (d) Condition 14(viii) be amended to remove reference to playgrounds, play items and street furniture.
  - (e) Condition 18(ii) be amended to include the term 'Landscape Masterplan'
  - (f) Condition 21(i) be amended to 'The construction of Brears Road to Access Street standard in accordance with Table 2 of Council's IDM providing for a 7.3m wide carriageway including kerb and channel (eastern side only), paths in accordance with condition 20 (eastern side only) and associated pipe and pit reticulated drainage.
  - (g) The first sentence of condition 26 be amended to 'Prior to each stage of the development abutting Brears Road coming into use, street trees in accordance with the requirements of condition 14(i) must be provided as shown on the approved plans and must include the planting of mature (2 – 3 metres high) street trees (of an approved species and location), or to such higher standards by agreement and must be selected and planted by a qualified Horticulturist / Arborist.'

(CARRIED)

FILE NO:  
5. TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE  
GOVERNANCE

ITEM NO: 10.1.1  
(MANAGER FINANCE, BEAU MITTNER)

**ENVIRONMENTAL UPGRADE AGREEMENT - QUARTERLY REPORT - MARCH 2025**

**Executive Summary**

Section 181 (G) of the *Local Government Act 1989* requires the Chief Executive Officer to provide Council with a quarterly statement on matters pertaining to Environmental Upgrade Agreements (EUAs).

**MOTION**

CHAIR ADMINISTRATOR GRAEME EMONSON / ADMINISTRATOR SUSAN BENEDYKA

That Council note the Environment Upgrade Agreements quarterly statement, which has been prepared in accordance with section 181(G) of the *Local Government Act 1989*.

(CARRIED)

**9. NOTICES OF MOTION**

NIL

**10. PETITIONS AND JOINT LETTERS**

NIL

**11. COUNCIL SEAL**

NIL

FILE NO: VARIOUS

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**URGENT BUSINESS****MOTION**

CHAIR ADMINISTRATOR GRAEME EMONSON / ADMINISTRATOR SUSAN BENEDYKA

That Council resolves to accept an item of Urgent Business in relation to the Emergency Services and Volunteer Fund.

(CARRIED)

**EMERGENCY SERVICES AND VOLUNTEERS FUND (ESVF)**

The Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund (ESVF) passed through Victorian Parliament on 16 May 2025. The ESVF replaces the previous Fire Services Property Levy (FSPL) from 1 July 2025.

Councils are legislatively required to collect the levy for the Victorian Government. In 2024/2025 Council collected \$5.45m for the Victorian Government via the FSPL from the ratable properties within our community. In 2025/2026, under the new ESVF this is set to increase to \$7.95m. This represents an increase of over 45% on the Victorian Government Levy.

In the context of rate burden on our property owners, this has the following implications. In 2024/2025 Council raised \$36.67m in general rates revenue plus the \$5.45 for the FSPL or in simple terms, 13% of the rates levied are passed through to the Victorian Government. In 2025/2026, Council proposes to raise \$37.81m in general rates revenue plus the \$7.95m for the new ESVF. This now means that 17% of the rates levied are passed through to the Victorian Government.

Council understands the need for additional funding and resourcing for our local emergency services units, however believes that this funding should not come via an increased levy on our property owners.

**MOTION**

ADMINISTRATOR SUSAN BENEDYKA / CHAIR ADMINISTRATOR GRAEME EMONSON

That Council, on behalf of the Moira community, write to the Premier of Victoria, Jacinta Allen, with the following points:

1. Advising that we support increased funding and support for our local emergency services units.
2. Advising our opposition to the introduction of the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund (ESVF) on the basis of the proposed increase in taxation burden for our property owners.
3. Asks the Premier to meet with our community, including local volunteers from our emergency services units to understand and hear their concerns directly.
4. Requests that if the Victorian Government proceeds with implementation of the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund (ESVF) from 1 July 2025, the Government provides
  - a. Clear, detailed information on how ESVF revenue is allocated, including estimated

FILE NO: VARIOUS

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**GENERAL BUSINESS**

- regional and LGA allocation breakdowns for the forward budget period.
- b. Assurance that communities contributing to the Fund will receive proportionate direct benefit, including investment in their local emergency services and volunteer resources.

(CARRIED)

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QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC GALLERY

Name	Summarised Question	Response
<b>Ed Cox</b>	<p>1. What will council position be if ratepayers don't pay this ESVF tax?</p> <p>2. Is the MAV taking up our concerns?</p>	<p>Under the <i>Fire Services Property Levy Act 2012</i>, Council has legislative obligations it must meet in the recovery of the Fire Service Levy. These legislative requirements will also apply to the Emergency Services Volunteer Fund.</p> <p>A serious failure by a Council to perform its functions as a collection agency under this Act, may have serious consequences, including the suspension of Council under section 230 of the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i>.</p> <p>Council will continue to work with ratepayers experiencing hardship to implement suitable and flexible payment arrangements.</p> <p>The MAV continues to advocate concerns regarding funding and review of the allocation of the ESVF. The recent May State Council Resolutions details the Consolidated State Council Motions on the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund.</p>
<b>Sally Hutchinson</b>	<p>I believe you opposed the new emergency services tax on farmers that has now been partially passed. Would very much appreciate to see your written opposition to this please.</p>	<p>Council does not always rely on 'written' opposition to matters, and in the case of the ESVF we have relied on the key advocacy groups who represent us, being the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), Rural Councils of Victoria (RCV) and Murray River Group of Councils (MRGC) are our key advocacy mechanisms. Council voted in support of the motions against the ESVF at the MAV State Council held on 16 May 2025.</p> <p>We provided data to the RCV so that they could advocate on our behalf.</p> <p>We have also spoken publicly about the ESVF, refer Cobram Courier Article '<i>Rates are about to skyrocket. Who's to blame?</i>'.</p> <p>We have also written to the Minister for Emergency Services requesting a meeting to understand how the funding will be used and distributed back to our local SES and emergency services units here in Moira (now that legislation has passed).</p>

MEETING CLOSE: 6.11PM