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**Mansfield Shire**

31 March, 2025

[Name]

[Email]

Dear [Name]

### **Call for an urgent review of the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund**

I'm writing to you as the Mayor of Mansfield Shire, Taungurung Country, to ask you to urgently stop the Fire Services Property Amendment (Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund) Bill 2025 and call for a review which includes consultation with the communities that are impacted the most.

The Bill in its current form proposes a new tax which is unfair, inequitable and has a significant negative impact on our community with cascading effects on our environment, our climate, and the lands we care for.

The new tax places an inequitable burden on those who put food on the table of households across the country. The fund, which is sold as a support system for our emergency and disaster recovery services will, in reality, fund core government services such as Triple Zero Victoria, the State Control Centre, Forest Fire Management Victoria, Emergency Recovery Victoria as well as Fire Rescue Victoria. These services do not have volunteers.

On the other hand, most people in the country, those targeted unfairly by this tax, volunteer for the CFA and SES. We are the ones who slip on our uniforms in the night and get to each other's homes before the state's trucks arrive. We are the ones who care for our land and through it our environment and our climate. However, we can only do this if we have the economic capacity to maintain our homes and the lands we steward.

A recent survey of 18 properties in our region showed that more than 130,000 trees were planted in the last 20 years (an average of more than 360 trees per year per property). In the past ten years, more than 16km of waterways were fenced from livestock to improve water quality and riverine habitat. A new tax that unfairly hits primary producers will see farming practices shift back to core business, forcing the situation of just keeping mouths fed.

The reality for many Victorian farmers is that their homes sit on generational farming land but day-to-day finances, just like most families across Victoria, are tight. It is a misperception that our farming community has the capacity to pay. As well as volunteering, many are working additional jobs to stay on the land their families have stewarded for generations. The cost of



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living shock this tax proposes will double down against the Federal Government's recent attempted cost of living initiatives.

We just want a fair deal. When our primary producers have to pay more, we all have to pay more for the food on our table – every Victorian family will have to pay the price of this hastily pushed through tax. The cost of living shock in this new tax hits country people, so it is being swept quickly through parliament and doesn't fairly consult with those it affects the most.

Rural communities care about the environment and we care about keeping each other safe. However, we can't bear the burden of this massive tax increase with more than \$149m additional tax dollars being asked of Victorian Farmers alone.

On top of all this, councils across Victoria are being asked to collect this tax with rates notices. We don't want our communities to even pay this tax, let alone asking local government to be the tax collector for the state government's unfair tax.

I urge you, on behalf of the 10,543 people I represent, to not pass this bill in its current form. We are asking for a review so that our communities can be consulted.

Yours faithfully

**Steve Rabie**  
Mayor

