



BOURKE SHIRE COUNCIL
PRESS RELEASE

BOURKE SHIRE COUNCIL TO ABSORB A FURTHER LARGE INCREASE IN
EMERGENCY SERVICES LEVY IN 2019/2020

Local Government Councils in New South Wales will face an increase in their Emergency Services Levy following the introduction of legislation passed in November 2018 by the State Government to increase worker's compensation entitlements for firefighters recognising that those with extended service in the field may be more susceptible to certain types of cancers. The reforms will make it easier for those fire fighters to receive medical care and support for their families.

The funding of emergency services costs is shared between insurers, the NSW State Government and Local Government who provide 11.7% of the total funding.

The levy now incorporates Council's Contribution to New South Fire and Rescue, State Emergency Services and Rural Fire Service.

Mayor of Bourke Shire Council, Councillor Barry Hollman stressed that Council is very supportive of initiatives to assist those who protect our community and often risk their lives in doing so but was critical of the timing of the announcement of the increase. He noted that Councils had only this week received advice of the increase and the majority of Councils, including Bourke, would have prepared their Operational Plans (Budget) for 2019/2020 and these were in the process of being advertised and subsequent adoption.

The General Manager of Bourke Shire Council, Ross Earl said the increase to Bourke Shire Council is approximately \$31,500.00 or 21.5% over last year's contribution. He said that, while it is not a significant amount compared to the overall budget, it accounts for the bulk of the \$36,500 able to be raised by Council through the allowable General Rate increase of 2.7%.

Mr Earl said that this increase is on the back of the 27.5% increase in the Rural Fire Service portion of Council's contribution in 2016/2017, which was due to a change to the funding formula. That increase equated to 80% of the amount able to be raised through the General Rate increase of 1.8% applicable at the time.

He said consideration of any increases to be applied to Local Government by the State Government should be undertaken having regard to the allowable rate pegging percentage.

Mr Earl said like the Mayor he supported the concept of looking after those who put their lives at risk for the benefit of the community and often suffered injuries or disease as a result but he also queried the timing of the announcement and the fact that it did not allow Councils the opportunity to factor the increase into their budgets despite the legislation being passed in November 2018.

END

Contact

General Manager of Bourke Shire Council, Ross Earl - 0409362307