9 September 2026

MEDIA RELEASE

SCCA CALLS FOR THE NSW GOVERNMENT TO REDESIGN THE PROPOSED EMERGENCY SERVICES LEVY FRAMEWORK

The Shopping Centre Council of Australia (SCCA) has said that the NSW Government needs to go back to the drawing board on its proposed reform framework for the Emergency Services Levy (ESL), following its appearance before the NSW Parliament's Select Committee on Emergency Services Funding Reform this week.

The SCCA used its public hearing appearance before the Committee to reinforce the need for any new emergency services funding model to have a wide funding base that includes all users and beneficiaries, particularly to ensure that the current narrow funding base isn't simply replaced with similarly narrow funding base; which would see a disproportionate burden placed onto shopping centres.

Angus Nardi, Chief Executive of the SCCA said: "Our industry supports well-funded emergency services, and the NSW Government's proposed reforms have an opportunity to land on a credible approach, particularly given this issue has gone around in circles for many years." Mr Nardi said.

"Each time reform has been proposed in recent history, the limitations of the current insurance-based model get transferred into a proposed property-based model, whereby major users and beneficiaries get out of contributing to the system. This time around, once again motor vehicles are being excluded – despite being huge users of emergency services such as in road accidents and electric vehicle fires – alongside Government owned land".

"As soon as you narrow a tax or levy base, someone else has to pick up the slack and this defeats any principle of fairness no matter how much you spin it," said Mr Nardi.

"Treasury has proposed five options for reform; none of which have a wide enough levy base, but also fall into a trap of making aggregated property lots pay the levy multiple times."

"This would mean that some shopping centres would have to pay the proposed levy 10 times for the one shopping centres, given they sit across multiple land titles", said Mr Nardi.

"NSW Treasury has also once again used a simplistic argument that land values are a good proxy for capacity to pay, without any further detailed or considered analysis," said Mr Nardi.

"Our message to the Select Committee was clear, simple and fair: NSW Treasury needs to go back to the drawing board and redesign of the proposed levy reform."

"We are not seeking to avoid making a contribution. We are seeking a system that is credible, transparent and fair, and doesn't transfer the limitations of the current system into a new one."

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