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The decision to reverse a shock charge on councils and ratepayers was the clearest indication yet that the NSW Government was genuinely committed to an equal partnership with local government, the sector's peak body said today.

The policy reversal - announced today by Acting Premier John Barilaro and Local Government Minister Shelley Hancock – will see the State Government cover an initial increase of almost \$14 million in the Emergency Services Levy paid by councils.

Local Government NSW President (LGNSW) Linda Scott said the announcement followed months of intense work by the peak body and NSW local governments across the state.

"Local government strongly supports fairer workers' compensation for paid and volunteer fire fighters," Cr Scott said.

"In many areas, especially in regional NSW, mayors, councillors and council staff are the core volunteers that make up our state's rural fire brigades.

"Local governments welcome the NSW Government's decision to listen to us, reversing its decision to significantly increase the Emergency Services Levy cost to NSW councils this year.

"I welcome the Deputy Premier and Local Government Minister's recognition that this additional, unexpected cost to councils, particularly those in rural and regional areas affected by the drought, would cost communities."

Councils currently contribute 11.7 per cent of the Emergency Services budget in NSW, with the cost embedded in council rates and further costs recovered through insurance premiums.

Council contributions were unexpectedly sent soaring to cover the cost of extending workers' compensation coverage for volunteer and career firefighters diagnosed with one of 12 specific work-related cancers.

The first councils knew they would be asked to cover any increase was when they opened a bill from Revenue NSW and saw levy spikes of up to \$220,000.

Cr Scott said the levy increases ranged between 11 and 25 percent, with some of the hardest-hit councils already struggling to support their communities through drought.

"Many of regional and rural councils were telling me they were unable to pay any increase imposed by the NSW State Government," she said.

"I look forward to having a real opportunity for both tiers of government to sit down together to develop a constructive way forward that involves a fair and realistic transition process towards a better, fully funded workers' compensation scheme for NSW firefighters and their families.

"By working together we can ensure the way forward that doesn't penalise communities across NSW in need of council services such as childcare, and infrastructure such as parks, roads and footpaths."

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