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MEDIA RELEASE

CFA VOLUNTEERS WELCOME STATE GOVERNMENT VESEP GRANTS

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria, the CFA volunteers' association, welcomes the announcement by Minister for Emergency Services, the Honourable Jane Garrett, of up to \$12.54 million to help volunteer emergency services organisations protect lives and properties across the state.

The Volunteer Emergency Services Equipment Program (VESEP) has been a vitally important program, and now enters its 15th year. The program provides one off grants of up to \$100,000 to purchase additional operational equipment and fund small capital works that add to a local Brigade's ability to protect Victorians.

Andrew Ford, CEO of Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) says the association is proud of its long standing involvement and input to the design of the VESEP program, with the aim of making it as simple and practical as possible.

"VFBV appreciates the Government's recognition of the professionalism and essential services provided by Victoria's emergency management volunteers. The VESEP program is a great government investment in maintaining and building volunteer capability, from Victoria's most remote communities to its largest cities, with CFA volunteer Brigades protecting 60% of Melbourne's suburbs, regional cities and all of country Victoria."

"VESEP provides grants for operational items that the applicants believe will best benefit their local community. That makes it a real winner with local volunteer Brigades, who can apply for additional operational vehicles, specialist equipment and training equipment – all practical stuff that volunteers can use to make their communities safer."

"The great benefit of the VESEP funding program is that the decisions are driven by local needs and informed by local knowledge and made by the people at the heart of their communities. Emergency service volunteers know what equipment or infrastructure is required in their area, and this program lets them get on with what is needed to protect their townships," he said

Not only does this life saving equipment help to protect local communities, but much of it can also be called in to support the enormous CFA volunteer surge capacity that deals with regional and statewide emergencies.

"Victoria relies on CFA's ability to amass thousands of volunteer firefighters and equipment from across the State at a moment's notice, dealing with the large scale and prolonged emergencies that are becoming more common."

"CFA's ability to mobilise and sustain a large volunteer workforce is absolutely vital to Victoria's ability to deal with major disasters" Mr Ford said.

VESEP contributes two dollars in grant money for every one dollar raised locally by the Brigade.

“The flexibility of the program is deeply popular with volunteer brigades, as it allows them a means to purchase items that may have been previously unaffordable to their local community,” Mr Ford said.

VFBV supports the Minister’s view that not only do volunteers play a crucial role when responding to emergencies, they are also vital in strengthening the capacity of communities to prepare for, withstand and recover from emergencies; helping to create safer and more resilient communities.

Last year, 179 communities served by local volunteer CFA Brigades and Groups around the state were successful with their applications.

This year’s VESEP grants will favour applications for;

Operational Equipment such as:

- Chainsaws
- Quick Fill Pumps
- Generators
- Inflatable Rescue Boats
- Rescue and Safety Equipment

Vehicles and Appliances such as:

- Field Command Vehicles
- Lighting and Storm Trailers
- Light/Medium Tankers
- Big Fill Trucks
- Watercraft
- Rescue Trucks

Minor Facility Improvements such as:

- Refurbishments
- Amenities – such as kitchens/change rooms

Mr Ford urged all eligible volunteer emergency services groups to apply for the funding, with VFBV again offering tailored support and assistance to Brigades and Groups to help them with their applications. Toolkits, case studies and guides are all available from any of VFBV’s 20 District Councils across the state, and also available for download from the VFBV website; www.vfbv.com.au

VESEP grants are open to volunteer emergency services Brigades and units from CFA, SES, Life Saving Victoria (LSV) and the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard, with applications closing on 27 April 2015.

CFA has 60,000 volunteers and over 1,200 local Brigades protecting 60% of suburban Melbourne, regional cities and all of country Victoria, every day and night of the year.

Ends.

Pronunciation note for media: VESEP is pronounced Vee-Sep.

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