



VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA

News Note

Note for Volunteers - 1 May 2014

VFBV WELCOMES STATE GOVERNMENT'S CFA FLEET FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENT

The State Government has today announced \$29 million in funding for CFA fleet replacement for the upcoming financial year. The funding will go to 78 new front line fire trucks, including 74 medium tankers to be allocated to volunteer Brigades.

While this leaves more work to be done on securing multi-year funding, VFBV welcomes the announcement as a good first step towards dealing with CFA's ageing fleet & congratulates the Government on this important initiative.

The \$29 million funding for 2014/15 is good news for CFA volunteers.

At the media conference, Minister for Police and Emergency Services Minister Kim Wells said; *"We'll be putting an extra \$17 million into CFA trucks. That's in addition to what's already going to be announced in the budget next Tuesday. So in total there will be a \$29 million investment into 78 CFA trucks. The 78 CFA trucks will be 74 medium tankers and four prototypes. This will be a significant boost for the CFA fleet."*

The announcement follows a grass roots campaign led by Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria and volunteers across Victoria to educate MPs on the shortcomings of successive governments when it comes to adequately funding CFA's front line firefighting trucks.

In our campaign we asked for funding to increase the annual spend on CFA's Fleet to \$29 million per year, which would aim to progressively reduce the age profile of the fleet, with an objective of reaching an optimal average truck age of 20 years by the year 2027.

Also at this morning's official announcement, the Minister specifically acknowledged the good work that VFBV and volunteers have done to achieve this funding boost that will benefit volunteers and the communities they serve across Victoria – he said; "I want to thank the CFA volunteers, and I also want to thank Andrew Ford and Hans van Hamond from the volunteer organisation for their strong commitment to ensure that the CFA trucks are kept up to date and as modern as possible."

We think that today's announcement of a \$29 million commitment for 2014/15 is a recognition by the Government that action needs to be taken to rectify problems with CFA's current funding base when it comes to firefighting trucks.

The announcement also gives us some confidence that the new Fire Service Levy does potentially have the capacity to establish a better ongoing base funding for CFA's essential truck replacement program.

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The commitment of additional funds is a clear sign of the value and respect the government places on the knowledge and advice provided by our volunteers.

VFBV CEO and Board want to thank our members for the work you are doing to bring this important issue to the attention of MPs across Victoria. The 2014/15 funding is a good start and we will continue to work with the Government and all political parties in the hope that we can also achieve a commitment to secure ongoing funding to maintain CFA's firefighting fleet to an adequate base level.

VFBV is ready to keep working with both sides of Parliament to maintain the momentum & take the next step, making it an ongoing commitment to this level of funding with a five year rolling plan of truck replacement, and the eventual aim of bringing CFA's entire front line fleet under the 20 year age limit that is accepted by fire services across Australia.

Volunteers will also be pleased to hear that the additional funding has been specifically earmarked to ensure the bulk of CFA's fleet building program for the upcoming financial year will directly address and replace some of the state's oldest tankers with brand new ones.

At the official announcement, CFA Chief Officer Euan Ferguson gave more details about the trucks that are being funded; *"These will significantly add to the firefighting fleet of frontline appliances in CFA. The Medium Tanker brings new technology and new engineering to our fleet. It means that our firefighters will be more effective on the fireground, they will be safer, and of course more effective firefighting means that they can return to their families and their employers more quickly."*

Well done to all members who have supported this vital campaign, and have written or spoken with their local Members of Parliament. This is a significant achievement and milestone in our campaign for increased long term funding for the CFA fleet. Whilst there is still much to be done, today's announcement provides a significant boost of morale for volunteers across the state and is a clear sign that Government is listening.

Keep up the good work. The key message for our members and others is;

- Today's \$29 million announcement is a good start
- VFBV congratulates the Government on this commitment for 2014/15 and hopes it is a signal that there is acceptance of the need to fix the CFA truck funding for the longer term
- Government's direction to specify the \$29 million is spent on trucks is a good move and will ensure the funding isn't diverted to lower priority issues or administration overheads
- VFBV will continue to work with Government and all political parties to secure an ongoing annual truck funding commitment so that there can be a smarter rolling replacement of ageing fire trucks, giving CFA, Brigades and Victoria's truck manufacturing industry a chance to plan ahead
- This fixes the problem for 74 Brigades that will get modern fire trucks with the latest truck safety, fire crew protection and firefighting technology but we are still committed to fixing the concerns of other Brigades who have one of the 500 CFA trucks now over 20 years old.
- VFBV will continue to keep members abreast of progress on this issue and any further commitments made to volunteers

To see VFBV's submission to the State Government on CFA Fleet Funding, download the VFBV News Note for MPs at www.vfbv.com.au

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