



MEDIA RELEASE

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CFA VOLUNTEERS WILL MAKE GOOD USE OF VESEP GRANTS

CFA volunteers at 179 Brigades and Groups around the state are in for good news this week.

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria, the CFA volunteers' association, was with the Minister this morning as he announced this year's successful VESEP grants. All successful volunteer brigades will be receiving a letter from the State Government confirming they are in for a slice of the \$12.23 million worth of grants awarded to emergency services volunteer fire brigades, rescue, lifesaving and Coast Guard units this year for things such as fire trucks, equipment and fire station improvements.

Andrew Ford, CEO of Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV), says the association is proud of its input to shape the Volunteer Emergency Services Equipment Program (VESEP) 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. In turn, it gives direct benefit to improving service to the community," Mr Ford said.

"VESEP gives brigades a pick list of items they can buy with the grant money that they believe will best benefit their local community and it doesn't call for any more paperwork than is absolutely necessary."

"That makes it a real winner with local volunteer brigades, who can apply for fire trucks, specialist vehicles, emergency gear and training equipment, or improvements to their fire stations – it's all practical stuff that volunteers can use to make their communities safer," he said.

The grants are made on a two for one basis, with the State Government funding \$2 for every \$1 the Brigade raises, so every dollar the Brigade raises in the local community is worth three dollars.

"That flexibility is popular with volunteer Brigades, as it allows them a means to purchase items that may have been previously unaffordable to their local community and they can choose equipment that suits their needs and their fundraising ability," Mr Ford said.

"They might be working towards a new heavy tanker, or a smaller vehicle like a four wheel drive incident command vehicle, or they might be a smaller Brigade that's just looking for things like a couple of chainsaws or a new generator," he said.

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VESEP also funds improvements to fire stations that could be as big as an extra room for training, or as simple as a concrete apron in front of the station, where the crew can work on their trucks in the open. In some smaller communities, the extension to the fire station can also provide a community facility, like a meeting room with a kitchen.

“VESEP is a good example of how involving front line CFA volunteers from the design stage of a program can make it a success that adds to the ability of local Brigades and other emergency units to protect the community,” Mr Ford said.

“VFBV actively supports local brigades with their VESEP grant application, by providing advice on planning and fundraising, helping them with their applications, as well as case studies on successful VESEP applications from past years” he said.

“VFBV congratulates all Brigades and Units who were successful in this current round, and encourage any brigades that have not applied before or who were unsuccessful this year to plan ahead, visit our website for application tips and look to apply again in next year’s VESEP round.”

“This is a great government initiative and the Government is to be commended for ensuring it continues. Since its inception in 2000, VESEP has been greatly appreciated by CFA and other emergency sector volunteers,” Mr Ford said.

VESEP grants are open to volunteer emergency services Brigades and units from CFA, SES, Life Saving Victoria (LSV) and the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard.

CFA has 60,000 volunteers and CFA Brigades protect 60% of suburban Melbourne, regional cities and all of country Victoria, every day and night of the year.

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