
FROM GEOFF HOWARD MP, MEMBER FOR BALLARAT EAST

Tuesday, 5 May, 2009

BUDGET BOOST FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES TO KEEP STATE SAFE

A record investment in new vehicles, equipment and communications has highlighted the Brumby Government's commitment to supporting our volunteer emergency services throughout the Victoria, the Member for Ballarat East announced today.

Geoff Howard MP said the record **\$215.5 million** emergency services budget centres on ensuring Victorian communities are better prepared to address future emergencies before the next bushfire season.

He said that the 09/10 State Budget package included additional support for the CFA and VICSES included the following for the Ballarat East Electorate:

- A new heavy pumper for Fiskville College;
- A new light pumper for Creswick CFA;
- A new light pumper for Ballan CFA;

"This State Budget's record investment ensures that our local volunteer emergency services have the equipment and resources they need to serve our community," Mr Howard said.

"The additional funding will boost the capability of our volunteer emergency services right across the State to respond to natural disasters such as fires, floods and storms and assist in rescues."

"The Brumby Labor Government is making the right investments to keep Victorian families safe and rebuild after the bushfires."

Mr Howard said this was part of a massive emergency services package which includes:

- **\$21.1 million** to replace 87 CFA appliances over the next year;
- **\$10.3 million** to replace 15 heavy rescue vehicles, 7 four wheel drive vehicles, 9 rescue boats and 11 road crash rescue kits and 18 road rescue trailers at VICSES Units across Victoria; and
- **\$10.3 million** for 42 new ultra light tankers for the CFA.

Mr Howard said **\$6.8 million** would also go to assist SES units across the State, including SES units in the Ballarat East Electorate.

"Our local VICSES volunteers do a terrific job and we are providing them with additional financial support to run their day to day operations," Mr Howard said.

Mr Howard said that under the package announced in the 2009 State Budget, the 000 and emergency communications service would be also be boosted.

He said **\$56.2 million** would be provided to the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA) to improve its capacity to manage calls and dispatch units with the Country Fire Authority, Ambulance Victoria and the State Emergency Service.

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In addition, **\$57.1 million** had been allocated for new radios and to provide upgrades to the radio and pager network used by emergency services in the field.

This upgrade builds on the \$450 million investment in communications since 2000.

“The unprecedented magnitude of this summer’s fires highlighted the need for further improvements to the state’s emergency communication capabilities,” Mr Howard said.

“This funding will improve communication and boost the safety of emergency service workers across the state.

“While a Royal Commission has been established to investigate the fires, this funding will enable improvements before the next fire season.”

Further to this, an investment of **\$20.7 million** is being made to improve communication blackspots across the State, plus enhancements to the bushfire information line.

“Since our Government came to office, Victoria’s expenditure per person on fire services has increased from the second lowest in the nation to the highest in the nation – in recognition that Victoria is a fire-prone state.”

“The CFA and VICSES do a tremendous job in protecting Victorians and their property across the state and the Brumby Labor Government is committed to supporting these vital organisations by investing record funding in their operations,” Mr Howard said.

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