

Tuesday, 28 October 2008

NATIONAL FIRE AIR FLEET TO BENEFIT SA

Emergency Services Minister, Michael Wright, today welcomed the Federal Government's announcement of the national fire-fighting fleet for the next fire danger season.

Minister Wright said the CFS and the South Australian community would benefit from having a high-volume Erickson air crane helicopter based in South Australia.

"In the past we've been well served by this resource being available in South Australia when it's not required in other States but we do recognise the benefits of having an air crane based here particularly given the outlook for this year's fire danger season," Mr Wright said.

The hot weather in recent days and the season's first Total Fire Bans over the weekend certainly signals a warning for a potentially dry and hazardous fire season.

Minister Wright says the air crane, which has a 7,200 litre capacity, will provide a significant boost to the fire-fighting capabilities of the CFS by bringing the number of aircraft available for deployment in the state to 14.

"The key message here is that this fire danger season, there will be more aircraft, with increased capacity and improved flexibility of the fleet," Mr Wright said.

Over the next few weeks, the CFS fleet of fire-fighting aircraft will begin their service for the fire danger season, covering all the high risk areas across South Australia, including Lower Eyre Peninsula, Mount Lofty Ranges and Lower South East. In addition to the Erickson air crane, there will be another 13 fire-fighting and aerial surveillance aircraft including three Bell helicopters, seven fixed-wing air tractors and three fixed-wing surveillance aircraft.

Minister Wright said the State Government's expenditure on aerial fire-fighting has increased considerably every year since its first Budget in 2002-2003 when it allocated \$1.6 million.

"This State Government has increased spending on aerial fire-fighting every year to a record \$6.8 million dollars in this year's State Budget. Under the Liberal government, a dismal \$831,000 dollars was dedicated to aerial fire-fighting. "

The total also includes \$1.85 million from the Federal Government's national funding package for aerial fire-fighting.

"The State Government has more than matched this with State funding of \$4.9 million, bringing it to a total of \$6.8 million for aerial fire-fighting capabilities for this fire season."

“These measures are aimed to ensure that communities and CFS volunteers are well equipped and prepared to respond to bushfires this season,” Mr Wright said

STATE BUDGET EXPENDITURE FOR AERIAL FIRE-FIGHTING

- 2001-02 - \$0.831 million (last Liberal Budget)
- 2002-03 - \$1.558 million
- 2003-04 - \$2.081 million
- 2004-05 - \$2.386 million
- 2005-06 - \$2.940 million
- 2006-07 - \$5.720 million
- 2007-08 - \$6.280 million
- 2008-09 - \$6.795 million (Budget allocation)