
BARCELONA, Spain - Monday, 26 May 2008

GOVERNMENT BOOSTS FIREFIGHTING EFFORT

The Rann Government will commit **\$15.9 million** over four years in the **State Budget** to enable a Type 1 helicopter, such as the Erickson AirCrane, to be based in South Australia over the fire danger season.

Premier Mike Rann says the large-capacity, high volume helicopter will complement the existing fleet and support the volunteers tackling fires on the ground.

The Deputy Coroner recommended in the Wangary Coronial Inquest that further consideration be given *“to acquiring a fire-fighting helicopter to be permanently or primarily stationed in South Australia.”*

“We are acting on that recommendation,” Mr Rann said.

“There are increasing demands on fire-fighting resources during our fire danger season, and while, in the past, we have been well served by sharing an air crane with other states, we believe it is now prudent to have our own.

“The Government is committed to doing everything it can to ensure South Australia is prepared for a major fire in the future.”

“The Government recognizes that aerial fire fighting is an important tool for the Country Fire Service.

“Since the Government came to office we have substantially increased our investment in aerial firefighting and today’s announcement takes that investment up to another level.”

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 - \$5.942 million (Estimated)
- 2008-09 - \$6.795 million (Budget allocation)

Mr Rann says that the funding will also provide for additional support staff for the aerial operations and to upgrade fire retardant mixing infrastructure.

Mr Rann says the Budget will also include **\$2.85 million** over four years to fund further measures to meet the Government’s response to the Wangary Coronial Inquest.

“Many of the Deputy Coroner’s recommendations have been dealt with and I’m pleased that in this budget we can address 13 more, which relate to improved training and support for Incident Management Teams.”

The **\$2.85 million** will not only fund additional training for Incident Management Team personnel, it will also fund two new positions.

- An Operations Planning Officer (CFS-based) to co-ordinate Incident Management Training and ensure all personnel are appropriately skilled.
- An Emergency Management Officer (SES based) to liaise between agencies and local councils to provide a more co-ordinated approach to prevention activities and community warning systems,

“We wanted to broaden our response to the Coroners finding and improve our responses to all major incidents, not just bushfires.

“It’s equally important that we respond well to events such as floods, hazardous material incidents and major structural fires.”

“These initiatives will further ensure that communities and emergency workers are well prepared for fire emergencies.

“This Government has, and always will, respond swiftly to disasters such as major bushfires - not only in dealing with the event itself, but also in acting on the lessons learned.”