

Media Release

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CFA Annual Report confirms continued funding app

The Victorian Farmers Federation has slammed the State Government's continued underfunding of the Country Fire Authority, with today's release of the CFA's 2024-25 Annual Report confirming a funding crisis that is placing regional communities at unacceptable risk.

VFF President, Brett Hosking said the numbers tell a damning story that can no longer be ignored.

"The gap between funding and the demands on volunteers is continuing to widen. It's at a point where we're putting people in harm's way," Mr Hosking said.

VFF analysis shows that despite a nominal uplift in the past 12 months, the CFA's real purchasing power has been gutted by nearly 14 per cent since 2020-21. In 2024-25 alone, the CFA recorded a \$51.8 million deficit, the fourth in five years, bringing the cumulative funding shortfall to over \$145 million.

Meanwhile, our volunteers responded to 41,925 incidents last year, the busiest year since the Fire Services Reform. Activity is up 36 per cent over five years while real funding has gone backwards.

"The maths simply doesn't add up. You can't do 36 per cent more work, while real funding is cut by 14 per cent. The only way that works is by pushing volunteers to breaking point and putting them in harm's way," Mr Hosking explained.

Mr Hosking said the Government must learn from past failures and commit to genuine reform.

"We have already seen what happens when governments try to fix emergency services funding in a vacuum. The Emergency Services Volunteer Fund cash grab was a debacle that wasted time, eroded trust, and didn't deliver for the volunteers who actually protect our communities.

"This shouldn't be a political issue. We've always said we're prepared to work constructively with the Government on sustainable, long-term funding for the CFA.

"You'd think we could at least get back to 2020-21 funding levels in real terms. That shouldn't be controversial.

"Our volunteer firefighters don't ask for much. They give their time freely, they put their bodies on the line, and they ask only that they have the equipment, training and support they need to do the job. Right now, the funding is failing them."

Mr Hosking noted the timing of the Annual Report's release was particularly stark.

"We are in the middle of another devastating fire season. CFA volunteers are out there right now, protecting lives and property across regional Victoria.

"Regional Victorians are watching this issue closely, and they won't accept the CFA being systematically starved of resources," Mr Hosking said.

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