

Media Release

Jaclyn Symes MLC

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Attorney-General

Minister for Emergency Services



Friday, 26 August 2022

REDRESS SCHEME FOR FISKVILLE FIREFIGHTERS TO OPEN

People exposed to harmful levels of toxic substances at the former Country Fire Authority (CFA) training college in Fiskville will have access to financial support, with the Andrews Labor Government to provide a redress scheme.

Minister for Emergency Services Jaclyn Symes today joined CFA Chief Officer Jason Heffernan and Acting Deputy Commissioner Mick Tisbury to announce \$57 million for a new Fiskville Redress Scheme and to apologise, while offering financial and non-financial support to those affected.

People who worked or trained at Fiskville, lived at or in the vicinity of the facility or attended the Fiskville State School will be among those encouraged to apply.

The redress scheme will examine individual circumstances and each application will be looked at on a case-by-case basis. In line with other redress schemes around Australia, consideration and advice will be given to the extent of exposure and the seriousness of illness associated with the kinds of exposure experienced.

The scheme will provide mental health and medical support to participants. It will also include non-financial support such as case management and counselling.

Fiskville was the CFA's main training centre for more than four decades from 1972 until 2015, when the Labor Government permanently closed the facility. The redress scheme was a key recommendation from the Parliamentary Inquiry into the CFA Training College at Fiskville.

The Government has been working with relevant agencies, medical experts and those directly affected by their time at Fiskville to ensure the redress scheme appropriately responds to recommendations of the Inquiry.

The Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) will manage the scheme and is independent of CFA. All redress outcome decisions will be made by DJCS and no information will be shared with the CFA or any other organisation to protect the privacy of applicants.

Scheme participants will not be restricted in their right to pursue other avenues of compensation including the Government's Presumptive Rights Scheme and workers compensation.

The Fiskville Redress Scheme will open on Monday 5 September 2022. People can register their interest or find out more at www.vic.gov.au/redress-fiskville.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Emergency Services Jaclyn Symes

"Today is an important milestone, as we announce much-needed support those who have been affected by their time at Fiskville and acknowledge the harm caused to them and the community."

"Many are still dealing with the physical and mental effects of their time at Fiskville – today is about acknowledging that service in the name of keeping Victorians safe and the severe consequences that came from that."

Quotes attributable to CFA Chief Officer Jason Heffernan

"CFA welcomes the introduction of the Victorian Government's Fiskville Redress to provide support to people impacted by the events at Fiskville over a number of years."

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“We acknowledge the significant issues of the past in relation to the management of this facility, and we are deeply sorry for any potential harm to volunteers and staff and other attendees at the time and the many people from the local community who supported CFA at this important site near Ballan.”

Quotes attributable to FRV Acting Deputy Commissioner Mick Tisbury

“This is a welcome announcement six years in the making. It is my hope that we will now be able to close this chapter in the history of Victoria’s fire services and provide some closure to those affected and their families.”

“FRV is thankful to the government for implementing this scheme. Today sends a strong message to those impacted by Fiskville that they are believed and it’s not just words, but tangible action.”