

Jihad Dib

Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government
Minister for Emergency Services
Minister for Youth Justice

**Penny Sharpe**

Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy
Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage
Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Media Release

RFS Benevolent Fund giving back to firefighters and families

Monday, 11 December 2023

The RFS Benevolent Fund, a charity created to provide support to RFS members and their families during challenging times, has been officially formed and is now available to help.

To support the new Fund, communities will be able to recognise firefighters while supporting recycling efforts through a partnership with the 'Return and Earn' program.

The RFS Fund, born out of the remarkable generosity of people in Australia and around the world, aims to assist RFS members, especially the families of those who lost their lives or were injured or fell ill while serving the community.

Following the devastating Black Summer fires a total of \$110 million in donations was given to the NSW Rural Fire Service and Brigades Donations Fund, with \$10 million of this support channelled to establish the RFS Benevolent Fund.

Mr. Ken Moroney AO APM MA, a distinguished figure with a 42-year track record in the police force and former NSW Commissioner of Police, will chair the Fund.

The board is now focused on supporting firefighters and their families and partnering with charitable initiatives, to keep the Fund self-sustained and assist in raising additional resources.

The board also includes Nancy Fox AM FAICD as Deputy Chair, Louise Meijer as Treasurer, Elizabeth Svoboda as Secretary, along with Trevor Anderson PSM AFSM, David Jordan, and former RFS Commissioner Phil Koperberg AO AFSM BEM serving as members.

One of the initial collaborations is with the NSW Government's 'Return and Earn' scheme.

This partnership aims to leverage community efforts in litter reduction and recycling, converting these endeavours into funds supporting the RFS Benevolent Fund.

From now until April 2024, individuals can choose to donate the 10c return deposit to the RFS Benevolent Fund, the current statewide donation partner for the scheme.

More information on the RFS Benevolent Fund, including details of making a donation or applying for assistance, can be found on the Fund's website www.rfsbenevolentfund.org.au

Further details on the Return and Earn program is available at www.returnandearn.org.au

Minister for Emergency Services Jihad Dib said:

"The establishment of the Fund is a vital step in ensuring that our firefighters, who risk their lives to protect us, receive the care and support they deserve."

“We know that our volunteers give so much, protecting their communities and when called on, travelling long distances to support others in their time of need. This is one way to show how much this is valued and ensure RFS members and their families have the support they need.”

“The initial \$10 million in funding will be used to support the families of members who have lost their lives or been injured, or contracted illnesses as a result of their RFS duties.”

“Partnering with the Return and Earn scheme is a great way for the Fund to raise awareness and additional funds to become self-sustained and continue to support volunteer firefighters and their loved ones.”

“This bushfire season, in addition to having a plan for what you and your family will do if fire threatens, I encourage everyone who recycles to consider donating to the Fund to support those who keep our communities safe.”

Minister for Climate Change and the Environment Penny Sharpe said:

“Not only does recycling through Return and Earn help the environment, but it can now also be a great way to give back to our volunteer firefighters who look after us during the bushfire season.

“Since the Return and Earn scheme was introduced, more than 10.4 billion containers have been returned across NSW and more than \$47 million has been raised for charities and not-for-profit organisations.

“I encourage all householders to take their eligible cans and bottles to their local Return and Earn point and consider donating to worthy organisations including the new RFS Benevolent Fund.”

Commissioner of the RFS Rob Rogers said:

“I congratulate and welcome all those who have joined the RFS Benevolent Fund Board and I am pleased that members of the RFS will benefit from the Fund, as well as the families that allow our members to do what they do.”

“While the RFS already provides a range of supporting measures, the Fund will also work to offer additional practical and compassionate support such as counselling, support services and welfare grants to any of our members experiencing poverty, distress, or other difficulties.

Benevolent Fund Chair, Ken Moroney said:

“I am honoured to chair the RFS Benevolent Fund alongside those on the Board and contribute to the well-being of our brave firefighters.”

“Their dedication is commendable, and it is our duty to ensure they and their families receive the compassionate support they need.

“Community contributions, like those through the Return and Earn initiative, will allow the Board to help those who need it most for years to come.”

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