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Our Victorian State Emergency Service volunteers do an incredible job. We rely on them to help keep us safe when disaster strikes – whether that’s a flood, storm damage or other emergency. You may not always see what they do because it could be that they are helping to repair a roof or help someone trapped in an upturned car in the middle of the night when most of us are fast asleep.

They are always there to roll up their sleeves and help those in need. It doesn’t matter whether it is Easter or Christmas Day or any other holiday - if there is an emergency they will give up precious time with their families and friends without complaint.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of local communities like ours in the hills and we must make sure we have their back.

The Emerald SES unit is one of the busiest in Victoria.

These hardworking volunteers respond to around 1,300 requests for help every year, across the Dandenongs and surrounding areas.

I’ve visited the unit on several occasions over the years and I’m always impressed at the work they carry out. But it was clear to me that the volunteers needed better facilities.

That is why I was so happy to announce that Emerald SES will be receiving \$1.8 million in this year’s Budget to build a brand new modern facility. This funding boost ensures Emerald SES volunteers will have everything they need to protect the community when disaster strikes.

That means no more outdoor toilets or a leaking roof. Instead, Unit Controller Ben Owen and his team of volunteers will enjoy the best of the best. Volunteers returning from an emergency can have a hot shower and recharge their batteries in a new two-storey facility before going back to work.

Emerald SES volunteers have been campaigning for this new facility for many years. The volunteers knew that they needed an upgrade in order to continue the outstanding work they do in the local area. They have heard enough talk and empty promises - we have actually delivered for them. The \$1.8 million investment will make an enormous difference and I can't wait to stop by and check on progress in months to come.

The Emerald unit’s volunteers are some of the most dedicated in the state – more than half of them have served for more than a decade. They deserve the absolute best and that is exactly what they are getting.

The new facility will mean the dedicated volunteers of the Emerald SES can concentrate on keeping the community safe, rather than spending their time tin-rattling for spare change.