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MEDIA RELEASE

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No date for emergency chopper

No clear indication has been given by the Government of when the promised emergency helicopter for Western Victoria will be put in service.

Speaking in Parliament this week, David Koch, Member for Western Victoria, said that while the Premier had at last listened to the community and finally committed funding for a long-awaited emergency rescue helicopter, there was no certainty of when the service would be in operation.

“The people of Western Victoria deserve to know when the chopper will be in the air, but the Government is not prepared to say when this will happen.

“As Western Victoria is the only part of the state not having ready access to a fast-response air ambulance service, it is vital the chopper is operating as soon as possible with an actual start date announced. Vagaries like the Premier suggesting 18 months or so means the fight is not over yet.

“And the tremendous effort and hard work of all those who diligently supported the campaign by raising community awareness and bringing this issue to the Brumby Government’s attention deserve recognition.

“Their example typifies the passion many share for the necessity of an emergency chopper in the region.

“But in wishing to praise and thank all those who fought so hard to secure the Government’s commitment for the chopper, my comments were ruled out of order in the Parliament and I was denied the opportunity to acknowledge the very people who brought about the Brumby Government’s back flip.

“This Government shows its lack of sensitivity to Western Victorians by not allowing due recognition or acknowledgement for the time and energy that was so voluntarily given by the broad community, and particularly Keith Meerbach, Dominique Fowler, Geoff Downes and Inspector John Robinson and his successor, committee Chairman Stephen Lucas of the WestVic Helicopter Rescue Service, who together brought about this great outcome.

“Not only must the Premier ensure the chopper is in service as soon as possible with an actual start date so more lives are not lost due to unnecessary delays, but he should give due recognition to the people who have been diligent in bringing about this much-needed service for Western Victoria”, said David Koch.

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