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**RURAL FIRE SERVICE ASSOCIATION SLAMS UNION
CLAIM OF 'UNPROFESSIONAL' VOLUNTEER FIRE
FIGHTERS**

The Rural Fire Service Association (RFSA) has strongly rejected claims from the NSW Fire Brigades Employees Union (FBEU) that volunteer rural fire fighters in NSW are 'unprofessional'.

RFSA President Brian McKinlay said the FBEU's comments were beneath contempt and without any foundation, and adversely reflected on the professionalism of all the State's rural firefighters.

Mr McKinlay said the FBEU's latest comments reflected a continued attack on the Rural Fire Service and its volunteers and was all about increasing its own membership with 'no benefit to the community whatsoever'.

"Our volunteers operate at the very highest levels of performance and professionalism across all facets of fire suppression and mitigation operations within the Rural Fire Service. What the FBEU does not seem to understand is that the professionalism and service quality of our State's 70,000+ volunteer firefighters is strengthened, not weakened, by being a part of the community they serve.

"The FBEU's comments are deeply offensive and insulting to our volunteers."

Mr McKinlay said that there is a Ministerial process in place between the Rural Fire Service, the NSW Fire Brigades, the FBEU and the RFSA to determine jurisdictional boundaries of the Fire Services. The RFSA fully supports this process, in providing protection to our communities across New South Wales.

"While our volunteers would welcome constructive proposals,

they should be offered within the current adopted process, not through inaccurate media comment. The current FBEU commentary is not in any way a constructive proposal for improved operations or for greater community safety.

“ The FBEU’s latest comments are a continued, underlying grab for union numbers and union power at the expense of our members and NSW taxpayers. They willingly tarnish the good reputation of our rural fire fighters for their own purposes and, at no time, do they consider the overall good or safety of the people of NSW,” Mr McKinlay said.

For media enquiries and photos contact: Karin Krueger, KDK Media on 02 9979 3718 or 0419 991 267.

About the RFSA

The RFSA (NSW Rural Fire Service Association) is the Association representing NSW’s 70,000+ rural fire fighters. The RFSA’s president is Brian McKinlay and Executive Director is Peter Olah. See www.rfsa.org.au