



MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 11 March 2016

Firefighters' Union calls for more women in job

The 6,200 member Fire Brigade Employees' Union of NSW (FBEU), which has a long-standing commitment to diversity, is calling on the Baird Government to ensure that more women are employed in this year's firefighter recruitment campaign.

"Our first women firefighters started in NSW in 1985 yet 30 years later barely 5% of FRNSW's fulltime firefighters are women, and none are senior officers," said FBEU President Darin Sullivan.

"The FBEU wants our job and our Union to reflect our communities and that means 50% women, not 5%. We support a new approach."

"Even a shift to guaranteed 50:50 recruitment today would still require another 30 years before we reach gender parity. So real action is needed, and needed now."

"We know women can do the job, because they've been doing it for three decades. Affirmative action in recruitment will mean more women, not lower standards. Every new firefighter, man or woman, will continue to meet FRNSW's high standards for employment."

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Firefighter recruitment campaign brings equity to table

Fire & Rescue NSW (FRNSW) Commissioner Greg Mullins today announced changes to the fire service's highly competitive permanent firefighter recruitment campaign in a bid to ensure more women get the chance to join its firefighting ranks.

The 2016 permanent firefighter recruitment campaign will open on 16 May with thousands of would-be firefighters expected to apply.

Commissioner Mullins said FRNSW had worked hard in previous years to increase the number of female applicants but the odds were stacked against them.

"The overwhelmingly large number of male applicants and the staged processes we employed had the unintended consequence of disadvantaging female applicants," Commissioner Mullins said.

"In this year's recruitment campaign changes will be made to address this imbalance and bring equal numbers of successful male and female applicants to recruit classes after they satisfy the demanding requirements. There will no reduction in standards.

"As in previous campaigns, merit selection will determine the best candidate for the job, regardless of gender, but we will deliver equity in the number of male and female firefighters.

"This campaign will provide a level playing field for intelligent, fit, healthy and community-minded men and women to join our permanent firefighter ranks."

Commissioner Mullins said the firefighter recruitment process - which includes an online application, physical, medical and psychological tests and an interview - was extremely challenging.

"Our standards are high and will always remain that way for everyone. We want only the very best candidates and we have a recruitment process in place that will achieve this as well as ensuring our firefighting workforce starts to better reflect the communities we serve and protect," he said.

President and Acting State Secretary of the Fire Brigade Employees' Union, Station Officer Darin Sullivan said, "The FBEU wants our job and our Union to reflect our communities and that means 50 per cent women, not 5 per cent. We support a new approach."



"We know women can do the job, because they've been doing it well for three decades. Affirmative action in recruitment will mean more women, not lower standards. Every new firefighter, man or woman, will continue to meet FRNSW's high standards for employment," Mr Sullivan said.

Information on how to apply will be released on the FRNSW website in the coming weeks but would-be candidates are encouraged to start training now – every week counts when it comes to getting fire fit.