



15 May 2026

The Hon Jihad Dib MP, Minister for Emergency Services

By email

Dear Minister Dib

Re: Rural Fire Service Vehicle Problems

As I am sure you are aware of by now, around 60 RFS vehicles are currently offline with 100's more having been identified as having problems relating to excess weight and the strain that is placing on axles.

It is my understanding that the RFS are concerned that this excess weight could cause a catastrophic failure of the axles and damage or destruction of vehicles without warning.

I am aware of an internal RFS communication which has mandated that only certain numbers of volunteers may enter an appliance at a time, including a weight limit for those volunteers. Several cat 9 vehicles, for example, are limited to a single volunteer who must weigh no more than 90kg.

The system of Mutual Aid Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding means that rather than invest in additional FRNSW resources in strategic locations, the Government requires my members to rely on volunteers to support their responses and form part of their systems of safe work.

I understand that FRNSW has offered to stand up appliances in strategic locations to cover the gaps created by the RFS appliance issue, with a response yet to be received.

I am aware that the RFS is stating that they're "fully operational" and does not require any support from FRNSW, which seems to contradict the situation as we understand it.

In addition to this matter, recently released GIPA material has raised further concerns regarding the limited availability of RFS volunteers holding appropriate firefighting qualifications, particularly in relation to structural firefighting capability.

Given FRNSW now routinely operates with eight firefighters on the fireground as part of contemporary safe staffing arrangements, these issues raise serious concerns regarding the adequacy of backup and support available to FBEU members operating at incidents alongside or reliant upon RFS resources.

I will be communicating with my members to provide them with advice on how to maintain a safe work environment while the agencies and Government work out a plan. I respectfully request that you instruct FRNSW/RFS Senior management to meet and work out the best way forward for the safety of firefighters and the communities they serve or alternatively call for an extraordinary meeting of the FSJSC to discuss the issue. For transparency, today I have also written to Commissioners Fewtrell and Curtin asking same.

I would appreciate your response by 12PM Monday, 18 May 2026.

Yours fraternally

Leighton Drury
State Secretary