



2 June 2023

Megan Stiffler  
Assistant Commissioner  
FRNSW  
1 Amarina Ave  
GREENACRE NSW 2190

Dear Ms. Stiffler,

**RE: CAPS Appliance Safety Concerns**

The FBEU has had recent contact from members indicating significant safety concerns with the new CAPS Appliances currently being implemented across FRNSW fleet.

While we are yet to ascertain the total extent of the issues across the fire stations where they have been delivered based on what we know to date the matters raised are of significant enough concern that we are providing this initial list of issues/concerns to hopefully begin a process of resolution.

Issues raised to date include:

- Insufficient training to respond as an aerial appliance – as you are no doubt aware, in order to operate any elevated work platform (above 11 metres) an operator is required to hold a current high risk work licence. FBEU understands however that based on the current training, operations manual and response protocols, in order to perform an emergency bleed down procedure on this appliance, 3 operators are required to operate the aerial component of the appliance at that same time. FRNSW have not been able to confirm that there will in fact be three fully qualified operators at all time to ensure safe systems of work and safe staffing and it's our understanding that you intend to respond the appliance as an aerial appliance with only 2 fully qualified operators with a third operator at times being a "trainee" and not holding the necessary high risk work licence.
- Weight of hose trays – as outlined above, 3 operators are required to operate the boom in the case of an emergency bleed down procedure. In order for the third operator however to access the levers required for this operation, two hose trays must be fully removed manually from the appliance. Due to the weight of these two trays two firefighters are needed to remove them from the appliance meaning additional staffing will be required to safely access the levers.
- Weight rating of the platform and boom – it is our understanding that due to the weight rating of the boom and the platform an operator cannot be in the platform while using water. Hoses and water are therefore operated remotely from the ground via a remote control however the range on the remote control does not work if the boom is extended beyond 11 metres negating the aerial component of the appliance when delivering water.

- Rust and cracks on the boom – we have had numerous reports of rust and cracks particularly on the boom and platform components of the appliance.
- Electrical earthing/grounding – a concern has been raised that the appliance does not have appropriate mechanisms to ensure that in the event the appliance comes into contact with electricity, the electricity travels through the appliance appropriately and does not pose a risk to the operator or any other person in contact with the appliance.
- Stretcher access – We have been advised that due to the placement of a stretcher on the platform, if a rescue is performed where the stretcher is utilised, an operator cannot safely remove the stretcher from the platform as the platform can either not decline close enough to the ground/the stretcher has been placed too high. In these circumstances a second appliance (either technical rescue or a ladder platform) is required to safely remove the stretcher from the platform placing firefighters in the very difficult circumstances of potentially having to decide between delaying assisting an injured person or risking their own safety to remove the stretcher.
- Sounds within the boom – when extended there are sounds coming from within the boom that sound like metal or other material falling down the boom. Any reason for this to occur is unexplained.
- Catch points, crush points and blind spots – when the boom is extended at various heights and angles, the placement of the second operator on top of the appliance operating the aerial component in the case emergency bleed down procedure creates multiple catch points, crush points and blind spots not only leading to risk of harm but preventing communication between operators operating the boom in the emergency where visual cues should be able to be used between operators.
- Visual issues with the pump control – firefighters have reported being unable to see or reach the pump control panel with the appliance deployed on an incline and being unable to see pump control panel in direct sun light.
- Unable to operate touch pump panel in wet weather conditions.
- Trip hazards - including the ground pendant umbilical becoming entangled.
- Fire fighters being instructed not to use Automatic set-up function more than twice due to risk of appliance tipping over.
- Issues with the manual escape ladder – the manual escape ladder from the platform is unusable in majority of positions preventing escape from cage when not in correct position or requiring extremely risky manouveres to utilize the ladder. Further, the escape ladder base section is not unusable except in small field of booms operation.
- Escape cordage equipment storage inadequate causing exposure to elements of safety equipment.

As stated, the list of concerns above are just an initial assessment of those that have been raised with us however we believe it is likely that more will become apparent.

Based on this we are seeking your immediate confirmation that:

1. FRNSW will suspend the deployment of these vehicles as aerial vehicles immediately unless 3 fully qualified operators holding the necessary high risk work licence are on the appliance
2. An urgent meeting be held between the parties including a full joint inspection of one of these appliances to allow us to get a fuller picture of the concerns.

Could you please confirm your agreement to the above by no later than COB Friday 2 June noting that should FRNSW not take immediate action as outlined above, given the seriousness of our concerns we reserve all our rights to escalate this matter further.

Please feel free to contact myself and/or Senior Industrial Officer Rini Krousos should you wish to discuss this matter further. Otherwise we look forward to your response.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'L. Drury', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Leighton Drury  
State Secretary