



MEDIA ALERT

Friday 23 April 2021

Fire Brigade Employees' Union and Ryan Park MP discuss new critical response proposal that sees firefighters on front line of emergency medical response

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA: Representatives of the Fire Brigade Employees' Union (FBEU) are meeting today with Ryan Park MP, NSW Shadow Health Minister, to discuss a new state government proposal that will see firefighters working at the frontline of emergency medical responses to assist in alleviating resource and capacity shortages in the NSW Ambulance service.

Under the new proposal, firefighters will be asked to respond to critical cardiac responses in situations where the NSW Ambulance service is not available. In what's being called a 'bandaid fix', firefighters will be called to assist the state's paramedics and asked to respond to emergency situations of cardiac arrest, without adequate training, skills or equipment.

Firefighters currently receive basic life support training, which enables them to provide an initial response to an emergency. However, this does not extend to providing the necessary skills and knowledge to conduct a clinical assessment at the scene of a cardiac emergency and ensure meaningful treatment can be conducted for the patient. While the proposal is still on the table, the state's firefighters are finding themselves having to respond to these emergency situations.

At 6AM on Tuesday morning, Bulli Fire Station responded to a call of an 7-year-old boy who was not breathing, due to an ambulance shortage in the Wollongong and Illawarra area from its fleet of 11. Bulli's firefighters responded to the scene, however were met with uncertainty as they had inadequate equipment that did not account for children under the age of 8 and a lack of clinical medical training that enabled them to conduct the appropriate assessment.

Now, the FBEU is calling for an urgent assessment on how and why firefighters were sent to an urgent medical emergency for which they are not trained, qualified or resourced to respond to.

As NSW State Secretary, Leighton Drury, has explained, this proposal brings on firefighters across NSW, who are already under-resourced, and lacks focus on the issue's root cause.

"FRNSW say our members are 'Prepared for Anything' but we are not paramedics, it's as simple as that. Nothing can prepare a firefighter to do the work of paramedics, other than being paramedics. People's lives are at stake in these situations, and the mental health of our emergency service workers is also put at risk."

Mr Drury added: “We wouldn’t ask NSW Police to put out a house fire. The community deserves to be able to call 000 and get the service they need.

“Our members welcome all reasonable discussions about growing our capabilities as a service. But sending firefighters to medical emergencies because of a fundamentally budgetary and resourcing issue is not on. The community deserves better.”

FBEU representatives are meeting with Ryan Park MP Friday 23 April, 2021 at 2.30pm to discuss the proposal. For any media inquiries and any interview requests, contact:

- Lex La Sala on 0466 258 343 or lex@fiftyacres.com
- Dasha Romanowski on 0416 144 959 or dasha@fiftyacres.com

Please note – To the best of our knowledge, the patient mentioned in the above media release is safe.

About Fire Brigade Employees Union:

The [Fire Brigade Employees Union](#) was formed in 1910. We are the union of all professional firefighters in NSW. Our members are permanent and retained (on-call) firefighters and work all over the state. The FBEU is a high density union with a proud history of standing up for our members and important community issues.