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'Boundary areas need to be looked at': Medowie fire station debate flares



By [Matthew Kelly](#)

Updated January 31 2025 - 12:51pm, first published January 30 2025 - 6:00am



Medowie house fire tragedy - Pictures by Jonathan Carroll

The NSW firefighters union has claimed a [man who died in a house fire at Medowie on Australia Day](#) may have been able to be saved if a fully resourced fire station was based in the town.

The Rural Fire Service (RFS) and NSW Fire and Rescue are undertaking reviews into their respective responses to the blaze, which claimed the life of a 62-year-old man.

It was also revealed on Wednesday that Medowie is the largest residential suburb in the state covered by the RFS.

The RFS has defended its response to Sunday's fire.

RFS records show town's crew, based at Ferodale Road, was advised smoke was coming from a yard in Coolabah Road, Medowie at 2.31pm.

Three minutes later, following advice from an RFS member who was passing the scene, the incident was upgraded to a structure fire.

The RFS then requested NSW Fire and Rescue NSW also attend in accordance with a mutual aid arrangement between the two services.



📷 Multiple fire trucks from the RFS and Fire and Rescue NSW were at the scene on Sunday afternoon. Picture by Raymond Terrace Rural Fire Brigade.

The first RFS pumper arrived on the scene at 2:42PM.

The first NSW Fire and Rescue appliance, which travelled 15 kilometres from Raymond Terrace, arrived 10 minutes later.

A total of 26 RFS personnel and seven RFS trucks attended the incident, while NSW Fire and Rescue crews from Stockton, Mayfield, West Tarro and Lambton also assisted.

Despite their efforts crews were unable to save the building's male occupant, whose body was found in the rear of the property.



📷 FBEU secretary Leighton Drury

FBEU secretary Leighton Drury praised the work of Rural Fire Service volunteers, but said the weekend's fatality highlighted the need for a fully equipped NSW Fire and Rescue station.

"Under the Fire and Rescue Service NSW Act we give a guarantee of service. The RFS Act does not have that," he said.

"This started as a yard fire that got inside the house. It's an example of where minutes can potentially save lives."

Mr Drury said Medowie was the largest suburb in the state that is covered by the RFS.

"We are calling for extra resources to deal with incidents that growing communities face," he said.

"Some of these boundary areas need to be looked at, especially around built-up populations to make the fire service more appropriate."

Rural Fire Service celebrates International Volunteer Day

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International Volunteer Day is when we celebrate and promote the impact of volunteering. The RFS wants to say a big thank you to the more than 70,000 volunteers, who give up their own time to protect the communities of NSW.

He added NSW Fire Brigade crews also received more advanced training in the use of breathing equipment, which allowed them to enter spaces that RFS members couldn't.

In relation to the Medowie fire, the RFS spokesman said the first RFS members on the scene were fully trained structural firefighters and compressed air breathing operators, qualified for both internal and external firefighting.

He said the community was best served through a collaborative approach between the two services.

"Both the RFS and Fire and Rescue NSW provide fire services to Medowie and the surrounding community through established mutual aid agreements," he said.

"The local agreement requires that structure fires are responded to by both agencies. These agreements also ensure a coordinated

approach, with each agency responding under pre-determined arrangements or at the request of the other.

"This collaboration ensures that the community receives the best possible fire and emergency services."

Port Stephens MP Kate Washington declined to comment.

A spokesperson for the Minister for Emergency Services, Jihad Dib, said any loss of life was tragic.

"We extend our sympathies to the family of the person killed in this house fire and the affected community," he said.

"In Medowie and across the state, fire services operate under established mutual aid agreements - between Fire and Rescue NSW and the NSW Rural Fire Service - ensuring that both agencies respond to fires in a coordinated manner."

Forensic investigators are still working to determine what caused the blaze but it is believed that a large amount of machinery and scrap metal may have been the ignition source.

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Matthew Kelly has worked as a journalist for more than 25 years. He has been working as a general reporter at the Newcastle Herald since 2018. In recent years he has reported on subjects including environment, energy, water security, manufacturing and higher...

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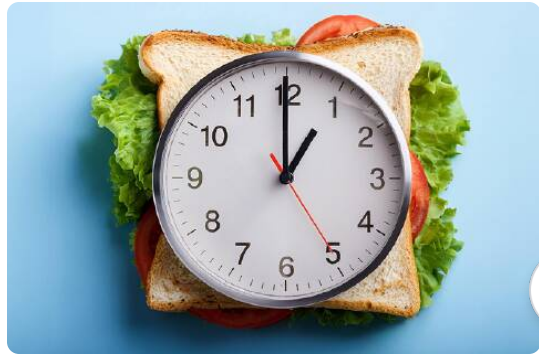


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