



## **FBEU DELEGATES CONFERENCE 2026 – SAVE THE DATE – 24 & 25 MARCH IN SYDNEY**

Registrations are now open for the 2026 FBEU Delegates Conference - our most important forum for setting the direction of the Union and shaping the next chapter of our Union.

Delegates from across the state will come together in Sydney from midday Tuesday 24 March to Wednesday 25 March to address key industrial issues, strengthen our campaigns, and determine the priorities that will guide our Union in the years ahead.

This conference comes at a critical moment for FBEU members, our conditions, and the future of the fire and emergency services. It is your opportunity to help define what a stronger, better-resourced and properly respected service must look like and how we secure it.

Accommodation will be available on the night of Tuesday 24 March for delegates who require it.

The conference will include dinner on Tuesday evening, lunch on Wednesday, and morning and afternoon tea on both days.

Trade Union leave will be required for those rostered during conference dates, and attendees are encouraged to notify the Union of their circumstances on the RSVP link [here](#).

If you have any questions regarding travel, accommodation or leave arrangements, please contact the Union office as soon as possible.

## **PERMANENT MEAL ALLOWANCE CLAIMS**

Many of you would now have seen the emails sent from Michael Baldi regarding the non-payment of Meal Allowances. It would have been nice if FRNSW had discussed this with us prior to sending it, but regardless, the message now seems clear that FRNSW is not intending to pay these meal allowances in accordance with their Award obligations.

Given this, we are now going to review claims that have been sent to us by members to assess the best way forward on running this case, likely by way of a test case on behalf of a single or small group of members in the first instance.

If any member has made a claim for meal allowances that has been **rejected** (as opposed to being put on hold or not paid) and you have good records to support this claim, can you please forward these ASAP to [office@fbeu.net](mailto:office@fbeu.net).

We will keep everyone updated as we progress the case.

## **RFS NUMBERS – THE REALITY WE’VE BEEN WARNING ABOUT**

[Recent Sydney Morning Herald reporting](#) has confirmed what the FBEU has been raising for years - the NSW Rural Fire Service has overstated the number of active and trained volunteers, which the NSW Government has relied upon to justify a volunteer-led emergency response system while failing to invest in new professional firefighter stations, staffing and funding despite growing risk and demand.



# SitRep 1/2026

While the RFS has routinely promoted figures of around 70,000 volunteers, internal data shows that more than 20,000 of those people are not actually trained or qualified for basic frontline bushfire firefighting. These inflated figures have been provided to external bodies, including the Productivity Commission, giving government and the public a false sense of capacity.

This matters because volunteerism is in decline, while bushfires and other natural disasters are becoming more frequent, more severe and longer in duration. A system built on overstated numbers masks real capability gaps, increases pressure on professional firefighters, and delays the investment NSW urgently needs in a properly resourced, professional emergency response.

The FBEU has been consistently warning about this issue - including in [SitRep 39/2024](#), [SitRep 1/2025](#), and [SitRep 29/2025](#). This reporting shows that our advocacy is finally forcing the truth into the open.

The FBEU has now organised a meeting with the NSW Audit Office to pursue this matter further and ensure the real state of firefighting resources in NSW is fully examined and transparently reported. More to follow.

In Unity

A blue ink signature of the name 'Leighton Drury'.

**Leighton Drury**  
State Secretary