



RFS NUMBERS UNDER INCREASED SCRUTINY

A *Daily Telegraph* [report](#) this week confirms what the FBEU has warned for years: NSW RFS volunteer firefighter numbers have been significantly overstated.

New data in the Productivity Commission's [Review of Government Services \(RoGS\)](#) reveals a loss of 20,000 volunteer firefighters across NSW this year. This directly contradicts long-standing claims of a 70,000-strong volunteer base - figures that have defied known declines in volunteerism and fuelled more than a decade of claims about being "the world's largest volunteer fire brigade".

The numbers are wrong. They have been for some time.

This statistically significant correction follows sustained FBEU advocacy, including direct engagement with the RoGS team. Inflated RFS capacity has been used to suppress professional firefighter numbers, delay new stations, defer boundary reviews, and increase risk to communities. Further examination of these new numbers is still required, but the shift is undeniable. With misreporting no longer in dispute, attention must turn to accountability and transparency, and to the realigning of boundaries proportionate to community risk.

It goes without saying that volunteers and professionals both play important roles. But a growing state requires a guaranteed standard of response - delivered first and foremost by a properly staffed professional fire service. The FBEU has made this case consistently, including through multiple government inquiries.

FBEU Executive members, including the newly appointed Junior Vice President, were in Parliament this week meeting with MPs across the political spectrum to press the Union's priorities on staffing, stations, boundaries and operational capability. The FBEU will also meet with the NSW Audit Office to examine how RFS inaccuracies have shaped government decisions on funding, workforce planning and service delivery.

We will continue to prosecute this issue and keep members informed.

DELEGATES CONFERENCE: FINAL SEATS AVAILABLE

Places remain available for the upcoming FBEU Delegates Conference, but members are urged to act quickly as remaining seats are limited. The Conference is a key opportunity for delegates to hear directly from the Union, help set priorities, and focus on the challenges facing professional firefighters across NSW.

Members should also note that the FBEU and the Department have agreed to hold a joint Regional Forum for retained and permanent firefighters in country areas. The forum will be held in Sydney on the Monday prior to the Conference and will focus on regional industrial issues, including rescue capability and arrangements. Further information on the Regional Forum will be provided shortly. In the meantime, members intending to attend the Delegates Conference are encouraged to secure their place as soon as possible. RSVP [here](#).

In Unity

Leighton Drury
State Secretary