



AWARD UPDATE - DECISION TO BE HANDED DOWN TOMORROW - THE DEPARTMENT SEEKS TO DOWNGRADE RESCUE CAPABILITY

This week marks the conclusion of hearings before the IRC on the 2024 Permanent and Retained Awards, with the final outstanding issues addressed by both parties at a hearing on Tuesday and a final decision expected at midday tomorrow.

As previously reported, one of the remaining disputes is the proposed new allowances clause. The original decision of the Full Bench from August expressed the view that the GLR and the other new specialist rescue allowances should only be paid to employees who are attached to a station accredited in that work, and which has the relevant equipment for that specific type of rescue.

In an operational context, this obviously has significant implications for our rescue capability, with many of our qualified personnel at non-accredited stations.

Through the conciliation process we have consistently put the position that the drafting of the clause should read in such a way that all employees at any accredited rescue station (be it GLR or RCR) should receive the relevant allowances when they hold qualifications. Our proposal would ensure that our full operational capacity remains online.

The Department, however, has refused to agree to this, and at Tuesday's hearing, they clearly put the opposite position, requiring specific accreditation in the specific capability to receive the relevant allowance.

Our proposal not only represents the best outcome for community safety, but also makes economic sense. For example, you might remember that in 2022, the Department was granted an additional \$34.3 million in funding to boost our flood rescue capability following the NSW Government's Flood Inquiry.

Under the Department's proposal, we will lose over two thirds of our In Water Flood Rescue Operators, including our entire regional capacity.

If you think this sounds ludicrous, so do we, but the Department is not only limiting this proposal to specialist rescue capabilities, there's more.

At the hearing, the Department also made it unequivocally clear on the record that it believes only firefighters stationed at **GLR-accredited stations** should be entitled to the GLR allowance.

This position, advanced by the Industrial Relations Secretary on behalf of the Department, has serious and far-reaching implications. It is not merely about allowances, but about **the Department's willingness to restrict rescue capability** and determine which communities are deemed worthy of that capability - particularly in regional areas.

Under current arrangements, many GLR-accredited operators work from Road Crash Rescue stations. **The Department's proposal would strip these firefighters of the allowance from 26 February 2026**, despite their qualifications and existing operational need.

More concerningly, the Department added that it does not expect firefighters at these stations to hold themselves ready to perform GLR work in the future, asserting this is not part of their role unless they are at a GLR-accredited station.



SitRep 45/2025

We strongly opposed this position and made clear to the Full Bench and government officials that the Department's approach **would significantly undermine rescue capability**, particularly outside metropolitan areas.

The Full Bench has advised that they will issue their decision on this at midday tomorrow. Should the Department's position be accepted, it will necessitate major changes to current rescue arrangements across the agency and the broader sector.

Notably, **no uniforms attended the IRC**, raising serious questions about whether the Commissioner is aware of, or endorses, the operational consequences of the positions being advanced on his behalf.

Members will be updated once the Full Bench's decision is handed down and the final Award outcomes are confirmed.

In Unity

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "L. Drury".

Leighton Drury
State Secretary