



SitRep 26/2021

FRNSW Moving Bathurst's Appliance

Earlier this week the Department sent out an email about the Union's ban on training involving 216 Bathurst Station. To be very clear, the issue wasn't about training but about member safety. It's something we take very seriously as do our members, with all impacted members following the ban's instructions.

Last Tuesday 25 May 2021, members at 216 Bathurst were informed that they were to attend training at 423 Portland Station an hour away. This would have removed the only Type 3 Pump in Bathurst, a city with a population of 37,000.

Discussions were held with FRNSW with alternate proposals put forward, including holding the same training in the Bathurst area, as members were rightly concerned with the initially proposed arrangements. We also asked for a written Risk Assessment only to be told that a Dynamic Risk Assessment was sufficient. This prompted the Union to issue a ban on moving Bathurst's Alpha Pump and its crew attending Portland Station for drill. Consequently, Kelso Retained attended the training instead.

At the same time this matter was heard in the IRC on 1 June 2021, 216 Bathurst responded to a building fire. The Bravo Appliance was not on the initial call as it was Retained short and 105 Kelso responded from the drill at Portland almost an hour away. In the end, 216 Bravo Pump attended with a crew of two. While it is lucky that the incident turned out to be a minor fire, it highlights why taking the Permanent Appliance out of a city like Bathurst is a safety concern not only for our members but also the community.

While the Department has acknowledged that a Risk Assessment exists for the move of these appliances, it has failed to consult with the Health & Safety Representatives (HSRs) for the members. In other words, it is our understanding that the Department is in breach of the law. The Department also failed to consult with all its stakeholders including Bathurst Council and did not inform them that their only Type 3 Appliance would be responding from an hour out of the city.

Involving HSRs in a Risk Assessment is a requirement of any change in a workplace's processes and resources. It ensures that impacted workers are involved in assessing any associated risks and whether the controls in place to mitigate those risks are adequate. The Department's own policy on WHS Risk Management procedure states that HSRs need to be consulted throughout the entire process.

The FBEU will be speaking with impacted members to consider an appropriate course of action that puts the safety of members and the public first and can hopefully guide FRNSW in how to adhere to their own policy and the relevant legislation.

In Unity,

Shane Kennedy
State Secretary