Tanker Strategy FAQs

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About the project	**What is the Tanker Strategy Project?** The Tanker Strategy Project aims to expand the successful two-person tanker response model from Peak Hill Fire Station to an additional 10 identified on-call (retained) fire stations in low-risk, rural areas with low or declining populations and low incident call rates. New Class 1 Tankers, to replace the current Class 2 Pumpers will be deployed to the stations. These tankers are better suited for the specific local geography and operational needs, thereby improving response capabilities. Each of the 10 identified stations will have a minimum staffing requirement of two firefighters per tanker. This model, introduced in 2019 at Peak Hill, has proven to be both safe and effective, addressing staff shortages and reducing costs. The project aims to strategically align station resources with community needs. By equipping each station with appropriate appliances and resources, FRNSW seeks to enhance response capabilities and overall safety outcomes. The project will also ensure identified stations remain operational within our fire district and are not at risk of closure. It enables FRNSW to maintain the current establishment status at the station and develop a scalable approach to station capability. Capability reviews can be undertaken in	**What is FRNSW changing?** FRNSW is expanding its 'Tanker Strategy' to 10 rural stations, after a successful trial that began in 2019 at Peak Hill Fire Station in the state's central west. The program will replace Class 2 pumpers that require a minimum four firefighters, with Class 1 4WD tankers that carry more water, are better suited to the terrain, provide additional protection inside the cabin and are operated by a minimum of two firefighters. It is important to note that resources will not be reduced in these areas and stations will not be closed.

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	response to changes in local population dynamics, such as town growth or decline.	
Consultation	**Who has been consulted about the project?** FRNSW is undertaking formal consultation with the Fire Brigade Employees Union (FBEU), local government and emergency service partner agencies to ensure the project is well-planned and meets the needs of all parties involved.	**Who has been consulted about the project?** FRNSW is undertaking formal consultation with the Fire Brigade Employees Union (FBEU), local government and emergency service partner agencies to ensure the project is well-planned and meets the needs of all parties involved.
Timing	**Why is FRNSW implementing this now?** The Tanker Strategy Project is a critical step to achieving financial sustainability while continuing to deliver high-quality services. It has been carefully planned and researched and is essential to ensure operational efficiency and the safety of firefighters and communities. This project is about making sure we're using our resources in the smartest, safest way possible, especially in regional areas where firefighter numbers are tight, call volumes are low, and communities still need strong protection. This strategy will give us greater flexibility in response capability and staffing levels for remote stations. It will reduce the pressure on filling staff shortages and the pressure on firefighters to stay available.	**Why are you doing this now?** The Tanker Strategy has been carefully planned and researched and is essential to ensure operational efficiency and the safety of firefighters and communities. This project is about making sure we're using our resources in the smartest, safest way possible, especially in regional areas where firefighter numbers are tight, call volumes are low, and communities still need strong protection. This strategy will give us greater flexibility in response capability and staffing levels for remote stations. It will reduce the pressure on filling staff shortages and the pressure on firefighters to stay available.
What happened in Peak Hill	**What were the impacts in Peak Hill?** The model has been successfully tested at Peak Hill Fire Station. Standbys have been reduced, the fear of closure is	**What were the impacts in Peak Hill?** The model has been successfully tested at Peak Hill Fire Station. Standbys (where firefighters are moved from other

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	removed, and the community is better protected with the tankers' off-road capability. The two-person response model has demonstrated significant improvements in operational efficiency and safety. In the first five years of the trial at Peak Hill, there were nil negative operational impacts from this model.	stations to cover) have been reduced, the fear of closure is removed, and the community is better protected with the tankers' off-road capability. In the first five years of the trial at Peak Hill, there were nil negative operational impacts from this model.
Cost saving	**Is it just about saving money?** No, financial savings are an outcome and not a driver of this strategy. Aligning with FRNSW's broader goals of achieving financial sustainability, the project seeks to optimise resource allocation and reduce significant staffing costs. By managing our resources effectively, optimising operational efficiency and planning for long-term financial health, we can ensure our operations are both sustainable and responsive to community needs. The project will reduce the need for firefighters from other stations to cover shifts, thereby decreasing associated overtime and relief duties costs. This not only improves the efficiency of our operations but also ensures that firefighters can focus on their primary responsibilities without additional pressures. The maximum savings from this project is forecast to be around $40 million over the next four years, assuming no staff shortages.	**Is it just about saving money?** No, financial savings are an outcome and not a driver of this strategy. Our on-call (retained) firefighters often have other jobs or caring responsibilities and make themselves available to respond to incidents around their primary roles. At these stations there is significant pressure on the station and zone management teams to fill shortages, and/or for on-call firefighters at the stations to be available all the time which is not sustainable and increases fatigue. Simply recruiting more firefighters is often not a viable option as there are limited people living within reasonable proximity to the station who are willing and suitable to take on the role. Attempts to increase staffing to any sort of acceptable level are not always effective despite intensive recruitment activities.

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<tr><th></th><th>INTERNAL</th><th>COMMUNITY AND MPs</th></tr>
<tr><td>Selected stations</td><td>
How have the identified stations been chosen?

Phase 1 will include three identified stations, Bingara, Dungog and Walgett, and begin this year. Phase 2 will include another seven stations – Balranald, Barham, Batlow, Berrigan, Boggabri, Bombala and Warren – starting next year.

These stations have been selected following a thorough review of population statistics, current firefighter staffing and recruitment attempts, local environment indicating preference for a 4WD drive fire truck, incident and risk profile, and previous five years' expenses to keep FRNSW operational.

The transition from Class 2 Pumpers to Class 1 Tankers will help tackle ongoing staffing shortages and operational challenges in these areas.

<table>
<tr><th>Station</th><th>Population</th><th>Annual incidents (figures Jan 2025 to May 2025)</th></tr>
<tr><td>Bingara</td><td>1,318</td><td>12</td></tr>
<tr><td>Dungog</td><td>2,169</td><td>30</td></tr>
<tr><td>Walgett</td><td>1,377</td><td>62</td></tr>
<tr><td>Balranald</td><td>1,063</td><td>24</td></tr>
<tr><td>Barham</td><td>1,512</td><td>12</td></tr>
<tr><td>Batlow</td><td>1,313</td><td>8</td></tr>
<tr><td>Berrigan</td><td>1,264</td><td>9</td></tr>
<tr><td>Boggabri</td><td>885</td><td>14</td></tr>
<tr><td>Bombala</td><td>1,418</td><td>36</td></tr>
<tr><td>Warren</td><td>1,365</td><td>22</td></tr>
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Why have station(s) in my area been chosen for this?

Phase 1 will include three identified stations, Bingara, Dungog and Walgett, and begin this year. Phase 2 will include another seven stations – Balranald, Barham, Batlow, Berrigan, Boggabri, Bombala and Warren – starting next year.

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<tr><td>Tankers v pumpers</td><td>
How do the Class 2 Pumpers and Class 1 Tankers compare?

The Class 1 4WD appliance is better suited for operational conditions in remote areas with unsealed roads and fire conditions requiring 4WD capability.

The new tankers will offer advanced features like increased water capacity, cabin protection systems, pump and roll capability and specialised road crash and general land rescue capabilities to increase the effectiveness of emergency response.

<table>
<tr><th>Feature</th><th>Class 2 Pumpers</th><th>Class 1 Tankers</th><th>Benefits of Class 1 Tankers</th></tr>
<tr><td>Purpose</td><td>Designed for metropolitan and regional areas with intermediate hazard levels</td><td>Multi-purpose 4WD off-road capable tanker</td><td>Versatile for various terrains and situations</td></tr>
<tr><td>Water capacity</td><td>Minimum pump capacity of 3,000 litres per minute

Water tank holds 2,000 litres</td><td>Minimum pump capacity of 2,800 litres per minute

Water tank holds 2,700 to 3,200 litres</td><td>Higher water capacity for extended firefighting</td></tr>
<tr><td>Foam systems</td><td>Not specified</td><td>Equipped with Class A bushfire foam</td><td>Enhanced firefighting capability</td></tr>
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Why are tankers better for these areas?

The new 4WD vehicles are better suited for firefighting in remote locations with challenging terrain and unsealed roads. The tankers will also provide specialised road crash and general land rescue capabilities to increase the effectiveness of emergency response.

The tankers have increased water supply, pump and roll capability and cabin protection systems. This represents a significant safety improvement for regional firefighters responding to grass and bush fires.
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			systems and Compressed Air Foam Systems (CAFS)*	with foam systems	
	Pump-and-roll capability	Not specified	Yes, allows water delivery while moving	Effective for fighting bushfires and fast-moving grass fires	
	Cabin protection	Not specified	Incorporates cabin protection spray systems	Increased safety for firefighters in burn-over situations	
	Hazmat and rescue capability	May have primary rescue capability	Some have hazmat and primary rescue capability	Additional functionality for hazardous materials and rescue operations	

*Note that CAFS will not be part of the tankers due to weight issues – tankers will have road crash rescue or general land rescue equipment instead to suit each station's capability.

Tankers for the purposes of this initiative are defined as a Class 1, six locker variant with 4WD capability. Other tanker variants are not acceptable, as they are unable to carry sufficient inventory to respond as a first appliance.

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Impact on emergency response	**Will FRNSW's operational readiness be reduced?** Absolutely not. The operational readiness of FRNSW will remain robust and effective with the implementation of the two-person response model. FRNSW remains committed to ensuring all fire districts have adequate resources and support to maintain their operational readiness and community protection. FRNSW operates a network of 335 stations and over 700 firefighting and specialist vehicles. Each fire truck and crew is available to respond anywhere across the state, irrespective of fixed station locations. This dynamic approach ensures a mobile network of coverage is always provided to communities ensuring continuous capability to respond to incidents efficiently.	**What will it mean for emergency response in my area? Will you still be able to effectively put out fires and deal with other emergencies?** Absolutely. The operational readiness of FRNSW will remain robust and effective with the implementation of the two-person response model. The new 4WD vehicles are better suited for firefighting in remote locations with challenging terrain and unsealed roads. The tankers will also provide specialist road crash and general land rescue capabilities to increase the effectiveness of emergency response. FRNSW remains committed to ensuring all fire districts have adequate resources and support to maintain their operational readiness and community protection. FRNSW operates a network of 335 stations and over 700 firefighting and specialist vehicles. Each fire truck and crew available to respond anywhere across the state, irrespective of fixed station locations. This dynamic approach ensures a mobile network of coverage is always provided to communities ensuring continuous capability to respond to incidents efficiently.
Impact on safety and staffing	**What does the change mean for firefighters?** The introduction of the tanker-only model aligns with established response protocols, simplifying operations and reducing the need for additional personnel from other stations.	**Will firefighters still be safe?** The introduction of the tanker-only model aligns with established response protocols, simplifying operations and reducing the need for additional personnel from other stations.

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	For firefighters at the identified on-call (retained) fire stations, the Tanker Strategy Project will bring significant yet positive changes to their daily routines. The introduction of Class 1 Tankers and the implementation of a two-person minimum staffing requirement will streamline and enhance their operational duties. Firefighters will receive comprehensive training on the new tankers and current response protocols, ensuring they are well-prepared and confident in handling the new equipment and procedures. Responding with two firefighters reduces impact and stress on the station and zone management teams, and surrounding fire stations who were previously required to keep four firefighters available at all times. This requirement has no bearing on actual call rates, with minimum availability required even during daytime work hours when there is substantially reduced risk in the fire district. The implementation of this project will not affect the stability of employment or the remuneration of our firefighters. Award attendance and drill requirements at the specified stations will be upheld. Appliance staffing is determined by the type of vehicle as per both the Retained and Permanent Firefighting Awards under Schedule 3, Safe Staffing Table - Station Based Minimum Safe Staffing Numbers. This ensures that all staffing levels meet the established safety and operational standards, maintaining high levels of readiness and effectiveness.	Firefighters will receive comprehensive training on the new tankers and current response protocols, ensuring they are well-prepared and confident in handling the new equipment and procedures. Responding with two firefighters reduces impact and stress on the station and zone management teams, and surrounding fire stations who were previously required to keep four firefighters available at all times. This requirement has no bearing on actual call rates, with minimum availability required even during daytime work hours when there is substantially reduced risk in the fire district.

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	If a station identified in this project can provide more than two firefighters, then they will respond with this higher number of staff. Firefighters will continue to engage with and serve their local communities effectively, with the new tankers enhancing their capability to respond to a wide range of incidents, from bushfires to road crashes, with greater efficiency and effectiveness.	
Our people	**What is expected of our people during the change?** We expect our people to understand the benefits to themselves and to the organisation, embrace the change, commit to training and adhere to safety protocols. We expect our firefighters to continue to build and maintain strong relations with the communities they serve, engage with local residents to help foster trust and support for the changes being implemented. By working together and demonstrating these positive and professional behaviours, our firefighters play a critical role in improving operational efficiency, improving safety and ensuring that this important initiative is a success.	