



# SitRep 14/2022

## CFU Backdown

Over the weekend FBEU became aware that Fire and Rescue were calling for Community Fire Unit's to respond to flood affected areas.

The FBEU was not informed or consulted in regard to this proposal.

Today we have urgently written to Fire and Rescue seeking that they provide an undertaking by 4pm today to cease the deployment of CFU's in this capacity.

As Members would be aware, CFU's are trained and equipped to operate within an extremely limited capacity effectively taking part in basic bushfire preparedness activities in their own geographical area. This scope is defined within the *Fire and Rescue (NSW) Act 1989*.

Allowing CFU's to respond outside of this scope creates not only an unprecedented demarcation issue but highlights an alarming escalation to existing concerns surrounding the resourcing crisis we are facing as a fire service. For too long Professional Firefighters have been underutilised or under resourced in equipment to provide a response.

This situation has made it abundantly clear that FRNSW no longer have funding to deploy professional staffing resources required to deal with serious emergency situations and are now making dangerous decisions which impact organisational liabilities, our members safety, and the safety of the community. This is simply not good enough from FRNSW nor the NSW Government.

We have raised these concerns with FRNSW in our correspondence this morning. Not only is this work outside the skills, knowledge and training of CFU, but it also puts our Members at risk who we assume will be required to direct and control the work of these volunteers once deployed including assuming responsibility for their safety and the safety of those with whom they interact.

**This afternoon FRNSW have walked-back from this decision acknowledging the legal limitations of the initiative.**

The FBEU clearly supports providing appropriate resources and personnel to assist in response to those who have suffered loss as a result of the floods. We are in fact advocating for it in other relevant forums.

We maintain however that the right resources here are those trained and equipped to deal with the situation, professional, Career Firefighters. It is the permanent and retained workforce of FRNSW who should be deployed where additional assistance is needed. Anything less is simply not good enough.

In Unity

**Leighton Drury**  
State Secretary