



## **FBEU Highlights Major Safety Flaw with Sydney Metro Project Cross-Passage Tunnels**

As you may have seen across media this morning, we recently became aware of a significant safety concern regarding cross-passage spacing in the Sydney Metro rail tunnel projects which will put commuters and firefighters at significant risk.

For those who have not read the media reports, the current Australian Standard, AS 4825, stipulates that cross-passages in rail tunnels should be built every 240 metres to allow for emergency evacuation and, as all firefighters know, access to the incident point.

The FBEU recently discovered that Sydney Metro will deviate from the Australian standard, doubling cross-passage spacing to 500 meters and hindering safe work practices for firefighters and our rescue efforts. This was confirmed by them following the FBEU exposing this risk through the media.

In the event of an emergency inside the tunnel, firefighters will be forced to walk up to 500 metres carrying injured, elderly and disabled passengers, a distance that puts us at risk, that affects our ability to help the community due to the limitations of our breathing apparatus, and increases our response times considerably.

These tunnels are significant pieces of state infrastructure, designed to serve the NSW community for the next 100 years. It is imperative that Sydney Metro adopt the appropriate fire safety strategies now at this stage of the project build and that the State Government does not allow vital infrastructure to be built that will put the NSW community at risk.

We have today sought urgent intervention from Emergency Services Minister Steph Cooke and are awaiting a response.

## **Ministers \$30 Mill Smoke and Mirrors Announcement**

You may have also noticed Minister Cooke recently spruiking an alleged announcement of \$30 million of funding for FRNSW under the banner of 'Clean Firefighter, Clean Appliance and Clean Building'.

Minister Cooke, along with Commissioner Baxter, has been claiming that the funding will be "transforming traditional firefighting by rolling out new fire station designs, new uniforms, and world-class decontamination procedures to better protect our firefighters from exposure to dangerous carcinogens" and that "FRNSW is world-leading in decontamination technology and the improved fire station designs".

Unsurprisingly the FBEU was somewhat sceptical of this announcement given the current state of our fire stations, no station guidelines to provide for appropriate PPE storage, clean/dirty areas or diesel extraction systems, not to mention our out of date appliances, so we dug a little deeper.

It has now become evident that this \$30 million seemingly includes little to no new money and in fact is the Minister simply recycling old announcements of the new PPC and laundry system which has been rolling out for approximately two years now and is just a fraction of the measures FRNSW should implement to actually take a leading role in providing a safe workplace for firefighters.



Regardless, we all know that even if the whole of the \$30 million was new funding, it would not come close to fixing the massive health and safety concerns with the current state of FRNSW infrastructure.

The FBEU will continue our campaign for real funding for NSW professional firefighters to ensure you are provided with the world class technology that already exists such as diesel extraction systems, and FRNSW adheres to appropriate standards to keep you safe from unnecessary exposures.

## **FBEU IRC Matters – Busby Relocation Dispute has an Urgent Late Night Hearing and Vaccination Policy Cases Closes**

The FBEU has had various matters before the IRC this week including an urgent late-night hearing on Wednesday night regarding the current temporary relocation of Busby Firefighters to Liverpool Fire Station.

Many members will not be aware of the detail of that dispute however for some weeks now the Department has been seeking to direct Busby firefighters into a temporary facility despite the numerous concerns we have been raising including potential non-compliance with building codes and fire safety. This culminated in the urgent hearing before the IRC on Wednesday evening which ran until after 9pm before the parties could reach an agreed temporary resolution. We want to acknowledge and thank members, in particular our Busby Delegate, for their ongoing commitment to ensure that our facilities, whether temporary or not, are fit for purpose and safe. For those who gave up their evening and attended the IRC late that evening we thank them for their effort and commitment.

Also, final closing submissions on the FBEU's case regarding FRNSW Covid-19 Vaccination Policy were heard on Tuesday. For those who do not recall, the FBEU has filed a dispute regarding the lawfulness and/or reasonableness (and lack of effective consultation) in relation to the COVID-19 Policy and underpinning risk assessment which mandated that all FRNSW employees must have received two doses of an approved Covid-19 vaccinations by December 17 2021.

The hearing for this matter has now concluded and the IRC Commissioner has reserved her decision meaning she will issue a decision in due course, which she has indicated will be prior to the end of the year. Members will be updated once a decision is handed down.

In Unity

**Leighton Drury**  
**State Secretary**