



## **AWARD UPDATE – UPDATE**

With both the FBEU and FRNSW having filed final material for the Award arbitration process, we now reach the final stages of the timetable set by the IRC articulated in [SitRep 47/2024](#).

From Tuesday 11 February, those deciding upon our Award will hear from witnesses from across the FBEU membership to fully assess the fair and equitable improvements to firefighter pay and conditions, prioritised by you in our endorsed 2024 Log of Claims. Over 9 days between 9 – 11 February, our matter will be heard in the recently reintroduced Industrial Court of NSW. Our industrial and legal team have put significant work into building our case but crucial to our argument will be the 39 past and present FBEU members who have stood-up to give evidence to the Court.

The Courts reintroduction is component of the IR reform campaigned for by FBEU members and the broader union movement, and empowers specialised Judges, independent of the NSW Government, to hear and make enforceable decisions on public sector industrial matters. The Court, which has been absent for more than a decade, is a critically important forum for our Award claim and we need the Commissioner and the Judges to understand the real impact their decision will have on you as frontline workers.

**The FBEU call on all available members to attend the Court in support of our claim. Seats are limited and members are encouraged to RSVP for specific dates using [this link](#).**

## **RFS TAKE AIM AT “PROFESSIONAL FIREFIGHTERS”**

The Rural Fire Service Association – the (other) representative for RFS volunteers – has come out swinging in response to recent FBEU calls for greater resourcing of professional firefighters. Members can find RFS correspondence [here](#) – refer to page 2.

RFS comments come in response to various submissions made by the FBEU to State Government Inquiries – examples found [here](#) and [here](#) – calling for wholesale review of funding for the emergency service sector including an audit of “active” RFS volunteers. The RFS, who have continued to perpetuate the myth of 70,000+ volunteers for some time, have referred to FBEU calls as “nonsense”, and they appear to have taken issue with the phrase “professional firefighters”. According to the RFS, both agencies are getting along swimmingly, and qualifications have little to do with an appropriate standard of fire cover for the NSW community.

The real reason for the RFS’s knee-jerk is that RFS need a diversion from the hard conversations NSW needs to be having right now. As FBEU members continue to carry the risk across NSW, the RFS are off empire building with new urban-pumpers and \$400 million aerial contracts while hazard reduction targets are left completely neglected.

And it isn’t just the FBEU that are calling for this urgent conversation. With LA burning the Australian media are paying close to attention to the “world’s largest volunteer fire service”. Just this week the Sydney Morning Herald published [this story](#) concerning RFS aerial firefighting fleet. As the lucky for the RFS, the RFS aren’t immune from scrutiny either – [see this](#) Sydney Morning Herald story raising the alarm on the association’s charitable fundraising side hustle.

*As the FBEU submitted recently - Both professional and volunteer organisations will continue to play an important role in service delivery. However, the reality of a growing State demands a guaranteed*



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*standard of response. The evidence provided above, however, suggests the required standard of cover must be primarily delivered by a professional service - like FRNSW. The FBEU contend that structural reform within the sector is urgently needed to improve these circumstances and to deliver improved outcomes for our State.*

In Unity,

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