



THE STATE OF THE STATE RESCUE BOARD

The efficient and effective maintenance of rescue services throughout NSW is a key issue for the FBEU membership and has featured heavily in our recent Award Arbitration process. The FBEU has made it clear to the NSW Government that the misallocation and duplication of rescue resources must be addressed, starting with urgent reform of the sector ensuring that paid professional firefighters have the tools they need to meet community expectations – see Sitrep [40/2024](#) for more detail.

On the back of a documented decline in volunteerism across the Emergency Services Sector (report [here](#)), the State Rescue Board's (SRB) significant over-reliance of waning volunteer rescue units is beginning to hit a hard and rather public limitation. However, a recent budget estimates performance from the Chair of the SRB demonstrates the full extent of deterioration in the board's capacity for accountability and oversight. The exchange, initiated by the Hon. Rob Roberts MLC, can be found [here](#) on p68-69 of the transcript and here [via the video recording](#). Whilst the SRB acknowledge a problem with the reporting of offline volunteer rescue units, the board remain indifferent to the concept of collecting the 'right data' to substantiate the efficient delivery of rescue service, with the Chair responding "What would we do with the data?".

So, what would we do with the data from rescue incidents? Aside from ensuring compliance with the SERM Act and State Rescue Policy, aside from ensuring that the NSW Government can evaluate SRB decisions concerning the suitability of rescue arrangements across NSW, the Minister for Roads, Hon. John Graham, agrees that data might assist in evaluating State Government efforts to minimise road fatalities, injuries, and economic impacts of uncleared arterial roads. [Members can view that exchange here.](#)

Turning political attitudes into quantifiable improvements to public services will continue to be a hard task for the Minns Government while ineffective clusters of decision-makers, like that represented in the SRB, are left unchecked. Gone are the days of the 1980's rescue turf wars, communities across the state expect the quickest responding and available rescue unit at their time of need. This means capitalising on the training, availability, and guaranteed response of FBEU members for primary responses.

In the absence of the SRB doing their bit, members are advised to continue reporting rescue shortages and related issues directly to the FBEU Office.

In Unity,

Leighton Drury
State Secretary