



# RFSA

## INPUT SOUGHT - KEELTY INQUIRY *YOUR INPUT IS IMPORTANT*

4 April, 2018

Dear Fellow Volunteer,

I am writing to you on behalf of the NSW Rural Fire Service Association (RFSA) to seek active participation from your brigade in presenting an informed and accurate presentation of the current state of the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) to the Keelty Commission of Inquiry.

The Inquiry's Terms of Reference are:

*Review and report on the adequacy of the fire services response to the Reedy Swamp fire Bega that occurred on 18 March 2018, and subsequently impacted on the township of Tathra;*

*Review the call taking and despatch arrangements of both Fire and Rescue NSW and NSW Rural Fire Service across the State, and make any recommendations to ensure they are best practice, addressing emerging technology, and provide the best possible service delivery to the community of NSW.*

The RFSA has been invited to make a submission on behalf of all volunteers, and to this end seeks your input.

You may have seen recent publicity surrounding the Tathra fire. This would normally have been reasonably balanced with sensible suggestions for improvement, however this has been perverted by an organised campaign to denigrate the NSW RFS response. In the process the volunteer firefighters' response was directly attacked along with State Operations and the local IMT.

The responders were accused of denying appropriate aid from Fire & Rescue NSW (FRNSW). When this accusation was refuted, allegations were raised concerning a "turf war" and NSW RFS responses in other Districts were brought into question.

It is clear there is an agenda to sow dissent between NSW RFS and FRNSW personnel, which has the potential to erode the extremely successful model that exists in NSW and is the envy of other states.

Observers of the ongoing issues in Victoria will be aware that the United Firefighters Union (UFU) has endeavoured to control the administration of the Country Fire Association (CFA) with demands of operational veto rights and unreasonable authority over volunteer roles. It is apparent that this attitude may not be confined to Victoria.

We now need to hear your brigade experiences in relation to:

- issues with call-outs to incidents,
- territory issues,
- views on vehicle tracking,
- the proposal for FRNSW to take over despatch and control of NSW RFS vehicles,
- feedback (both good and bad) on your relationship with FRNSW.

*There is very limited time to gather this information. It is needed by mid-April. Even a simple statement of your views to be followed up with a more detailed response will assist us in our presentation.*

Submissions should be emailed to: [submissions@rfsa.org.au](mailto:submissions@rfsa.org.au) by **Wednesday, 11 April, 2018.**

*Yours sincerely,*



**Ken Middleton**  
President