



RFSA

Rural Fire Service Association

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MEDIA RELEASE

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RURAL FIRE SERVICE ASSOCIATION ACCEPTS PREMIER'S COMPROMISE BUT PREFERRED POSITION REMAINS 'NO SUPER MINISTRY'

The RFSA (Rural Fire Service Association) today has accepted Premier Nathan Rees' clarification and concessions in relation to his Super Ministry reforms following lengthy negotiations this week, but notes the Association's preferred position remains 'no Super Ministry'.

RFSA Acting President Stephen Raymond said the Premier's new position represents a workable compromise guaranteeing that the Rural Fire Service "remains a separate legal and financial entity and an independent public sector organisation under the *Public Sector Management Act 2002*".

Mr Raymond said the Premier's compromise position is "subject to a guarantee that the agreed level of autonomy for the Rural Fire Service and the Rural Fire Service Commissioner will be sustained as a minimum level for the life of this Government, and a guarantee that the election platform of the Premier's party for the 2011 NSW general election will also maintain this level of autonomy as a minimum standard". He said other measures agreed to include:

- No change to the current statutory arrangements under the *Rural Fires Act 1997*.
- The Rural Fire Fighting Fund will continue to be separately maintained and the resources will continue to be dedicated to the purposes of the Rural Fires Act 1997.
- The authority of the Commissioner of the Rural Fire Service as the head of the organisation remains unchanged. The Commissioner's line of accountability to the Minister for Emergency Services remains unchanged.
- The Minister for Emergency Services will continue to have responsibility for the current portfolio budget and for bringing forward matters for consideration by the Government.

Extensive discussions were held between the RFSA's President Brian McKinlay and Executive Director Peter Olah, the NSW Commissioner of Police, Andrew Scipione, the Minister for Police, Tony Kelly, the Minister for Emergency Services, Steve Whan, and the Member for Blue Mountains and former Rural Fire Service Commissioner, Phil Koperberg.

"On this basis we intend to communicate to our membership that a compromise position has been agreed to, and that whilst the RFSA's preference remains that no Super Ministry should be built incorporating the Rural Fire Service, we nevertheless believe this compromise position is workable.



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“It’s an important outcome and a proud result for the RFSA, as we can now move forward confidently knowing that the integrity and independence of the RFS as a volunteer oriented, community focussed organisation has been preserved.

“I’d also note the thanks of the RFSA and its membership for Phil Koperberg’s assistance throughout this process. His commitment to the volunteers within the Rural Fire Service, and immense respect on all sides, has been vital in achieving this negotiated outcome.

“However on behalf of our broad membership we will continue to monitor government policy and action in this area to ensure that the promised level of autonomy is maintained as an absolute minimum,” Mr Raymond said. END

For media enquiries and photos contact: Karin Krueger, KDK Media on 02 9979 3718 or 0419 991 267.

About the RFSA

The RFSA (NSW Rural Fire Service Association) is the Association representing NSW’s 70,000 rural fire fighters. The RFSA’s president is Brian McKinlay and newly appointed Executive Director is Peter Olah. See www.rfsa.org.au