



The Hon. David Elliott MP
Minister for Police and Emergency Services

DOC 21/2283
DOC056034

Mr David Blunt
Clerk of the Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Mr Blunt

On 31 July 2020, the Legislative Council Portfolio Committee 5 released *Report 54 – Legal Affairs into the Rural Fires Amendment (NSW RFS and Brigades Donations Fund) Bill 2020* ('the Bill'). In accordance with the Terms of Reference:

- (a) the provisions of the Bill were referred to the Committee for inquiry and report
- (b) the resumption of the second reading debate on the Bill would not proceed until the tabling of the report; and
- (c) the Committee was to report by Friday 31 July 2020.

The NSW Government has noted the Committee's recommendations. Please find attached a document outlining the NSW Government position for the Committee's information.

Yours sincerely

The Hon. David Elliott MP
Minister for Police and Emergency Services

DE Jan 2021

*Received on behalf of the Clerk of
the Parliament at 5.33pm on
Friday 29 January 2021*

NSW Government Response to Report 54 of Legislative Council Portfolio Committee 5 – Legal Affairs into the Rural Fires Amendment (NSW RFS and Brigades Donations Fund) Bill 2020

Recommendation 1	
<p>That the NSW Rural Fire Service establish a Rural Fire Service Volunteers Benevolent Fund, with this Fund administered cooperatively by the NSW Rural Fire Service, the Volunteer Fire Fighters Association and the Rural Fire Service Association, so that immediate support can be provided to volunteer firefighters who have been injured and/or who have lost their homes to fires during the course of their volunteer duties, and to the families of firefighters who have lost their lives.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Response</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Consistent with the decision of the Supreme Court of New South Wales, the NSW Rural Fire Service ('NSW RFS'), together with the Trustees of the NSW Rural Fire Service & Brigades Donation Fund ('the Trust'), has commenced work on establishing a fund to "support the families of firefighters killed in the line of duty and firefighters injured whilst firefighting."</p> <p>The NSW RFS has worked closely with the Trustees of the Trust on the framework of the Fund. Work on establishing the Fund is now underway.</p> <p>At the heart of the Fund are members of the NSW RFS. In recognition of this, the NSW RFS will call for expressions of interest from volunteers, including young volunteers, to sit on a Board which will oversee the activities of the Fund. It is intended that the Board will comprise diverse representatives with the requisite skills, capabilities, experience, and attributes to support the activities of the Fund, and the people and families it cares for.</p>
Recommendation 2	
<p>That the NSW Rural Fire Service and Brigades Donations Trust allocate an initial start-up budget for said Benevolent Fund from any unallocated donated monies originating from the Ms Celeste Barber fund in the NSW Rural Fire Service and Brigades Donations Fund as at 31 July 2020.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Response</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>The NSW RFS notes that none of the monies held by the Trust are unallocated. The Trustees of the Trust have allocated approximately \$15M to a number of volunteer welfare programs, which includes an ongoing benevolent fund.</p> <p>Donations received into the Trust have also been allocated to a range of initiatives that will support volunteer firefighters, transform the way</p>

they respond to emergencies and enhance the assistance they provide to their local communities. These include:

- a grant program delivering to more than 2,000 brigades across NSW firefighting equipment, resources and training they need;
- improved personal protective equipment for all 72,000 NSW RFS volunteer members; and
- programs to support the welfare, health and wellbeing of volunteers and their families, of which the benevolent fund is one.