



FIRE AND RESCUE NSW SUBMISSION TO THE IPART REVIEW OF PRICES FOR HUNTER WATER CORPORATION FROM 1 JULY 2020

Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW) has legislated community safety obligations under the *Fire and Rescue NSW Act 1989*. The ability to fulfil many of these obligations is dependent on the adequate provision of water from reticulated water networks, which in turn is linked to the financial investment in upgrading and maintaining these networks.

Hunter Water's current operating licence requires that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) be established with FRNSW and Clause 5.11.2 (c) states its purpose is to:

"Identify and develop strategies for efficient and effective provision of firefighting water consistent with the goals of each party to the memorandum of understating."

There is a requirement that representatives of Hunter Water and FRNSW establish a working group and Clause 5.11.3 (b) iii) requires that this group must consider several matters including *"arrangements for Hunter Water to consult with FRNSW in the design of new assets and planning of system maintenance, where modelling indicates that minimum available flow and pressure may unduly affect firefighting in the network section under consideration"*.

The MOU working group met most recently on 27 August 2019 and Hunter Water indicated that approximately 1% of properties (around 2,100) have been identified as being served by reticulated water mains providing water flows of less than 5 L/s. Every fire is different and the water requirements to extinguish a fire and prevent fire spread to neighbouring properties also vary significantly. A flowrate of 5 L/s or less may not be sufficient to effectively fight a fire in a fully involved structure unless FRNSW responds more resources than standard response protocols to relay water from more distant mains. Emerging risks, such as lithium-ion battery banks, require copious amounts of water to control if alight.

The MOU working group proposes to address the abovementioned concerns regarding the supply of water for firefighting in two ways:

1. Hunter Water has indicated that the capital expenditure portion of their pricing proposal included funds for the upgrade of reticulated water mains that serve approximately 1,300 of the properties with fire flows of less than 5L/s. FRNSW and Hunter Water are currently working together to identify high fire risk residential areas with low reticulated fire flows to maximise the benefit to the community of any capital expenditure on water main upgrades. Hunter Water has also indicated that it is undertaking its own analysis to ensure any capital expenditure is used as efficiently as possible.
2. FRNSW proposes to amend its response protocols, responding more fire trucks (which carry their own water) to properties identified as being served by mains with fire flows

less than 5 L/s, but that will not be upgraded. Hunter Water is in the process of generating maps indicating the areas with low fire flows to assist FRNSW's preparedness and planning. While FRNSW supports this approach, it has limitations. FRNSW has a finite number of resources and committing additional resources to a single incident will reduce the resources available to respond to other simultaneous incidents.

FRNSW strongly supports the Hunter Water upgrade program and the proposed capital expenditure as it will minimise the number of properties that require increased FRNSW response protocols. This leaves more firefighting resources available to respond to other concurrent incidents. Hunter Water and FRNSW are working together to maximise the benefit to the community of the proposed upgrade program and the capital expenditure.