



SITREP 34/13

A new Drug and Alcohol Protocol? Update #6

Further conciliation before the IRC's Justice Haylen following our last update in SITREP 32 resulted in agreement being reached on Tuesday for a new Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) Policy and associated Procedures document. The new Policy took effect on Wednesday with the publication of Commissioner's Orders 2013/20, replacing the Joint Drug and Alcohol Protocol that had operated (in our view successfully) since 1998. Both Awards will shortly be amended by consent to reflect this change at Clause 39 (Permanent) and Clause 30 (Retained).

We've travelled a long way forward on this issue from October 2012 when SITREP 41/2012 first reported that the Department declared consultation had concluded and that a new AOD Policy (based on urine testing) was in final draft. Months of negotiations, counter-proposals and IRC proceedings resulted in a very different, and very much improved Policy from the documents first released to the Union and the workforce in May this year.

Of course the new Policy is not without its controversy - principally its provisions for random and targeted drug and alcohol testing of all "workers" in "the workplace" (two intentionally broad definitions that now extend well beyond only FRNSW firefighters and FRNSW fire stations). However it also retains important elements of its D&A Protocol predecessor in providing support for members who may require it, and maintaining a clear focus on health and safety rather than discipline and punishment.

The Union is comfortable with the final, agreed Policy and Procedures documents and is confident that they will help secure the unquestionably laudable aim of a safer workplace for firefighters.

While the Policy (including the new 0.02 alcohol limit) is now operating, the full Procedures and testing regime will not commence until 1 December. The Union will publish more information and advice on the AOD Policy and testing regime closer to the December launch date.

Retained Award negotiations - update #4

The Union's application for a new Retained Award returned to the IRC on a couple of occasions since our last report in SITREP 32, most recently on Wednesday 4 September when IRC Vice President Walton decided to place the Union's previously-withdrawn availability payment proposal back on the negotiating table. Justice Walton has directed the Department to prepare and provide detailed costings of the Union's 10 point proposal prior to our next scheduled hearing on 20 September.

7% wage rise for Retained CFR - update #1

Further to SITREP 26, the 7% wage increase handed down by the IRC's Justice Staff in the Union's long-running work-value case was given effect to this week with the variation of the Retained Award to include new classifications and definitions of CFR Captain, CFR Deputy Captain and CFR Retained Firefighter, together with the new rates of pay. I today met with Commissioner Mullins to discuss, amongst other things, how and when these new pay rates will take effect. More to follow.

Jim Casey
State Secretary

Friday 6 September 2013