



SITREP 40/13

Good governance always a priority

The trade union movement has dominated the media for much of this week for all of the wrong reasons. If it wasn't the disgraceful right-wing toad Michael Williamson who systemically contrived to dud HSU members of over \$5M over the years, then it was the ongoing debate about the so-called "faceless men" of the union movement that allegedly bankrolls and controls the ALP.

The Union has in place systems and policies to prevent corruption and/or roting of members' funds - policies that were put in place well before the HSU scandal erupted. One example of this is the 2009 AGM's remuneration policy which strictly prohibits FBEU officials from receiving even one cent more (in money or kind) than the policy allows unless a General Meeting of members approves it:

- g) *it is expressly provided in the interests of financial and political probity that with the exception of the provision for meetings of the State Executive Committee and the State Committee of Management of meals and refreshments of the same standard as that provided to members who attend Union training courses or similar events, neither the State Secretary nor the State Committee of Management may approve any payment for or on behalf of any official outside of this policy and that any official who considers him/her self to be out of pocket as a result of this policy will be both entitled and encouraged to make a submission setting out the amount of that shortfall, and the reasons for same, to that year's Annual General Meeting, which will in turn decide to:*
- i) reimburse the official for the full amount of the claimed shortfall; or*
 - ii) reimburse the official, but for a reduced amount; or*
 - iii) decline the official's claim.*

I don't intend buying into the ALP's "faceless men" debate except to, firstly, question why there is not similar outrage over the lawyers, billionaire miners and corporate spivs who prop up and control the Liberal and National Parties and secondly, to remind members that the FBEU ceased its affiliation with the ALP in June 2001 and has not given Labor a single cent since.

2013 AGM reminder

The agenda for the Union's 2013 Annual General Meeting and the draft minutes of the previous AGM and 2012/2013 SGM's are available on the online version of this SITREP. The 2013 AGM will be held commencing 1000 hours next Thursday 24 October at the Union Auditorium, Belmore Street Surry Hills.

Meal and Travel allowances increased from 1 July - update #3

SITREP 38/2013 reported the exhaustion of the Union's patience over the delay in paying (and back-paying) meal and travel allowances that were increased from 1 July 2013, with the Department warned of industrial action if the increased rates were not paid by 17 October. This week's Commissioner's Orders confirmed this. Members should nonetheless continue to check their pay records to ensure the correct amounts are being paid. If not, contact the Union office.

The Department was not at all happy with SITREP 38's attribution of this delay to "bureaucratic incompetence and/or managerial bloody-mindedness", and wrote accordingly last week. Copies of both that letter and the Union's letter in reply can be viewed via the online version of today's SITREP 40.



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Fitness for duty and medical retirement process back on track

Despite having agreed on a process for the assessment of fitness for duty, permanent redeployment and medical retirement over a year ago (see SITREP 38/2012), the Department proceeded to issue non-agreed letters, deceptive consent forms (see SITREP 36/2013) and, in some cases, blatant misinformation to firefighters about their D&D entitlements. This resulted in some members prejudicing their rights under the D&D Award and exiting the job before their D&D benefits had been settled.

After three letters went unanswered the eventually Union took the issue to the IRC, causing the Department to agree to issue only the agreed template letters settled in October 2012 and to cease issuing the offending consent forms. The agreed template letters can be viewed on the online version of this SITREP. Members who receive a fitness for duty and/or medical retirement letter from the Department which differs in any way from the agreed letters should contact the Union Office before discussing the matter with management, and certainly before consenting to anything. Members are also reminded that:

- You are not required to sign anything in order to progress through the medical assessment process.
- You are not required to sign consent for release of medical information forms issued by FRNSW.
- The D&D Award prevents the Department from requiring you to consent to or sign anything related to medical assessments or retirement before the Union has been advised.
- You should not engage your own legal representation before speaking with the Union.
- You should not consent to medical retirement (or a medical retirement date) before obtaining advice from the Union on all of your rights and entitlements.
- You should not consent to medical retirement (or a medical retirement date) before your benefits have been confirmed in writing by either the Department (PPI) or the D&D Fund (TPI).

Mental Health Information Service

As part of Mental Health Month, the Union brings to member's attention that the Mental Health Association of NSW provides two information lines: **Mental Health Information Service 1300 794 991** (Information, support and referral on issues relating to mental health generally) and **Anxiety Disorder Support Information Line 1300 794 992** (focuses more specifically on anxiety disorders).

You can phone (for the cost of a local call) or email. All calls are treated confidentially, no personal details are held and you can remain anonymous if you wish. Further information see www.mentalhealth.asn.au

UK firefighters set to strike again

English and Welsh firefighters will strike once again over government attacks on their pensions tomorrow, between 6.30pm and 11.30pm (UK time). Matt Wrack, FBU General Secretary, said: "We had hoped our first strike was enough to show government that firefighters could not be more serious about protecting public safety and ensuring fair pensions." Send a message of support to london@fbu.org.uk

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Casey".

Jim Casey
State Secretary

Friday 18 October 2013