



# SITREP 24/14

## Disturbance Allowances – what, when and how?

Members lucky enough to have been on shift at a station where significant building works have taken place may have been paid the elusive disturbance allowance for some or all of that period.

Contrary to widespread belief, payment of the disturbance allowance is never automatic. Disputes over payment often occur after the work has commenced, or been completed. In such situations it is often too late. If management intends to start building work at your station agreement as to what arrangements or allowances will be in place need to be made *before* work begins. In the first instance contact your station delegate, or State Committee official. Local deals and arrangements inevitably end up in tears.

## New Helmets?

FRNSW has written to the Union regarding the introduction of new “jet style” firefighting helmets. State Committee has given provisional agreement to the roll out, subject to these helmets conforming with relevant international standards, and that final approval will be subject to subsequent review. Roll out is expected to commence within this calendar year.

## Nobel prize winner - Abbott budget a “crime”

Nobel prize winner Professor Joseph Stiglitz, a mainstream economist who is far from being a dangerous radical, has described the Abbott Government’s proposed changes to university fees and Medicare as “*absurd*” and “*a crime*” that would lead Australia down the American path of widening inequality.

Asked what Australia had done right that the US had not, he said: “*unions*”. “*You have been able to maintain stronger trade unions than the United States. The absence of any protection for workers, any bargaining power, has had adverse effects in the United States. You have a minimum wage of around \$15 an hour. We have a minimum wage of \$8 an hour. That pulls down our entire wage structure.*”

“*The elite, the top 1%, are not too concerned. When you have so much inequality those at the top say: I don't need public transportation, I have a helicopter, I don't need public schools, I don't need all these other public services and so the result of that is .... we have some of the best universities, but our average education performance is mediocre.*”

Stiglitz is correct. A strong and effective trade movement helps make society less unequal, which is why if we value a fair society we need to keep our unions strong.

## Bust the Budget on 6 July

Members who can do so are reminded and encouraged to attend the coming Bust the Budget protest on Sunday 6 July. The FBEU will be meeting at the Union’s offices, 1-7 Belmore St Surry Hills, at 1230 to march to the main rally at Sydney Town Hall, 1300 hours.

**Jim Casey**  
State Secretary

Friday 4 July 2014