



SITREP 27/14

Permanent Award negotiations - update #4

I'm pleased to report that significant progress has been made since our last update in SITREP 20. Clause 13 (Progression and Promotion Provisions) has been the subject of most of our attention over this time, with conditional agreement reached on a new rank, promotions and pay framework on Wednesday of this week. The IRC expects confirmation by next Wednesday of the details of this agreement (all of which will remain subject to final approval, for our part, by an SGM, and for the Department, by the Minister and various other Government bodies), so the Union and Department are now working to that timetable. On the MFR front, little has occurred other than a commitment from the Department to provide details of its proposed trial.

Permanent members interested in promotion to S/O would be aware that the Award requires the Department to call for SOPP applications in Commissioner's Orders each July. Wednesday's conditional agreement included an understanding that the calling for applications would be deferred pending finalisation of the new Award. More to follow in SITREP 28.

Retainer ripoff – update #1

Scores of retained members contacted the Union this week in response to SITREP 26's report of our discovery of potentially hundreds of cases of underpaid retainers stretching back many years. A Union inspection of the Department's pay records this week confirmed that many of those members had indeed been shortchanged, with the back pay for those affected averaging around \$1,500 per member.

Members who suspect they might have been underpaid should contact the Union.

GSE Act

Last year the NSW Government passed, without consultation or notice, the *Government Sector Employment Act* with the aim of providing "*streamlined statutory framework devoted solely to NSW Government sector employment and workforce management.*" While firefighters remain employed under the *Fire Brigades Act*, it appears that at least some parts of the GSE Act apply to us. I say "appears", because both the Government and the Department remain unsure about which parts do apply to us and which parts do not. One thing that is clear is that independent promotion appeals are now well and truly dead (see SITREP 21/2013).

An astute member wrote to us after he noticed an ad on jobs.nsw.gov.au which asserted that due to the GSE Act, all public sector employees now held roles rather than positions and could therefore "*be re-assigned to other roles at the same classification over time, in line with organisation priorities and/or personal development plans*". The member put his concern succinctly: "*To which NSW govt agencies does this apply? What does this mean for us fireys? The prisons are short a few screws, so off you go Sunshine? Not my go, I can tell you.*"

While there will be many arguments to follow about the application of the GSE Act, the FBEU will never allow any member to be transferred from FRNSW to another agency without their consent.

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

Jim Casey
State Secretary

Friday 1 August 2014