



SITREP 21/15

2016 Permanent and Retained Award claims

Both the Permanent and Retained Firefighters Awards expire 18 February 2016. The State Committee is beginning the process of preparing claims for both Awards, and member feedback is invited.

Members are reminded that firefighters, like all NSW public sector workers, now are required to negotiate with the employer as per the Coalition's 2011 Public Sector Wages Policy. As has been noted previously (see SITREPs 23, 27 and 35 of 2011 as a start) the Policy stacks the deck against workers looking to improve their wages or conditions. Wage increases are limited to 2.5% pa, unless employee related cost savings are identified and realised in order to fund any additional increase.

"Employee related cost savings" do not equal productivity. The Policy states that "Employee related cost savings should not include...productivity improvements which do not result in employee related cost savings". So it doesn't matter how much harder or smarter we work, or what new duties we take on, they are not paying for it. And there's no longer any recourse to the independent umpire - the Industrial Relations Commission of NSW - because the O'Farrell Government changed the IR Act to require the IRC to also comply with the Policy.

The Policy needs to be changed, and the IRC needs its judicial independence restored. This will require either a cross-union campaign or a change of government, both of which the FBEU is committed to but neither of which is likely to occur prior to February 2016.

Suggestions from members of either cost neutral, or internally funded, proposals for next year's Awards are invited. Members can submit any questions, comments or clarifications via email to office@fbeu.net, or by using the industrial inquiry link on our website.

28 July - save the date

The inaugural annual function for FBEU members, both serving and retired - and particularly for those who have left the job over previous year - will be held commencing midday on Tuesday 28 July at Doltone House, Hyde Park. Tickets will be available from next week, together with further details.

Who voted Liberal? Abbott to strip parental benefits

The Coalition Government has announced changes to the paid parental leave scheme set up by Labor in 2010. The changes focus on mothers deemed by Abbott to be "rorters" and "double dippers" - those who access employer-funded schemes as well as the Commonwealth's paid parental leave scheme.

The changes will (if passed by the Senate) mean that any worker (like us) whose current industrial award or agreement provides maternity leave more generous than the Commonwealth's will lose the entire Commonwealth benefit of \$11,500. This is the reality facing FBEU members, as our Permanent and Retained Awards both entitle members to 14 weeks of maternity leave on full pay.

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

Jim Casey
State Secretary

Friday 12 June 2015