



SITREP 29/15

Outduties and "mixed-roster" stations - update #1

SITREP 28 raised the question of outduties - who should work them if a station with mixed-roster crewing (eg one member working the 10/14 and the rest working 24s) finds itself over-strength? The Union's State Committee considered this last week and ultimately resolved to settle on the status-quo (ie, that any member can be sent on outduties, regardless of their roster, provided they are allocated evenly and fairly). The State Committee's reasoning can be found in the next item below.

10/14 versus 24 hrs - who gives way?

SITREP 28's "24 hour gorilla" item also asked if some stations should be reserved 10/14 and others 24 hours, with members then being transferred to one or the other according to their personal preference?

The joint FRNSW/FBEU FAQs reflect the expectation of both parties that approval to work an alternative (in most cases 24 hour) roster would ordinarily require four members to apply:

Excerpt from point 4.1: *"If you want to work a 24 hour roster, it is preferred that you do so in conjunction with three other employees at your station (one employee from each of the other three platoons). This will increase the chances of FRNSW approving your application. It's also possible that FRNSW will make approval of your application conditional upon you finding one or more other employees to work it with you, or may propose that you facilitate the working of 24 hour shifts by a PCOS agreement instead."*

Nevertheless, some Zones have since approved alternative rosters so (for example) three Station Officers are now working 24 hour shifts while one remains on the 10/14. This has resulted in the unexpected issue raised in the above item about outduties, because their station is often now one Station Officer over strength on one shift and one short on another. This could not occur (and the outduties question would not arise) if all four Station Officers were working the same roster.

So what to do when four members (ie, one per platoon) cannot agree? One suggestion is that all four work the default 10/14 Roster. A counter approach is to make the 24 Hour Roster the default and to make all four work that. A third approach is to attempt to accommodate the wishes of both, like this:

- If only **one out of four** seeks to work an alternative roster then he/she would be transferred to another station where members are working (or seeking to work) that same alternative roster;
- If **two out of four** seek to work the same alternative roster then they would be transferred to another station where members are working (or seeking to work) that same alternative roster;
- If **three out of four** seek to work the same alternative roster then the remaining member who does not agree would be transferred to another station working the default roster; and
- In all three cases, the four members in question would remain on the station's default roster until the required transfer(s) occurs. If a transfer was not possible (eg, stand-alone station or qualifications) then the alternative roster would not be approved, although PCOS would remain an option.

We understand that the Department is now investigating the number of stations and transfers that would be required to place every member on their preferred roster. This is obviously more feasible for larger areas like the GSA than it is for stand-alone regional stations and the major regional cities, although even within Sydney it may not be possible to meet every member's preference.

Members are urged to discuss these issues and to provide feedback prior to the State Committee's next meeting on 24 September, which will make a recommendation to the October AGM.



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Say no to alternative roster "contracts"

Further to the previous two items, the Union has discovered that members in at least two zones have been asked to sign "contracts" setting out their new roster hours and, in once case, requiring members to agree to work more than 12 outduties per year before management approves their alternative roster application. The Department has since agreed that contracts and/or conditions of this (or any) kind are both unnecessary and inappropriate, and are not to be used. Tell a Union official if you're "offered" one.

Prior employment recognised

The Union and Department have agreed on new arrangements to recognise prior firefighting employment (including Retained service) for progression to QF and SF, backdated to 2 January 2015. The following guidelines will apply:

1. Prior employment as a full-time (Permanent) firefighter with FRNSW or a comparable urban fire service will be recognised for the purpose of progression to QF and SF as time already served.
2. One quarter of the period of prior employment as a part-time (Retained) firefighter with FRNSW or a comparable urban fire service will ordinarily be recognised also.
3. Recognition will ordinarily occur prior to a member's completion of the training and/or training competencies at the College, or otherwise asap following written application.

Applications are now open. Members should note that these guidelines also replace the 1992 "Re-appointment to Fire and Rescue NSW" Standing Order and further, that prior volunteer service with the RFS or similar is not "prior employment" and therefore will not be recognised.

Example 1: A member who commenced as a Recruit at the College on 2 January 2015 with 10 years' prior Retained service will now be recognised as having completed 2.5 years' equivalent service for the purposes of progression under Clause 13. If this member was assessed by RPL as already holding the QF competencies then her progression to QF will be backdated to the date she left the College and she will be eligible for progression to SF on 2 September 2018 (not 2 January 2021). If, however, she is not yet recognised as holding all of the QF competencies then her date of progression will instead be the date that she applies to be assessed for those competencies as per subclause 13.14. If she applies for assessment on 1 October 2015 and is successful then she will progress to QF on 1 October 2015 (not 2 January 2017) and will remain eligible for progression to SF on 2 September 2018 (not 2 January 2021).

Example 2: A member who commenced as a Recruit at the College on 1 September 2011 with 10 years' prior Retained service will now be recognised as having completed 6.5 years service for the purposes of Clause 13 (4 years as Permanent firefighter and 2.5 years' equivalent prior service). Assuming he completed the SF competencies last year and is waiting for the 72 months to be served then his promotion date will now be 1 March 2015, not 1 September 2015.

Award subclause 13.12 has recognised since 1997 that, over time, the requirement for minimum periods for each classification of service may no longer apply. This agreement is small but appropriate step by the Department and the Union in that direction. Eligible members are advised to apply asap.

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Dept prosecuted for Award breaches on job ads - update #1

SITREP 24 reported on the Union's prosecution of the Department for multiple Permanent Award breaches after consistently failing to advertise vacancies in Commissioner's Orders. This action had the desired effect, with permanent firefighter vacancies returning shortly afterwards in Commissioner's Orders 2015/16 following a near 3 year absence. The Union has now discontinued that prosecution action and will instead seek to extend the range of positions advertised to include EOIs.

Retained availability system set to launch

SITREPs 2, 8 and 27 of 2015 each reported on the joint FRNSW/FBEU selection, development and trialing of the new retained availability system coming out of the 2014 Retained Award (see subclauses 5.2 and 6.9). The system is now ready for a general roll out, with training set to commence shortly and stations to come progressively on line as when members are comfortable with the new system from next month onwards.

This training will be conducted as a special 3 hour training session in addition to, not instead of, your station's regular drills. If the training is conducted on a night that your regular drill would be conducted then another drill must be arranged within that fortnight. Because this training is not a regular drill, but rather authorised duties (see the Award's Table 4 - "*attendance at training sessions/exercises additional to the normal drill program*"), members are also entitled to payment for travel both to and from the station in accordance with Award subclause 9.2.

As members will soon discover, the trial and ongoing negotiations with the Department have taken the system further than originally expected, to the extent that it is now set to replace the need for members to sign on and off in the station's E-Occurrence Book. We are confident that members will find the system as useful as it is easy to use.

The only thing left (for now at least) is for you, the members, to give the new system a name. One suggestion is to stick with RTAS, renamed as the "Retained Timesheet and Availability System", which makes sense given the current Award's subclause 6.9 RTAS Allowance. Another is the "Retained Availability and Timesheet System", but then should it be known as RATS?! Members can email your suggestions to us by 30 September. SITREP 33 will announce the most popular name as the winner.

In brief

- Negotiations for new 2016 Permanent and Retained Awards commence this week, with both parties having already committed to conclude the process prior to February, and hopefully this year.
- The LF Test review (see SITREP 27) and the MFR sub-committee's report (see SITREPs 18, 19 and 24) will both now be released following the next SCOM meeting to be held on 24 September.

Jim Casey
State Secretary

Wednesday 2 September 2015