



SITREP 39/15

Some new Permanent Award provisions now operative

Permanent members may have noticed expanded eligibility for various Inspector and Station Officer vacancies in recent Commissioner's Orders, with Station Officers on the LSO Program now eligible to apply for Inspector vacancies, and Senior Firefighters on the LF Program now able to apply for SO vacancies. These are 2016 Award provisions (see subclauses 28.7.2, 28.7.3 & 28.7.4) that the Union has agreed to implement now to ensure that traditionally difficult-to-fill positions do not remain vacant.

This is only the first stage of expanded eligibility under the new Award. Re-advertised Inspector vacancies will now be open to all Station Officers with at least 12 months service at SO rank, and re-advertised Station Officer vacancies will be open to all Senior Firefighters with at least two years service at SF rank. Note that successful members will then need to complete the LSO Program or LF Program (as the case may be) before they can take up the position, and to then complete the Inspector Program or Station Officer Program within the next 12 months after that.

The alternative was to: (a) allow difficult-to-fill positions to remain vacant, or (b) allow the Department to force-transfer members into them, or (c) allow the Department to open them up to external applicants - none of which were considered acceptable.

The Union has also agreed to the operation, if required, of the new Clause 12A, Interstate and International Deployment between now and the commencement of the 2016 Award in 9 weeks' time.

More LSOs advertised

Continued Union representations to management saw this week's Commissioner's Orders including advertisements for 5 more positions on the LSO Program. The Union expects these to be the first of a new and ongoing series of ads for more LF and LSO Program vacancies across the state in 2016. The Department is now working to deliver the revised LF testing process, with its emphasis on firefighting competency over the psychometric component, that was endorsed by members at this year's AGM.

SF competencies back in-house

This week's Commissioner Orders confirmed that after years of outsourcing to OTEN, FRNSW will once again deliver all Senior Firefighter training - and removing the last of the external hurdles (including costs) for progression to SF rank.

The shift to competency based training in the late 90's required members seeking progression to Senior Firefighter to enroll externally with OTEN to complete the necessary units of competency, raising the question: who would pay the enrolment fees? Initially these fees were passed onto members, but in 2000 the Union secured reimbursement for one 12-month period subject to completion of competencies. In 2006 the Union negotiated an extension of the paid enrollment period to 24 months and agreement that the Department, not the member, would in future pay the course fees upfront. In 2011 the Department tried to revert to once-only fee payments, until the Union intervened.

It took years of chipping away, but the return to a fully in-house SF Program has removed the final financial barriers to QF members seeking progression. This, and the 2014 increase in the SF rank's rate of pay from 104% to 106% of the QF rate, is all the more reason for QF members to start on your SF modules and hand yourself an extra \$4,500 pa.



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Extra compensation for working Christmas Day?

An unforeseen repercussion of 24 hour shifts is that those working Christmas Day now work the whole day after 0800 instead of returning after 1800 - a real loss of quality time with family and friends.

Firefighter wages include a loading for working regular public holidays but not additional public holidays (see SITREP 4/2015), which is why permanent members receive consolidated leave and retained members are paid at overtime rates for any hours worked on an additional public holiday.

In 2010 the Keneally Labor Government legislated to automatically make an additional public holiday whenever New Year's, Christmas and/or Boxing Days fall on a weekend. While obviously welcome, this often means that the permanent members who work a weekend New Year's, Christmas or Boxing Day miss out on the consolidated leave, because they'll be off-duty when the additional public holiday occurs. But what if we surrendered our compensation for the additional public holidays that follow when New Year's, Christmas and/or Boxing Days fall on weekends to instead compensate members (permanent and retained) who work on Christmas Day? There will be 9 additional public holidays every 10 years so the proposal is essentially cost-neutral, although the table below shows that the impact on permanent members of this change varies according to rosters and platoons.

	Current	New
10/14 Roster	A Pltn = 14 hrs (0001-0800 on 27/12/16 & 1800-2400 on 2/1/17) B Pltn = 8 hrs (0001-0800 on 2/1/17) C Pltn = 10 hrs (0800-1800 on 27/12/16) D Pltn = 16 hrs (1800-2400 on 27/12/16 & 0800-1800 on 2/1/17)	A Pltn = 6 hrs (1800-2400 on 25/12/16) B Pltn = 18 hrs (0001-0800 on 25/12/16 & 0800-1800 on 25/12/17) C Pltn = 14 hrs (0001-0800 & 1800-2400 on 25/12/17) D Pltn = 10 hrs (0800-1800 on 25/12/16)
24hr Roster	A Pltn = 16 hrs (0001-0800 on 27/12/16 & 2/1/17) B Pltn = 0 hrs C Pltn = 0 hrs D Pltn = 32 hrs (0800-2400 on 27/12/16 & 2/1/16)	A Pltn = 8 hrs (0001-0800 on 25/12/16) B Pltn = 8 hrs (0001-0800 on 25/12/17) C Pltn = 16 hrs (0800-2400 on 25/12/17) D Pltn = 16 hrs (0800-2400 on 25/12/16)
B2B Roster	E Pltn = 12 hrs (0600-1800 on 2/1/17) F Pltn = 12 hrs (0600-1800 on 27/12/16)	E Pltn = 12 hrs (0600-1800 on 25/12/16) F Pltn = 12 hrs (0600-1800 on 25/12/17)
Special Roster	S Pltn = 17 hrs (0800-1630 on 27/12/16 & 2/1/17)	S Pltn = 8.5 hrs (0800-1630 hrs on 25/1/17)
Overlap Roster	G Pltn = 10.5 hrs (0700-1730 on 27/12/16) H Pltn = 21 hrs (0700-1730 on 27/12/16 & 2/1/17)	G Pltn = 10.5 hrs (0700-1730 on 25/12/17) H Pltn = 0 hrs

These comparisons are for the 2016 and 2017 years only. Over the Dec 2018/Jan 2019 period, for example, S, G and H Platoons receive 0 hours under the current Award but would be credited for working the Tuesday 25 December 2018 under the revised arrangement.

It's an idea - and nothing more at the moment - that members are encouraged to consider and discuss at your station. If the idea gains support as a way of recognising members who are required to work on Christmas Day then we'll raise it with the Department and put it to a vote at next October's AGM.



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Workplace Standards – silence is golden

The Union has recently come across a number of procedural defects in the Department's handling of misconduct allegations and subsequent investigations that has seen members prejudicing their case. For instance, WSB has contacted members seeking "preliminary comments" in response to allegations to ascertain whether they proceed to an investigation. This is a misapplication of the Procedural Guidelines and the Department is on notice to cease this practice.

When dealing with disciplinary matters, or any investigations into allegations, regardless of what stage, members are reminded that they should not answer questions, write reports or sign statements until *after* they have contacted the Union. This applies in all circumstances – no matter how much management demands or reassures members that "this is not a disciplinary matter", members should not do anything until they contact the Union. For example, although you may be asked to write a report to your Inspector, this report can – and often does – end up in the hands of Workplace Standards. Disciplinary action often ensues, so members are advised to contact the Union first.

Retained members: end of call, end of duty

Enterprising managers have been caught attempting to get more bang for their buck out of retained members by requiring them to undertake additional duties at the end of fire calls, holding them back until at least the end of the hour. This issue was clarified once and for all with the current Retained Award, which clearly states at subclause 6.5.2.7 "*except in the case of regular drills and authorised duties, where the purpose for which an employee was required to report for duty is completed, the employee shall be released*". If, for example, members are called to an incident and that incident concludes after 30 minutes then they must be released, not held back for the remaining 30 minutes to undertake other duties like station maintenance, SIMS checks or a community safety activity. To do otherwise is a breach of the Award for which, if you tell us, the Department will be prosecuted by the Union.

Helmet stickers and 2016 cards/calendars

2016 FBEU membership cards have been posted to members' homes this week together with two new-look FBEU helmet stickers (one for your structural helmet and one for your general purpose helmet). If you don't receive yours it will be because we don't have your current address. Members who have changed address but have not yet let us know, or simply aren't sure should complete a change of address form via the Union's website so that we can update your records and ensure that you receive your card, sticker, other Union publications and voting material.

The 2016 Membership Card's calendar (a copy of which can be found in the online version of this SITREP) reflects the popularity of our Permanent Award roster reforms by using a new format that shows both the 10/14 Standard Roster and the 24 Hour "Ryde" Roster. The coloured shading shows the 10/14 Roster's day shifts only (night shifts always follow on the next two dates) while the coloured date numbers show the 24 Hour Roster shifts.

Jim Casey
State Secretary

Friday 18 December 2015