



SITREP 03/16

Are refreshment allowances still payable?

The Union has received several inquiries recently on the Refreshment Allowance. It's been the Union's preference for at least 50 years for suitable meals and refreshments to be provided rather than for the allowances to be paid. The advent (after 20+ years of fighting with the Department) of agreed refreshment packs, substantial meals and emergency meal packs - and the relatively recent provision of workable kettles that go with all of that - means that the payment of allowances in lieu of meals and refreshments should now be the exception rather than the rule.

That doesn't mean the allowances should never be paid though.

Having a kettle and refreshment packs on the truck is all well and good, but if (for example):

- they don't work (eg, they're stale, out of date or the kettle fails); or
- they're not of the required standard (see below); or
- they run out; or
- you don't get the chance to take them because you're stuck on the end of a branch for hours;

then the Refreshment Allowance should still be claimed and paid.

So it's not a blanket yes or no - it depends on the circumstances. See Clause 10 of the Permanent Award and Clause 8 of the Retained Award for more information on the provision of meals and refreshments and the payment of allowances when they are not provided (and the payment of the Refreshment Allowance when an Emergency Meal pack is provided).

Prior employment recognised – update #3

Our agreement for the recognition of prior firefighting employment (see SITREPs 29, 30 and 37 of 2015) saw the first 16 of scores of permanent members progressed to QF and SF in this week's Commissioner's Orders 2016/02, with the remaining applications expected to be finalised shortly.

FRNSW economic theory

Last Friday Commissioner Mullins emailed all staff *"to update all staff on how absenteeism and overtime trended over the Christmas / New Year period, and to thank all Inspectors, Station Officer and Permanent Firefighters for their dedication and diligence over this period."* Fair enough.

Unfortunately he then lost the plot with comments that sounded more like Gladys Berejiklian than Greg Mullins, including this: *"... government departments have laid off dozens or even hundreds of workers to reduce government expenditure to sustainable levels. As a society it is essential that this occurs or there will be dire consequences for our economy, and therefore our way of life."*

Really? There are more solutions to public sector budgetary pressures than continually cutting government expenditure. For example, making big business pay its fair share of tax and ending the ongoing (and obviously unsustainable) cycle of tax cuts followed by budget cuts.

Jim Casey
State Secretary

Friday 29 January 2016