



SITREP 08/16

Government agencies to merge?

For those who missed it, NSW Treasurer Gladys Berejiklian last week flagged a major shake up of NSW Government services and agencies in an address to the Sydney Institute:

"... currently there are about 870 NSW Government entities, including departments, agencies, state owned corporations, boards, committees and trusts. I know this because I recently tasked an expert panel to audit the structures within our Government and present recommendations on how to make our processes leaner and more efficient. Many of these identified bodies overlap in terms of the functions they perform. There is opportunity here to reduce this number. Not for the sake of it – but because it will reduce waste, streamline decision making and make Government work better.

The intention of this reform is to streamline administration and governance arrangements and consolidate government agencies, bodies, boards and committees. This process could deliver significant savings which could be poured back into essential services."

Agencies that overlap in terms of the functions they perform? Who might she be referring to? We'll doubtless find out when the Baird Government delivers its 16/17 Budget in June, but if it is FRNSW and the RFS then it is more likely to involve head office consolidation than a full-blown amalgamation.

Meanwhile, the Government's intention to overhaul emergency service funding with a new land tax commencing July 2017 (see "Baird's new fire tax" in SITREP 38/2015) proceeds apace. We still don't know much about their "Emergency Services Property Levy" (ESPL) save that it will be based on unimproved land values (in stark contrast to similar levies interstate) and with different rates for different categories of land. Nor do we know when it will be tabled in Parliament. More to follow.

Women in firefighting

The FBEU has a proud record on the question of women in our industry stretching well beyond our support for the then-NSWFB Chief Officer, Rex Threlfo (himself a former FBEU President) in the re-introduction of women into the job in 1985. I say "re-introduction", because hundreds of women actually served in the NSWFB's Women's Fire Auxilliary (WFA) during WW2. Then-Union Secretary, Jim Lambert challenged sceptical "firemen" in the Union's December 1944 journal, rhetorically asking "Do you know that women carried out watchroom jobs in London during the blitz?".

It should therefore surprise nobody that the Union today supported Commissioner Mullins (also a former FBEU official) when he announced "*changes to the fire service's highly competitive permanent firefighter recruitment campaign in a bid to ensure more women get the chance to join its firefighting ranks.*" Today's FBEU and FRNSW media releases can both be found as a link in the online version of this SITREP.

The Union's progressive stance on women in our industry has always placed us on the right side of history and while not all members will agree, today's stance will come to be seen in the same light.

Darin Sullivan
President and Acting State Secretary

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