



SITREP 20/16

2016 Federal Election

Tomorrow's election is an opportunity for all Australians to elect a government that understands the lives of working people and that will govern in our best interests. If you:

- care about your job and working conditions;
- support a strong and effective trade union movement;
- expect properly funded health (think Medicare) and education (think Gonski) services;
- want a Royal Commission into the banks (and who except merchant bankers like Turnbull and Baird doesn't?);
- oppose big tax cuts for big business while public services continue to be squeezed and cut;
- demand real action on climate change;

then **put the Liberals last.**

More LF positions advertised

Ongoing negotiations between the Union and Department led to the launching of our new on-request, in-station Leading Firefighter Test arrangements and a further 23 Leading Firefighter Program positions being advertised in this week's Commissioner's Orders.

Some members contacted the Union office to complain about the apparent low number of positions on offer (only 7 in the GSA for example), but their concerns were allayed when it was explained that these are the first of what will now be a steady ongoing stream of advertisements. Further positions are expected to be advertised for members within most Regional and all Metro zones over the next 6 to 9 months, and the Union is now pressing the Department for a full 12 month schedule of expected positions for 2017. Work is also underway for more LSOs.

NSW Budget - the Coalition still hates you

NSW Treasurer Gladys Berejiklian's 2016/17 budget has forecast a whopping \$3.7 billion surplus this year and further surpluses averaging \$2 billion for each of the next four years. Meanwhile, economic growth is expected to slow and inflation to increase while public sector agencies and employees will continue to suffer under the Government's wage cap and efficiency dividends.

With a big fat surplus like that you'd be forgiven for thinking that the Baird Government might use it to fund FRNSW appropriately. Not so - the 2016/17 budget has not allocated enough funding for FRNSW management to do the things it needs to do (like pay all of us), let alone the things it wants to do. The RFS on the other hand received yet another budget boost, with 60 more jobs for 'mitigation officers' and others and \$14M allocated for a new headquarters in western Sydney - which north shore Liberals like Baird and Berejiklian doubtless consider to be rural NSW.

The good news, if you can call it that, is that the pre-budget rumours from some FRNSW senior managers about \$22M in cuts and an immediate restart of station closures did not eventuate. There may be a reason for that, with Baird knowing that a return of TOLing would initiate another damaging campaign for the Government. That said, the budget handed down was still sufficiently brutal that if implemented to the letter then permanent and retained job cuts would follow. The FBEU will continue to fight the Government and FRNSW management where necessary to ensure that doesn't happen.



SITREP 20/16

... Continued from Page 1

This year's budget continues the recent trend whereby FRNSW is again required to do more with less while RFS empire building and duplication of FRNSW resources and capabilities continues. The Coalition hates professional firefighters - both here and interstate.

Victoria CFA dispute

Members are likely by now aware of the interstate industrial dispute raging between Victoria's Country Fire Authority (CFA) and its professional firefighters and their union, the UFUA over what is alleged to be a union takeover of CFA volunteers. This is in truth a massive union-bashing exercise being driven by Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV), the Murdoch press and the Liberal Party.

Nothing new there. What is unprecedented and of real concern is the injunction sought by the VFBV and granted in the Supreme Court of Victoria preventing ratification of the agreement reached between the employer and the union. As a result, the wage agreement cannot now be voted on by professional firefighters until 20 July at the earliest, and even that is now dependent on consultation occurring with the volunteers (who of course are not covered by the proposed wage agreement). Ironically, by blocking the wage deal the VFBV is now guilty of having already done to professional firefighters what they claim the union could do to them under the new EBA.

Concerted misrepresentation of the proposed agreement by the Coalition, VFBV and right wing media has seen unionised firefighters (both CFA and MFB) booed and jeered while responding to calls, with allegations of assault, theft and even death threats surfacing in an increasingly ugly dispute.

The dispute has also seen the intervention of Prime Minister Turnbull, who has pledged that a re-elected Coalition Government will immediately move to amend the Fair Work Act to block the CFA/UFUA wage deal and require volunteers to be consulted over any future industrial agreement that might affect or offend them.

Proving that stupidity is not confined to south of the border, the VFBV's unrepresentative counterpart here, the Rural Fire Service Association (RFS) last week poured fuel on a fire that wasn't burning in NSW by writing to both our Minister and the Premier seeking assurances around the NSW Government's industrial relations with its firefighters, and therefore the FBEU. A copy of the RFS's letter can be found with the online version of this SITREP. More to follow.

Less than 3 weeks to the Rex

Tickets are selling fast for the 2nd Rex Threlfo Annual Toast to be held at Doltone House Hyde Park on Tuesday 19 July. Tickets are limited and will not be available on the day. Click the link on the online version of this SITREP to buy yours now.

Darin Sullivan
President and Acting State Secretary

Friday 1 July 2016