



SITREP 29/16

106th AGM meeting dates, times and locations

Further to the AGM notice of 29 September, the details of both the opening and closing Annual General Meeting and all related Sub-Branch meetings have now been finalised as follows:

Date	Time	Location
Thursday 27 October	1000 hrs	Trades Hall, 377 Sussex Street Sydney
	1400 hrs	343 Stn. East Maitland
	1830 hrs	68 Stn. Narrabeen
Friday 28 October	0930 hrs	304 Stn. Gosford
	1300 hrs	260 Stn. Newcastle
Saturday 29 October	1800 hrs	216 Stn. Bathurst
Sunday 30 October	1000 hrs	412 Stn. Orange
Monday 31 October	1000hrs	503 Stn. Wollongong
	1800 hrs	97 Stn. Huntingwood

Sub-Branch meetings require a quorum of least seven financial members to be present at all times and all members are entitled to attend and vote at any meeting, provided they vote only once.

Turnbull Govt turns on firies - update #2

The Senate this week passed the *Fair Work Amendment (Respect for Emergency Services Volunteers) Bill 2016*, which we reported on in SITREPs 23 and 25. Pauline Hanson's One Nation, Derryn Hinch, Bob Day, David Leyonhjelm and the Nick Xenophon Team all joined with the Coalition to force the Bill through Parliament. Only Labor, the Greens and Jacqui Lambie stood up for collective bargaining and voted against the Bill.

Rather than helping resolve the CFA dispute, this will increase tensions between professional and volunteer firefighters in Victoria and likely export similar problems interstate where presently little or no such tension exists. Volunteers will now be able to intervene in and potentially block any federal IR system agreement that firefighter unions reach with their employer simply by claiming that the agreement might interfere with volunteer operations. What this will mean in practice is thoroughly unclear, apart from a great deal more litigation. More to follow.

Availability of the Station Officer and Inspector Programs

Leading Firefighter members occupying Country Station Officer positions can start working towards their SO promotions, with the Department confirming that the new Station Officer Program will be available next week. For Leading Station Officer members occupying Country and Operational Support Inspector positions, it is anticipated that the first two units of the Inspector Program will be ready and available by the end of November, with the remaining units to be available in February 2017. The Union will continue to liaise with the Department over the coming weeks regarding the above timelines to ensure the development of the modules and training remains on track to meet these target dates.



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Review of workers comp scheme

The NSW Parliament's Legislative Council Standing Committee on Law and Justice announced its inquiry into the workers compensation scheme in August this year. The FBEU made a submission (see the online version of this SITREP for a link), one of over 60 submissions from individuals, unions, employers and insurers. The Union is scheduled to appear before the Committee in November and will continue to update members on the inquiry's progress.

Additional public holidays for permanent and retained members

Further to SITREP 4/2015, members are again reminded that Tuesday 27 December 2016 and Monday 2 January 2017 have been proclaimed as additional public holidays. Members who work on these days will therefore receive additional compensation - permanent members with consolidated leave and retained members with payment at overtime rates - for all hours worked between 0001 and 2400 hours on either or both days.

Auditor-General's report on firefighter fitness - update #1

SITREP 12 of 2014 commented on the NSW Auditor-General's report on firefighter fitness, which unsurprisingly recommended that FRNSW should implement regular mandatory health and fitness assessments for firefighters. We were comfortable then (as we are now) with that recommendation and have continued negotiations with the Department on this question, but we did express concern at the time with the Auditor-General's proposed two-speed approach to health and safety, observing that:

"The Auditor-General did hit one dud note, with less-stringent recommendations for Rural Fire Service volunteers. If the fitness of firefighters is a genuine health and safety issue, which of course it is, then why have one standard for FRNSW and another for the RFS?"

The RFS constantly assures the public that their structural firefighting units are at least as good, if not better than FRNSW Retained Brigades. Really? While that remains to be seen, the Auditor-General's reluctance to hold them to same level of accountability suggests that he, at least, can see the difference."

The Auditor-General yesterday released an updated report and presumably sought to avoid repeat criticism over inconsistency on RFS and FRNSW health and fitness standards by simply ignoring the RFS altogether. It seems that while mandatory testing of 6,000 professional firefighters is now both urgent and essential, the health and fitness of the claimed 70,000 RFS volunteers with responsibility for 90% of the state's area (but not population) is a non-issue.

The Union's response to the report can be found together with the report itself in a link from the online version of this SITREP.

Leighton Drury
State Secretary

Friday 14 October 2016