



SITREP 17/17

The Fire Emergency Services Levy Berejiklian's billion dollar new tax – Update #2

Who knew the truth about Berejiklian's billion dollar new tax? We did. The FBEU tried to warn the people of NSW back in March, and the rates finally released by the Government this week confirmed we were correct. Hundreds of thousands of homeowners will now pay more (in many cases hundreds of dollars more) through the new FESL than they paid through the previous levy on insurance policies.

Premier Berejiklian promised the average fully-insured homeowner would save "around \$47 per year" based on an expected reduction of "around \$233" on the average residential property insurance policy. We now know, following the confirmation this week of a residential charge of \$100 plus \$21.90 for each \$100,000 of land value, that the promised \$47 saving was based on a land value of only \$388,000.

I say "only" \$380,000, because the latest figures from the Valuer-General put the average residential land value for NSW at \$572,000, and for Sydney at \$902,000. The FESL on \$902,000 is \$297.54, or an extra \$65 for the average Sydney homeowner supposedly doing the right thing by having insurance.

If the Union is any sort of measure then the hit on commercial property will be even more severe. The FBEU paid an emergency services levy this financial year of \$2,489 on the insurance for our property at Surry Hills. This will almost double under the FESL to \$4,838 (a whopping \$2,349 more) on 1 July.

There may at least be some unintended upsides. For one, fire station closures might now prove more difficult and new fire station openings more feasible. The Government should certainly have a harder time explaining why the homeowners of Terrey Hills are paying triple what the people of (say) Penrith are paying for a bushfire brigade rather than a 24/7 FRNSW station. The RFS will also find it a lot tougher on the fundraising front once the general public realise that the RFS does not run on donations.

Our fire service funding arrangements operated well for over 100 years and nobody except the insurance companies ever complained. Not any more. Most property owners remain unaware of Berejiklian's billion dollar new tax, but that will change as soon as everyone's first FESL bill arrives along with notice of their next quarter's council rates. Roll on the March 2019 election.

Permanent members – Cyclone Debbie - update #1

The Department has been caught attempting to dud members again, with many responders to Cyclone Debbie reporting that no accommodation or meal allowances have been paid. Subclause 12a.5 clearly states "*employees on interstate deployment who are not provided with accommodation of a standard comparable to that required in NSW shall be paid the relevant accommodation allowance ...*". The tent accommodation provided in Queensland did not meet this standard and members are therefore entitled to the accommodation allowance of \$226.45 per day on deployment. Similarly, members who were not provided with Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner or meals during periods of work are entitled to meal and refreshment allowances.

Management appears to be leaving it up to individuals to claim, no doubt hoping that many members won't, however Clause 12a does not require members to claim before these allowances are paid. The Department must keep records of the meals and accommodation provided and is in breach of the Award if it does not pay accordingly. Members who deployed to Queensland and who have not yet been paid their meal and/or accommodation allowances should email the Union office asap.

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Permanent members - North Coast floods - update #1

As anticipated in SITREP 16/17, the Department has underpaid members who were recalled to attend the North Coast floods last month. Whilst some members have been paid some overtime, others have received no additional payments at all and the payment of kilometres and meal allowances has been ad hoc at best, with total underpayments sighted so far ranging from \$3,500 up to \$7,300 per member.

The Union office is now collating the claims of those members who have sent us their payslips and will be pursuing those claims over the coming week. Any member who has not been paid in accordance with the Union's advice and who has not yet faxed or emailed your most recent payslip to the Union office should do so now, together with the hours you commenced and ceased duty.

J and Z Relieving to finish by 30 June

SITREP 9/17 reported that the Union would be withdrawing from the 2004 J and Z Relieving agreement with the Department and the State Committee last week set 30 June as the date for this to occur. It is already the case for most members anyway but from 1 July, there will be no cross-shift or cross-roster work performed except by overtime. The Union will be enforcing the Award so that any work performed by any permanent member outside of their own platoon's and roster's hours is paid at overtime rates. Our letter to the Department can be found with the online version of this SITREP.

Mobility and Transfer Policy - update #2

Two emerging issues in recent weeks have caused the State Committee to take the unusual step of resolving to intervene in proposed permanent staff transfers. The first is the Department's intention to transfer all Metro Duty Commanders, which is clearly management's last step before turning to the mass transfer of Station Officers and firefighters. SITREPs 33/16 and 34/16 reported the Union had negotiated a number of changes to the Department's Mobility and Transfer Policy. While it is not our policy, and we do not endorse it, we think members can reasonably expect management to at least observe it. They aren't. The second issue is the threat by management to transfer members who are exercising their right to work the "exotic" 10/14 Roster. The Union has written to the Department separately on both issues and these letters can be found with the online version of this SITREP.

Health and Fitness testing – update #1

Further to SITREP 34/16, the Department last week emailed all firefighters to announce that it was seeking a new D&D Award, supposedly because the current D&D Award has expired, and "to assist firefighters to maintain optimal health and safety throughout their career". The truth is that the 2015 D&D Award remains in force and operative but management wants compulsory health and fitness testing of FRNSW firefighters to start on 1 July. That's barely 9 weeks away. More to follow.

Leighton Drury
State Secretary

Friday 5 May 2017