



SITREP 23/17

Retained authorised duties – know your rights

It's that time of year again, when local management attempts to order members to limit or stop authorised duties to rein in the zone/area budget before 30 June. The Retained Award was amended earlier this year to include a minimum number of authorised duties hours per station, per month (see subclause 6.6.3). This is a legally-enforceable entitlement, not a guide, and members may therefore continue working and claiming authorised duties up to the Award's limits without interference.

Can't get to work due to emergency?

The recent floods in northern NSW and QLD have caused members to ask what happens if your journey to work is blocked (for example) by a flood or bushfire? The answer is, there is no simple answer. The Awards are silent and the Department has no policy, but the Union can and does negotiate outcomes on behalf of affected members on a case by case basis.

Each case and answer will be different depending on the circumstances of the emergency or disruption, the distance between your residence and base station and whether alternative transport options are reasonably available. For example, it may be appropriate to report to an alternative fire station closer to your residence, or to attend the emergency as part of a taskforce. If this is not possible or practical then you may be entitled to special (paid) leave, or you may be required to take your own leave.

If you believe you cannot report for duty, you should contact your Duty Commander as soon as possible to discuss your options, and contact a Union official or the Union office for further advice.

Workers' share of GDP at lowest level since 1959

A report out this week reveals that Australia's total labour compensation (including wages, salaries, and super contributions) has fallen to only 46.2% of gross domestic product (GDP) – down from a peak of 57% in the mid-1970s to the lowest level since the Australian Bureau of Statistics started collecting the data in 1959. It is no coincidence that the 57% high occurred when our unions were at their strongest, or that this new low has occurred in an environment of a weakened union movement and greatly reduced collective bargaining power. The evidence is clear that Australian workers are going backwards, and that the need for a strong union movement has never been greater.

Grenfell Tower disaster

The next time you hear someone complaining about health and safety, or whinging about too much red tape, or demanding that for every new regulation introduced, three are removed; when you hear someone say that it just costs too much to install sprinklers or fire doors or use fire-resistant materials, that profits are more important than safety; when firefighters, police and medical staff suffer cuts; when you are told that we can have low taxes AND good public services - think of this image. And pray for the people of Grenfell Tower.

Billy Bragg, London, 14 June 2017

Leighton Drury
State Secretary

Friday 16 June 2017