



FBEU fighting on multiple fronts

The relative silence of SitRep of late has not been due to a lack of action. The Union has been flat out in negotiations with the Department and preparing or appearing before Parliamentary Inquiries into the Emergency Services (see SitRep 24) and the Fire and Emergency Service Levy or disputes before the Industrial Relations Commission and Supreme Court on multiple issues including:

- the **recall kilometres** dispute, which is now headed for arbitration after the Department inexplicably walked away from a clear agreement to pay. We look forward to next week when the Department must file its evidence and submissions in support of its indefensible position.
- the **Bega Valley Fire** dispute that was notified by the Union after the Berejiklian Government announced the acceptance and implementation of the Keelty Tathra review's recommendation to (among other things) *"implement a fully integrated civilianised single call and dispatch centre ... managed by either a non uniformed public servant staffed organisation..., or the NSW Police Force"*, all without any consultation despite the obvious threat to 100 FBEU members' jobs. The IRC this week directed that negotiations and further hearings both now occur.
- A recent and potentially far-reaching **training course attendance entitlements** dispute now before the IRC's Chief Commissioner over the application and scope of the Permanent Award's Clause 16.
- An ongoing **Code of Conduct** dispute over the Department's attempt to use it to unreasonably restrict the rights of firefighters that returned to the IRC this week, and remains unresolved.
- A **retained Unit Trainers** dispute before the IRC this week over the interpretation and application the Retained Award's subclause 6.4 unit trainer provision, and the Union's contention that any training delivered at other than a unit trainer's own station or for anything other than regular station drills is not unit training and must be paid for instead at the Relief Duties rate.

These are only some of the many issues currently before us. None are yet resolved, and all come on top of our already-heavy 'bread and butter' industrial workload and the continual emergence of new threats like the Berejiklian Government's Emergency Services Legislation Amendment Bill (more on this shortly), so we appreciate members' patience if your calls or emails are not always answered immediately at the moment.

QF promotions

SitRep 23 reported on the delays being experienced by permanent members seeking promotion to Qualified Firefighter rank owing to problems with the Department's training accreditation. We also reported that Union intervention saw the Department agreeing to back date QF promotions (and pay) to members' 24 month anniversaries once the problems were sorted.

The Department assured us at the time that this would take around 2 months, but it has since emerged that it may in fact take 12 months or more. In the meantime, the Department expects members to suffer unnecessary pay shortfalls of over \$300 per pay through no fault of their own. This is unacceptable. The Union has now written to the Department demanding the payment and promotion of all members to QF rank who have completed the available competencies within 24 months. The Union's State Committee will consider the Department's response (or not) next Thursday, with an update to follow in SitRep 26.

Leighton Drury
State Secretary