



SitRep 29

Govt's presumptive cancer Bill in the NSW Parliament

SitRep 28 flagged the possibility of the Government introducing its own presumptive cancer legislation for firefighters this week, and it did so today. A link to the Government's **Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment (Firefighters) Bill 2018** can be found in the online version of this SitRep.

Sitrep 28 also predicted that any alternative Government legislation would be inferior to Labor's, but having now reviewed their Bill we are happy to report that they have proven us largely (but not entirely) wrong. Perhaps it is due to their federal counterparts' Wentworth rout, or their own Wagga by-election disaster, or their fear of angry FBEU members, but the Bill the Government introduced this morning is surprisingly good.

It's not perfect though, and falls well short of Labor's Bill on retrospectivity for firefighters who contracted cancer prior to September but had not yet made a workers comp claim. The Government defended its stance on no retrospectivity by claiming this morning that Labor's unlimited approach would cost over \$350 million. This was the first that either the Opposition or the Union had heard of this, which says all that needs to be said about their claims of having properly consulted the FBEU and other stakeholders.

Contrary to some media reports, the Bill has not yet been passed. We continue to review the Bill, and the situation generally, but what can now be said for certain is that with both the Opposition and the Government each with their own bills before the Parliament, NSW firefighters and their families will soon benefit from the added protection of presumptive cancer legislation. More to follow.

AGM agenda - MFR Policy amendment withdrawn

Members would be aware that the Agenda faxed to stations and posted to the Union's website on 19 October included a motion from the State Committee of Management proposing amendments to the Union's current MFR Policy. Those amendments included the banning of all "assist ambulance" calls, which members have been increasingly finding to actually be medical response calls.

The Department yesterday notified the IRC of an urgent dispute, claiming threatened industrial action, and the matter was listed for hearing at 0930 hours today.

Direct discussions with the Minister prior to those IRC proceedings led to agreement this morning that:

1. the State Committee would not introduce the motion at this AGM;
2. the Department would withdraw its application to the IRC;
3. the Department will meet with the Union asap to clarify the intent and limit of future FRNSW "assist ambulance" calls; and
4. the Union will be notified and consulted before the Government makes any move to introduce an MFR or Early Access Defibrillator (EAD) program in NSW.

The State Committee's amendments were therefore not moved at this morning's meeting and will not be debated or voted on by the meetings to follow. The Department withdrew its IRC application and is expected to meet on the "assist ambulance" question shortly, with a further SitRep update to follow asap thereafter.

Leighton Drury
State Secretary