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PAD Update

By now I'm sure many of you have read yesterday's email from Deputy Commissioner Fewtrell about the PAD Program, and specifically about a recent call a FRNSW crew responded to involving a young child struggling to breathe. The content of this email was then posted by FRNSW to the Firefighters Forum on Facebook. I was compelled to respond to the post this morning and I also want to share my response with you now. It read:

I don't often post comments on social media as Facebook isn't the place to have a conversation about serious issues but this post needs to be addressed.

I also write knowing members have differing opinions on doing medical work.

FBEU members sign up to protect the communities they serve. It's what we do. Implying anything else is bewildering.

That service does not give the Department license to dismiss our need for training, resources and conditions to protect the communities we serve. FRNSW has a responsibility to deliver this to us as workers. It is the height of disregard for workers to say the community deserves protection but we as workers don't.

The employer refuses to commit to providing the training, resources and conditions we need to safely do the work they are trying to turn us out to. It is an insult to our professionalism to care so little about our welfare.

If FRNSW want Retained members to do medical work, ask them first, then they should be paid the Community First Responder pay rate in the Award and be given the training and support CFR stations receive.

Similarly, FRNSW should negotiate what medical work looks like for Permanents and undertake the proper process of what this work is and does, and what our working conditions look like. I refuse to allow them to be so negligent in terms of their duty to us as workers.

It's clear that the recent propaganda from FRNSW on PAD and other medical work is trying to shame FBEU members into taking on ambulance work without agreement, without proper consultation, without adequate training, without adequate resources, without adequate equipment and without recognition of remuneration and conditions. Or without an honest conversation about what a dignified retirement will look like for those members impacted by the inevitable PTSD increase.

It's quite easy for the people who are not frontline and who won't be doing this work to say that we should. I am disgusted by their refusal to deal with this with the gravity it deserves.

That said, we have been clear we are also up for a reasonable conversation to discuss if and how this all works.

But to be blunt, the Executive Leadership Team needs to stop trying to insult and demean firefighters about our commitment to our communities. We are the ones who turn out, not them. We are the ones who are on the frontline, not them. We are the ones who are supposed to be prepared for everything, not them. Their job is to secure funding to train, resource and provide the conditions to be prepared for what the ELT want us to be.



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If they can't, then who is actually failing to be prepared for anything? It's not the frontline.

Just In – PAD in the IRC this afternoon

The Union were today before the Industrial Relations Commission to discuss our serious concerns, and their relation to our broader 'new work' dispute.

FRNSW were unwilling to admit that the incident in question was a PAD call. Instead, referring to the incident as 'ad hoc'. The Union sought FRNSW's commitment to ensuring status quo on medical work while the dispute remains before the Commission. Status quo being, no FRNSW station other than a trained CFR station should currently be undertaking medical first response work. The FRNSW representative was unable to agree on this interpretation, concerning they were also unable to articulate their own interpretation.

The Commission has asked FRNSW to take some time to establish their position before a report-back next week and so that the matter might be progressed constructively.

The FBEU remain highly concerned regarding FRNSW's capacity to control the situation and to safeguard members from risk. We encourage all stations to continue to report suspect medical calls to the FBEU office and thank all members who have worked with the Union to document concerns thus far.

CAFS Aerial Pumpers

On Monday, we had a hearing at the Industrial Relations Commission (IRC) related to the roll out of the CAFS Aerial Pumper (CAP). We relayed members' concerns around the minimum number of operators for these appliances and the need for the relevant competency to be delivered to Station Officers.

Both parties subsequently met today to further discuss the rollout which was somewhat productive. The Department is going to write back to us by Wednesday next week, after which we are due to report back to the IRC.

Members would have received an email yesterday from Deputy Commissioner Fewtrell about the roll out in which he stated the Department has been proactive in consultation and that they care about the safe operation of these appliances. While it is positive to see the Department now committed to the safety of members impacted by the rollout, the reality is there would not have been any consultation at all if members had not pushed for it. Without members taking action, this process would have seen a Risk Assessment developed without the input of any operational firefighters, a breach of the Department's legal obligations under the NSW Workplace Health & Safety Act 2011.

Due to the involvement of HSRs, delegates and members, we now have a precedent for how consultation should occur for all new appliances including an in-person inspection by all impacted members. This is not something the Department gave us freely, it's something members won.

We'll update members after the IRC hearing next week.



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Retained Turnouts

There appears to be an increasing number of appliances being turned out to incidents without the bells being set off at the station. At both Retained and Mixed stations, this is causing pay issues and leading to confusion.

While there are plenty of legitimate reasons for appliances to be put onto incidents without the bells being set off, there is no justification for Retained staff missing out on pay that they are entitled to.

We wrote to FRNSW this week about this issue and will update members when we have more information.

May Day Marches on This Weekend

Thank you to all members who have registered to join the FBEU contingent at one of this year's May Day marches. Meeting point locations and times are as follows.

Parramatta: 1030hrs at Prince Alfred Square, Parramatta.

Newcastle: 0930hrs at Hamilton Train Station car park.

Wollongong: 1000hrs at Lowden Square (next to Wollongong Train Station).

We have closed registrations but if you can come along please let a SCOM Rep or one of the organising team know and we will try to make sure we have a T-shirt for you.

Everyone who has registered would have been contacted by now with the details of their event. If you have any questions, please speak to your SCOM Rep, delegate or organiser.

Have a wonderful May Day, all.

FBEU State Committee Election

Polls closed today at 1700hrs and counting will begin tomorrow at 0830hrs. We'll notify members of the outcome once we have the official results from the NSW Electoral Commission.

I want to take this opportunity to thank members who engaged in the election and returned their ballots, and to those members who put their hand up to run for a position on our State Committee of Management. Our union is proudly led by members for members, and will continue to be so.

In Unity,

Leighton Drury
State Secretary