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Wage Cut Update

Further to SitRep 25, after having its Regulation disallowed last week the Government's goal is still to cut public sector employees wages and subsequently applied to the Industrial Relations Commission to join 48 public sector Award applications together with the Public Service Association's Salaries case. The Chief Commissioner this week joined the 23 Health Services Union Awards, the four Nurses Awards and the Australian Salaried Medical Officers Federation of NSW Awards to the 10 PSA Salaries Awards. This was despite the various unions' objections.

Do not be fooled by the rhetoric from the Government claiming this is about securing jobs. It is another attack on the working people of NSW and is also economically destructive. The flow on effects will be significant with regional and rural NSW copping another kick in the guts after suffering from the drought, an already weak economy, bushfires and Covid 19.

The Full Bench of the IRC will now determine the threshold question as to whether the Wage Regulation provides for an automatic increase of 2.5 per cent per year for public servants. We are considering all options in lending our weight to fight this latest attack on firefighters and other public sector workers. More to follow.

National Bushfire and Climate Summit

Early this week Roundtable One of the National Bushfire and Climate Summit 2020 was held with over 40 Individuals and organisations providing insights, knowledge and experience on a number of different topics. These will be collated into a summit report which will go to decision makers (Government) before the next bushfire season and hopefully shape the future of Australia's bushfire response. Further Roundtables are planned, and we will keep members informed.

Safe Work backs HSR and FBEU at the Sydney Comms Centre

For weeks members at Sydney Comms have been dealing with the mess caused by up to fifteen years of water leaking from a men's urinal. The Mess Room has been closed and work has been going on to try and stop the leak and fix the damp caused by it.

After the FRNSW contractors discovered black mould on site, members jumped into action with the HSR supported by the delegate and FBEU Organiser, Jono making reasonable requests for both the scope of works and an industrial hygienist to test air quality.

Alarmingly, this was not seen as being needed to be provided by FRNSW. Safe Work were then called to access the situation and have now formally requested FRNSW engage an industrial hygienist... Exactly as the HSR had suggested.

We know that HSR's are extremely important representatives of workers and it is great to see HSRs getting active in your Work Groups and across NSW. The FBEU is supporting HSRs to get and stay connected with each



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other and in doing your important job at work. If you are a HSR and need any assistance in performing your important role – get in touch. Active, supported, linked HSRs make dealing with WHS issues effective.

Our organising team are:

- Max Murphy – Regional West, Metro West, MS3 – mmurphy@fbeu.net 0408 617 217
- Georgie Slater – Metro North, Regional North, ME3 – gslater@fbeu.net 0417 924 151
- Jonathon Wright – Metro South (Minus MS3), Regional South, ME 1 and ME 2 – jwright@fbeu.net 0419 753 305

The FBEU is awaiting a response from FRNSW on a structure to allow better consultation about WH and S more broadly and we look forward to working with the Department on a system that supports the roles of HSRs on safety.

Great work to all at Sydney Comms and to all the HSRs getting active and connected.

Oran Park Fire & Rescue Station

The building of Oran Park Fire Station has been announced now for the third time by the State Government; once in 2015, again in 2017 and now in 2020. As if that wasn't bad enough, there is now a sign at the site of the proposed station that states "Proposed Fire Station. Estimated commencement: 2015. Estimated completion: 2018". Must have cut the funding for new signs too?

Members in Metro South 3 joined myself, NSW Opposition Leader Jodi McKay and Shadow Emergency Services Minister Trish Doyle at a press conference last Tuesday to speak with the media about the fact that public services aren't keeping up with new developments in New South Wales.

Since 2001, we have had almost 2 million more people in NSW and not an additional Fire Station to show for it. Expanding Fire & Rescue's network through building more Stations will create jobs, help stimulate the economy and ensure that those in who live on the growing urban fringes of our cities and towns get the service they need. Here is the link to the 10 News piece on the Station: <https://bit.ly/2AiUN2H>

Stay tuned for more activities about Oran Park and other areas desperately in need of our fire services.

Armidale Driver Training Centre

Members would be aware of the Department's plan to move the Armidale Driver Training School away from Armidale. This is being done without any comprehensive planning or consideration of risks and could jeopardise the quality of training, the capacity of Fire & Rescue to deliver training and the Workplace Health & Safety of trainers and firefighters alike.



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In addition, a poorly planned move could impact one of the few alternative revenue streams within the Brigade at a time when the community is wanting to see their Fire Services as resourced as possible.

The FBEU has written to the Department with a list of demands. They are; for the School to remain in Armidale until such time as there is an agreed position from both Members and the Department, for a Risk Assessment to be carried out for any proposed relocation, that there be a clear consultation process for this and that the Department works with the Appliance Training Unit to deliver training to recruits who have been unable to attend. We expect a response from the Department on this next week.

Rescue Operator Shortages

It has come to the attention of the Union that on multiple occasions that some Zone Commands have been continuing to turn out retained rescue capabilities with less than the required minimum of two rescue trained firefighters on the appliance. Despite multiple conversations between the relevant organiser with Zone Management, this issue continues to take place.

If this happens at your station or a station near you, we urge you to call your organiser as soon as you become aware of this shortage so the Union can report it to the RESCO, the State Rescue Board and Safe Work NSW. We recommend reporting through your organiser to ensure anonymity as we know this is a concern for some of our members. This is a health and safety issue and we urge all members to follow this procedure accordingly.

Engine Keeper Duties

Many retained delegates across the state have been in contact with their organiser regarding confusion around Engine Keeper duties. We would like to take this time to clear this up.

Here is an excerpt from page 316 of Standing Orders:

“The classification of Engine Keeper was deleted from the 2000 Retained Award. However the position and duties remain. Accordingly, in line with past practice, a Retained Brigade should continue to follow the same procedures (ie merit selection involving written applications and interviews) in appointing firefighters as the Engine Keeper or 2 Engine Keepers, where 2 appliances are attached to a station.”

If you do not have an engine keeper at your station, raise this with local management in the first instance and then us if you have any issues or questions, please contact your organiser.

08/22 Status Quo Clarification

We would like to remind all members that the 08/22 Code Red from November 5 2019 remains in place. This means that zone management must use permanent firefighters in the first instance who are based within 60km of the station where there is a retained shortage. Outside of 60kms, the Union believes that the shortages should be divided fairly. This takes into account retained and permanent availability, cost effectiveness, kms and qualifications. If you have any questions or concerns about this, please contact your organiser.



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Medical Work

Consultation on new medical continued this week with FRNSW committing to the Unions request for a full audit of BLS. FRNSW quoted BLS training as more than 87% up-to-date. We think this seems very high and we will be speaking with delegates to map the BLS in your stations. We are very well aware of a huge number of firefighters whose BLS is expired.

FRNSW have also acknowledged that there has been no risk assessment conducted about the proposed new medical work. The FBEU are yet to receive any statistical information which supports members being involved in this work, and remain unconvinced that this proposal is any different to the previous iterations of medical work proposed by the department all of which have been voted on and discussed at length with and by members.

The FBEU has no intention of allowing the Department to introduce medical to our roles work by stealth.

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In Unity,

Leighton Drury
State Secretary