



# SitRep 31

## Presumptive cancer Bill – “You’ve got no balls, mate.”

So said Labor MLC Greg Donnelly to the Christian Democratic Party’s Fred Nile last night (it’s there in the record on Page 72) after the CDP sided with the Berejiklian Government to defeat Labor’s amendment to cover all firefighters, including those already suffering with cancer before 27 September this year.

Members who read yesterday’s Code Red notice would know that by midday the upper house had voted for Labor’s amendment, with the CDP’s Fred Nile and Paul Green making the difference and causing a rare defeat for the Government. By 3pm yesterday the CDP’s Paul Green was emailing firefighters with this report:

*CDP has delivered its use of the balance of power and responsibility over the last 8 years in the Parliament of NSW.*

*During this time we have always looked after workers and their rights - today was no exception.*

*CDP voted to retrospectively ensure all fire fighters will be looked after under Worker's Compensation for cancers attributed to their work place hazards.*

*The vote was 18:17, with the government voting against the respective changes. It was CDPs two casting votes in favour of the Labor and Greens amendments that brought about this victory for our Firies and their families.*

*Thank you to our Firies for all you do, Rev. Nile and I were honoured to stand with you today.*

*Wishing you all a very happy and safe Christmas.*

*Kind Regards,  
Paul Green MLC*

It was a short lived victory, because the Government then got to Paul and Fred with claims that Labor’s amendment would cost the state \$1 billion (up from \$356 million only that morning) and by 7pm they had sided with the Government and reversed their vote. The CDP’s backflip means that the “Firies and their families” who had cancer before 27 September have been shut out and will not be covered by the new law.

Of course it’s not all the CDP’s fault. It was the Berejiklian Coalition Government who opposed and voted down Labor’s original Bill (see SitReps 27 and 28), and it was the Coalition who repeatedly opposed and eventually blocked Labor’s attempt to save the firefighters caught by the Government’s 27 September cut off.

The truth is that the Berejiklian Government was late to the party and can take no credit for this legislation. The Coalition spent almost all of their near-8 years in office side-stepping the presumptive rights issue, and palming the Union off with promises of further studies or reviews or consultations. The Government only took a genuine interest when it became clear that the Labor Opposition was already working with the Union on its own legislation (see SitRep 39/17).

While we are disappointed with the lack of pre-September cover (which we have not given up on), members can celebrate the passing of this important legislation. We acknowledge and appreciate the invaluable support of the Labor Opposition, the Greens and the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers, but it is your Union’s continued agitation on the issue that has delivered this result for NSW firefighters and our families.

**Mick Nairn, President and Acting State Secretary**