



# SitRep 33

## Repressive Code of Conduct defeated

A comprehensive win in last month's judgment on the recall kilometres dispute (see SitRep 32) was followed up last week with a crucial result for the Union in another long-running (and equally unnecessary) dispute over the Department's heavy-handed Code of Conduct and Ethics.

SitRep 25 reported back in August that *"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."* The Union objected to the new Code, which was so broad and ill-defined that firefighters who engaged in lawful and appropriate political/industrial activity could be subject to disciplinary action. The offending Code was a blunt attempt by management to silence firefighters and prevent protest actions like our successful 2012 strike to defend workers comp from occurring again.

The dispute proceeded to arbitration last Friday, but was settled without the need for a decision when the Department agreed on the day to issue a revised Code that expressly recognises and allows for "reasonable" union activity (including the wearing of uniforms and use of FRNSW vehicles), and for union officials and delegates to make comments that are critical of their employer without the threat of disciplinary action. The Department will now email, print and issue the amended, agreed Code to all FRNSW employees shortly.

## PFAS Inquiry report

A Commonwealth Parliament Joint Standing Committee has released its report into PFAS contamination and management in and around Defence bases, with no finding on the health effects of exposure to PFAS. The Committee did however support the many participants who pointed out that overseas bodies appeared to place a greater emphasis than Australia on the potential adverse health effects of exposure to PFAS by recommending "that the Australian Government review its existing advice in relation to the human health effects of PFAS exposure, including to acknowledge the potential links to certain medical conditions."

The Union has written to the Premier urging her Government to adopt the Committee's recommendations and direct FRNSW to provide voluntary blood testing for firefighters. A copy of that letter and a link to the full report can be found on the online version of this SitRep.

## In brief ...

- The State Committee yesterday resolved to **ban all involuntary transfers within MW2** (agreed transfers are OK) until management can satisfactorily explain what appears to be planned mass transfers. If you're in MW2 and you're given notice of transfer, ignore it and contact Sub-Branch Secretary Sam Wassell.
- The Department is yet to comply with the IRC's **recall kilometres** Orders to confer with the Union on the amounts and timing of backpay. We'll be returning to the IRC if payment is not made by 25 January.
- **2019 FBEU Membership cards** have been posted to all members' postal addresses. If you don't receive yours then please contact the Union office to check (and if necessary, update) your membership details.
- **The Union Office will close at midday today and re-open on Monday 7 January.** Members requiring assistance over this time may contact a State Committee official – for details see [www.fbeu.net/contact](http://www.fbeu.net/contact)

Leighton Drury  
State Secretary