



SitRep 44/2020

AGM Update

So far, almost 500 members have attended our AGMs and we're not even halfway through.

We have been committed to AGMs going ahead despite the pandemic, so special arrangements were put in place. Our decision to do things differently has absolutely proven a success with more members set to participate in this year's meetings than in recent years.

I am also really excited to see members engaged in deciding what we take to the employer for your Award round. These AGMs will provide your negotiating team with a claim we know comes from you, the members. Throughout Award discussions, members will continue to be involved in making decisions about how we progress.

In addition to such high levels of participation, we have delegates who are running meetings for the very first time – and you are doing a fantastic job. If you are a delegate running a meeting over the coming week and you need any support at all, please get in touch with your State Committee Official, Organiser or office@fbeu.net.

Action Alert – 16 November

Unions NSW is organising a series of actions for and about public sector workers on the morning of 16 November, the day before the state budget is handed down. The actions will be held in locations across NSW.

The FBEU is encouraging members who may be available to attend these actions to register your interest so we can link you up with actions in your areas on 16 November as well as future actions. To register your interest, please contact office@fbeu.net.

On the Road

This week our Organiser Georgie has been on the road in the Hunter and across Regional North, visiting 20 stations from Cessnock to Moree to Grafton. It's an invaluable way to hear from members and see things first-hand.

Members have raised concerns about the forced sharing of Engine Keeper duties and there have been numerous complaints about the lack of training and support for trainers, as well as the ageing stations and appliances.

There have also been a lot of positives; it's been very exciting to hear of discussions of delegate elections and station meetings for some of our most regional stations. I encourage members to get in touch with their Organiser for support, whether to elect delegates, for issues at your station, or to be more active in the FBEU.

Our other Organisers have also been back at it with Jono visiting stations across the GSA and Max in Western NSW. The team are very happy to be out and about again.



SitRep 44/2020

NSW Bushfire Inquiry Funding Initiatives

Last week, the NSW Government announced \$192m in funding over the next five years as part of its response to the NSW Bushfire Inquiry.

This funding announcement is a huge let down for our members. Of the \$192m announced, \$21.4m will go to FRNSW. This represents just 11.1% of the total funding.

The NSW Liberal Government is failing communities by failing to invest in us and our service. Whilst the focus of announcements like this is about pouring millions into volunteers and senior bureaucrats, highly populated areas are being left without a professional fire service, our wages are being cut and our stations are not fit for purpose.

Our members protect 90% of the population of NSW and attended 127,500 incidents in 2018/19, compared to 30,000 incidents by the RFS. Yet we have members with just one bushfire jacket, stations and crews that are not utilised in bushfire emergencies, training that is not being put into action, and stations that are no better than backyard sheds in some areas.

Of the \$23m announced for PPC improvements, just \$8m of that will go to FRNSW. We assume FRNSW will use this for the unfunded PPC they have already procured.

Of the \$36m announced for a mental health strategy, only \$7.7m will go to FRNSW. It's unclear what this 'strategy' is but it's absolutely critical that money is spent directly on services for firefighters – at the frontline. We have been pressing the Department and Government over the past 18 months for more mental health resources and any funding in this space is very welcome and long overdue.

The Federal Bushfire Royal Commission report and recommendations were released today. You can read the report [here](#). Professional frontline firefighters were not called to give evidence at the Royal Commission which is very disappointing. You can read our statement [here](#). We are looking at the recommendations now and will report as needed next week.

Country Relief

In order for a firefighter to undertake a country relief, certain steps are required for that arrangement to be valid under the Permanent Award. Clause 8.2 explains how rosters are arranged. For some country relief arrangements to be valid when working on a different platoon or roster, the firefighter must elect to work an alternative roster that meets the conditions explained under clause 8.2.2 for example; it works over an eight-week cycle and must operate within the hours of the firefighter's default roster. There are other conditions in clause 8.2 that members should familiarise themselves with when undertaking to perform an alternative roster for the purposes of performing a country relief.

Members also often ask what they are entitled to be paid when they perform a "country relief" as a result of claiming residential priority under clause 28, as that terminology is not explicit in the Award.



SitRep 44/2020

By way of example, a firefighter stationed at Blacktown and performing a country relief pursuant to clause 12.4.1.2 in Coffs Harbour would be entitled to the following:

- Relieving allowance (Item 16, Table 3, Part C) \$35.95/shift (x2 for a 24-hour shift)
- KM allowance (Item 2, Table 3, Part C) for the distance travelled from the location of the firefighter's PPE (base station) to the relief station
 - o \$1.34 x 530 km = \$710.20 (Blacktown Station to Coffs Station)
- KM allowance (Item 2, Table 3, Part C) for the return KMs if FRNSW isn't able to return the firefighter's gear
 - o \$1.34 x 530 km = \$710.20 (Coffs Station to Blacktown Station)
- Payment of tolls to be reimbursed (clause 12.13)

Technical Support Vehicles (TSV)

As many of you would know, discussions with the Department regarding a trial of the TSV have been ongoing for the last few months. The TSV is a specialist vehicle with HAZMAT, swift water rescue and drone capabilities.

The main points still to be addressed are the retention of on-shift firefighters working the current roster at Batemans Bay and initially staffing the TSV with four firefighters until response and safety issues are better known.

We are currently waiting to hear back from FRNSW regarding staffing levels of this appliance but will keep members informed of any developments.

In Unity,

Leighton Drury
State Secretary