



# SitRep 46/2020

## Bushfire Legislation Passes

The Bushfire Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 has now passed after the NSW Legislative Council made significant amendments that will lead to better outcomes for firefighters and the community.

The Bill was introduced last week by Emergency Services Minister David Elliott without any consultation, which you can read about in [SitRep 45](#). The lack of consultation was apparent from a number of problematic provisions, including 'industry brigades', many of which had nothing to do with the NSW Bushfire Inquiry's recommendations.

After working closely with the Opposition and Crossbench on amendments, I'm pleased to say that:

- 'industry brigades' have been omitted,
- firefighters and hazard reduction workers will now have representation through their unions, including ours, on the Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee,
- there is a check and balance (a disallowance regulation) on the boundary clearing code,
- and the Emergency Services Minister is now to report to Parliament every three months on the implementation of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry recommendations.

I want to acknowledge Shadow Emergency Services Minister Trish Doyle for her work in getting these amendments negotiated. It's a shame the NSW Coalition Government hasn't taken the Bushfire Royal Commission or NSW Bushfire Inquiry seriously enough to make the very real changes we need but our work on this legislation has at least stopped the Government from making things worse.

## NSW State Budget

In what will come as no surprise, there's very little in the 2020-21 budget for firefighters.

Public sector workers will see no real wage growth with a 0.3% wage freeze followed by a 1.5% wage cap. The Government's wage policy has hampered our ability to negotiate for almost a decade and this week's announcement makes it even more difficult.

While the NSW Coalition Government touts the wage freeze as a '\$3b saving' we know what it really is, a cut.

Cutting our pay makes no sense economically and is entirely disrespectful of us and our work.

The only other real announcements in the budget are the same ones made off the back of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry Report. Yet again we see no real investment in us or our service - and it appears Minister Elliot has again failed to advocate for budget increases.

## E-Recall Review

The e-recall system was implemented in December 2017, subject to a review by both parties after six months. However, the Department never provided this meeting and many issues with the e-recall system have gone unchecked since its implementation.



# SitRep 46/2020

One example of this is the double application of recall hours. In this case, an Inspector rings someone who doesn't answer and immediately moves onto the next call. When the firefighter then calls back and gets the shift, they have the hours applied for turning it down as well as accepting it. It's a ridiculous situation and one that likely could have been resolved had the six-month review occurred.

To try and rectify this and many other issues you've brought to us, we've written to the Department requesting a meeting. You can read the FBEU's letter [here](#).

Please get in touch with us if you have any issues with e-recall that you'd like us to raise with your employer.

## Medical Work

As last noted in [Sitrep 31](#), the PAD proposal is set to be arbitrated in the IRC to determine whether the program constitutes 'new work' under the Award. The IRC dates have been set for next week, 24 and 25 November.

Recent correspondence from DC Fewtrell on this topic should be seen for what it is, a cheap trick to divide and conquer the workforce. There are only two sides to this dispute. One, a FRNSW management who refuse to consult operational firefighters on work that ultimately only operational firefighters will undertake. And two, members who are willing to listen and consider all proposals from their employer providing that they have an opportunity to influence the outcome.

Is this simply about remuneration? No. It's about training, equipment, mental health support, and risk amongst other things.

The facts remain that:

- Our members have serious concerns about the parameters in which this work would hypothetically be carried out, if it is to be carried out.
- We cannot hold meaningful discussions about these parameters because FRNSW have not acted in good faith throughout the consultation period. FRNSW have failed to:
  - o Consult with the broader HSR network regarding risk parameters including training.
  - o Develop a business plan or budget to ensure such a proposal can be introduced safely.
  - o Provide any real statistics on the PAD proposal from NSW Ambulance.
  - o Be honest with the retained membership about time delays associated with this work and their call rates.
  - o Be honest with the extent of incidents without clinical assessment where members will be exposed to medical situations which fall well-outside of standard BLS qualifications.
  - o Consider the serious impact of compounded trauma on the job and the ways in which these risks can be mitigated.

Notable exceptions from those participating in the PAD program include the RFS and Police. Reading the [impacts of this line of work in comparative emergency services](#), it's not hard to see why.

Real consultation means having operational firefighters guiding these sorts of initiatives. After all, decision makers like DC Fewtrell won't be on the truck next to you when or if you get your first PAD call. So, what is it about consulting people in the job that makes FRNSW so nervous?



# SitRep 46/2020

## Home Fire Safety Visits

Many members are being asked by their commands to undertake proactive Home Fire Safety Visits.

In agreement with the COVID IMT, members are advised that proactive visits can only occur so far as letterboxing, with no doorknocking at this stage. After putting a leaflet in letterboxes, if a resident rings and asks for assistance, it is to be conducted in line with all other reactive visits.

While the Department's Executive Leadership Team remains working from home, it's unreasonable to expect firefighters to be knocking on doors and entering homes proactively.

We will continue consulting with the COVID IMT as the situation changes, and when this advice changes, we will let you know. If this is unclear or your command asks you to doorknock, get in touch with the Union and the COVID IMT.

## Relieving SOs

In recent weeks, FRNSW has placed Station Officer Reliever positions at the zone office to work either a special or overlap roster. This has been done in an underhanded manner and without any consultation with the Union.

It is the Union's fundamental position that these roles must be based at a station and the zone office does not qualify as a station. Among other problems, working from a zone office prevents members from progressing to the higher rank of LSO or gaining their rescue qualifications.

The Union wrote to FRNSW demanding that these positions be placed at a station effective immediately and requested FRNSW provide their response by close of business today. More to follow.

## Assist Ambulance

Following on from [Sitrep 36](#), consultation between FRNSW and FBEU on Assist Ambulance procedures has not progressed in any meaningful way. As a result, interim protections continue to be in place:

- All Assist Ambulance calls are to go through the Rescue Coordinator until further notice.
- FRNSW and ANSW will work on a policy document dealing with incident control and procedures at Assist Ambulance Calls (FBEU and HSRs to be consulted).
- FRNSW firefighters are to tag any problem experienced at an Assist Ambulance Call which will then be resolved at the FRNSW/ANSW joint operations meeting.

In Unity,

**Leighton Drury**  
State Secretary