



SitRep 16

2020 Awards – Done.

As you all know, your Union was before the Industrial Relations Commission this week regarding all three of our Awards. Since day one, your Union has fought to ensure that your pay rise would take effect the day the Award expired, 17 February. Under laws introduced by the Liberal Government in 2011, Awards can no longer be backdated automatically.

We argued there were exceptional circumstances that delayed the Award process and prevented the Union and the Department from finalising the Awards sooner. It is safe to say that the circumstances surrounding our negotiations such as floods, a ravaging fire season and now a pandemic fits the definition of exceptional circumstances.

We informed the Department in advance that we ask the Commission to make a decision around your 2.5% pay rise. In short, the Commission has the powers to make a decision on when our Awards are made and in effect, to make sure we are paid from 17 February, not 2 April.

I am happy to report that our Awards have now been finalised and the 2.5% pay increase will be backdated to 17 February 2020.

For our retained members, for us to get the Retained Award made today, we needed to revisit our changes to the Long Service Leave clause that would specifically allow for single-day absences. Rather than delay the hearing and your wage increase any further (especially given the uncertain economic environment), your Union agreed to deal with this outside of the Award. We agreed to this because we are confident that unlike the Permanent Award, there is no language in the existing clause as currently written that prevents Retained members from accessing Long Service Leave in single-day increments.

The word 'unprecedented' has been used a lot over the past few months, but with catastrophic bushfires leading straight into storm and tempest events leading straight into a global pandemic, it is appropriate. During this time, your elected officials have been lucky enough to have the support of our wonderful staff, who, although relatively new to the FBEU, have shown dedication and skill. We have delivered our Awards, ensured our issues are front and centre in the coverage of bushfires, campaigned for and won a Royal Commission, built a growing network of station delegates, and dealt with a large increase of member inquiries and queries to the office. I want to thank them and those on the State Committee who have gone over and above in utilising their professional skills, and importantly, demonstrated solidarity.



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Lastly, I thank the Union, you the members for being understanding of the process and therefore patient, for voting, for calling, for emailing and for your constructive feedback as we worked through this process. This result and the achievements of the past several months show just how much we can achieve when we work together.

Next week, we will continue our union organising work in new and different ways, we will invite delegates to participate in meetings via Zoom and I, and other members of State Committee and the Staff, look forward to speaking directly to you all in those meetings.

If you do not have a Station Delegate please speak together with the other members at your station and contact the organising team to support you to make it happen – use office@fbeu.net. We need to continue to build our structures so that members are on the front foot through this crisis and beyond.

In Unity,

Leighton Drury
State Secretary