



# SitRep 18

## COVID-19 Update

Further to the comprehensive update on FBEU instructions and recommendations for members in [SitRep 17](#) on Tuesday. I encourage all members to read this SitRep to answer any questions about COVID-19, our work and our job.

I have been really impressed with the feedback from delegates and members who are reading the SitReps before contacting the union office with COVID-19 questions. Thank you for getting in touch.

With the bushfires, our Awards, floods and now COVID-19, your Union's office has received more enquiries (nearly double than this time last year) in the first few months of this year than our wonderful office manager Alison, who has been with us for 20 years, can remember. Again, I thank all the members for your support and understanding and our staff for their hard work.

**Now is a good time to remind members, and especially our growing number of delegates and all Union member HSRs, that if you stand up and enforce instructions and recommendations for yourself and others, we will back you.** Keeping you and our community as safe as possible is absolutely crucial and should you find yourself in a situation that is not yet covered by our instructions or recommendations, we will support you.

## COVID-19: Health checks postponed

Although postponing health checks has been agreed at the joint COVID-19 committee the Department has failed to make this clear in letters sent to members on health checks. Therefore:

**Members who receive a health check letter are hereby instructed to not undertake a compulsory health check under the D&D Award until otherwise instructed by the State Secretary.**

## COVID-19: Traveller issues

Your Union has been working on how to protect members and their families where members work long distances from their residence. The Berejiklian Government's made much of offering 'special leave' for workers but have left much to be desired in terms of who can access it.

We have put every case of hardship and possible risk for members who travel to the Department and it has committed to assessing on a case by case basis. Any member who feels they have a case for a change to their work arrangement should email their Zone Commander, copying in their Station Officer and Duty Commander, as well as [office@fbeu.net](mailto:office@fbeu.net) to deal with these issues. If you would like advice on how to word your email, please call the office on 9218 3444.



# SitRep 18

## COVID-19: Update Retained

We have taken a number of calls in relation to the payment of retained members for all fire calls: should they be marked A, CA or left blank? The intent of our notice and instruction is that if you are/normally would be genuinely available, you will be paid for the call. This is based on the assumption that you would normally be available to attend the station, however, due to COVID-19 arrangements you may:

- be told to stay in your car
- get a phone call whilst driving to the station and told there is no need to attend,
- be normally available but not on the 'rostered social distancing group' therefore not attending the station.

It should be assumed if you make yourself Available and that if the call is a job that requires all hands-on-deck, then you need to be able to respond.

Firefighters should be adjusting their availability at 1800hrs the night before and should not be declaring themselves available if they are genuinely not available due to things such as primary employment, carer's responsibilities, and the like. You should be marking yourself as Unavailable during those periods. Any questions of how your availability should work please contact your Station Delegate or Organiser or contact the office on 9218 3444.

## Critical Shortages?

The FBEU has had a number of calls from delegates and members reporting concerns about shortages in essential supplies including toilet paper, sanitiser and other PPE. We ask that Station Delegates report critical shortages using this form so that we are able to deal with them in a systematic and organised way.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/InventoryShortages>

## Work Health and Safety is Union business

As reported in [SitRep 14](#) we have been speaking with FBEU member Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) about the current Work Health and Safety (WHS) structures in FRNSW. In a well-attended teleconference, members agreed that working together and in union on health and safety was important and a good idea. We agreed to build a group of FBEU HSRs, SCOM and staff to lead the consultation and discussions with management about work health and safety structures.

Following that teleconference and as reported in SitRep 14 we advised the Department we want to consult in a meaningful way and suggested that the formal consultation begin at a time where our resources are not so focussed on the urgent health and safety matters related COVID-19. We assume the Department will be agreeable to this, given the current situation.



# SitRep 18

This week myself and Emily Mayo our Lead Organiser met with the Department regarding WHS HSR elections. All parties agreed that given the current COVID-19 crisis it would be appropriate to speak with Safe Work and request an extension for the elections of HSRs take place. Safe Work has agreed and extended the period for three months. Emily has been keeping the HSRs from across the state – nominated in the initial teleconference as key contacts - in the loop.

The FBEU intends to support members and current HSRs to consult with management so that we have the very best safety systems and structures we can. Aside from the current crisis, we know that many of the really big issues facing members are work health and safety ones. The way we – workers – organise our HSRs and WHS more broadly can make a huge difference.

We have agreed we will be back to management by the end of next week to begin consultation and discussions about this. To do that we need to speak with you.

**ZOOM MEETING:** WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15 at 1400HRS

**WHO:** CURRENT FBEU MEMBER HSRs AND MEMBERS INTERESTED IN BEING ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN WH and S ORGANISING.

**HOW:** REGISTER TO BE PART OF THE FBEU WH and S ORGANISING GROUP HERE:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FBEUWHS>. WE WILL SEND THE ZOOM INVITE TO ALL THOSE WHO HAVE REGISTERED.

## Easter Sunday Holiday on 12 April

Don't forget that Sunday 12 April is Easter Sunday. Permanent members who work on Easter Sunday will accrue consolidated leave at single time for the hours worked on this day and Retained members will be paid overtime for the number of hours worked.

To clarify, this only applies to Easter Sunday (12 April) and not Good Friday or Easter Monday, which are both public holidays. This is because both Awards' wage rates already include a loading for working on weekends and public holidays, the consolidated leave or overtime is to compensate firefighters when there is an extra public holiday that hasn't been captured by this loading.

So why is Easter Sunday different? Prior to 2011 there were 10 standard public holidays per annum, but the Kenelly Government's Public Holidays Act 2010 extended this to 11 per year by also making Easter Sunday a public holiday for the first time. It follows that firefighters who work this Easter Sunday will not be compensated for working this additional public holiday by way of the Award's wage rates and are therefore entitled to be credited with consolidated leave (permanent members) or overtime (retained members) instead. The Department disputed this, but the Union won the dispute in the Industrial Relations Commission in 2012.

Additional gazetted holidays generally arise when New Years Day, Boxing Day or Christmas Day fall on a weekend, but it doesn't stop the NSW Government from proclaiming other additional holidays from time to time. For those who like to plan ahead, there is one gazetted for Monday, 28 December 2020.



# SitRep 18

## Union Organising and Delegate Meetings

As I have previously reported, your Union has had to pull our organising team from all our face-to-face station meetings and suspend our delegate training to ensure everyone's safety. This is a great pity because delegates have loved the training and members across the state have reported they have had staff visiting - for many, for the first time in decades.

Your organising team sees the COVID-19 environment as an opportunity to try new things and are working on the phone and online with members to continue to build power and structures.

Following Easter, we will trial Zoom delegates meetings and we encourage all delegates to dial in to your meetings where you can. You can see the schedule of meetings [here](#). Staff, and where possible SCOM, will be a part of the meetings and look forward to speaking directly with you. To make this manageable and effective the meetings are only for delegates.

We are still working on each of the Zoom meetings and will circulate the Zoom links and some basic info on how to use Zoom - the dial in details will be circulated to Delegates early next week. The calendar of meetings will include opportunities for all delegates to participate and we will reuse this schedule of meetings in an ongoing way so that the meetings cut across different days and platoons.

If you do not have a delegate, please get in touch and our organisers can assist you to get one. Every delegate should be linked with an organiser who is there to support you as the elected representatives of the members in your station or workplace.

Your organisers and their areas are:

Max Murphy - Regional West, Metro West, MS3 – [mmurphy@fbeu.net](mailto:mmurphy@fbeu.net) 0408 617 217

Georgie Slater - Metro North, Regional North, ME3 – [gslater@fbeu.net](mailto:gslater@fbeu.net) 0417 924 151

Jonathon Wright – Metro South (Minus MS3), Regional South, ME 1 and ME 2 - [jwright@fbeu.net](mailto:jwright@fbeu.net) 0419 753 305

I am looking forward to trialling these meetings with you and, like in all we do, we will change and adapt them to best support our purpose: to build structures to allow members to be engaged, informed and most importantly, powerful, strong and united. Enjoy your break, if you are having one, and I hope you and your family are safe and well.

In Unity,

**Leighton Drury**  
State Secretary