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Award Update

Since the last update, your Union attended a further Award meeting with FRNSW on Thursday 6 February 2020. The following key matters remain outstanding:

- Your wages being increased by 2.5% from the 17 February 2020
- FRNSW proposed Dual Badge Ops support positions
- Removing the 28 day restriction on employees performing higher duties

Whilst both parties are continuing to negotiate in good faith, the unprecedented fire season, coupled with other factors including what can only be described as restrictive bargaining parameters FRNSW are negotiating within, has impacted on our ability to settle the Award well before the expiry date of 17 February 2020.

A central part of the Union's claim is that the 2.5% wage increase is passed on to you in full on the 17th February 2020, regardless of when the Award is actually made. The Union has been consistent with this position however FRNSW has not agreed to this part of our claim which is untenable for the Union. Our members deserve the government increase and rely on it to be passed on the specified February date which should be preserved.

The Union remains committed to this Award process however we will look to seek the assistance of the NSW Industrial Relations Commission.

FBEU heads to ACTU Emergency Services Summit

Last week I headed to the federal parliament for the ACTU Emergency Services Summit alongside those involved in the front-line and the backline of this summer's ongoing bushfire crisis, and to ensure that the voice of professional firefighters, FBEU members, were heard in Canberra. I was part of the delegation from Unions NSW, the union peak body as well as the voice of the approx. 11000 thousand professional firefighters from NSW, QLD, WA and SA that are calling for a Royal Commission.

The Summit was good opportunity to hear the experiences of workers and community members from fire affected areas and to contribute to discussions about the union movement's work around the bushfire crisis. Listening to union members from the ETU, ASU and PSA (to name but a few) was not only insightful and inspiring into how other workers play their role in these events but also distressing to hear that they have same budget problems under their current Governments.

I was also there for the Prime Minister Scott Morrison's speech about the bushfires and his announcement of the intention to hold a Royal Commission into fire services and the 2019/20 bushfire crisis, and to inform the gallery that he had spoken to State Premiers regarding the proposed



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terms of reference for the Royal Commission. I, alongside other firefighter union secretaries, from Western Australia, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania have previously written to Minister Littleproud about the need for a Royal Commission and its Terms of Reference.

While in Canberra, with a delegate from Queanbeyan and our new organiser Jonathan, I took the opportunity to meet with a number of Senators (Tim Ayres, Tony Sheldon, Murray Watt, Jenny McCallister) to discuss the importance of adequate funding and resourcing in both ensuring the safety of members and in protecting local communities.

Rescue Recall Win

Your Union secured a win recently for the rescue-qualified members involved in the rescue station transfer from Newcastle to Lambton in late 2018. Prior to the transfer this matter went before the IRC and FRNSW formally agreed to allow transferred members to remain in the system as rescue qualified for purposes of performing recall and outduties from 29 October 2018 until 17 February 2020.

Regardless, as we have seen way too many times before, FRNSW did not uphold their end of the agreement as members were never updated in the system as rescue qualified and were being excluded from rescue recalls and outduties.

Staff in the Union became aware of this in late 2019 and immediately demanded FRNSW rectify this issue. FRNSW pushed back but after continued pressure and negotiation from your Union, we got FRNSW to fix the issue in the system (as of 29 November 2019) and to agree to extend the agreement for an additional 13 months (to 29 December 2020) to account for the amount of time FRNSW prevented these members from performing rescue recalls and outduties.

Motions for the next Special General Meeting

As most would know, I made a commitment as State Secretary that your Awards will be endorsed by you the members. As described above, it looks likely we will be listing a dispute over the award and therefore it will delay the final award clauses for members to consider. That said, there has been two motions from the membership to be considered at the next Special General Meeting which is predicted to be held within the next two weeks. One of the motions to be considered, "Pay Parity Petition", an idea the Union office is already investigating, doesn't adhere to the Unions rules in regards to determining when the meeting is held as under rule 4 (a) "The State Committee of Management shall cause a Special General Meeting to be held as soon as practicable" as well as the agnostic wording of it being called before the 14th of February rather than being held. With that in mind the members will be asked to consider their Awards in the next two weeks along with both motions. It should be noted that due to the current governments public sector wages policy, anything new thrown on the table for these negotiations will jeopardise the 2.5% wage increase from February



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17 and will no doubt have our awards move into the Industrial Relations Commission rather than the public campaign that the mover and seconder of the Pay Parity motion are suggesting. More to follow.

Payroll meltdown

The Union office has been inundated with inquiries on under/over and non payments for retained and permanent members. We brought this to the attention of the Department late last year and there is still ongoing issues to resolve. FRNSW has given an undertaken two audits which will finalise in the coming weeks. It is a timely reminder to members to always check your payslips and if you have any discrepancies to contact the office.

Delegate Training – Kicking off!

Our first delegate training day is happening in Sydney on Monday, 17 February and we have seven delegates attending. There are a series of dates and locations open for expressions of interest and I encourage delegates to get involved. **Register here:** <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/7ZMST8B> and see SitRep 3 for more info.

Broken Hill the FBEU as west as it gets

Organiser Max last week visited Broken Hill (and a number of other towns) and Stations 238 and 239 turned out in massive numbers. The meeting was so big there was talk of moving it to Broken Hill Trades Hall. The FBEU members will elect and endorse delegates following this meeting and are keen to get active and organised. This is fantastic. Members coming together in meetings in your stations is really important and it's great to see more and more members building union structures to make it easier for all to participate and get active. Well done Broken Hill.

Leighton Drury
State Secretary