



# SitRep 04/2022

## **FBEU AND FRNSW MEET TO DISCUSS AWARD NEGOTIATIONS**

The FBEU and FRNSW met today to discuss parameters for negotiations for both the Permanent and Retained Awards.

The FBEU have been requesting FRNSW's bargaining parameters for some months now however FRNSW have not been forthcoming with any documentation or information regarding their position leading into today's discussion. This is despite Government policy requiring them to be to have their parameters approved at least three months prior to negotiations.

FRNSW advised as late as this week, following a further request from us for their bargaining parameters, that they would discuss this in our first meeting scheduled for today.

It seems FRNSW representatives were rather busy over the Christmas break with matters other than ensuring firefighters were safe during a significant surge in COVID-19 cases. As of today they are all of a sudden in a position to provide comprehensively re-drafted Awards containing all the changes they are seeking in this round of negotiations.

It beggars belief that a significant part of FRNSW's approach is to reduce member conditions to fund the PAD program, a program which has neither been established as effective, safe, nor part of the ordinary duties of members without improvements to training.

The FBEU is currently considering the changes proposed by FRNSW however on a first reading the proposed changes significantly and negatively impact your current terms and conditions of employment.

FRNSW have also proposed two-year Awards with headline 2.5% (minus super) increases each year, however hidden in the detail are numerous cost-saving measures.

It is not our preference to agree to a two-year Award as this would delay your ability to seek vital improved terms and conditions of employment for another two years.

We will provide further information to members shortly detailing the proposed changes in order to ensure you are fully informed of the process.

However, as members are well aware, it is our view that FRNSW needs to refocus to really deliver on positive changes for firefighters in the areas of infrastructure, appliances, training and staffing. Firefighters need safe Fire stations, appliances, PPE/C and systems of work, not a focus on cost saving measures designed to diminish your conditions of employment.

Over the last twelve months we have seen increased disputation with FRNSW on fundamental and basic consultation requirements. From the PAD dispute to issues around deployment basics, or in preparing for the predictable impacts of COVID-19 FRNSW have absolutely failed to engage and consult with you to ensure the delivery of optimum outcomes in your workplace.



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It goes without saying that this is having a dramatic and negative impact on your health, safety and well-being in the workplace.

Rebuilding our delegate structure and getting organised to has been a priority to ensure we can deliver on key strategic goals for members, including vital health and safety improvements.

We now need to move forward and aim to embed some of these matters in the Awards to lock in these key rights and ensure we can bring FRNSW to the table with their employees.

Having workers at the table seems not to be in FRNSW DNA. However, we hope that FRNSW will recognise that better decisions are made with their best asset at the table, their workers.

As you know, firefighting is a unique and inherently dangerous industry, therefore it is vital that firefighters, who know their job best, participate in any decision making that affects their workplace.

Today, we made it clear to FRNSW that this will be a key priority of this round of negotiations along with other matters.

FRNSW say they want a 'modern and sustainable 21<sup>st</sup> century organisation'. No disagreement there. Let's start with suitable worksites that reduce carcinogen exposure and provide amenities for women firefighters. Let's update our decaying fleet and plan for firefighters to be safe in their job and in return for the communities they serve.

We are currently in the process of developing a log of claims for member endorsement. In the current COVID-19 climate we are still to determine the best method to proceed with this however members will be updated shortly.

We will continue to update members as negotiations continue.

In the meantime, should members have any queries please contact the Union office on (02) 9218 3444

In Unity

**Leighton Drury**  
**State Secretary**