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FRNSW Health & Safety - More Concerned with Optics than Substance

Some Members will be aware that FRNSW are today coordinating a HSR conference for HSR's across the state to meet and discuss the existing circumstances around Workplace Health & Safety.

While the FBEU were not consulted on this initiative, nor invited to participate in this important agenda, we do acknowledge that FRNSW wrote to the Union on 21 March with an invitation to attend the conference.

Despite the FBEU not accepting the invitation, Members attending the conference today will note an empty table with 'FBEU Representatives' on it.

While it might be the first seat at the table FRNSW have offered us when it comes to WHS in some time, today, the FBEU were instead busy escalating multiple disputes regarding lack of consultation after FRNSW have ignored and refused to engage collaboratively with us on a number of WHS matters.

While the optics of an empty table might be a pretty piece of propaganda by Management, the FBEU will continue to focus on substance by advocating for our Members health and safety.

We also intend to launch new disputes regarding inadequate protections in engine bays. Many of us have seen the improvements neighbouring states have made to minimise diesel particulate matter and other known carcinogens from the job over the last decades.

We say, same lungs, same protections.

We will be in touch shortly with HSR's in attendance with a plan for your Work Group and will continue to support you and the Members we represent.

FBEU Provides Submissions to the Flood Inquiry

Today the FBEU also filed its submission to the *Inquiry into the Response to Major Flooding Across NSW in 2022*, established by the Legislative Council this year.

We thank Members for their valuable insight and contribution in this process. It is through your actions and representation of your industry that we can achieve real change for emergency response both for Professional Firefighters across NSW and the community.

A copy of our submission can be found [here](#).

Submissions for a second Government Inquiry into the same events are due in June this year. The FBEU will also be making a submission to this inquiry.

Award Negotiation Update

The parties met today in our final negotiation meeting regarding award negotiations prior to our scheduled conciliation before the IRC on this matter.

The FBEU can report that today agreement could not be reached between the parties, with FRNSW returning to form in not providing basic information which has been requested by the FBEU for months. This now includes cost savings, and utilising stalling tactics to ultimately advise today that effectively their position has barely shifted from their original claim.

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In fact, FRNSW didn't even bother to turn up with an ELT member capable of making decisions.

Further, FRNSW backtracked on key positions from the last meeting including the term of the Award.

We have been upfront with FRNSW from the start. We want a one year award. At the last meeting, FRNSW agreed.

Today however their position altered, and they have reverted to their position to seek a two year term.

On this basis, the FBEU is reconsidering our position and our Log of Claims to reflect a potential two year term.

It remains our position that the parties could reasonably agree to a one year term, providing for vital consultation provisions to provide a streamlined and efficient consultation process on key matters which affect you in your workplace, a streamlined disputes process and other minor updates.

FRNSW however continue to deny Firefighters a right to a say in any of these matters purely on the basis that it is allegedly 'too bureaucratic'.

The FBEU went so far as to propose a clause to legitimately engage in a process which would consider FRNSW's proposal regarding PAD as part of medical first response work, a threshold issue for FRNSW. With no direct feedback on the draft clause as provided by the FBEU, FRNSW have rejected this.

Before the IRC on Monday we understand that FRNSW will be continuing to seek the following:

1. Forced introduction of the PAD program. No consultation with Members about the safe implementation of such a program and how it might best deliver outcomes. Worse still, you fund it out of your existing conditions through changes to clause 7 of the Permanent Award and the removal of the 28-day cap on acting up.
2. Changes to clause 13 to reduce the period of time of service required for promotions.
3. Changes to clause 27 to provide for temporary transfer, thus avoiding their current obligations to pay appropriate overtime rates for the provision of off shift training for example.
4. Insertion of a new clause 28A to make changes to the current transfer register process.
5. Changes to the current provisions relating to intrastate deployments to bring them under the same conditions for interstate and international deployments which would involve a reduction to current conditions.

We can also confirm that other than agreeing to a minor change to the current list of authorised duties for Retained Firefighters to include current authorised duties in the Award. FRNSW have not agreed to any of FBEU's claims.

While not surprised by these antics, the FBEU are still alarmed by FRNSW's position.

Today FRNSW Representatives (including operational personnel at the table) confirmed that they would rather put the decision-making power, particularly regarding the huge operational and cultural shift of medical work, in the hands of IRC Commissioners than engage with you, their workforce.

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They also confirmed that for them to agree to a simple matter of consulting on the arrangements for intrastate, interstate and international deployments and attendance at major emergencies as put by the FBEU, you will need to pay for the privilege by agreeing to the reduced payment for intrastate deployments.

FRNSW have stayed true to form and as result the parties remain in dispute regarding practically all matters despite months of negotiations.

Members will be further updated following Monday's conciliation and the potential for an expanded claim in light of FRNSW's position.

In Unity,



Leighton Drury
State Secretary