



## Award Update

Further to the last update on Award negotiations, we can confirm, that after a fair bit of to-ing and fro-ing, we have been able to lock in 3 negotiation meetings with FRNSW prior to our next attendance at the IRC scheduled for 1 March 2023. You might recall we were seeking to meet daily between our last appearance at the IRC and expiry of the current Awards but it seems these three meetings are all FRNSW can accommodate.

The first of these meetings was on Wednesday morning where we outlined key items in our log of claims in relation to health and safety and the new proposed promotional structure.

Health and safety of our members along with a transparent and clear promotional systems are key priorities for us in this round of negotiations.

For too long FRNSW have ignored significant health and safety issues inherent in our work as firefighters and it is vital that we address this via an enforceable industrial instrument, i.e. our Awards.

FRNSW have not to date agreed to any of the claims put forward by us but we are hopeful that continued and genuine discussion and good faith negotiation will allow FRNSW to gain a full understanding of the benefits of our proposals and lead to a consensus position between the parties.

Should FRNSW however continue to be obstructionist and not negotiate in good faith, we will be left with little choice but to consider further action as part of this dispute. In preparation for this, the FBEU Industrial Action Committee met this week to consider this potential escalation of bans and other actions. The parties will meet again on Monday and Tuesday next week ahead of the IRC on Wednesday. Watch this space following Wednesday's hearing.

## Health Checks

As outlined above, part of the reason health and safety remains such a priority is due to the current failings of FRNSW systems such as the Health Checks system. We all know the current system is confusing and burdensome at best, and at worst punitive and fails entirely to screen firefighters for known occupational illnesses caused by our job.

This is why as a key priority for this round of negotiations we have proposed a Health Screening program which, we say, should be non-punitive and screen you for all the illnesses and exposures inherent in our line of work.

Given the failings of the current health checks system, as you all know, last year the FBEU notified a Code Red on health checks and commenced a dispute regarding the ongoing and systemic issues with the system. In good faith, on request of FRNSW we lifted that Code Red while we participated in a series of meetings with FRNSW to try and resolve the issues. Those meetings however failed to resolve many of the issues and as a result, we recently reinstated our Code Red.

In response to this FRNSW wrote to us alleging that we have not provided them with specific information, that UHG do not receive incentives when members are sent for further testing or questioning and that the Department can't see how UHG have exceeded FRNSW's Health Standard with individual de-identified cases that we have raised. Their letter can be read in full [here](#).



We responded this week again highlighting our specific concerns, requested proof that UHG isn't incentivised by additional testing and to raise the concern that UHG continues to allege that members aren't meeting FRNSW's Health Standard without any specificity. We have also reiterated that the alternative health screening we have included in our log of claims would resolve the union's many concerns with health checks. Our letter can be read in full [here](#).

Given this, we made our Health Screening claim the number 1 Agenda item for negotiation this week. Despite agreeing to this agenda, it seems FRNSW is not interested in genuine resolution of this issue and during the meeting FRNSW refused to discuss this aspect of the FBEU's Log of Claims entirely.

As a result, the FBEU position stands and the Code Red remains in place until further notice.

## SOSB Meeting

This week the SOSB met to discuss numerous and ongoing concerns regarding human resources, workforce planning and other issues affecting members of the subbranch.

This meeting was extremely well attended and attests to the significance of the concerns facing members of that branch. The FBEU wants to thank members for their attendance and participation in that meeting.

Some 12 motions were passed by the sub-branch which has resulted in 5 letters to FRNSW today and 3 Code Reds being implemented. This action by the SOSB highlights how completely out of touch ELT are with all levels of employees right through from recruit up to Chief Superintendents.

## New TPI Claim Forms for D&D

The NSW Fire SuperFund (Death and Disability) changed insurers on 20 February 2023. This has no impact on members other than members filing a claim for Total and Permanent Incapacity (TPI) will need to make sure they use the updated forms that the new insurer uses. The latest version of these forms can be found on the fund's website, [here](#). Please check and download the latest copy from their website to ensure you're using the correct forms.

Members who require assistance with D&D queries are welcome to contact us or the fund directly on 1300 836 869.

## Country Officers Audit

Late last year we wrote to the Department seeking an urgent audit of Country Officers to ensure that their Country Officer allowance was being paid following reports FRNSW was failing to do so.

In typical fashion, FRNSW responded that they would "do a search on one or two Country Officers to see if there is any great reason to look beyond this", indicating a clear disbelief that their system could fail in the way we were alleging.

Finally, on 7 December, the Department wrote to us to inform us that in fact 14 Country Officers were not being paid the allowance and agreed to make adjustments in the next pay run.



# SitRep 9/2023

The Department is so far refusing to backpay beyond 2016 and is refusing to audit and backpay Firefighters who have previously worked as Country Officers. The FBEU will continue to pursue these underpayments on behalf of members.

In Unity

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