



Labor Commences Promised IR Reform

Following weeks of negotiations with public sector Unions, the NSW Labor Government has finally introduced the first tranche of reforms to the Industrial Relations Act and System.

These reforms were a key election commitment to public sector unions, including the FBEU, to ensure we have an IR system that delivers real wages growth to public sector workers and establishes a new Industrial Court who is empowered to make enforceable decisions when Unions bring industrial disputes.

Earlier this year, the Labor government removed the legislated wages cap which targeted public sector workers and prevented us from being awarded fair wage increases.

This bill goes one step further and repeals the current provision in the IR Act requiring the IRC to give effect to Government policies on public sector conditions of employment.

Instead, the Bill introduces a series of issues the IRC must consider including encouraging strategies to attract and retain skilled staff where there are skills shortages in order to ensure effective and efficient delivery of services.

The reforms will also bring in a “mutual gains” model of negotiation, where agencies and unions will have a forum for facilitated and genuine bargaining.

Lastly, the Bill also reintroduces an Industrial Court to NSW with specialised judges appointed to hear and make enforceable decisions on industrial and award matters as well as workplace health and safety matters and underpayments.

The FBEU, along with other public sector unions, is welcoming these changes which, if passed, will come just in time for our 2024 Award negotiations. However the work in this space is still not done. While the changes in this Bill go a long way to providing firefighters with an Industrial Relations system and framework where we can make real claims around firefighter work value, Labor must work with us in 2024 to continue to deliver further reforms to bring a truly modern and fair industrial relations system to public sector workers in NSW.

In Unity,

Leighton Drury
State Secretary

