



Public Sector Wages Cap – Meeting with Treasurer

Public sector Union Secretaries, myself included, met with State Treasurer Daniel Mookhey this morning to discuss the Labor Government's proposed wages policy.

As you all know, this Government was elected on the back of significant campaigning by essential workers, with FBEU members playing no small part in that. Our work campaigning against the previous Liberal Government was in part informed by Labor's announcement that they would end the current unfair wages policy, which legally limited pay increases to public sector workers and stifled any real negotiation and reform.

We are now two months post-election however and still no firm announcements have been made.

This morning's meeting was an important opportunity to continue to press our claim regarding this issue and ensure the Labor government does not forget its commitment to firefighters and the broader public sector workforce.

Discussions are continuing in this space at this time and as soon as we have a firm position from the Government I'll be updating you all further.

Award Update

Meanwhile Award negotiations are continuing at the IRC as we await wages policy. FBEU and FRNSW met in conciliation again on Wednesday where we moved on from our discussion regarding the promotional structure on to our claim for a new Health Screening model.

At the conciliation we articulated very clearly the principles of our claim in relation to a health screening model, focusing heavily on the need for less onerous, less intrusive and less punitive model. We also clearly raised before the IRC Commissioner the need for occupation illnesses and injuries to be tested, in particular occupational cancer and PFAS/PFOA testing.

FRNSW have been asked by the Commission to consider the issues raised by the FBEU and work with us towards an alternative model for Health Checks.

Conciliation recommences on 15 June with a full day scheduled before the IRC again on that date.

PFAS/PFOA Contamination

As we discuss PFAS testing for members in the Award, I hope you all took the time this week to read the numerous media reports regarding our exposures as firefighters to PFAS/PFOA contamination and FRNSW ongoing failures to ensure appropriate action to protect us and the community from ongoing exposure.

In case you missed it, below are some links to just some of the media:

[SMH Article: "Poison playground as firefighters recall hosing down kids with toxic foam"](#)

[ABC Article: Calls to permanently ban use of PFAS chemicals still found in some domestic products](#)



We all know that PFAS/PFOA is the next big - and yet in many cases, unknown - risk to our health and safety as firefighters. For many of us, our exposure to these 'forever chemicals' was extensive and ongoing through our work but still we know only a smattering of the potential risks to our health.

FRNSW however is still failing to take real and proper action to remediate potential harm and work proactively with us to do all we can to assist those of us exposed.

While Fire Services in other States have funded PFAS blood testing for all their staff, have taken action to either close or remediate fire stations and training colleges to avoid ongoing exposures and contamination, and have supported world-leading studies about potential options to remove PFAS/PFOA from our blood stream, FRNSW have sat on their hands, still refusing to offer funded PFAS/PFOA testing to all firefighters and only testing 11 out of our over 300 fire stations for contamination.

We all know our historical exposures to these contaminants. Unfortunately, when we were unaware of the risks, we used a toxic material not only as part of our emergency response activities, but as part of our community engagement unknowingly exposing ourselves, our families and our community. Given what we now know about the potential impacts however, FRNSW must act to do all they can to remedy the harm caused and protect our health and wellbeing.

FBEU members will continue to call for necessary action and you can expect to see further developments from the FBEU in this space in the near future.

In Unity,

Leighton Drury
State Secretary