



NEWSLETTER

United Firefighters' Union of Australia Aviation Branch

OCTOBER 2013 NEWSLETTER

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1. GLOVES

The update on gloves from the September newsletter is that the Union and ARFF have agreed to trial two gloves one being a GP type glove and the other a L3 firefighting glove. The Union and ARFF are keen to get the trial underway as soon as possible and are working to get samples into the field for the trial. Both gloves meet CASAs requirement for compliance with the relevant Australian Standard. It is hoped to begin a trial at 4 locations (Cairns, Brisbane and Sydney) next week.

2. DIVISIONAL CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL

The Divisional Consultative Council met in Canberra on the 10th October 2013. The following is an update from the meeting. A further update will be provided when the minutes and full list of action items from the meeting are available.

Clothing/uniform contract.

The tender evaluation team met in Canberra on 24/09/2013 to finalise all outstanding issues. All issues were addressed and the tender evaluation report is now in completed draft form and awaiting a finalisation meeting with Procurement then off to the CEO for approval. The current Stuart & Heaton clothing contract has been extended 6 months to cover the delay and allow for the provision of recruit course clothing as well as replacements for existing staff. Bushfire PPE has been agreed upon and is now in procurement phase for stations requiring it.

Provide the top 10 initiatives list

The Union has submitted numerous items through these meetings and otherwise with no real outcomes. ASA advised at the meeting that there was a list of items with attention being currently being focused on what they have determined as the top 10. The Union asked for the list of the top 10 items/initiatives:

- 1) Vehicle Markings
- 2) Lights and Sirens
- 3) ULFV Mk 8 Locker Reconfiguration
- 4) GUV Replacement
- 5) Wild Fire PPE
- 6) CABA and CABA Communications PIR
- 7) DSU / Telemetry
- 8) Operational Hose (38 mm/flaked hose)
- 9) Category 8/9 and Category 10 Station Design
- 10) ARFF Radio Communications

Investigate the status of the engineering fixes to the internal/cabin issues with the MK8s.

These items are on the initiatives list however are not in the "top 10". The Union is not satisfied with this response as some items are safety related and will pursue these issues through other means.

Confirm that the project specs for the refurb works at Brisbane are compliant with all WHS regulations.

The project intends complying with all relevant WHS regulations for all new works and modification works undertaken.

Provide a timeframe for the expected completion of the refurbishment works at Brisbane Fire Station.

The project has only just commenced the planning phase; as such the schedule is still being developed. At this stage the project expects to deliver the modular building component in 2nd quarter 2014 with the remainder of works completed in the 3rd quarter of 2014. This assumes sufficient budget, absence of latent conditions that delay works and relevant consent and approvals being granted in a timely manner.

Provide an update for HMI accommodation issue.

Currently the Fire Station Manager is conducting discussions with Hamilton Island Enterprise as to the extension of existing land area to facilitate extra accommodation buildings. Business support is aware of the requirement for the extra accommodation at Hamilton Island and will work with Planning and Integration to progress. Existing accommodation is planned to be renovated during the installation of new buildings to better suit need.

3 HEAT STRESS TESTING

ARFF have engaged the CFA Victoria to conduct heat stress testing at Darwin in mid November. The aim of the testing is to scientifically evaluate various methods of fire fighter cooling. The original proposal was to test 3 methods – forearm immersion, cool towels and shade (control group). On advice of the Union, following previous important work done in Darwin by the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre, full body immersion has now been included in the methods to be evaluated.

Importantly, previous testing in Darwin was conducted on now replaced PPE so this testing provides the opportunity to test using the current PPE.

Testing is to be conducted in conjunction with scheduled drill or training activity and participants will wear an “equivital” sensing device (chest mounted under duty wear and swallow a thermometer capsule to measure core temperature during testing. The thermometer is ultimately excreted from the body.

Blood pressure, core body and skin temperature, heart and breathing rates are to be measured prior to commencement of each testing exercise and at 5 minute intervals immediately on cessation of testing activity and throughout the active cooling/rehab period for up to 20 minutes post exercise activity.

To protect the anonymity of participants they will be identified by being allocated a number so test results cannot be attributable to an individual after testing.

Safety of participants is paramount so participants will need to be operationally fit and all participants will be fully briefed prior to the testing and able to ask questions.

Participation in the testing is not mandatory and the Union only supports participation on a voluntary basis. A Union representative will be observing and participating in the testing at the invitation of ASA.

ARFF have stated that there is currently no intention to implement any changes that will affect our members and have stated that while test results may indicate changes to current practices or equipment that should be made, no changes will occur without prior consultation with the Union in accordance with the consultation provisions of the Enterprise Agreement which means that results of the testing will be shared with the Union.

The Union met with ARFF representatives in Canberra on the 10th October to discuss the proposed testing and as a result changes have been made to the original testing proposal. Principally, as the Union required, the full body immersion method of cooling has now been included. As the Union suggested, Dr Matt Brearley from the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre, who conducted the previous Darwin study, was consulted by ARFF and offered his support and assistance but surprisingly the offer was not taken up by ARFF. The revised testing methodology is now:

- Four methods of cooling will be tested – shade (control group), forearm cooling, cool towels and full body immersion;
- 12 volunteers for 2 half days;

- Participants engaged approximately 8am to 12 noon each day and then released;
- Each participant doing 2 evolutions each about 90 minutes apart;
- Testing exercise will involve 2 teams of 2 running 1 line of 2 lengths of hose, charging hose and advancing hose to fuselage and a number of victim rescues from fuselage (dummy weight 24kg) and the number of dummy drags to be determined based on the number completed by the first group with 20 minute time frame without over-exerting the participants;
- Helmet and tripod mounted cameras will record exercise and rehab activity for up to 20 minutes past exercise activity;

To ensure the safety of participants the following process will operate:

- Live monitoring during exercise;
- In accordance with Australian Institute of Sport Standard;
 - 39 deg C will be constantly monitored;
 - 39.5 deg C will cause stop of exercise and immediate implementation of rehab process;
 - Same limits apply during rehab period;
 - Any increase in core temp over 39.5 deg C will cause immediate medical intervention;
- Any participant holding increased temp of 39 deg C will be withdrawn from testing;
- Ambulance will be on site during testing;
- Time of exposure to exercise will be governed by core temp increases e.g. 10 minutes to reach 39 deg C will cease task

The Union recognises the importance of this issue to the safety and welfare of our members and supports participation but only on a voluntary basis.

4 ANNUAL BCOM MEETING

The annual BCOM meeting will take place in Brisbane from the 13th to the 15th November. In compliance with the recent amendments to the Fair Work Registered Organisations Act, all BCOM Delegates will undergo training in the new governance requirements for Unions. The Union's annual financial statements will be tabled at the meeting and will be presented to members for endorsement at annual branch meetings to be conducted following the BCOM meeting. The minutes of the BCOM meeting will also be circulated for endorsement at the annual branch meetings.

5 ITEMS OF INTEREST

ABBOTT'S COMMISSION OF AUDIT PAVES WAY FOR CUTS TO PUBLIC SERVICES

ACTU MEDIA RELEASE:

Commission of Audit must not lead to cuts, privatisation of public services Australians rely on.

The Abbott Government's Commission of Audit is nothing but a process to outsource public policy to big business and pave the way for cuts to public services, the ACTU has stated.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said that this had already happened in Queensland where the Newman Government used the same process to savagely cut public services such as health care and social welfare services leaving many of its community in the lurch and moving to privatise provision of important public services. "This is not a broad-based commission, it is a body that has no representatives from civil society or unions and which will support a government agenda of cuts and contracting out services," Ms Kearney said. "The Government is effectively contracting out policy-making to business. "This process isn't about the future of public finances and the needs of the Australian community; it's about the interests of big business. If the Government intended to

contract out responsibility for public finances to an organisation representing the banks and mining companies, they should have told the Australian people before the election.

"The Australian Public Service is a vital institution that provides valuable services to the community that cannot be replicated by the private sector. We have a world-class public service which provides irreplaceable value to Australians. Australia has a small government by the standards of other developed nations, and since 2007 the size of the APS has not kept pace with population growth. The idea that we have a bloated public service is patently false."

"The Coalition has already begun its ideological attack on the role of government in delivering a social protection floor through the promotion of 'The Big Society' concept - an abject failure in the UK that resulted in social inequality, major job losses, and cuts to important social services.

"Australians will not support slashing cuts to public services such as Centrelink and Medicare, or the sale of government assets.

"While in opposition Joe Hockey boasted of plans to cut 20,000 jobs from the public service. This commission must not be used as an excuse to make deep cuts to services and permanently reduce the capacity of the public service.

"We have seen the results of government 'austerity' programs in Europe, and we do not want Australia to go down that path. Australian workers want the Federal Government to provide good quality services. They will not support widespread cuts, privatisation and contracting out of essential functions of government."

Ms Kearney said the ACTU was concerned about the prospect of the sale of government assets after Finance Minister Mathias Cormann confirmed today that the Government planned to sell Medibank Private and would not rule out further asset sales.

BRITISH FIREFIGHTERS TO CONTINUE STRIKE ACTION AS PENSION BATTLES CONTINUE

As reported on www.fbu.org.uk:

Firefighters announce further strike dates as government fails to offer firm guarantees

The Fire Brigades Union has announced further fire fighters' strikes on Friday 1 November 18.30-23.00 and Monday 4 November 06.00-08.00 after government and fire employers failed to offer any firm guarantees for firefighters facing 'no job and no pension' as a result of pension changes. Last weekend the FBU postponed a five hour strike after the Westminster government and fire employers shifted their position and finally recognised that firefighters faced losing their jobs and a large chunk of their pensions under new changes imposed in April. Government and employers had offered various routes to tackle the problem of firefighters not fit enough to work beyond the current retirement age of 55, but this week they informed the FBU they could provide none of the guarantees necessary to address this crucial aspect of the dispute. Matt Wrack, FBU general secretary said: "The FBU has been very reasonable, but we are now faced with broken promises and those in power evading their responsibilities. The Westminster government has created this mess, but it is refusing to clear it up. It now recognises the problem, but it won't provide the legal and financial guarantees firefighters need to ensure they have a job and an unreduced pension in the future. "Firefighters face the sack towards the end of their career and the loss of their pension. That can't be right. The employers promised to tackle the issue of firefighters facing the sack for failing fitness tests last week, only to say they can't offer any guarantees this week. That is simply not the way to run a public service. "The government is now making threats to withdraw some of the other concessions they have made this year. Their own

Williams report shows most firefighters cannot work beyond 55. They are trying to bludgeon firefighters into an unworkable pension scheme. We are not prepared to be bullied. “Firefighters don’t want to go on strike, but we are left with no option when the government and the employers refuse to deal with the problems of their own making.” In addition, the government is proposing further increases in employee contributions from April 2014. This will mean a third year of contribution increases and will see the majority of firefighters paying around 14.2% of salary towards their pensions – among the highest contributions in the public and private sector

Bushfires and the burning desire to cut public services

State-shrinking, rightwing ideologues would let ordinary citizens go up in flames



Van Badham, theguardian.com, Wednesday 23 October 2013 13.28 AEST



A young man stands in

front of a family home business destroyed by bushfire in Yellow Rock, Australia. Photograph: Lisa Maree Williams/Getty Images

This is a story about fire and politics.

On 29 September, 2010 in South Fulton, Tennessee, a member of Gene Cranick's family was burning some garden waste in a backyard fire when dry wind caused embers to carry. The Cranick property caught fire. Conditions were arid in the rural, corn-growing community, and attempts to extinguish the flames with garden hoses did not work. Gene Cranick called emergency services but they did not respond to his call.

In the meantime, the fire spread to the Cranick house. The family ran from their burning home. While Cranick made 20 increasingly hysterical phone calls for the fire service, none of which brought a response, everything the Cranick family owned – every plate and sock, toy and family photo, furniture, piece of jewellery and sentimental souvenir – was incinerated. A pet cat and three dogs were trapped in the burning house and died.

Gene Cranick was standing outside the flaming wreckage of everything he had ever owned when firetrucks did, finally, turn up – but they were not there to help him. They had arrived to douse the flames that had caught from the Cranick's house and set fire to his neighbour's cornfield. While the Cranicks begged them for help, silent firefighters soaked the neighbour's property but did not allow a drop to touch anything in Cranick's name, even as his family home was razed to the ground.

Cranick's misfortune was to live in an area where a hard-right, Republican, anti-tax mayor had pursued the logic of a user-pays ideology to the institution of a flat, non-asset-differentiated \$75 household charge for "fire protection" in addition to existing city taxes. Cranick was a taxpayer, but hadn't paid the fee. Despite offering to pay the \$75 and then some, local authorities decided to make an example of Cranick by ordering firefighters to ignore his burning building.

That another, fee-paying neighbour had to suffer a burning cornfield was an unimportant consideration compared to the act of political extortion that Cranick's local user-pays political ideologues were willing to enforce. He was not the sole victim of their zealotry: interviewed in front of the burned out remains of his home, Cranick explained there had been a similar local incident where firefighters were prevented from saving a burning barn in which an entire family of horses were burned to death.

Fires are organic entities, created or enlarged by accident and coincidence. They are unfolding disasters to be physically fought, not human agencies to be socially negotiated. Fire services, on the other hands, are civic things – infrastructure of the state first recognised as an essential as early as 24 BC, when the emperor Augustus founded the seven Roman fire stations.

In the wake of the Great Fire of London in 1666, a need for fire protection became rudely apparent to the British, whose newly-minted insurance companies formed their own brigades to fight their clients' fires. Famously, their refusal to come to the aid of anyone who wasn't a direct policy holder inspired their forced amalgamation by city authorities: James Braidwood, an ancestor of modern fire-fighting, was chief of the first entirely municipal fire service founded in Edinburgh in 1824 and was imported in London to oversee their transition to public fire service in 1833.

The responsibility of the state to provide fire protection was a considered policy response to the somewhat obvious fact that the longer it takes for a fire to be brought under control, the more damage it will wreak. Fires do not recognise property deeds, taxation boundaries or insurance policies in the way those who believe in the "invisible hands" of market forces and other ideologically convenient magic pixies may prefer.

Those insisting that discussion of the present catastrophe engulfing New South Wales not "be politicised" are endangering our communities by silencing criticism of the creep towards user-pays that the free-marketeers of Liberal Party are enforcing on Australians at a state and federal level.

Both the Liberals and Labor are guilty of resisting taxation models that attract revenue on a capacity to pay in order to provide services that protect and enfranchise all citizens. Where the Liberals shift the services debate is around imaginary "budget crises" that necessitate "savings", causing services to be run down to the point that "fire protection" and other economically unequal mechanisms are shoved at the electorate if they wish to enjoy infrastructure at all.

Note that Barry O'Farrell's Liberal government cut \$20m from the regional fire services now trying to battle the New South Wales blaze. Note also that Joe Hockey is mentioned in the Australian today, appointing no less than the head of the Business Council of Australia to oversee an audit for federal government spending "savings". The Australian says: "the terms of reference explicitly support the idea of "user-charging" and "co-payments" for government programs." The government couldn't be more blatant in their advocacy of the ideology that cost Gene Cranick his home with the suggestion that Australians themselves may, as a result of the audit, be asked to pay more for government services.

We have public fire services, just as we have public health and welfare agencies and education systems and infrastructure – because the older and often original models of these institutions, which was private and user-pays, did not work. It does not work. It is not going to work. Just ask Gene Cranick.