



WORD BACK

No.35/2018
12 December 2018

A B C D Day Retained

PFAS REPORT

As reported extensively in the media in recent days, concerning results of blood testing for PFAS have been received by some members, in particular in a “cluster” of firefighters at Largs North Station. This cluster was identified by our members having a conversation about and comparing their results. Reportedly, due to privacy requirements, the data is de-identified before being provided to the MFS, so the “cluster” would apparently not have shown up otherwise.



The UFUSA will be working with our members to collect information which will help to identify if there are any other “clusters” as testing proceeds. We have also spoken to the MFS about increasing resources so that all stations and appliances will be tested for the presence of PFAS and we believe this will happen soon.

Meantime the MFS has commissioned extensive testing of soil, water, air, dust and eggs at the Largs North Station and the MV Gallantry, and it is anticipated that the results of the testing will be available late next week.

The MFS has also now extended the offer of free testing to family members of those affected.

A meeting of members and families will be called to discuss the results and necessary consequent actions. The UFU and the MFS are agreed that any contaminated facility will be closed and other arrangements put in place to ensure members are able to stay safe while they continue to protect the local community.

The majority of members have not yet participated in the blood testing exercise, so the full extent of the concern may not yet be known.

All members and retired members are urged to participate in the PFAS Testing Programme even if you do not believe you have had exposure to the firefighting foam in the past. Greater numbers involved in the exercise will increase the validity of the results, so you will also be helping others while ensuring you receive and record important information.

The UFUSA understands that while there are a range of health conditions associated with the presence of PFAS in the human body, these are not yet scientifically/medically accepted as a direct link. Nevertheless, the evidence of impact on humans, particularly in the US, is compelling and we urge members to take this matter very seriously as we believe this is an emerging health issue, not just in Australia but globally.

You can get the referral documents for the blood test from the MFS through Clara Cipriani 0436 406 905 or by email Clara.Cipriani@sa.gov.au or Steve Pavlich on 0419 806 295 or by email steve.pavlich@sa.gov.au

If you have any difficulties, please do not hesitate to contact the UFU office on 8352 7211 for assistance.

Members in country areas are advised that you are able to have blood taken for testing at a number of regional locations, rather than have to come to Adelaide – please email steve.pavlich@sa.gov.au to make the necessary arrangements and obtain the written referral.

Annual General Meeting

Thank you to everyone who was able to attend the UFU AGM on 30 November 2018 and the BBQ which followed; it was great to see you here at the union office and we hope you found it both enjoyable and informative.

The meeting also provided the opportunity to introduce members to new staff to the office (see below) and to thank and farewell Chris Johnson who is returning to his full-time position at Broadspectrum at Edinburgh, though no doubt he will continue involvement on union matters.

The AGM provided me with the opportunity to report on the activities of the union and in particular, on the first six months of the new term of office, from 16 May 2018, when the membership overwhelmingly voted for a change in the union's leadership and direction.



President Chas Thomas, the new leadership team and I committed to the renewal of our union, to rebuilding it as an organisation which members can be justifiably proud to be part of and active in.

Hallmarks of that renewal include enhanced communication, a focus on good governance with increased accountability and transparency, and encouragement for Shop Stewards and Members to actively participate in UFU business. We all know that greater membership engagement increases the influence, strength and activism of the UFUSA for the benefit of the membership.

The new UFU State Council completed governance training in August and I am pleased to report that Council is working together as a strong team, measuring all issues up against what is "in the best interests of the members". State Councillors have all taken on various roles and responsibilities and take pride in reporting back to the Council on a regular basis. There is not always agreement, but mature debate is valued and encouraged as a healthy sign of democracy and there is recognition that we have common goals based on the interests of the membership.

State Council meetings are open to members who are encouraged to attend by advertisement of dates and times of meetings in the union's newsletter. Many have taken advantage of this and hopefully will continue to do so.

The UFU now has a finance committee comprised of the President, Trustees and the Secretary which meets prior to each Council meeting to review the accounts and speak with our accountant and our auditor as appropriate. The UFU Finance Committee developed the budget for the consideration of the State Council which was subsequently endorsed.

The UFUSA now also has a building committee which has developed a plan of works and a budget to upgrade our major asset, our union office. Councillors and other members have given their time to working bees, cleaning out the old and starting on a program of refreshing the union premises. This week asbestos was removed and soon the roof repairs will be underway.

Meetings and training courses of Shop Stewards, Retained Shop Stewards, and Work Health and Safety Representatives have been conducted and we have developed a schedule of meetings for 2019.

Former Secretary Mick Doyle is conducting a review of our union's State Rules with a view to updating them and he will be reporting to the next State Council meeting on 13 December 2018. One of the exciting initiatives which Mick is working on, assisted by a working party of retired members, is the creation of a Retired Members' Association.

The industrial agenda upon which we are engaged is an ambitious one, but the new team commenced on a positive note with the achievement of the mid-term pay increase of 2% from 1 July 2018 taking our

year's pay increase in 2018 to a total of 3.6%. Members will receive a 1.6% pay increase from the 1st pay period on or after 1 January 2019 and we are continuing work on our claim for the next mid-term pay increase due to commence on 1 July 2019.

Underpayments and overpayments are an ongoing issue with the union working as much as possible to resolve these issues with the MFS and Shared Services. Members are urged to regularly check payslips and to act quickly where there are irregularities.

Industrial matters addressed include disciplinary matters, promotions, training, an ageing fleet, PPE, leave issues, WHS, superannuation, recruitment, health and well-being, Retained Firefighter issues, overtime and recalls, Lateral/Direct Entry, day work issues, act ups and gadding, bullying, station upgrades, Engineering Department Centre of Excellence, etc.

Implementation of provisions of the Enterprise Agreement 2017 are ongoing, including the Leading Senior Firefighter as reported to the AGM by Rhys Lauritsen, the increasing manning levels in the life of the agreement, the 2nd shift at Mount Gambier, the Marine Review and much more.

Injuries and workers compensation are always high on the Union's agenda and in particular the extension of workers compensation provisions for firefighters which was introduced earlier this year. It's concerning to report that this is currently under challenge and the union is fighting to ensure the broadest possible terms are provided for firefighters.

Other challenges we confront in 2019 include Work Health and Safety issues including PFAS, the resolution of the Leading Senior Firefighter issue, the negotiation of the new Broadspectrum Enterprise Agreement, resourcing of the MFS, Part-time firefighter concerns, firefighter registration, MFS Marine review, station upgrades, renewal of fleet, and the development of the Engineering Department Centre of Excellence, reviews of the system of training, recruitment and promotions, station preference review, first responder, manning levels, resolution of the fair and consistent system of overtime and recalls, fair pay increases, and the application of fair workers' compensation provisions.

Thank you all for your interest and participation in our union and we relish the challenge of the year ahead – remember, dare to struggle, dare to win!

Representative Roles

For those of you who may not know, I am nominated by the UFU and appointed by the Minister to the SAFECOM Board with UFU President Chas Thomas as my Deputy SAFECOM Board Member.

Shaun Goad is the UFU WHS Coordinator and sits on the MFS PFAS Committee, as well as the MFS WHS Committee together with Chas Thomas and I.

Chris Barry, Jesse Virgo and Rhys Lauritsen serve on the MFS Training Advisory Committee.

Gideon Douglas and Tim Maitland are on the MFS Strategic Capability Committee; Tim Maitland takes primary responsibility on PPE.

Matt Watherston is with Michael Riggs on the MFS Vehicle and Equipment Committee

Michael Riggs leads on the MFS Health, Safety & Well Being Working Group

Jesse Virgo and Steve Smithson are Disciplinary Representatives for Firefighters and Officer respectively, Brad Robertson and Rhys Lauritsen are the deputies respectively.

Greg Chivers leads the Comcen Working Party with Carly White

Tim Maitland and Brad Robertson are on the MFS Overtime and Recall System Working Party

Max Adlam, Greg Chivers and Matt Watherston are our UFU nominees to the Superannuation Trustees Board with Chris Barry and Jesse Virgo as deputies.

The positions representing Firefighters and Officers on the SA Employment Tribunal Promotions and Disciplinary bodies established under the SA Fire and Emergency Services Act are currently open for nomination and these will be determined by State Council on 13 December 2018.

Shop Stewards Report

Adelaide Station Shop Steward Matt Osborn reported on the Shop Stewards' training course conducted by the UFU in the 1st week of November.

Matt emphasised the need for activism in the face of mounting challenges and described how the training equips Shop Stewards for their role as activists and leaders in our union.

He said important areas of the training included greater knowledge of the Enterprise Agreement and the Award, the importance of keywords, models of decision-making, handling grievances, questioning techniques and how Shop Stewards can ensure the presence of the union in the workplace on an everyday basis. Matt likened it to Shop Stewards “putting out the bushfires while the union office dealt with the inferno”.

The feedback from everyone in attendance at the training course was extremely positive and they resolved to report to the State Council and the AGM and to strongly recommend the training to all Shop Stewards.

UFUSA STAFF



Georgie

Members are advised of new appointments in the UFUSA office.

Georgie Matches has been appointed as the Office Coordinator following a working life and extensive experience in both union and senator's offices. Georgie is your first point of contact when you ring or call into our office so please do make her welcome.

With the departure of Chris Johnson at the end of his six-month contract at the UFU, the union has advertised and is interviewing for a permanent Industrial Officer. In the interim we are joined temporarily by Kathleen Galvin, an experienced union

organiser, trainer and industrial Officer of many years' experience. The permanent appointment is expected to be made in January 2019, but we are fortunate indeed to have Kathleen to fill the breach in the meantime.



Kathleen

In October State Council resolved to appoint a Project Officer for 12 months to assist in the UFU office. Rhiannon Newman has recently taken up the role, bringing with her qualifications and experience which equip her well to progress the interests of firefighters.



Rhiannon

UFU State Council

The next meeting of State Council is scheduled for Thursday, 13 December 2018 at 09:30 hours at the UFU office at 148 South Road Torrensville. Members are welcome to attend meetings of State Council as observers; please contact the union office on 8352 7211 if you would like to do so.

Victor Harbor Christmas Pageant

Our Victor Harbor winners of the Chief Officer's Shield for outstanding performance represented us well at the Victor Harbour pageant with a series of new and vintage appliances that delighted the crowd!

If your crew is up to something you would like to share please send pictures and details through to info@ufusa.com.au

It would be appreciated if you would ensure this Word Back is printed out and placed on the Station noticeboard if possible; this will enable those who do not access electronic devices to keep up with the latest information.

In solidarity

Max Adlam

UFU Secretary