



WORDBACK

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MID TERM REVIEW

So now we know what firefighters are worth, at least in the eyes of the MFS.

In correspondence of 25 July 2019, the MFS Chief Officer wrote to the UFU that *"I advise that no efficiencies have been identified by the South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) as part of the productivity and review process for 2019."*

And further,

"In the circumstances, I consider there is minimal evidence to support any increase."

Really?

At the earlier meetings this year, when the UFU detailed the extensive work and resources the membership has committed to the productivity and efficiency reviews in accordance with the Terms of Settlement of the *Metropolitan Fire Service Enterprise Agreement 2017*, there was no argument between the parties about the work put in and the Chief Officer endorsed our representations with some enthusiasm.

Now it seems MFS management has received their 'riding orders' from above to take all the benefits of the deal they struck but renege on the pay increase to firefighters.

In his correspondence the new Chief Officer says he will convene the Single Bargaining Centre to determine the wage increase as proposed by the UFU on 18 July 2019. Except he won't be there, leaving us to ponder just who is running the MFS?

And despite our request for this matter to be dealt with some urgency, today we have received a request for a meeting of the SBC on *16 August 2019*.

Members can be sure that the UFU will not only be making the strongest representations to the SBC for a 2% pay increase as contemplated in the terms of settlement of the EA, but we will require back pay to 1 July 2019.

The UFU will pursue our overdue pay increase with vigour and members will be kept informed as we progress.

ENTERPRISE AGREEMENT LOG OF CLAIMS

The UFU State Council next meets on 8 August 2019 with Shop Stewards' recommendations in relation to the EA log of claims, high on the agenda.

It is anticipated that the consolidated log of claims will then be submitted to you the members for endorsement, with the bargaining process initiated immediately after that.

Thank you to everyone involved in driving and participating in this agenda which provides a very solid basis for our negotiations.

DISPUTE IN THE MFS ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT WORKSHOP

Firefighters are aware of the long-term understaffing of the MFS Engineering Department workshop, with issues arising constantly regarding the ability to address concerns with our ageing fleet. Back in the early 1990s there were reportedly 25 – 30 employees compared with eight now on the floor.

And despite the importance of the work they do, our members in the Engineering Department are not always treated appropriately by management.

Following much frustration in addressing issues with the MFS, UFU members employed in the workshop determined to foreshadow a ban commencing Monday, 29 July 2019 unless the following issues were satisfactorily addressed:

- An additional three staff to assist in the provision of excellent services to firefighters;
- Availability of overtime and callout to assist with workloads and reduce outsourcing;
- MFS to honour the unconditional commitment provided to the members that Babcock will not be used to undertake any of the duties performed by personnel in the workshop;
- The training and licences required to perform the work to be made available (eg EWP over 11 m, forklift and dogging licences);
- The provision of a robust outdoor covered work area (which doesn't blow away like the last one) to protect staff from the extreme weather elements when required to perform outdoor work preferably with the capacity for a harness to work safely at heights;
- Professional cleaning and decontamination of vehicles before engineering work is required;
- Uniforms to be supplied as per current issue which will be new, not used items;
- No change to uniforms without appropriate consultation being completed;
- Safety glasses with prescription lenses where required to be provided at the employer's expense; and
- The provision of an appropriate workstation where work emails can be accessed, and time provided to staff to do this.

Despite our invitation to meet through the week of 22 July 2019, the only offer the MFS made to meet was at 1500 for a meeting at 1530 on Friday, 26 July 2019.

In the interests of seeking a resolution to the dispute we agreed to meet however not surprisingly we then found it difficult to assemble the necessary people to get to the city that afternoon at such late notice.

The UFU then proposed a meeting early on Monday and this was agreed however that meeting was subsequently cancelled at 1815 with a telephone message from ACFO Benham that the MFS was instead seeking orders against us in a compulsory conference on Monday in the Employment Tribunal.

After conciliation in the tribunal, it was agreed that the MFS would respond in writing to the issues by 12:00 hours on 1 August 2019 and that the UFU will provide a written response to the correspondence on 8 August 2019 with the parties to meet on 12 August 2019 to try to resolve the matters of dispute. In the meantime, UFU members in the Engineering Department agreed to lift the foreshadowed ban.

Since that time, new overalls have been distributed to members who have waited many months for them, and we are advised that a new diesel mechanic will commence work in the workshop next week filling the position vacated by UFU member Les French in March this year. Welcome developments indeed.

Members will be kept updated on the progress of these matters.



PORT AUGUSTA STATION

The UFU is advised that the MFS management received the report some weeks ago from the independent investigation of concerns raised at Port Augusta Station.

The concerns include a range of very serious allegations by Retained Firefighters raised with MFS management in January this year but seemingly ignored.

When raised with the UFU in February we passed the complaints on to the MFS Chief Officer to address and in the meantime, we have sought intervention by management in the interests of ensuring the safety and well-being of *all* at Pt Augusta.

It is our view that where there are complaints made to the employer about such matters as alleged assault, bullying and harassment, lack of training, poor communication and unsafe work practices, etc, these should be addressed with a degree of urgency.

In the interests of all concerned.

There is also the alleged 'disappearing' HIRMS report following an incident in a structure fire where a young firefighter who suffered burns was taken to hospital by ambulance and subsequently given back the bills by MFS management to pay himself. No apology.

Whatever the outcome of the investigation, it is unfair to all concerned that these matters are subject to such unwarranted delay and that the complainants at least, have not seen any of those senior management who the Chief claims are monitoring these issues on a day-to-day basis and assisting staff.

The UFU has now referred the matter as a dispute to the SBC for assistance in achieving progress towards a resolution at Pt Augusta Station; we have reserved the right to refer the issues to external agencies where required.

Firefighters deserve respect.

In solidarity,

Max Adlam
SECRETARY