



SIGNAL SEVEN

26 July 2016

Welcome to this edition of Signal 7.

UFU General Meeting Notice

Pursuant to Rule 55 of the UFU Rules, Members are hereby given notice of a Special Meeting of the UFU ACT Branch.

The meeting will be held:

**Tuesday 9 August
6.30 pm Sharp
Stromlo Room,
Woden Tradies
Cnr Launceston St & Furzer St, Phillip**

The meeting to summoned to consider the following questions:

1. Endorsement of the Branch approach to the ACT election including:
 - a. The election charter;
 - b. Communication with ACT election candidates;
 - c. Publicity and campaigning.
2. Appointment of a part time administrative officer to assist the Branch Secretary

All off duty members are urged to attend

Federal election campaign and results

The UFU had a significant presence during the Federal Election campaign, joining with other unions to urge voters to put the Liberals last. One of the main reasons we did this was because during the federal Election campaign, the Government pledged to amend the Fair Work Act to limit the UFU's rights in bargaining.

We campaigned in Eden Monaro, on the basis that ACTF&R often respond into Queanbeyan, and because any effort expended in Canberra would have been for little result, given that the Liberals don't hold a House of Representatives seat here. In Eden Monaro there was a 5.83% swing against the Liberals, which means the Labor member elected, Mike Kelly, has 52.92% of the Two Party preferred vote, up from 47.09.

The UFU had a presence at the Queanbeyan pre-poll for each day of the three weeks that it was operating, and we had members at the Queanbeyan East and Queanbeyan West booths on election day. The pre-poll vote achieved a swing of 4.29% of primary votes against the Liberals, translating to

a swing of 2.99% on a two party preferred basis. Similarly, Queanbeyan East achieved a swing of 1.45% against the Liberals on a two party preferred basis, and Queanbeyan West 2.97%.

As well as turning out at polling, UFU members were also present at the National Press Club, when employment Minister Michaelia Cash spoke there during the election campaign.

The efforts of the following members who volunteered during the campaign deserve special mention:

Joe Box	Nicolas Louis	John Streatfield	Peter McGrath
Seb Boehm	David Bremmers	Mark Simpson	Jim Walsh
Keith Rourke	Brian Connell	Andrew Johnson	Shawn McIntyre
Brian Mexon	Benjamin Davis	Ryan Dixon	Grant Geerdink
Michael Nolan	Jeremy Brennan	Stephen Holmes	Adrian Grayson
Matty Gruber	Steve McDonald	Robert Collins	Phil Levings
Matt Buchtman	Warrick Hancock	Stephen Gibbs	Adam Scott
Damien Parkes	Anthony Maher	Phil Gurney	Arron Kiewiet
Peter Meadows	Luke Alchin	Jeremy Dowling	Shane Ryan
Dave Bridgford	Gareth O'Keefe	Ged Morrison	Graeme Hoskinson

The work of the BCOM also deserves special mention: Mate Peric, Graeme Gallagher, Steve Geerdink, Adam Gresham, Neal Hall and Damian Holloway all put in a large amount of work in getting the union organised.

We will now step up our efforts towards the...

ACT Legislative Assembly Election

October 15. Less than 3 months away. We have many challenges before us, and your UFU representatives will again be approaching you to get involved. The Special General Meeting is an important part of this.

Members will have seen various communications, such as the recent ESA staff news, which have made statements about the conduct of ACT government employees during election campaigns.

The UFU, Unions ACT and some affiliates to Unions ACT met with senior officials of the Chief Minister and Treasury Directorate about this issue on July 13. It was clearly stated to us that union members are free to exercise discretion to be involved in election campaigning, but that they can't leave a person with the impression that their personal view is the government's view.

We specifically discussed the issue of what UFU members wear during campaigning. It is important that members a UFU shirt during campaigning because it clearly identifies them as a union member.

If members have any concerns, if if views contrary to the above are expressed to members, please contact a member of the BCOM.

Changes to Emergencies Act

On 9 June, the ACT Legislative Assembly passed the Emergencies Amendment Act 2016. Some of the main changes which have been identified as matters of concern for UFU members include:

- Removal of the obligation the obligation to consult with the Bushfire Council on appointments to the RFS.
- Providing that a person does not commit an offence under 190 (1) (preventing or hindering the effective use of a fire appliance) if they have the permission of a member of ACTF&R, a member of the RFS or a police officer to undertake the action that is preventing or hindering the effective use of a fire appliances.
- Allowing members of ACTF&R and the RFS to exercise functions of their Chief Officer under s. 67 and 68 in accordance with guidelines issued by the Commissioner ESA.
- Providing that RFS having the ability to respond to fire within the built up area where ACTF&R is not available or where a member of ACTF&R is not present to direct the RFS.
- Providing that responsibility for community education and awareness rests with the Commissioner.
- Removing the concept of the bushfire abatement zone (BAZ) from the Act for the purposes of operational planning and response. Responsibility for fire planning and response will now be split between the rural area (the responsibility of the RFS) and the built-up area (the responsibility of ACTF&R). The rural area will incorporate the bushfire abatement zone.

Another change is the addition of the word “service” to the name of ACT Fire and Rescue. This was said to be because:

“ACTF&R is currently unique among the ACT emergency services in that, despite it being an emergency service, it is not legally referred to as an emergency service. This contrasts with the ACT Rural Fire Service, the State Emergency Service or the ACT Ambulance Service.

This lack of the word “service” in its title is not reflective of the important service role ACTF&R undertakes within the Territory.”

Although

“The Review noted that there would be no costs associated with this amendment to the title and no changes to ACTF&R branding.” (Emergencies Amendment Bill Explanatory Statement)

A curious result of this is that the two fire services, if mentioned by their legal acronym, are known now as ACTFRS and ACTRFS. Coincidence?

In relation to the issue of the BAZ, the UFU made it clear to every member of the Legislative Assembly that the sequence of amending the legislation first, then making any boundary changes later, was not preferred: It would leave the ACT in a position where there was no BAZ in place for operational response, nor any timeframe for changes to boundaries to be made to take account of the removal of the BAZ for operational purposes. We therefore sought that the Bill be held over until August to allow revised fire service boundaries to be settled. The debate on the Emergencies Amendment Bill can be found here:

<http://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2016/pdfs/20160609a.pdf>

The debate starts at page number 1982, and provides interesting reading.

Fire Service Boundaries

Earlier this year, the UFU raised the question of the fire service boundaries, and in particular the issue of pockets of land which are designated as Rural Area (RA), but are surrounded by Built Up Area (BA).

In the debate on the Emergencies Amendment Bill, Minister Corbell said the following:

“It is clear to me that there are good grounds to review the arrangements for both the built-up area and the rural area in terms of the geographic application of these zones. I would like to make it very clear that the ESA Commissioner has given a commitment, at my request, that subject to this bill being enacted the ESA will commence a process to review the boundaries of the built-up area, with the aim of ensuring that a negotiated notifiable instrument and maps are in effect prior to the commencement of the next bushfire season on 1 October this year.” (Hansard, 9 June 2016)

As a consequence, the UFU is meeting regularly with the Emergency Services Operational Review Group to discuss the boundaries. It is expected that this process will continue through August. Should members require elaboration on what is being pursued by the UFU, please contact the Secretary.

Comcen

We were taken aback by the announcement of Minister Corbell on 28 June that firefighters would be removed from Comcen in July 2017, resulting in about 12 firefighters being “returned to the frontline”. The timing is interesting, insofar as ESA have signalled their intention in bargaining for the next agreement to ask firefighters to choose between a pay rise and the removal of firefighters from Comcen.

Putting aside the issue that until an appliance arrives on scene, Comcen IS the frontline, the sequence of events on the day in question should be clearly understood by UFU members:

10.44 am: ESA Commissioner Lane calls the UFU to say that Minister Corbell would be making an announcement on Comcen that day.

Approx 11 am: ESA Commissioner Lane commences a presentation to ESA staff at Hume training college, which includes the Comcen announcement.

11.12 am: The Minister’s Media Release is in the hands of the media.

The really concerning thing about this is that the Minister’s announcement has taken the process backwards. We had made representations to the ESA and the Minister throughout the early half of the year, trying to get a sensible approach on Comcen. We advocated the formation of a Workplace Consultative Committee to get away from what we called “wish-list consultation”, and instead look at the details of how Comcen works now, work out what should be kept, and what should be changed. We obtained agreement on this from the Minister in writing on 8 June, when he wrote:

“the ESA is prepared to commit to the establishment of a Local Consultative Committee under the Fire and Rescue Enterprise Agreement 2013 – 2017 as a specific forum for communicating with affected staff in the area of ComCen reform.” (Minister’s letter to UFU, June 8 2016)

Putting aside the obvious error in this (we already have a Local Consultative Committee: we were seeking a Workplace Consultative Committee, but Commissioner Lane did admit he was confused by the language and the Minister probably was as well), it is clear now that ESA and the Minister have a pre-determined outcome in mind, and that any consultation is aimed at that outcome. Obviously, we don't agree that there can only be one outcome: UFU members in Comcen do an outstanding job, and are a key part of our safe systems of work.

Anyone who saw Commissioner Lane's email on 20 July, could only agree with him when he wrote:

“Our ComCen staff are well-trained, highly-skilled, and are supported to initiate the most appropriate response to each incident.

I also have complete confidence in the procedures, processes and systems of improvement in place, which are designed to assist our ComCen staff in continuing to provide the highest level of service to the community.”

Hear hear Commissioner. Hear hear. So why change it?

The Comcen issue is not over by a long stretch.

Congratulations

We extend our congratulations to the following UFU members who have received Honours and awards this year:

- Ross Turton AFSM (Australia Day list)
- Neil Maher: Commendation for Brave Conduct: Australian Bravery Awards (May)
- John Streatfield AFSM (Queens Birthday list)

We also extend our congratulations to the 3 recently promoted Station Officers.

Legal Services to members

We are pleased to advise that we have an arrangement with Maurice Blackburn Lawyers for the provision of legal services to UFU members. This includes a free first consultation, and a free standard will every 5 years. You will soon receive a separate email setting out the full range of legal services available to UFU members.

To contact Maurice Blackburn, please call 6120 5000.

BCOM members

Your Branch Committee of Management members are:

President:	Mate Peric	Secretary	Greg McConville
Vice President:	Graeme Gallagher	Junior Vice President	Damian Holloway
Trustee:	Steve Geerdink	Trustee:	Neal Hall
Trustee:	Adam Gresham	Trustee:	Vacant

Authorised by Greg McConville, Secretary, UFU, A.C.T. Branch.

This is an official Union document to be shared between members only.