



SIGNAL SEVEN

27 March 2018

Welcome to the latest edition of Signal 7.

Enterprise Bargaining

Core negotiations concerning the ACT Public Service are nearly complete, while negotiations for ACTF&R continue.

While the ACT Government is expected to make another offer on wages, the current offer is:

- 2% backdated to October 2017;
- 0.5 % Backdated to June this year;
- Additional superannuation: increasing by 0.25% per year to reach 11.25 %.

The Government is yet to make a specific offer on wages for Fire & Rescue.

Thus far we have reached in-principle agreement on a number of items of the UFU claim, as follows:

Item 7: Clarification of Clauses 22.1(e) and 27.1 (a). As currently worded it could be applied to provide for a two-stage process in promotions: Application to be on the merit list at rank AND subsequent application for a position. This is not the practice in ACTF&R and we have agreed to remove the potential for any confusion.

Item 9: In clause 29.4 remove the “or are completing” so that the acting up can only be performed by merit ranked employees who have completed the relevant development program.

Item 11: The Agreement will be varied to provide that in extraordinary circumstances the Head of Service and the UFU may agree to extend the lifespan of a merit list.

Item 14: Clarify operation of clause 45 to provide that an ‘8-hour plus travelling time’ break between shifts applies in all circumstances, not just after overtime.

Item 19: Extend specialist allowances where appropriate to TOSS personnel, e.g.:

- a. Hazmat allowance to Hazmat officer;
- b. USAR allowance to Rescue Officer.

Item 20: Ensure members are paid a meal allowance when rostered on tankers and finish time is delayed past the meal break time at management request.

These may be relatively minor matters so far, but it is significant that we have reached some agreement at least. In addition, we tabled additional items to the claim which was lodged in April 2017. These additional 12 items will be addressed in detail at the next UFU general meeting on Thursday, 12 April 2018 at 6.30pm at the Tradies Club in Dickson (see below).

The next negotiation is on Monday, 16 April 2018.

Budget Submission

On 8 February 2018, UFU ACT Secretary, Greg McConville, made a presentation to ACT politicians and staffers about current and future challenges in providing fire and rescue services in Canberra in support of its 2018-19 budget submission to the ACT Government. In the presentation, emphasis was given to the need to:

- recruit additional firefighters and run at least two new recruit colleges to address current staff shortages and plan for near future retirements from the service;
- procure an additional pumper-aerial appliance to complement existing firefighting appliances;
- recruit and train additional firefighters to crew the new aerial pumper;
- build a new city fire station to service; and
- complete replacement of firefighter structural firefighting personal protective clothing.

Since then, we have provided briefings to several Ministers and the Chief Minister's office. The Minister has since committed to acquiring an additional aerial pumper in the next financial year. That is a good start!

Current Issues of Concern

The union has been active in seeking to resolve several current issues of concern:

1. Medical Assistance Training concerns

Evidence suggests that ACT firefighters are increasingly expected to perform emergency medical assistance duties in the course of their daily work, in particular when ACTAS staff are unavailable. Concerns have arisen about the availability, suitability and quality of training for firefighters in the competencies necessary to perform these duties, following the cessation of the e-learning training previously provided by the Queensland Ambulance Service.

Consequently, the UFU has raised concerns with ACTF&R, and we anticipate that we will be able to tell members more in coming days.

2. Fighting discrimination against union members in the workplace – a 'General Protections' Court Application

The UFU has engaged legal counsel to pursue action against ACTF&R on the basis that certain firefighters, as employees, are being discriminated against because of their union membership and as a result are being disadvantaged by not being paid as workplace representatives.

The issue concerns the failure of ACTF&R to pay these employees when they attend committee meetings, such as for the Local Consultative Committee, the Uniform Committee or the Appliances and Equipment Committee, amongst others, on the basis that they are union employee representatives, whereas other employee representatives are paid.

This is an alleged breach of clauses 119.1 and 120.4 of the *ACT Public Sector Act Fire & Rescue Enterprise Agreement 2013-2017*, and of workplace legislation (the *Fair Work Act 2009*). The matter was listed last week in the federal Court, and the ACT Government has until 10 April 2018 to lodge their material in reply.

3. Ainslie Fire Station

A controversy has arisen over the decision of the ESA and ACTF&R to renovate and refit Ainslie Fire Station to enable a 'Privacy and Dignity' upgrade and to accommodate a second crew on a short-term basis, which is associated with the ACT Government's election commitment to purchase and crew a new aerial pumper appliance.

The UFU has notified ACTF&R of a dispute. The concern is that Ainslie Fire Station cannot be renovated to an acceptable standard and that we and employees have not been appropriately consulted in accord with the requirements of the Enterprise Agreement or good practice. There is a risk that an inadequate 'short term' solution may well become 'long term' to the detriment of both the health and safety of firefighters and the general public.

UFU ACT Elections for the Branch Committee of Management

The previous edition of Signal 7 notified members about the lodging of nominations for the forthcoming elections for all the offices of the BCOM. It is available on the website at <http://www.ufuact.asn.au/act-branch-news/signal-7-of-14-march-2018-elections-for-ufuact-branch-committee-of-management/> This process is being run by the Australian Electoral Commission.

UFU Workplace Representatives

At the same website location as above, you can find a separate call for expressions of interests for UFU workplace representatives, designed to improve two-way communications between the BCOM and members.

***** General Meeting of Members *****

A general meeting of members is being called for 6.30pm, Thursday, 12 April 2018 at the Dickson Tradies Club - upstairs, 2nd Floor, at the Trevor Scott function room (A Platoon is on duty).

An update on the status of enterprise bargaining will be discussed at this meeting.

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

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