



**QUEENSLAND FIRE AND RESCUE -
SENIOR OFFICERS UNION OF EMPLOYEES**

P.O. Box 217
LUTWYCHE QLD 4030

www.qfr-sou.asn.au

NEWSLETTER

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Discussion Forum Addition to the SOU Website

In support of improved communications and discussion between SOU members, the SOU Website is currently being enhanced through the integration of an online discussion forum. When in place, the forum will enhance online commentary and dialogue between SOU members on various pertinent topics and issues. Members will be advised when this capability is in place.

Rural and Remote Employees Incentives Policy now Released

The SOU can advise that an improved QFRS Rural and Remote Incentives Policy has been released, with the SOU playing an important role in influencing this improved outcome. It has long been acknowledged that QFRS employees in rural and remote locations face a range of challenges including higher cost of living, social and professional isolation and challenging work environments. Whilst the policy provides improved incentives for QFRS Seniors, the SOU believe that further improvements can be made and will continue to lobby in this regard.

Accruing of Excessive Work Hours by Senior Officers

In recent times the SOU Executive has received approaches regarding the accrual of working hours by Seniors over an extended period. The use of the Flexible Hours log in the QFRS electronic timesheet may have contributed to the question as to whether senior officers can claim hours accrued (outside the formal TOIL provision) and over an extended period of time beyond each pay cycle, particularly when senior officers are finalising their QFRS employment. The summary answer to this question is no. Therefore - Seniors should be aware of the following fundamentals relating to this matter:

- QFRS Senior Officers work hours are essentially self-managed with the intention being that a 'position focus' is maintained as opposed to an 'hours focus' (see QFRS - Certified Agreement {CA} 2009, Part 5).

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- Having said that, this does not mean that Seniors are expected to work till they drop, and this philosophy is also communicated in the 2009 CA (see Section 5.2.3 Work/Life Balance).
- In support of work/life balance SOU members are advised to balance their working week hours each pay fortnight so as to avoid the accrual of excess hours over the longer term, as these hours cannot be claimed anyway.
- SOU members should be aware of the two main avenues for managing excessive hours, these being use of Section 5.3 'Programmed Day Off (PDO)', and Section 5.5 'Time Off In Lieu (TOIL)' - both sections being provisions of the 2009 CA.
- For PDOs, SOU members should be aware that (as outlined by section 5.3.1 of the 2009 CA) Senior Officers ... who are currently working a 38 Hour Week shall be able to work a 40 hour week and accrue two hours per week towards a PDO to be taken once every 28 calendar days. (Note that a maximum of 2 PDOs can be accrued).
- All TOIL accrued or taken shall be applied for using the appropriate form (OBM 003). Obviously - TOIL accrued during an out of hours incident can be applied for after the fact.
- Extended hours arising out of major extended incidents/deployments may of course be covered by Section 7.12 'Extra Ordinary Duty Hours'.
- Finally - it is correct in saying that there are no other industrial provisions that allow for the accrual of excessive working hours for future claiming by substantive QFRS Senior Officers.

I should advise that an advisory note exists within the Flexible Hours log section of the QFRS electronic timesheet. This note states 'This feature is not to be used for TOIL or Overtime claims'. In summary, SOU members are encouraged to manage their working hours in support of a reasonable work/life balance. Should SOU members have any further queries they should consult with their Regional Councillor in the first instance. Having said that - SOU Executive members are happy to receive queries that are not answerable at the local level.

In conclusion – members are also reminded about considerations/preparations for the next Enterprise Agreement process due in 2012, and for the need to commence collecting suggestions for potential inclusion in the SOU Log of Claims. An ideas proforma is available for download from the SOU Website (in the 2011 Newsletters section). Completed forms can be sent to the State Secretary, for collation and consideration during the next State Council meeting expected later this year.

Yours in service



**Andrew Short AFSM
State Secretary
Queensland Fire and Rescue -
Senior Officers Union of Employees**