



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

P.O. Box 217
LUTWYCHE QLD 4030
www.qfr-sou.asn.au

NEWSLETTER

2013 Issue No. 1

27 June 2013

PRESIDENTS UPDATE

Wednesday the 26 June 2013 was the first day of EB arbitration held in front of the full bench in the QIRC so I thought it was an opportune time to give you all an update. To provide some context to the current situation I need to acknowledge the work that has been occurring over the last few months to make sure that we are fully prepared to represent Senior Officers as best as possible.

Firstly I want to thank all those senior officers who provided affidavits to assist our case. These were sometimes onerous and even though we had some legal and administrative assistance they were all time consuming. These are important to our argument and help the QIRC Commissioners to understand in plain English what our job entails.

Particularly I would like to acknowledge the work done by Andrew Short and Kevin Walsh who have put in countless hours (in their own time) to brief our legal representatives, write and coordinate statements and have a never ending stream of meetings with the various parties. A large part of our preparation has been involved in reading literally hundreds of documents including technical financial briefs, legal and industrial arguments and personal statements. Each of these needed to be understood, interpreted and then considered how the information may affect us. Where necessary arguments for or against needed to be developed and additional statements or evidence collected to support our position. The final result is 12 volumes of legal documents from all parties.

On Monday and Tuesday this week, the full bench along with an SOU Executive undertook workplace inspections at QCESA - which included a wide range of operational scenarios and workplaces demonstrating the breadth of QFRS's capabilities. Additional visits included Special Operations, Firecom, Brisbane Region ROC and the SOC.

All this preparation brings us up to the current situation. SOU Secretary Andrew Short (representing the SOU at the bench), Vice President Kevin Walsh and I were in attendance along with the UFU Secretary and Industrial Officer. The QFRS/DCS is represented by a Barrister and an instructing Solicitor in addition to senior staff from finance, legal and employment relations.

Currently, the hearing is set down for the remainder of this week and then for a further week in

August. All members are requested to remain patient as the arbitration process could potentially take some time.

This last 6 months has been an extremely busy period for the SOU executive and branch councillors, who have been doing their best to provide submissions, represent, attend meetings, lobby and generally act in your interests. The Malone Report, Keelty Review, Enterprise Bargaining, and now Arbitration have all taken a large amount of time and energy with all of this being done in an unpaid and private capacity.

Finally, we as Senior Officers should be proud of our contribution in protecting Queenslanders in what are extremely moderate staffing, wages and funding arrangements. The following is a quote from Qld Commission of Audit Final report 2013 which, I think summarises why we as an industrial body want to improve and go forward - and not slide backward.

"Compared with other states, QFRS performs favourably in terms of efficiency, prevention and response. Queensland had the second lowest number of fire incidents per 100,000 people and the lowest per person expenditure on fire services in 2011-12. Queensland also had the second fastest state-wide response times to structure fires."

This statement says it all; with my view being that QFRS Senior Officers are certainly instrumental in this positive outcome.

Mental Health Focus Group Update

In our April 2012 Newsletter we provided an overview of the Mental Health Focus Group and our partnership with the QFRS, UFU and PHD researchers. The SOU supported your participation in an on-line survey to collect data relating to the health and well-being of Senior Officers. This information collected was presented to the focus group members in a seminar held at QUT Kelvin Grove Campus in Brisbane, with the SOU being represented by one of our Brisbane members – Lance Duncan. Some of the main points from the presentation identified;

- Various levels of Stress, Anxiety and Depression in all cohorts and the relationship to different career levels.
- Levels of Stress, Anxiety, Depression were reduced due to social interaction and coping methods.
- It identified that personnel with posttraumatic symptoms were low.
- That Senior Officers and Station Officers did have higher levels of Stress, Anxiety and Depression.
- That Senior Officers appear to have less ability to offset, or defuse that Stress, Anxiety, Depression and this may be due to seniors believing they have less time or ability to do so.

Fire Care has released an email through your Assistant Commissioner that details their proposal to support the wellbeing of senior officers through a series of workshops. The SOU supports your attendance at these workshops. Acting Manager of Fire Care - Robyn Kirby would welcome any feedback on coping strategies from senior officers that would value add to the proposed workshops. Please remember Fire Care has Peer Support Officers that are available to you.

Finally - my personal thanks to Lance Duncan for his commitment to Senior Officer Well-being.

Regards

John Cawcutt AFSM

President

**Queensland Fire and Rescue -
Senior Officers Union of Employees**