



**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. 2

4 November 2013

PRESIDENT'S UPDATE - ARBITRATION NEARS CONCLUSION

Last Friday SOU Secretary Andrew Short and I attended the final hearing of Arbitration so it's an ideal time to bring you all up to date with the situation. Our quest for a new Certified Agreement has been going on for nearly 18 months and in that time an enormous amount of work and effort has gone to getting SOU members the best possible result.

So much has happened that its worth summarise a few key points;

- Feb/May 2012 - Branch Counsellors provided items for the Log of Claims
- May 2012 - The official Log of Claims was developed and provided to the QFRS
- June to July 2012 - 9 meetings occurred with QFRS, DCS, UFU and SOU to develop an agreed position.
- June 2012 - The SOU produces the coloured brochure explaining Senior Officers role in the community.
- 30 July 2012 - SOU met with the Public Service Commission in an attempt to have our agreement acted on as part of the Single Bargaining Unit. This was subsequently rejected.
- 31 July 2012 - SOU agreed in writing to the government's offer of 2.7% as well as a number of improved conditions.
- Aug 2012 to April 2013 - The negotiations went to the QIRC for conciliation. Approximately a dozen conferences were held. Although the SOU had already reached an agreed position a member of the SOU Executive attended every meeting to protect our interest and to ensure that the parity was not further eroded.
- 11 Dec 2012 - The parties could not reach an agreement. In recognition that the SOU had previously agreed to the offer, an interim pay rise of 1.7% was provided as well as the interim introduction of the improved conditions.
- Jan 2013 - The issue was referred to Arbitration. Arbitration is a long drawn out process that requires a full bench of the industrial commission. The arbitration process essentially means that everything starts from scratch so while we already had some agreement there was no guarantee that these interim agreed conditions would carry over. Because of this we then had to re-submit our adjusted log of claims.
- Jan 2013 - October 2013 - Approximately eight hearings in arbitration providing submissions and statements.
- 28 October 2013 - Chief Supt's Barber and Cawcutt called as witnesses.

1 November 2013 SOU comes to an agreement with QFRS regarding the following;

AGREED ITEMS - IMPROVEMENTS

- Hours of duty - clearer explanation of out of hours work PDO's – Now allowed to bank and take 5 x PDO's in one Block.
- TOIL - inspectors may now elect not to take accrued TOIL and have it paid out.
- Extraordinary Duty Hours - If called back from annual leave will have the option as to whether they have their leave re credited or paid 14 hrs per day. Also clarification regarding the payment of the 14hours single time on gazetted public holidays.
- Meal Allowance - when travelling or deployed if a substantial meal is not provided (i.e. only ration packs) then a meal payment will be paid.

ITEMS SUBJECT TO THE DECISION OF THE QIRC

- Overall Quantum pay rise - asked for 3.5% with current government offer of 2.2%.
- Tech rescue Allowance - this is the same claim as the UFU to maintain the parity.
- Pay points - one for each rank - still to be decided.
- The Problem of Pay Parity – between the ranks of Inspector and Station Officer.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The process is now nearing completion and we hope to have a decision in the next few months. In the interim you will maintain the 1.7% increase and the other agreed items.

Finally, Regardless of the final outcome I need to thank a number of people who, over the last 18 months have done an enormous amount of work. Firstly, my thanks to all the members who submitted items for the log of claims and also to the Branch Counsellors who have been the essential conduit for information and sounding board for the Executive over this whole period.

My acknowledgement and respect to all those who provided Statements for the Arbitration process. The development of these statements were onerous and a lot of work was required in a very short time frame. A special thanks also to Chief Supt Steve Barber who was called as a witness and who spoke eloquently and represented senior officers so well. Also Insp David Hermann and A/Chief Supt Greg Reynolds who stepped in for us at the QIRC when the Exec was not available.

My personal thanks to the SOU executive of State Vice President Kevin Walsh and Treasurer Neil Reid who have been on countless teleconferences, attended many meetings and provided much of the work behind the scenes to keep the SOU running during this period.

Finally, I must thank and acknowledge SOU Secretary Andrew Short who has shouldered much of the work over the last 18months. Over this time Andrew has worked tirelessly spending countless hours organising, writing, preparing and representing senior officers, nearly all of it in his own time. There were very few meetings and hearings that he was not part of.

Andrew represented the SOU at the bench during the whole arbitration process including questioning and cross examining witnesses (incl. the Deputy Commissioner). Whilst we had some

legal support, Andrew researched the process to make sure we came across as a professional organisation. His performance at the Bar gained respect from the Commissioners as well as the opposing Senior Counsel.

On a lighter note, Andrew's legal and oratory performance became quite famous as according to both the opposition Senior Counsel and Deputy President Bloomfield he managed during re-examination of an SOU witness to ask "the most leading question ever asked in the history of the Commission". What was interesting is that they both elected not to object to the question - probably out of courtesy to Andrew.

Colleagues, we now need to wait for the outcome but you can be assured that we have fought for the best possible deal for Senior Officers in what is a very different environment.

ADDITIONAL THANKS

I wish to record my thanks to all SOU members in supporting the transition to a new SOU fees payment process. As you are aware this was required as a result of a change in government policy relating to pay deductions for industrial bodies. I also appreciate the efforts of all State Council members for completing the onerous obligations associated with meeting the government's industrial transparency legislation changes.

STATE COUNCIL TELECONFERENCE

A State Council teleconference will be arranged in the near future to speak further in detail, but please contact your Branch Counsellor or any one on the Executive if you wish to discuss.

Regards



John Cawcutt AFSM
President
Queensland Fire and Rescue -
Senior Officers Union of Employees