



Code 2 Vol 28 No 39

10 November 2014

Award modernisation of your awards commences

QIRC conference Friday 7th October 2014

Your union was called into a QIRC conference at short notice on Friday 7th October 2014 regarding the modernisation of our awards.

At the conference, Commissioner Knight indicated that the QIRC were putting together a draft single award to cover all employees of the QFES.

The draft single award will be compiled irrespective of the stated views of the UFUQ, that we could see no benefit in combining the fire and rescue award with the communications centres award.

Commissioner Knight also suggested that the matter of award coverage for auxiliary firefighters could be dealt with under the same process, despite the matter being currently before Justice Martin of the industrial court. (In fact there was a court hearing the same morning we were called in for a QIRC conference in the afternoon). Our view is that it is best to get a court ruling about the correct legislative process to use to make a first auxiliaries' award, before blundering into QIRC conferences about matters which are before the court.

Your union advised QIRC and all parties beforehand that we will not consent to parties being legally represented in conferences about award modernisation. Both the fire service and the SOU sought to be represented by lawyers and a decision about that will follow.

It is unfortunate that matters your union has been trying to discuss sensibly with the fire service for most of the year, now looks like turning into another lawyers' picnic at the QIRC.

Information

Your union redrafted our two awards and provided them for comment and discussions to the fire service in April this year. The fire service has provided no response to our draft awards and refused to meet with us to discuss them over the past 8 months.

On 24th September 2014, in response to a request from the QIRC, we filed our draft awards in the QIRC Registry.

The fire service have not provided us with any drafts, or any other information and have not told us if they have given anything to the industrial commission. We have asked QIRC to give us any information provided by other parties including the fire service.

The QIRC manager responsible for compiling draft modern awards informed us last Friday that he had not been provided with the award modernisation information we filed in the QIRC in September. He had not seen our information, or read it at all prior to the QIRC conference.

From the information we received at the 'award modernisation' conference last Friday, it appeared that QIRC were preparing a draft award without looking at any of the information they had asked us to give them.

Timetable

The QIRC are now saying that the modernisation of our awards needs to be prioritised and progress made before the end of this year. The legislation and the latest version of the Attorney General's request, require our two existing awards to be modernised by 31st December 2015.

We received a letter from the QIRC in September which stated that our awards must be modernised by April 2015. (We queried the letter because it contradicted the legislation and the 'request', and received no reply).

No explanation was provided to us for the suddenly accelerated time table.

The conference was held after 2pm on Friday 7th November 2014, supposedly in part to seek the parties' views about 'how many' modern awards ought to be made. At the conclusion of the conference a couple of hours later, Commissioner Knight advised us that we should expect a draft single award to look at by Monday 10th November 2014.

Members will note that the QIRC took over a year to find the time and dates to hear the arbitration that the fire service was so keen to have and still haven't issued a decision a year after the hearings concluded. I expect the arbitration decision must be very close to being issued if the QIRC is able to suddenly prioritise award modernisation over finalising that decision. I will let you know as soon as we hear.

In relation to these issues, UFUQ made an application for a modern award for auxiliary firefighters nearly one year ago, on 2nd December 2013 and we redrafted our two existing awards and sent them to the fire service on 14th April 2014.

We will provide members a copy of the draft award prepared by the QIRC as soon as we receive it.

In the meantime, you can follow the 'award modernisation process' by looking at the dedicated section on your union's website.

JOHN OLIVER - STATE SECRETARY

Authorised by John Oliver State Secretary
United Firefighters' Union of Australia, Union of Employees – QLD

[REDACTED]