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## **EB NEWSLETTER**

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**Negotiations and  
Proceedings with  
QIRC and QFRS**



### **Negotiations Update**

#### **QIRC Proceedings**

As previously reported, QFRS sought the assistance of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission (QIRC) under specific provisions of the Industrial Relations Act to help them make a certified agreement with the relevant unions.

The initial QIRC conferences were basically of a 'report back' nature so the parties could let the QIRC know where the negotiations were up to.

In recent weeks the state government has demonstrated a heightened interest in how negotiations are progressing and appear to want to accelerate a conclusion.

On 2 October 2012, QFRS advised the QIRC that they felt the parties were too far apart and asked QIRC to refer the issues for arbitration. Your union had attended a meeting with QFRS and government representatives that very same morning. At this meeting, no QFRS or government representative asked us whether we would agree to matters being arbitrated or mentioned that they were going to make submissions to QIRC that same afternoon to the effect that conciliation should be aborted and matters be referred to arbitration.

In any case QIRC viewed the QFRS request as 'premature' and elected to exercise its jurisdiction to conciliate and set down a series of conferences to directly mediate between the parties.

Your union and QFRS are currently participating in conciliation in the QIRC.



## **Issues**

This round of negotiations is particularly difficult and complex and is clearly going to take more time than previous agreements. The negotiations are characterised by a raft of demands from QFRS and a fairly comprehensive QFRS rejection of most of the UFU members' issues. The context is one of austerity and a new conservative government.

The government is fixated on reducing the overtime costs incurred by firefighters and communication officers.

The key demands from QFRS are to strip our agreement of a number of clauses and in particular to abolish consultative arrangements.

The government is insistent as to its financial position and how much cost it is prepared to incur in any new enterprise bargaining package. At this stage, they are still pursuing cost savings and pushing most of their claims.

There has been some progress made in conciliation but further conferences will be needed to ascertain whether we could reach an agreed package.

The QIRC has jurisdiction to foreclose conciliation after considering a range of criteria set out in the legislation. In the event that the QIRC is considering ceasing conciliation we have asked to be heard in relation to the criteria set out by the law.

## **Campaign**

Our campaign has been effective to date and we encourage all members to participate. There have been a number of well attended rallies and demonstrations.

Further, there have been a number of delegates who have visited their local MP's mostly in conjunction with ambulance delegates. These delegates have raised our issues of concern, but there are still a number of MP's who have not yet been visited and meetings are still being arranged.

Industrial action has been activated and has gained some good publicity, allowing members to increase their involvement which is helping to support the negotiations. It was quite a complicated and difficult exercise arranging industrial action under the new laws.

We have combined with the ambulance officers' union to produce a joint TV commercial highlighting our concerns. This commercial has been launched in the media and is being aired in regional areas and receiving a favourable response.





The joint UFU - United Voice website [www.standingwithus.com](http://www.standingwithus.com) includes a petition and other information which we encourage members to circulate amongst social media.

### **Summary**

The certified agreement negotiations are now being conciliated by the QIRC. There has been some flexibility shown by QFRS but they are still strong on their demands. Our campaign is progressing and our TV and social media campaign is just starting in the regional areas. We encourage all members to participate wherever possible.

Minister Jack Dempsey continues not to meet with UFUQ.

**John Oliver**  
**State Secretary**

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