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Beware of award modernisation!

As we have previously advised the so-called “award modernisation process” arising from the state government legislation is continuing in the QIRC.

QIRC has been busily stripping conditions out of awards applicable to some public sector and state government agencies.

To date, our two awards have not been addressed by the QIRC, although the fire and rescue service have convinced the QIRC to avoid dealing with our application for an auxiliary award in the hope that it can somehow be delayed until our other two awards are modernised.

Your union provided redrafted awards and explanatory tables to the fire service in April 2014 and have repeatedly asked for meetings and feedback ever since.

To date, the fire service has not met with us or provided us any feedback on the documents we sent them over 3 months ago.

The fire service claim to be “keen” to present their own “version” of a modernised award to the QIRC, but again to date, have not provided it to your union despite our requests.

At a full bench hearing on 23 July 2014, the fire service sabotaged the current auxiliary modern award application.

Their argument was to have auxiliary award coverage rolled into the modernisation of our existing awards.

It is informative that at the hearing, Mr Herbert, counsel for the fire service stated -

"It's a very good opportunity from the fire service's point of view to introduce the sort of changes that it sought in the 149 determination".

"There's no secret about the fact that during the award modernisation process if the employer is successful in achieving those sorts of outcomes in the 149 determination will seek to have them included – them or something very similar to them – have them included into the modernised awards. So that there will be some quite dramatic changes in the one - the employer at least hopes there will be some quite dramatic changes in the modernised award so that in a number of respects it will look quite different from the existing award in that - and there are very large financial implications associated with that".

There might be "no secret" now those comments have been placed on transcript by the fire service's barrister, but none of those intentions had ever been conveyed by the fire service to your union.

In fact the fire service have concealed their plot and are avoiding your union on these issues right now.

It seems as if the fire service has yet another hidden agenda, as they have failed to meet with us to discuss our proposed redrafted awards, and have failed to provide us a copy of the award "version" they propose.

Further the fire service have told your union that our two awards won't be dealt with by the QIRC until at the earliest September 2015. The curious thing about the fire service saying that is, the QIRC has not stated that publicly anywhere and has not conveyed that timetable to your union.

We have asked the fire service who told them about when our two awards would be going up before the QIRC for "modernisation", but they have not advised us where they got their information from.

Maybe QFES have some inside knowledge that we don't have?

What do you think?

From parliamentary questions on notice asked of the attorney general (AG) Jarrod Bleijie, it is clear that the QIRC Vice President Linnane has communicated with the attorney general about the award modernisation process, and the content of the various "requests" made by the AG to the QIRC regarding "award modernisation".

Extracts of some of the QIRC's Vice President's correspondence have been tabled in parliament. Some of the extracts of the V.P's correspondence refers to the general award modernisation process and some of it refers specifically to a "fire occupation".

The Queensland Council of Unions (QCU) wrote to VP Linnane and requested full copies of the correspondence she had sent to the Attorney General (AG) as it was relevant to QIRC award matters involving affiliated unions.

VP Linnane refused to provide copies to the QCU of the correspondence she sent to the AG about the award modernisation.

Of the few awards that have been through the so called “modernisation process” to date, the QIRC has stripped out numerous existing conditions and has tried to roll in a number of awards into single awards.

The process looks rushed and crude and we were hoping to use the time we have to work with the fire service to make some agreed progress in advance of getting to the QIRC.

Given their history of secrecy and avoidance of the issues, we suspect the fire service is up to no good.

Your union will continue to press the fire service into discussing our drafts and revealing their “version”.

To date the fire service has –

- inferred they want a totally new award for the so called “*fire industry*” (which we have taken to mean “*QFES*”), and
- have obstructed and sabotaged an auxiliary award , and
- have not provided your union any of their demands for a new “modern award”.

Members have every right to be suspicious about what QFES is hiding and what lies ahead in the QIRC so called “award modernisation process”.

Your union has a dedicated section on our website, which contains information about “award modernisation” if you wish to stay up to date on this looming issue.

That information can be found here – <http://www.ufuq.com.au/modernisation-2/>

The website will be updated as new information becomes available and I will keep you informed as this “modernisation” matter develops.

John Oliver - State Secretary

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