



SIGNAL SEVEN

15 August 2024

Update on Enterprise Bargaining

In the Signal 7 on [1/8/2024](#) the UFU advised members we had given formal notice to all parties regarding our concerns about not meeting good faith bargaining requirements. The letters were sent to the Self-Appointed Bargaining Representatives (“SBRs”) on the 31/7/2024.

Following that notice we received claims and responses to our request as follows:

[Greg Mason – Log of claims](#) 1/8/2024

[Greg Abrahamffy – Log of claims](#) (first sent 1/8/2024 and amended 7/8/24)

[Rob Thompson – Log of claims](#) & [Response to our claim](#) 11/8/2024

[Andrew Steel – Log of claims](#) 12/8/2024

Zombie Claims

When you read closely, the claims submitted by the SBRs display significant commonality with the claims advanced by the [ACT Government in August 2018](#). We thought that our 2020 enterprise bargaining campaign had killed these employer wish list items, but here they are again walking about as though they are alive.

Some examples of the commonality include:

- The introduction of a random drug and alcohol testing regime.
- Mandatory annual fitness tests.
- Lateral recruitment at all ranks, and of course
- Removing the requirement to agree with the UFU.

While some claims don’t go as far as the 2018 proposals, they maintain striking similarities or deliver worse outcomes for firefighters. There is a proposal align Section J with the Fair Work Act, which contains only minimal leave entitlements. If agreed to, this proposal we would remove the entitlement to Workers Compensation Make-up Pay and an additional 2 weeks of annual leave.

There is however an important difference: when the ACT Government advanced those claims in 2018 they were prepared to pay firefighters to give up those conditions. A combined pay increase of 10% above the core pay offer was put forward to entice firefighters to give up these conditions. UFU members overwhelmingly rejected that claim and the associated pay increase and instead campaigned for the enterprise agreement we now have.

What the SBR's have advanced as claims cannot be described as a sellout - only because they are prepared to give away these conditions for nothing! There are no pay rises attached by them to the conditions they are prepared to give up!

Another significant concern is a claim to remove all reference to the UFU in the Enterprise Agreement. We believe that this is motivated by nothing other than retribution against the UFU for enforcing the Enterprise Agreement, and for being honest about the fact that a number of flexible working arrangements were not allowable at law. The UFU is the envy of many trade unions: they look at our membership density and our success and influence. They eye off the conditions that we have in our Enterprise Agreement, including the requirement to agree with us on essential matters of firefighter safety. Other unions wonder how they could obtain similar protections for their members.

Sadly, at least some of the SBR's are prepared to risk all that we have gained over the years and to write us out of the Enterprise Agreement, risking all of the big things we've achieved because one small part of the Agreement doesn't suit their personal circumstances. This is as tragic and ill-informed as it is dangerous.

Members should ask themselves questions such as those that follow:

- What does a superintendent or a station officer have to gain from removing the requirement to agree with the UFU about the crewing chart in Schedule 1 of the Agreement?
- What does a SBR have to gain from removing all reference to the UFU in the agreement?
- What does a station officer have to gain from being subjected to mandatory fitness testing and mandatory random drug and alcohol tests, with no accompanying protections?
- Why would a SBR advance claims in an enterprise agreement negotiation which do not include pay rises?
- Can you imagine what a hostile employer would do with the claims advanced by the SBR's?
- Can you guess what a Liberal government might do with these claims if they are elected in October?
- Can SBR's call themselves independent when they are pursuing zombie employer claims from the previous round of negotiations?

We are asking ourselves the same questions.

In the previous [Signal 7](#) we identified that the Government had said that they were required to consider all of the claims of all of the bargaining representatives before they responded to our claims:

“Delays in receiving or clarifying claims from all parties delays the investigation process and Government consideration of them”.

Noting that “The ACT Government acknowledges our shared desire to finalise all bargaining before the Caretaker period (commencing 13 September 2024) and is working to achieve that, but it is becoming increasingly unlikely this will occur.”

The Government has now formally written to us to propose a shorter agreement with fewer changes than all of the subject matter that we have proposed to date. Please see the attached [letter from Minister Mick Gentleman](#).

Based on this we believe that we must at least canvas the possibility with the membership about whether we continue to bargain for everything we are after, and if not, what we put in a priority list to be concluded very quickly. This is the issue that will be addressed at the member meetings on Tuesday and Thursday next week.

Important General Meetings

Members are assured that we are working quickly to address this developing situation. Members are strongly encouraged to attend the meetings scheduled for next week: the details are as follows:

Unfortunately, we have been unable to secure our preferred venue for these meetings at such short notice, so attendance must be in person. We do however believe that its is important to meet as soon as possible to keep on top of the situation.

If you're coming to the meetings, please RSVP to admin@ufuact.asn.au to let us know which meeting you will be at. The details of the General Meetings scheduled for next week are as follows:

Date: Tuesday 20th August 2024

Time: 18:30 hrs SHARP (D Platoon on Duty)

Venue: Malvern Star and Speedwell Rooms
Quality Hotel Dickson
2 Badham Street Dickson

Date: Thursday 22nd August 2024

Time: 18:30 hrs SHARP (C Platoon on Duty)

Venue: Malvern Star and Speedwell Rooms
Quality Hotel Dickson
2 Badham Street Dickson

To Update your details, please email admin@ufuact.asn.au
National Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/UFUAnational>
National Website: <https://www.ufua.asn.au/>
ACT Branch Website: <http://ufuact.asn.au/>
ACT Branch Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/UFUACT/>

Strength in Unity

Authorised by Greg McConville, Secretary, UFU, A.C.T. Branch.