



THE UNITED PROFESSIONAL FIREFIGHTERS UNION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

ABN: 31 367 577 278

PRESIDENT: Clem Chan

SECRETARY: Katherine O'Hara

PUBLIC MINUTES

SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING TUESDAY 28 MARCH 2023

Attendees: 175 as recorded in the attendance book - 31 members are required for a quorum as per 14 (4) of the UPFUWA Rules.

Apologies: 17 As recorded in the attendance book.

Visitors: Alex Forrest and Greg McConville

Meeting Movements:

Alex Forrest and Greg McConville left meeting at 19:31.

1. **Meeting opened** by meeting chair, President Clem Chan, at 19.00.

2. **Approval of the Draft Minutes**

Motion:

The Minutes of the Special General meeting of the UPFUWA held on 23 September 2021 are endorsed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Moved: Scott Gamble
Carried.

Seconded: Daniel Richmond

Motion:

The Minutes of the Special General meeting of the UPFUWA held on 29 June 2022 are endorsed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Moved: Paul Rogers
Carried.

Seconded: Lexie Bowring

3. EBA Bargaining Update.

The Secretary provided a verbal report on bargaining for the EBA:

- The agreement is due to expire on 8 June 2023 with the Department agreeing to commence early bargaining.
- There are 126 items in the log of claims with the priority claims being narrowed down on two occasions.
- At this point there have been 10 bargaining meetings with the 11th scheduled for next Tuesday.
- On the 31st of January, DFES filed an application in the WAIRC. The outcomes of this application were that there are now agreed timeframes regarding the employer's claims and discussions on the Union's claims, and an indication regarding a timeframe for an offer has been provided, this being by late April/early May.
- The next SGM will be held on 10 May 2023. It is expected the Union will be in a position to discuss the specifics of the offer at that meeting.

A number of questions were asked from the membership including:

Question 1

Was the Union aware that NSW broke wages policy?

Answer: Yes, though this was related to an election commitment.

Question 2

What, if any, effect will that have on wages policy in WA going forward?

Answer: Likely little, thought this is unknown at this stage.

Question 3

If Police and Nurses are receiving/have received the \$3000 payment, why aren't we?

Answer: The Union has asked for this payment to be paid to our members prior to the expiry of our agreement – the response is no. The Government's position is that both Police and Nurses are in a different position due to their agreements having expired.

Question 4

What is happening with the Public Sector Alliance?

Answer: The Union continues to be a part of the Public sector Alliance.

4. Superannuation Update

The Secretary provided a verbal report to the meeting on Superannuation:

- The Union has a current claim for additional employer contributions as part of bargaining.

- The history of the Defined Benefit was outlined, including the original intent of the super fund.
- There were several potential avenues to deal with the broader point of improving superannuation to ensure the original objectives were being met, however most of these avenues have now been exhausted.
- Arguments have been provided over why it should be increased – largely based on why firefighters need superior superannuation – specifically the physical and mental demands of the job, presumptive cancers.
- Superannuation is now a bargaining matter – although the Union maintains its position that we should not be dealing with this issue here, there is an opportunity to seek improvements, and we need to take that opportunity.
- Late last year the COM approved expenditure for modelling to be prepared by an independent forensic accountant.
- The superannuation working group has recently been expanded – the purpose of this group is to analyse the issues and present solutions/proposals to the COM for consideration. The Union’s focus now is on educating the membership about the complexities regarding the defined benefit fund.

There were several comments from the membership which were addressed by the Secretary including:

- The DB was set up to allow for a career of 35 years – for those members who are leaving before this time they are getting less money than what they put in.
- Recruits should be receiving better education about their superannuation when they first join the job.
- The South Australian model was discussed.

5. Presumptive Legislation Update

National Secretary Greg McConville and Alex Forrest presented to the meeting:

- The news report from Channel 9 News featuring member Sharon Duncan went to air on 28/02/2023. The meeting thanked Sharon for her courage and her efforts to speak on the matter to help advance the presumptive cause for the membership’s benefit.

Alex Forrest discussed the presumptive cancer cause:

- Alex is a Winnipeg Fire Officer with over 25 years’ experience as a firefighter. He is also the President of the Winnipeg Union, a trustee to the International Association of Research into Cancer (IARC) and a lawyer.
- He has come to WA to assist with the presumptive cancer campaign and engage with parliamentarians to advance the coverage for members.
- Science for firefighting related cancer has progressed. The risk of developing cancer is higher than previously thought – this increases the need to expand coverage. The additional 8 cancers have now been achieved Federally, but also in Canada and the US.
- It is also a social inequity issue for female firefighters whose reproductive organs are not covered which is due to the historic lack of female firefighters.
- The WA State Government is willing to move on 2 cancers, skin and mesothelioma, but not the other 6 cancers.

- The WA Government needs to be called out on its failure to protect firefighters.
- The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared firefighting the number one carcinogenic occupation in the world with cancer being the top line of duty death for firefighters in the world.

Greg McConville spoke regarding presumptive matters and the National Unions efforts:

- He thanked Katherine O'Hara and Clem Chan for their tireless work on behalf of firefighters.
- Confirmed our strength lies in being part of wider international unions who have assisted Australia in becoming a world leader in presumptive cancers. Australia is the first country in world to have all states/jurisdictions covered by presumptive.
- The 2019 Commonwealth Review of Presumptive Cancers was never actioned. This review recommended a reduction to the latency period and two new cancers malignant mesothelioma and melanoma.
- The group have and will be meeting with members of parliament throughout the week and media coverage will continue.
- There is an absurdity of disparity in coverage between state and federal firefighters as well as between male and female firefighters.
- Prevention is still an important part of presumptive cancer strategies – things such as the Edmonton Health and Wellness program are extremely beneficial in screening and early detection of health issues.

The President thanked Greg McConville and Alex Forrest for assisting the WA Branch. He also thanked Cian Evans for meeting with members of parliament and sharing his personal account. The meeting thanked Greg, Alex and Cian and applauded their efforts.

6. Meeting closed by meeting chair, President Clem Chan, at 20:38.



Clem Chan

President/Meeting Chair