



THE UNITED PROFESSIONAL FIREFIGHTERS' UNION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA CIRCULAR

President: Alan Crossman

Secretary: John Marsh

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Supporting Mel Ismail, His Family And Our Geraldton Members

Attention All Members:

Members will by now be aware that Geraldton Station Officer Mel Ismail was seriously injured in a shark attack while surfing at Glenfield Beach, north of Geraldton, on Monday morning.

Mel was assisted from the water and transported to Geraldton Health Campus, where he remains in a serious but stable condition. His injuries are significant and he faces a long recovery.

While the circumstances are confronting, there are also some extraordinary acts of bravery and support that deserve recognition.

Information provided to the Union, together with public reporting, indicates that another surfer and a group of young people at the beach responded immediately, including using a surfboard leg rope as a makeshift tourniquet to control Mel's bleeding.

All accounts praise Mel's own reaction to the incident, calmly outlining the situation and instructing bystanders on how to construct and apply a makeshift tourniquet - demonstrating the professionalism, composure and remarkable calm under pressure that will be familiar to anyone that has worked with him.

The Geraldton Fire Station crew also responded to the incident, though thankfully Mel was already in an ambulance ready for transfer to hospital when they arrived.

We have also been advised that circumstances aligned to provide Mel with access to critical medical expertise in Geraldton at the time, including the presence of a visiting trauma specialist. Combined with the actions of those at the beach, emergency responders and the team at Geraldton Health Campus, Mel received outstanding support when it mattered most.

The UPFU extends its thoughts and support to Mel, his partner Kylie, his children and their wider family.

Mel's family has publicly thanked the Geraldton community for the support and kindness they have received and has asked that their privacy be respected while their focus remains on Mel and each other.

Please read at Muster and post on Notice Board

We ask all Members to respect that request. Please allow Kylie, the children and the family the space they need, and avoid circulating unconfirmed information about Mel's injuries, treatment or recovery.

Supporting Geraldton

We also recognise the impact this incident may have on the firefighters who attended, Mel's workmates at Geraldton Fire Station, our Members working from the Regional Office and the broader Geraldton emergency services community.

Geraldton Station and the Regional Office have dealt with a number of significant and traumatic incidents in recent times. Those experiences do not disappear when the appliance returns to station.

The Geraldton firefighting community is also continuing to support retired Station Officer Brett Williams, who retired in 2023 and is presently undergoing treatment for a serious illness.

These events are very different, but together they are a reminder that trauma, illness and difficult circumstances can affect any of us - **at work and away from work**.

Fit for Duty

This is exactly why Fit for Duty is about more than physical fitness.

It is about connection.

It is about recognising when one of our own may need some support.

It is about checking on the person beside you, having the conversation that might otherwise be avoided, and making sure nobody feels they need to carry difficult experiences alone.

Over the coming days, please keep Mel and his family, Brett and his family, and our Geraldton Fire Station and Regional Office Members in your thoughts.

More importantly, take this as a reminder to check in with each other.

Sometimes simply asking "*How are you travelling?*" - and being prepared to genuinely listen to the answer - is one of the most important things we can do.

And if someone asks you the same question, be prepared to answer honestly.

Looking after each other only works when we are willing to both offer support and accept it.

**Look after yourselves. Look after each other.
Strength in Unity.**



John Marsh
Secretary

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