

## NZPFU Report- United Firefighters Union of Australia National Committee of management and National Executive Meeting

Hobart Australia 14-16 November 2018.

This conference is an annual event where both Unions (NZPFU and UFUA) send delegates to the others national conference. The purpose for these is to develop delegates understanding of world firefighting trends and emerging issues to foster relationships to increase Industrial and legislative awareness and support from our global partners.



This year Ian Wright (National President), Graeme (Norm) Gilroy (Southern Branch President) attended on behalf NZPFU. National Secretary Derek Best attended as a guest of the UFUA.

International General President of the IAFF General President Schaitburger gave a video presentation on the global alliance of the need for media capability and political education / representatives to support firefighter causes (i.e. presumptive legislation).

A report regarding the Fire Brigades Union (United Kingdom) was read and outlined the significant cuts to firefighters and there conditions and trends in how that has occurred (station closures , use of retained firefighters etc.)

The evolution of the European Fire Fighters Unions Alliance (EFFUA -Germany, Iceland, Finland etc.) was also discussed and how it may strengthen the Global Alliance especially in terms of presumptive cancer legislation fir firefighters.

Guest Speakers Presentations were made by;

- IAFF Canadian Trustee Alex Forrest (Presumptive Legislation , IARC and Firefighter Wellness)
  - Alex spoke of his attempts as the only non-doctor on IARC, to influence their understanding and get firefighting listed as a category 1 carcinogenic occupation. If this is achieved then no employer anywhere in the world could argue our job doesn't cause cancer at much higher rates than the general population.
- Professor Mark Taylor – Macquarie University (PFOS , PFAS, PFHXS foam and dangers)
  - Mark, along with UFU Vic Vice President highlighted a very concerning process around these chemicals. Heat resistant to the extreme, these chemicals, present in foams (incl AFFF) and in our level 2 PPE, particularly in the moisture layers. UFU have commissioned a study with the University and independent doctors and scientists to further look into this to formulate a direction and policy going forward. We look forward to piggy backing off that work.
- Senator Gavin Marshall (Australian Labour laws)
  - Instrumental in Australian firefighters getting presumptive legislation for cancer spoke of this piece of work, generally about the sorry state of Australian politics particularly made comment of the lack of blue collar workers in Government at the moment with no idea of have to work for a living. He spoke of a phrase of Factual Education; Using Union members to educate politicians and media on the dangers of being a firefighters in this day and age.
- MP Adam Bandt ( elections / climate change effects on Firefighters)
  - Adam was also instrumental in presumptive legislation getting over the line in Australia. He also spoke of the looming crisis of global warming and all that means for firefighters into the future. Current figures have fire service doubling within the next 10-20 years to keep up with the global changes and challenges that that produces.
- Ian Wright FENZ Progress
  - Ian provided an update on CEA negotiations and the job sizing process used and what was planned for the next year. He also detailed the TOM process and how we can inform and influence the outcomes of this piece of work and that we had to be mindful of the impact on workers and Union officials workloads.

In tandem with the main national committee of management (NCOM) meeting the Occupational Safety and Health break out meetings were held over 8 hours. These were attended by Graeme Gilroy,

Matters discussed included;

- Ergonomics as they relate to appliance design from the Victorian Branch (information to be passed to our type 3 work group). Fleet procurement procedure
- Diesel Emissions (Able to share New Zealand information)
- PFAS /PFOA Policy development.
- PTSD /PTSI Presumptive Legislation in Tasmania.
  - Legislation is currently before the House to be passed recognising PTSi as an occupational injury which is a huge win for the Tasmanian Firefighters and especially impressive as they were the first State to get presumptive legislation for cancer passed as well.
- PPE issues around standards.

Legislative Agenda

- It was interesting hearing their discussion around their Legislative agenda. This is something we are particularly interested in formulating and progressing at our special conference in May in Auckland. UFUA are actively using “fire ops 101” which is a program developed in USA that brings politicians and media and influencers alike to training centres where they are put through their paces including a hot and smoky wearing. Gives great insight into what it’s like to be a firefighter. They are involved in the repeal of fair work amendments giving Volunteers a say in contractual arrangements for Career firefighters. Progressing PFAS regulations and enforcement of standards on the use of these foams. They are looking at a Senate inquiry into Aviation standards and particularly the passenger thresholds and standards of cover. They are progressing a firefighter’s registration board, i.e. becoming a registered professional given the level of qualification, training and experience Career firefighters have. They are looking to get a commitment to legislate that superannuation rate is raised to 12% by 2022 for Career firefighters who only receive employer contributions at the superannuation guarantee rate. They are wanting firefighting classified as a high risk occupation which would mean, requirements for PPE, the minimum amount of firefighters on the fire ground before firefighting can start, mandatory qualification and training requirements.

Secretary Derek Best at the 75<sup>th</sup> Milestone Dinner for the Tasmanian Branch was given honorary membership of the UFUA and received a fitting tribute of thanks for his work over 34 years by the UFUA followed by a standing ovation. He also addressed the conference with an historical and humorous recollection of memories and again received a well- earned standing ovation.

A special vote of thanks to Boyd Raines was also made for his Australasian Standards work.

We have invited 2 UFUA representatives to attend our conference in Christchurch in December.

Ian Wright      Graeme Gilroy