



## IN BRIEF



### Award shock

When drafts of the first 49 'modern' awards were released in early September, Unions were horrified to learn that workers in some industries could end up worse off than under John Howard's IR regime.



### Cuts galore

Airline, offshore oil and gas industry employees and apprentice electricians faced big base pay cuts. The Australian Service Union estimated that over 750,000 office workers would be adversely affected if their new award wasn't amended.



### Damage control

Since then, IR minister Julia Gillard has been instructing the Commission to fix the mess, although not always in support of Union and worker concerns. For example, she's asked for penalty rates suiting restaurateurs, not employees.

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Rosters and pay structures that promote trust, support, confidence and safety among fire crews are under challenge from the Federal government's program to restructure or 'modernise' awards

pic: warren frey tas

# New award concerns

Threats to firefighter conditions and safety lurk behind the Rudd government's FairWork and 'forward with fairness' buzzwords

The overhaul of Australia's Award system will see more than 4,000 state and federal awards collapse into 130 'modern' awards. They will incorporate the government's ten National Employment Standards. "While the new awards can also include an additional ten minimum conditions of employment to meet the needs of a particular industry or occupation," says UFUA National Secretary, Peter Marshall, "the UFUA is very concerned for the future of firefighter rosters, pay and allowances."

All new awards are expected to include a 'flexibility clause' that could be used to

negotiate deals with individuals to undercut collective award or agreement conditions. 'Flexible work arrangements' and part-time clauses could be used as stalking horses to undermine the 10/14 roster system.

"The Industrial Relations Commission has been examining a new national firefighting services award," says Peter. "The Union participated on the unchallenged understanding that the outcome would apply to the private sector only. But late in the day, the Melbourne Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board (MFESB) put in a submission stating this award should apply to its firefighters."

## GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

Under the government's award overhaul guidelines, the public sector will be reviewed next year. "This is when awards and agreements covering public sector fire authorities like the MFESB, CFA and those in other states and territories will be considered," says Peter Marshall. "But MFB management has tried to jump the gun." The Union believes a current 'exposure draft'

of a fire services industry award is not suitable for the public sector firefighters. "Commanders are wrongly classified as non-operational while a number of allowances have been changed or cut," says Peter Marshall. "The federal government is supporting the Union's view that this is not the time to review MFESB agreements or awards." The Commission will announce its decision in December.