

Question on Notice
No. 264
Asked on 2 April 2014

MR BYRNE asked the Premier (MR NEWMAN)—

With reference to the Attorney-General's answer to Question on Notice No. 138 of 2014 and the assurances from both the Deputy Premier's staff and the Attorney-General provided to Auxiliary Firefighters during the debate on the Industrial Relations (Fair Work Act Harmonisation No. 2) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill—

- (1) Why is the government trying to deny auxiliary firefighters the right to an industrial award or even have their latest application for a first award heard by the independent tribunal, when their new application was made in December 2013?
- (2) Has the QFES, by making an application to 'strike out' the new application for an auxiliary firefighters' modern award, acted contrary to the intent of the government?
- (3) Who authorised the QFES to make the application to the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission to 'strike out' the new application for an auxiliary firefighters' modern award?
- (4) When will the Auxiliary award be finalised?

ANSWER:

- (1) The Attorney-General and Minister for Justice identified in Parliament that the matter of formal industrial coverage for auxiliary firefighters would be a priority issue to be addressed in the award modernisation process. Consequently, the Attorney-General's formal request to the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission (QIRC) to initiate the award modernisation process identified auxiliary firefighters as a priority industry.

At present the terms and conditions of employment for auxiliary firefighters are contained in a Standing Order issued by the Commissioner of the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES). Traditionally the Commissioner of QFES has flowed on headline wage increases for permanent firefighters to auxiliaries following the QIRC's certification of an agreement made between QFES and the United Firefighters Union. These longstanding arrangements will continue until the QIRC determines the question of award coverage.

- (2) The Government supports the view that the most sensible and appropriate means of determining award coverage for auxiliary firefighters is via the award modernisation process.
- (3) QFES is responsible for managing its own workplace relations and in this instance, as is customary, did so after consulting and gaining the support of the Public Service Commission.
- (4) The QIRC is responsible for progressing award modernisation in accordance with relevant legislative provisions and the Attorney-General's request referenced in (1) above.