

National Parks and Wildlife Service: December industrial bulletin

The PSA and its delegates met with National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) management at the Joint Consultative Committee meeting on Wednesday 9 December. There was no briefing from the Head of Parks as he was unavailable to attend the meeting. The following is an update on issues discussed at the meeting.

Workloads and stress levels amongst members

The PSA had a lengthy discussion at the meeting on the effects of the last fire season; the recovery process; capital works and additional funds, and the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on workloads and stress levels. The clear message from members across the state is that never before have workloads in the NPWS been so high and as such, so too, levels of stress amongst members.

Members have advised the PSA that when their concerns were aired they didn't appear to be heard and considered with reasonable action taken to mitigate such issues. The NPWS Executive Directors present at the meeting indicated they were constantly discussing such matters with Directors and that if Directors weren't taking action then members were entitled to raise such matters with the ED's and continue up the chain of command until such matters were effectively considered and dealt with. They also indicated that the NPWS had come out of the fire season with its reputation in place and this was due to the significant effort and professionalism of staff.

Further to this, the PSA inquired as to why many positions weren't being filled, including a situation whereby Field Officer Grade 1/4 roles were not being filled. The NPWS advised that, due to the establishment review process, some roles were not going to be filled. The PSA views this as a serious breach of the undertakings given by NPWS during Future National Parks process in 2017/18, as well as a further 'restructure by stealth' and will deal with this matter accordingly.

On that basis the PSA will seek an urgent meeting with the Minister early in the new year to discuss a range of issues. Most importantly, the filling of vacant positions that is creating such a significant work load and ever increasing stress levels for members.

Industrial Relations Commission salaries case

The latest decision in regards to your salaries was handed down on 12 November. The decision was in regards to how the paltry 0.3 per cent would be paid, whether via one lump sum for 12 months and your salary officially amended on June 30 2021 (next year), OR via amending your salary from 1 July 2020 and receiving the 0.3 per cent adjustment in your regular fortnightly pay. Both these options would include a back pay amount to take effect from the first full pay period on or after 1 July 2020.

The Industrial Relations Commission (IRC) largely agreed with submissions from the PSA and determined that the 0.3 per cent increase should apply from the first full pay period after July 1 2020,



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meaning you will receive a lump sum of back pay to that date, and then a regular increase in your fortnightly pay.

As per the IRC's orders, the PSA prepared "short minutes" to give effect to this by Friday 4 December. This means that your back pay and 0.3 per cent increase should be processed by the Department in the next few pay cycles.

Work Health and Safety

There were 130 'health and well-being' courses held with 1000 participants. CAMM's training had 1600 participants. However, there were issues with logging onto the training course. This is due to links within DPIE being problematic, hence NPWS is now establishing its own WHS web page. There were no claims from staff of DPIE for workers' compensation due to COVID.

NPWS budget

The PSA advised the Department that it's been 18 months since the NPWS had been allocated a budget, and the first time since the establishment of the NPWS that a budget had not been uploaded. NPWS shared the frustration of members and advised that the State Budget is late and that it was the hope of DPIE that budgets would be uploaded before Christmas.

Law enforcement training

A calendar for law enforcement training is currently being prepared by NPWS for 2021. At this stage it is uncertain as to how many level 1 and 2 courses will be rolled out in the New Year. However, a number of level 1 courses have been held recently across the state.

Introduction of digital pass

The PSA aired its concern with the lack of consultation in relation to the implementation of the digital pass system. Advice from NPWS at the meeting is that it is yet to be implemented and that there will be NO impact on roles other than some change of duties. And that it will not be implemented until February/March next year. This will provide time for consultation.

Leave balance accrual and deductions

Many of you would share the frustration of the PSA and many of its members in NPWS with the dysfunctional DPIE payroll/SAP HR system that calculates leave based an algorithm no-one understands and simply doesn't work. On that basis the PSA has advised NPWS that any mistakes made by the DPIE system in calculating leave balances (and costs of any miscalculations) should be borne by the department. If you have been adversely affected, please advise your PSA workplace



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delegate or PSA industrial staff. The PSA has, to date, had some wins with DPIE in relation to this matter.

Pest control

The NPWS currently has three aircraft working full-time on vertebrate pest control. Results are yet to be quantified. A bid for additional funds is being prepared for Commonwealth funding. This will include additional funds for ground baiting.

Bushfire Royal Commission recommendations

The PSA submission (amongst others) to the Royal Commission resulted in additional resources being provided to the NPWS. NPWS advised that on top of 125 firefighters an additional aircraft has been cross hired for RAFT duties over the fire season. Further to this \$1 million has been provided for vehicle protection systems including sprinklers; defibrillators; ROP and FOP's; heat shields and additional fire blankets for all Cat 9 vehicles. Approximately 40-50 vehicles will be initially supplied with this equipment. Fit-out is planned to commence after the current fire season.

An additional 25 new Cat 9s has been purchased and more vehicles are being leased. The NPWS has 600 vehicles, including 300 Cat 9s. Further plant will also be acquired this financial year.

Winch training for Paramedics

The current situation is that NSW Ambulance Service Paramedics are not permitted to winch out of single engine aircraft (hence they can't winch out of Parkair machines). This being the case, NPWS is proposing to contract out private company Paramedics (particularly for Class 1 fires). The NPWS will discuss with the RFS the ability for such Paramedics to winch out of single engine aircraft at Class 3 fires.

Finally, the PSA wishes all NPWS members a very happy and enjoyable Christmas. For those of you who are working please stay safe and let's hope it's a quiet one!

