

Rural Fire Service Award update: Allowances

This is our second bulletin in a series overviewing the key aspects of the principles document which was recently put to you by the Rural Fire Service (RFS). For a copy of that document, please click [HERE](#).

Our first bulletin dealt with hours of work, which included overtime and flexible work. This bulletin addresses allowances, including the Annualised Conditions Allowance (ACA). There will be another bulletin to cover the Average Shift Penalties Allowance in the coming days.

ACA

We recognise this is a significant issue for people. We have had a variety of views expressed, from those who wish to keep it and from those who want it replaced with an alternative arrangement.

The ACA compensates for a set of duties that are the same across the organisation. However, by its nature of being calculated as a percentage, we believe it is neither fair or equitable.

The ACA was developed in the first iteration of the *RFS Award* in 2002. It was primarily established to remunerate district staff for additional duties whilst reducing the administrative burden on the RFS management in processing individual allowance claims.

ACA is attached to a role, not to individuals. The ACA policy previously identified these roles. Various policy reviews have removed the identified roles creating uncertainty as to how the ACA is applied.

Furthermore, the PSA has advised management of our view that the process for managing ACA applications and reviews via the ACA Review Panel are inconsistent and not in line with the Award requirements. The PSA is currently pressing this issue with the RFS. Members also need to be aware that management can remove the ACA or components of it, from recipients due to changes in work practices with little notice.

It is for the above reasons the PSA believes that an alternative arrangement is sought to fairly and equitably compensate all members for the work that they do.

What will replace the ACA?

The ACA is made up of a matrix of components that is designed to compensate for individual allowances. Provided you meet the requirements you would still be able to claim allowances individually, such as Uniform/Laundry, Excess Travel, Garage/Carport, On Call and the Duty Officer. Programmed Overtime will not be an allowance; rather it will be recognised through the Flex Hours system. Additionally, you will be paid for hours worked as an On Call Officer and Duty Officer. This is not something that currently occurs for ACA recipients. This is explained further on in this bulletin.



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Below is a table indicating the components of the ACA, their origin from individual Award clauses and their monetary rate from the original Award clause, as at 1 July 2020. Note, where the *RFS Award* is silent on a condition, the *Crown Employees (Public Service Conditions of Employment) Award 2009 (Conditions Award)* applies and if eligible, you will be paid that allowance.

We will be publishing a survey at the end of this series of bulletins for you to have say on the Award, including whether the ACA stays or goes. While this won't be your final opportunity to have your say, it will be a great opportunity, so please participate!

ACA Component	Relevant Award Clause	Monetary Value of Allowance
Programmed Overtime	Nil. Stand alone allowance only available within the applicable ACA Scenarios.	The value of this component is based on an additional 2 hours worth of work relevant to the grade of the role that the ACA is attached to.
Afterhours	RFS Award Cl. 13	\$250 per week.
Excess Travel	Crown Award Cl. 27	Annual salary X (5/260.89) X (1/Normal hours of work)
On Call	Crown Award Cl. 92	\$1.00 per hour.
Garage/Carport	Crown Award Cl.48	Garage Allowance = \$695 pa Carport Allowance = \$154 pa
Uniform/Laundry	Crown Award Cl. 46	\$5.10 per week

Programmed Overtime

Programmed Overtime is an exclusive allowance that exists only within the ACA matrix. Currently, recipients of this component of the ACA are excluded from general overtime and local arrangement provisions as they are already being compensated for additional programmed work. The proposal is to have additional hours recognised through the *Flexible Working Hours Agreement*. It is worth noting the weekend multiplier effect to hours worked on the weekend is not something that occurs now.



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As advised previously, we remain of the view that overtime should be applicable within the bandwidth where work is directed over seven hours. This remains a matter for further discussion with management

After Hours Allowance (Duty Officer Allowance)

Currently, a Duty Officer (there are number of types) receives the After Hours Allowance as a \$250-per-week rate. This is for all Duty Officer work or as a percentage component within their ACA for all Duty Officer work. The After Hours Allowance is not indexed and has remained static since 2002 at \$250 whilst other allowances across the public sector have increased in line with the public sector annual salary increases.

The principles released by the RFS convert the \$250 per week to \$1.90 per hour (24hrs X 7days = 168hrs in a week – 35hrs paid = 133hrs available for Duty Officer per week. $\$250/133 \text{ hrs} = \1.90 per hour). This allowance is the hourly rate you would be paid to be available as a duty officer. This allowance would be indexed and increase in line with the public sector salary increases.

Incident Allowance

This is a proposed new allowance; it is not something that is paid currently. When a call received by the Duty Officer results in discernible action, the Duty Officer will be paid an Incident Allowance at \$37.62 per hour. This is based on the hourly base pay of an OCC operator. The “Incident Allowance” was based on an OCC Operator as this was the closest like for like role.

If a discernible action occurs, a minimum of two hours’ Incident Allowance will be paid irrespective of the duration of the action. A key issue will be how discernible action is determined. This issue is subject to further discussion between the RFS and the PSA. Too many of the arrangements within the RFS have been vague or “shades of grey”. We are aware the membership wants black-and-white certainty regarding discernible action. How this is defined will be clarified in further discussions to avoid any uncertainty.

Excess Travel

Currently Excess Travel is a component of the ACA and compensates recipients as a percentage of their ACA for travelling outside of the bandwidth. Those who are receiving this component are excluded from claiming Overtime and Local Arrangement for the extra time worked spent travelling as they are already being compensated. Those who are not on an ACA or do not receive this component within their ACA can claim excess Travel Allowance as per the Conditions Award or negotiate a local arrangement.

In the future, if there is no ACA, then all members who are travelling outside of the bandwidth will claim the Crown Award Excess Travel Allowance. The proposed wide bandwidth reduces the time available that the allowance is applicable compared to currently.



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On Call Allowance

Currently On Call is a component of the ACA and compensates recipients as a percentage of their ACA for being On Call (available for recall to duties) and for all duties worked as an On Call Officer (recalled duties). Those who are not on an ACA or do not receive this component within their ACA can claim the On Call allowance as per the Conditions Award, and when they are recalled to duty, they are entitled to overtime.

In the future, if there is no ACA, then all members who are On Call, claim the Conditions Award On Call Allowance and when they are recalled to duty they are paid overtime. Note, you do not need to be ranked to claim the Conditions Award On Call Allowance.

Garage and Carport Allowance

Currently the Garage and Carport Allowance is a component of the ACA and compensates recipients as a percentage of their ACA for garaging or carporting a service vehicle. Those who are not on an ACA or do not receive this component within the ACA and are required to garage or carport a service vehicle can claim the Conditions Award Garage and Carport Allowance.

In the future if there is no ACA, then all members who are eligible can claim the Conditions Award Garage and Carport Allowance.

Uniform and Laundry Allowance

Currently the Uniform and Laundry Allowance is a component of the ACA and compensates recipients as a percentage of their ACA for laundering their uniform. Those who are not on an ACA or do not receive this component within their ACA and meet the eligibility, can claim the Crown Award Uniform and Laundry Allowance.

In the future, if there is no ACA, all members who meet the eligibility can claim the Crown Award Uniform and Laundry Allowance.

We note that these arrangements may impact differently depending on your situation. We urge you to carefully assess this to enable you to respond to our pending survey. Please keep in mind that the survey is not your vote on a final position. It is to help us clearly understand your views and then determine the way forward.

Not yet a member and want to have your say?

Join the PSA today at www.psa.asn.au/join.

