

NEWSLETTER TO MEMBERS No 15 - 18 JULY 2008

WHAT'S THE POINT OF TALKING WITH YOUR LOCAL OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT?

A current ongoing dispute in Taupo provides further evidence that Operational Management has lost control, or even input, into Industrial Relations matters.

The last Newsletter NTM No. 14 – detailed the complete dominance of Human Resources in the dispute about the fairness of a minimum payment for pre-arranged call-outs.

In Taupo, the Local Secretary – Mike Powell – had acted diligently and properly in reaching an agreement – albeit verbal – with Taupo's Acting CFO – John Booth – in regard to allegations against a member of Breach of the Standards of Conduct – the catchall and usually spurious “bringing the Fire Service into disrepute”.

However, when Human Resources – Steven Fraser? – was informed of the agreement, Human Resources directed the agreement did not provide sufficient punishment and that a formal written warning must be given.

Faced with such a directive and regardless of the agreement already reached, the Acting CFO buckled and issued the written warning.

This outcome does raise real concerns about the usefulness of Locals attempting to resolve issues with Local Operational Management. If agreements reached in good faith are simply overridden by Human Resources, Union officials are entitled to ask – what's the point?

Without exception, Human Resources have no understanding or appreciation of what it means to be a Firefighter – and neither do they want to.

Sitting behind their screens in Wellington and immersed in their textbooks of management-speak – their actions are probably not surprising.

What is surprising is the abject surrender to Human Resources by Uniformed Management.

The struggle for power now seems to be between Human Resources and the newly emerging Fire Risk Management Department, which the Union understands now as well runs all the P.R. functions of the Fire Service.

The draft Discussion Document on Fire Safety restructuring written by Paula Beever – Director, Fire Risk Management - purported to significantly direct the future role of Operational Firefighters:

“As operational staff take up increasing amounts of proactive work...”

Bureaucratic power plays may stoke egos, but members know their role is providing the best services to the communities they serve. What Firefighters want from the various support services – for that's what Human Resources and others at National Headquarters are – is to be given the resources and assistance to best serve their communities.

What a disgrace that others in the Fire Service don't also have this objective.

N.Z.P.F.U.