

YOUR NATIONAL ENTERPRISE COUNCIL IS LOOKING OUT FOR YOU

Photographer: Ollie Winter-Irving



Delegates from the National Insurance Council met in Melbourne on 30 March 2007 to undertake planning for the coming year. Pictured L-R: Christopher Wright (NSW/ACT), Pam Nicholas (WA), Anna Zabinski (VIC/TAS) and Jim Convery (QLD). Absent: Jan Ruwoldt (NEC President, SA/NT).

Last year the FSU reached an important milestone in the structure of the Union with the establishment of member councils that represent various parts of the industry. The new Councils are crucial in ensuring that the FSU is a democratic organisation, and that it accurately represents the views of a diverse cross section of the Union's members.

There are seven state based Local Enterprise Councils (LEC's) representing members in banks, insurance and other financial institutions. Each LEC nominates a President who then represents the LEC at a National level. These delegates are called National Enterprise Councils (NEC's).

Before embarking on the first National Planning cycles for the FSU, NEC delegates met in Melbourne on 30 March for a Planning Day.

Delegates were given an overview of FSU's policy position on offshoring, pay equity and superannuation before breaking into groups to discuss plans for the next 12 months.

The National Insurance Council resolved the build power in insurance through growth in membership.

The top 4 issues for members in Insurance were prioritised as:

1. Remuneration/Market rates of pay
2. Work/Life Balance
3. Outsourcing/Offshoring of jobs
4. Lack of transparency and lack of genuine consultation by Insurance employers

PAY - WHAT ARE YOU WORTH IN THE INSURANCE MARKET?

It will be no surprise to members to learn that employers in the insurance sector continue their move away from across the board pay increases towards market-based pay.

At first glance, market-based pay might sound ok. After all, everyone wants to know that they are receiving the market rate for their job. It is not until employees take a closer look at market-based pay that they start to get a better idea of what this actually means for them.

At present, your employer decides which 'market' your role sits in. Typically, they do this by subscribing to external market remuneration surveys. The external remuneration company surveys a range of insurance companies and asks them what they pay for particular insurance jobs.

The employer compares your position to a description of positions in the survey to decide what the 'market' is paying for that role. But it is your employer, not you, who decides which position in the survey your role should be compared to. It may be that your job is being compared to one that has less or different responsibilities or skills. Therefore, the pay ranges may be less.

"FSU has access to a range of independent salary data. So, in order to provide confidential

“ It was a great opportunity to meet the other delegates on the FSU National Insurance Council as well as delegates from the other NECs. We reckon we've come up with a list of recommended priorities that will help build membership power in insurance. ”

Anna Zabinsky - Insurance Enterprise Council Delegate and President, VIC/TAS Local Insurance Council.

and independent remuneration advice to members, we have kicked off a national insurance remuneration project," says Jan Ruwoldt, President, FSU National Insurance Council.

The first stage of the project involves surveying members in 16 highly populated roles about your current pay and how it compares with pay for similar roles in other insurance companies.

- ❖ **Claims** - Claims Officer, Senior Claims Officer, Team Leader - Claims.
- ❖ **Insurance Call Centres** - Call Centre consultant, Call Centre team leader.
- ❖ **Retail** - Sales consultant, Senior sales consultant, Branch manager.
- ❖ **Underwriting** - Senior Underwriter, Underwriter, Assistant Underwriter.
- ❖ **Assessing** - Home Assessor, Motor Vehicle Assessor.
- ❖ **Workers Compensation** - Claims Officer, Injury Management Advisor, Case Manager.

If you are currently performing one of the above roles, FSU is keen for you to complete our online survey. All participants will be provided with independent market data for their role.

The information FSU collects is kept strictly confidential. We gather contact details only for the purpose of tracking average pay increases over time. Summary results by role will be available to FSU members only.

"This is a big project however the first measure of success for our members will be when FSU market data reveals the truth about comparative pay rates for similar roles across insurance," says Jan. "Employers in insurance share salary information. It's about time we employees - with the help of the FSU - did the same!" said Jan.

To complete the on-line survey go to www.fsunion.org.au/insurancesurvey/

LONG SERVICE LEAVE - ALLIANZ

FSU members in Allianz recently contacted the Union after receiving instructions from management that Long Service Leave (LSL) must be taken within two years of its accrual, regardless of whether the timing is convenient or not.

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Jan Ruwoldt, President, FSU National Insurance Council.

PAY EQUITY

Did you know that the finance sector has the highest gender pay gap of any industry in Australia? On average, women in the finance sector earn just 77% of what men earn. FSU has approached a number of insurance companies to examine ways to jointly address the issue. To find out more, check out www.fsunion.org.au/payequity

SKILLS SHORTAGES PREDICTED IN INSURANCE

In an article published in the Australian Financial Review on 15 March 2007, the journalist Helen Zampetakis suggested that the scarcity of skilled professionals is emerging as the biggest issue facing Australia's rapidly changing insurance industry.

To begin addressing skill shortages, the FSU is planning to host an industry forum later this year. The aim of the forum is to bring together the major employers in our industry, including key insurance employers, to discuss what could be done to minimise skill shortages in the future.

FSU is keen to hear from you about any training, career development and skills issues you are facing in your workplace. For example, are you aware of other insurance companies poaching or head hunting skilled staff from your workplace? Have increased regulatory requirements in insurance meant that you have self-funded training so you remain employable? Do barriers exist that may impede women from returning to work after parental leave? Email your comments to sally.wright@fsunion.org.au.



Want a pay rise under market rates? Good luck.

FSU told Allianz that we don't believe that the direction is consistent with the Insurance Industry Award 1998.

In contrast, it is custom and practice for employees to have the choice of either taking their accrued LSL after it falls due or postponing it to be taken at a more convenient time.

FSU members gathered signatures for a petition which was presented to management at Allianz. Through this collective action, Allianz has shifted their position.

"When Allianz try to undermine our entitlements, they have to understand that we will stand together as union members and make sure they listen to our concerns and act accordingly" says Lesley Carr and Terry Clarke, Allianz Brisbane.

Allianz has agreed to consider reasonable requests for postponements to taking Long Service Leave.

"FSU stepped up in the difficult industrial climate to enforce leave entitlements for members in Allianz and for all employees in insurance," said Paul Schroder, FSU National Secretary.

"Long Service Leave is an entitlement that union members fought hard to achieve. We've sent a clear message to all insurance employers that if one of them tries to water down entitlements, they are actually trying to water down entitlements for all insurance workers. FSU just won't let that happen," said Paul.

For more information, please see the FSU updates on www.fsunion.org.au.

SUNCORP AND PROMINA GROUP JOIN FORCES

In October 2006 it was announced that Suncorp and Promina Group would merge.

The merged group is now the second largest domestic general insurer in both Australia and New Zealand and Australia's sixth largest bank. They have one of the largest customer bases of any financial services group in Australia with more than 7 million customers.

John Mulcahy remains as Suncorp CEO and recently announced his new executive team and board members.

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Lesley Carr and Terry Clarke, Allianz Brisbane.

FSU conducted a series of visits to Suncorp and Promina workplaces during April 2007 to chat with employees about the merger. The impact the merger will have on the 16,000 employees is unfolding slowly.

Management has told staff that the integration of the businesses will take place across a two year period with 'business as usual' at the moment. Staff do not seem overly concerned about the merger at this point in time but have asked the FSU to remain ready to help in the event that any major changes or restructures are announced.

The top issues that employees talked to the FSU about included job security, competitive pay rates, adequate staffing levels, protection of their existing conditions and wanting management to properly consult during periods of change.

Meanwhile, Suncorp commenced discussions with staff around a new set of common core conditions. FSU, as a bargaining agent for members in Suncorp, forwarded a list of concerns to Suncorp's Review & Development Team (RDT) for their consideration. Of particular concern, are the proposed agreement clauses on pay, hours of work, job security and dispute resolution. Download a copy of the FSU paper from our website at http://www.fsunion.org.au/news/public/1179970462_9285.html.

FSU will continue to provide advice and representation to members as we continue to meet with Suncorp about any changed employment arrangements.

"It is really important for Suncorp employees to have a collective voice and to have access to the independent, expert advice of the FSU."

Adam Baker, Suncorp Brisbane.

Suncorp has told the FSU that employees in Promina will not be subject to the new Suncorp conditions at this point in time.

If you have any questions or would like more information about the merger, please email merger@fsunion.org.au

PUBLIC HOLIDAY BONUS FOR IAG'S FLEXIBLE WORK TEAM

FSU and IAG recently negotiated a local agreement for employees working in the Flexible Work Team (FWT) at IAG's Telephone Business Centre in Hurstville, Sydney.

Due to their non-standard rostering arrangements, no FWT employee is rostered to work on a Public Holiday. Rather, the number of staff is determined by IAG management and a call for volunteers is made.

"The main objective of negotiating this agreement was to ensure that the rostering arrangements in place in this team don't disadvantage the FWT employees in relation to pay and working arrangements for Public Holidays," says Chris Wright, Vice President, FSU National Insurance Council.

The local agreement delivers an annual bonus to compensate the FWT employees for Public Holidays. The IAG Enterprise Agreement 2003 continues to cover all other matters of employment for the FWT employees.

"This was a great outcome as FSU and IAG came up with a creative solution to remedy an unintended problem," says Rosanne Kerlin, FSU National Director.

RACQ - CHECK YOUR SUPER

If you receive weekend loadings for working part of your ordinary hours on weekends, you should have received an increased superannuation payment in your pay on 15 March 2007. In the following pay period, you may also have received a lump sum payment for superannuation.

The increased payment comes after an FSU member approached the Union to enquire whether additional loadings for working weekends (25% for Saturday work and 50% for Sunday work) should attract superannuation contributions from RACQ.

The answer to our member's question is - YES!

FSU approached RACQ and asked that they make the appropriate payments to our member, which they subsequently did. RACQ has now assured the Union that adjustments to the pay system have been made to ensure all future superannuation will be paid on ordinary hour loadings on weekends.

You may also have received a lump sum payment in your pay of 28 March 2007 (for the pay period 17 to 30 March). This payment is back pay for any super that was not paid on weekend loadings since June 2006.

FSU will continue discussions with RACQ about further back pay that may be owing to members from work performed prior to June 2006.

IMPROVEMENTS TO SUPER ON THE WAY IN NEW ZURICH EA

FSU Workplace Reps and member efforts have been successful in persuading Zurich to take a step in the right direction when it comes to increasing employer super contributions.

As part of the Zurich EA negotiations currently underway, FSU Workplace Reps clearly put the case that the current SGC contribution of 9% was insufficient to ensure a secure retirement future for Zurich employees.

After several months of negotiations Zurich indicated that it would be prepared to increase its super contributions, but that it would be on the basis of co-contribution only. Further efforts by FSU Workplace Reps have now been successful in negotiating several options to enable Zurich employees to have a say about this.

Zurich employees will therefore get to vote on one of the following 2 options. The option supported by the majority of staff will be included in the next Enterprise Agreement.

Those options are:

Option 1: An additional 0.5% superannuation is provided to all employees with more than 2 years service. There is no employee co-contribution required.

OR

Option 2: An additional 1% superannuation is provided to all employees with more than 2 years service and who also make a co-contribution of 1%.

Stop Press: At the time of print, the ballot concluded with the majority of employees supporting Option 2.

FSU will soon be meeting with Zurich to progress the next steps to conclude the EA process.



FSU Stepping Up

To Protect Your Rights at Work

Professional Advice
Enforcing your rights
Insuring your job

Contact your union

1300 366 378

www.fsunion.org.au