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Roper vs Exec: Dispute Deepens

UFBA Executive Director Don Roper and members of the UFBA Executive are attending employment mediation today amidst growing evidence of a wholesale collapse in their working relationship.

This new employment dispute follows one between the UFBA Executive and their former Business Manager Clare Leatham in 2002, which has to date cost the Association more than \$46,000. It is not yet clear what it might cost the Association to resolve this new dispute.

As previously reported, Roper has been on paid stress leave since May. This is understood to follow more than a year of deep tension between Roper and key members of the Executive, notably President Dave McFarlane. Issues in dispute are understood to have included Executive perks, and the role Executive members have played in directly managing UFBA staff.

Since the Leatham dispute the UFBA has experienced a sharp deterioration in its financial position, has failed to produce a business plan for the 2003/2004 year, and has engaged in ongoing funding and accountability disputes with the Fire Service. In June Dame Margaret Bazley froze funding levels for the coming financial year citing "the absence of a well argued business case", and imposed a range of new reporting requirements on the Executive.

VollyNet Reports has learned that Mary Roper, wife of Don and long-time voluntary worker for the UFBA, has been banned from the UFBA's Wellington offices. Member brigades report that their rolls have not been updated for some time, and requests for administrative information have gone unanswered.

A group of former UFBA presidents, reportedly deeply concerned by recent events, are understood to be planning a meeting to discuss what action they might be able to take.