

NATIONAL BULLETIN

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TO ALL UFUA MEMBERS

TASMANIA SETS THE PACE ON PRESUMPTIVE LEGISLATION

The Tasmanian Government has today moved to become the first State in Australia to introduce supported presumptive legislation recognising all twelve occupational cancers for firefighters.

This follows announcements last year by Western Australian and South Australian Governments declaring their intention to introduce similar mechanisms to enable firefighters to access their entitlements, compensation and medical assistance for occupational cancers.

While similar legislation to support firefighters with occupational cancer has been introduced in Victoria – or is close to being presented in other States – there is still work to be done to gain the support of all parties.

Tasmanian Emergency Management Minister David O'Byrne today introduced legislation to end the impossible task of firefighters proving which chemicals they encounter have caused their cancer from the many hundreds of fires and emergencies they may have attended.

They will be able to access medical support, leave and compensation -- removing the burden which currently falls on their family and friends.

Similar laws support stricken firefighters in Canada and the United States, as well as federally employed firefighters working in Canberra and Australian airports.

In Australia, the federal legislation was passed after a thorough Senate inquiry examined the links between firefighters and cancer, and was unanimously supported by all political parties.

Firefighters sincerely appreciate today's initiative by the Tasmanian Government. We hope this legislation will also have the bipartisan support of all parties in the Tasmanian Parliament.

We also hope that politicians in other States will soon recognise the unique risks that firefighters face.

TASMANIA currently has almost 300 career fire fighters, and almost 5000 volunteers.

Under current protections, a fire fighter who contracts cancer after being exposed to toxic chemicals may not be eligible for Workers Compensation.

Under the new legislation:

- Any fire fighter who contracts one of 12 types of cancer will be *presumed* to have done so in the course of their work - subject to qualifying employment periods, and exposure through fire incidents.
- All career and volunteer fire fighters will be covered.
- Retired career fire-fighters will be covered for 10 years after retirement.
- Retired volunteer fire fighters will be covered for 10 years after the last fire incident they attended (although the law is not retrospective).
- Career fire-fighters employed before 1998 won't have to meet exposure requirements, because exposure data wasn't collected before then.
- The costs of the scheme will be covered through existing Workers Compensation insurance provisions.

Fire fighters will be entitled to claim medical expenses, as per existing workers compensation arrangements. If they can't work, weekly payments are available under the Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act.

Strength in Unity
READ OUT AT MUSTER AND PIN ON NOTICE BOARD
Authorised by National Secretary Peter Marshall