



MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Volunteers welcome proposed cancer law**

The CFA volunteers' association has welcomed proposed legislation to simplify cancer compensation for Victorian volunteer and career firefighters.

Andrew Ford, CEO of Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV), said the legislation is important to all firefighters and he looks forward to it being supported by all MPs.

"We have had discussions with all of the major parties. The draft legislation launched today will be introduced to Parliament by the Greens, and Labor have advised they support the legislation in principle," Mr Ford said.

"We hope that such presumptive legislation will ultimately have the support of the Victorian Government," he said.

"The Victorian Government has done many things for volunteers since it was elected, and this is an area where we hope they will also take positive action."

Research examined as part of an Australian Senate Inquiry in 2011 demonstrated that certain cancers are far more common in firefighters than among the general community, so the legislation presumes those cancers to be work related unless proved otherwise.

"This legislation can allow the firefighter to concentrate on their treatment and recovery, not a complex process where they try to prove the cancer was caused by one particular fire or chemical incident that might have been 10 or 15 years ago," Mr Ford said.

"It can make a great difference for long serving volunteer and career firefighters alike, who are diagnosed with these typical firefighter cancers," he said.

Presumptive cancer legislation for firefighters already exists in the US and Canada, and the Australian Parliament has already provided this kind of coverage to federally employed firefighters, with a list of 12 specific cancers.

The South Australian and Western Australian governments are considering similar legislation.

"This is not a new entitlement, so I can't see why it shouldn't be strongly supported by all political parties," Mr Ford said.

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“The legislation builds on the existing entitlements and simply removes the barriers that have made it difficult for firefighters to prove beyond doubt which fire caused their cancer,” he said.

“Volunteers and career firefighters alike respond to fires every day of the year, so it is very difficult for a firefighter who may have attended hundreds of fires over many years to know which fire caused their illness.”

“This is an important issue for volunteers and career firefighters. The issue has been talked about in Victoria since similar legislation was passed for federally employed firefighters in 2011,” Mr Ford said.

“Now that there is a specific piece of legislation on the table, I am hopeful that it provides a catalyst for MPs across all political parties to work together to get it across the line as soon as possible,” he said.

“VFBV agrees with statements made today by the Deputy Premier Peter Ryan that this issue should not be politicised. We will continue to work with all of the major parties to advance the ultimate aim, which is fair protection for firefighters, volunteer and career alike,” Mr Ford said.

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