



## IN BRIEF



STOCKXPRT

### A long list

Concern about cancer rates among Australian firefighters has authorities asking for more information. The ACT Government was first to act with an investigative body involving the Union, Fire Service, Health Department and Comcare. The Queensland Government has commissioned a cross-check of State's cancer registry with firefighter staffing records, while AFAC is considering a ten year study into firefighter cancers.

### Sign off now

"We believe more can be done," says Peter Marshall. "In most states and territories reversing the onus of proof in compensation claims for firefighters contracting cancers can be done now, with the just the stroke of the Minister's pen."



STOCKXPRT

### Concrete it

The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service has decided the disused fire station house at Atherton will be removed and the site concreted over. This follows the discovery of the cancer cluster among Atherton firefighters.

## CONTACT

Peter Marshall  
 UFUA National Secretary  
 410 Brunswick St, Fitzroy 3065  
 Ph: (03) 9419 8811  
 Fax: (03) 9419 9258  
 email: officeadmin@ufuvc.asn.au  
 website: <http://www.ufua.asn.au>



WARREN FREY

Exposure to hazardous material at work is a serious health risk. Extensive US research into male firefighters found they are twice as likely to develop testicular cancer - and have significantly higher rates of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and prostate cancer - than other men.

## Action now!

This is the message to governments in the UFUA's campaign for presumptive protection for firefighters across Australia

The discovery of a cancer cluster at the Atherton Fire Station in North Queensland, and the Union's push for presumptive legislation for firefighters in the ACT, has produced a rash of 'further investigation' responses around the country.

However, the UFUA is questioning the need for further studies before Governments act. "We say there is already enough evidence to justify statutory protection for firefighters across Australia," says UFUA National Secretary, Peter Marshall. "For example, the US Cincinnati Report investigated 10,000 firefighter case histories and found a direct

correlation between cancer and the occupation of firefighting."

In North America, most states and provinces have protective legislation that reverses the onus of proof in compensation claims involving firefighters contracting cancers, as well as heart, lung and some infectious diseases.

However, in Australia, legislation is not required in most jurisdictions. "Apart from Queensland and New South Wales, this sort of protection for firefighters does not require legislative change," says Peter. "It needs just a declaration from the relevant Minister. And that requires only political will."

## OH&S REPS MEET

The UFUA National Occupational Health and Safety Coordinators group met in Melbourne at the end of July. The focus was on developing the Union's national policy on OH&S and standards, respiratory protection, building links with the ACTU and overseas unions and an annual conference. "There is an urgent need for standards of protection and specific

requirements for the employer to be included in all Agreements we negotiate," says Peter Marshall. "We just can't stand by and watch as firefighter lives are cut short by disease and injury because of exposure to hazards at work. Fire Services and the governments that fund them must take the bit between their teeth and fully fund protection for firefighters."