



NATIONAL

BULLETIN

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TO ALL UFUA MEMBERS

**HISTORIC DAY FOR UFUA CAMPAIGN
TO RECOGNISE OCCUPATIONAL CANCER**

***QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES
PRESUMPTION LEGISLATION***

**MONASH STUDY CONFIRMS CAREER FIREFIGHTERS
HAVE A SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED INCIDENCE OF
CANCER**

Today the Queensland Newman Government has publicly announced it will introduce presumptive legislation to recognise occupational cancer for Queensland firefighters.

Congratulations to UFUA Queensland Branch Secretary John Oliver, the Branch Committee of Management and members for achieving this great legacy for today's and tomorrow's firefighters.

The news of the success in Queensland was followed by the release of the Monash University "Australian Firefighters' Health Study" which confirms that Australian career firefighters are at a significantly greater risk of cancer.

The Monash study is one of the world's largest studies of firefighters health has confirmed that Australia's career firefighters suffer high cancer rates due to occupational exposures.

The study found the overall the cancer incidence for career firefighters was significantly raised compared to the Australian general population. There was no overall increased cancer risk for volunteers or paid part time firefighters.

The findings are consistent with previous international studies, and confirms that occupational cancer is a global issue for firefighters.

The Monash Study findings for male career firefighters included:

- Statistically significant increase in prostate cancer
- Significant increased risk of melanoma for firefighters with more than 10 years employment, with a significant increase in risk for Victorian, NSW and WA firefighters
- Significantly higher risk of kidney cancer for firefighters with more than 20 years employment
- Elevated risk of kidney cancer for firefighters 10-20 years employment
- Significantly elevated risk of lympho-haematopoetic cancers for firefighters more than 10 years employment
- A significantly higher incidence of mesothelioma in firefighters employed for more than 10 years. As the latency period for mesothelioma is 30-40 years it is expected that the rate will increase in the next 10-20 years.
- High attendance at fires is directly linked to increased risk of circulatory-caused death
- Suicide elevated for firefighters who completed employment by 1985.
- Male breast cancer elevated for firefighters more than 20 years employment
- More cases of testicular cancer than were expected
- The incidence of stomach cancer was significantly raised for firefighters who had worked before 1985

The findings are grim reading for firefighters and their families but confirm the need to have presumptive legislation to recognise occupational cancers so that all Australian firefighters can access assistance as they would for any other work-related injury or illness.

Today the UFUA welcomed the news that the Queensland Government announcement that it would introduce presumptive legislation and the newly elected Victoria Andrews Government has previously pledged to do the same.

Firefighters are among the healthiest workers at the start of their careers, yet too many suffer work-related cancers after 10-20 years of employment.

This is why the Australian Parliament unanimously approved legislation in 2012 so that firefighters who are federally employed, in the ACT and in airports, are now supported if they contract a range of 12 types of cancer.

Similar legislation has since been passed by the State Governments of Tasmania, WA and SA.

When emergency services workers put their life on the line, they and their families are rightly supported when they are injured or killed on the job.

The work-related cancers that affect firefighters may not be as visible or headline-grabbing, but their effect is no different.

The Monash study is consistent with global studies such as Tee Guidotti (2002) who supported presumption for claims by career firefighters for kidney, non-Hodgkins Lymphoma (lymphatic cancer), leukemia (hematopoetic cancers), bladder and brain.

Le Masters (2009) also found a clear association between firefighting and the increased risk of prostate and lymphoma and blood cancers (lympho-haematopoetic cancers) as well as elevated risks for melanoma, testicular, stomach, rectal and brain.

More recently the 2013 NIOSH study of 30,000 career firefighters found firefighters had twice the rate of mesothelioma than the US population and more likely to develop cancers of the digestive and urinary systems. The recent 2013 Nordic study found firefighters had an increased risk of melanoma, prostate, and mesothelioma.

The Monash University study of firefighter health looked at 232,871 firefighters including 18,035 career firefighters, 13,704 part-time paid firefighters and 201,132 volunteer firefighters.

Of the original 305,000 volunteer firefighter records included in the study, approximately 45,000 were eliminated as they had never been at an incident or fire scene in any capacity and a further 55,000 were eliminated as did not meet the criterion of attending one fire in a year.

Due to the small number of female career/paid part time/volunteers in the study there were too few deaths and incidence of cancer for statistically meaningful analysis.

Authorised by National Secretary Peter Marshall