



31 MARCH 2023

TASMANIA BECOMES THE FIRST STATE TO EXTEND CANCER PROTECTION FOR PROFESSIONAL FIREFIGHTERS

The United Firefighters Union of Australia has welcomed the Tasmanian Government's historic decision to expand cancer protection for professional firefighters.

Tasmania is the very first State or Territory to expand the number of cancers included under presumptive cancer legislation for professional firefighters from 12 to 20 and follows similar Commonwealth legislation passed last year.

At a rally outside the Tasmanian Parliament today, United Firefighters Union of Australia National Secretary Greg McConville thanked the Rockcliff Government for taking this courageous step to protect Tasmanian professional firefighters.

"We thank and congratulate the Rockcliff government's courageous step to expand cancer protection for its professional firefighters, the first State of Territory in Australia to do so.

"The Rockcliff Government today announced it would expand the number of cancers covered under presumptive cancer legislation from 12 to 20 to increase protection for professional firefighters who contract these types of cancer as a result of their work.

"Subject to examining the finer details of the legislation, we believe this issue has been resolved.

"Today's rally has been addressed by two firefighter cancer survivors and a third who has just been diagnosed with cancer, and we're pleased that their voices have been heard across the Tasmanian Parliament."

The additional number of cancers covered under Tasmanian presumptive legislation include primary site cervical cancer; primary site ovarian cancer; primary site penile cancer; primary site thyroid cancer; primary site pancreatic cancer; primary site skin cancer; primary site lung cancer, and malignant mesothelioma.

Mr McConville said adding these cancers to presumptive legislation was particularly important for women, who are now choosing to become professional firefighters in greater numbers.

"With increasing numbers of women joining the ranks of professional fire services, it's critical that they receive support and treatment if the development of cancer as a result of their work from day one.

"The addition of these cancers to Tasmania's presumptive cancer legislation delivers the protection that both female and male firefighters need and deserve."



MEDIA RELEASE

Mr Alex Forrest, an international presumptive cancer expert and a Trustee of the International Association of Firefighters, representing firefighters at the World Health Organization's (WHO) International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) meetings and has travelled from Canada especially to address the nations politicians said today's announcement was historic, not just for Tasmania, but for professional firefighters across Australia.

"The Tasmanian Government's courageous decision to expand cancer protection for its professional firefighters sets an excellent example for the nation.

"We call on all other Australian States and Territories to follow the lead of Tasmania and Commonwealth and to expand cancer protection for their professional firefighters as soon as possible," Mr Forrest said.

In July 2022, the World Health Organization's (WHO) International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) officially declared firefighting a cancer-causing profession. This move had major implications for the manner in which cancer is managed by firefighters and fire services across the world, including Australia.

"Presumptive legislation recognises the cancer risks of firefighting and provides that if a firefighter suffers from cancer, it is, subject to qualifying periods, presumed to have been contracted at work."

"But currently, in all Australian States Territories except Tasmania and the Commonwealth, only 12 types of cancer are covered under state law.

"Every day, firefighters risk their health and safety to protect the lives of others, and if they fall ill or become injured as a result of their work, our community owes it to them to ensure they receive the medical support and compensation they deserve.

"We once again congratulate the Rockcliff Government on today's announcement and call on all other Australian States and Territories to expand cancer protection for their firefighters.

"The United Firefighters Union of Australia looks forward to meeting with those State and Territory leaders shortly."

United Firefighters Union National Secretary Greg McConville or Alex Forrest are available for interview or comment

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