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PROFESSIONAL FIREFIGHTERS WELCOME ADDITION OF UTERINE CANCER TO PRESUMPTIVE LEGISLATION IN TASMANIA – A WORLD-FIRST

The United Firefighters Union has welcomed the Tasmanian Rockcliff Government's promise to add **uterine cancer** to presumptive legislation for professional firefighters, the very first jurisdiction to add this cancer both in Australia and across the world.

So far, the Commonwealth, Western Australia, the ACT and Tasmania are the only states and territories to have lifted the number of cancers covered under presumptive legislation to 20.

Tasmania's addition of uterine cancer will increase that number to 21, believed to be the highest number of cancers covered under presumptive legislation anywhere in the world.

United Firefighters Union of Australia National Secretary Greg McConville, who is currently addressing the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) John P Redmond Firefighter Health and Safety Symposium in New York on Australia's presumptive cancer legislation, said that this was a major win in protecting Tasmanian female firefighters from cancer and supporting their treatment and recovery.

"With more women choosing to become professional firefighters than ever before, it's absolutely critical that they receive the same protection and support under presumptive cancer legislation as their male counterparts.

"That's why the United Firefighters Union has already fought for and succeeded in including cervical and ovarian cancer for female firefighters in Tasmania's presumptive legislation.

"Women's reproductive systems, including the uterus, are particularly vulnerable to developing cancer when exposed to deadly toxins which firefighters are routinely exposed to when they enter burning buildings or attend vehicle fires or hazmat incidents.

"These deadly toxins, including formaldehyde, are contained in many common household and building products, such as furniture glue, and are unavoidable as they are dermally absorbed through the skin."

Mr McConville said a strong body of scientific research supported the direct relationship between toxic chemicals such as formaldehyde and women's reproductive cancer.

"Two significant studies have recently been released, linking uterine cancer to exposure to toxic chemicals, including the '9/11 World Trade Center Health Program White Paper', released December 2022, address the relationship between uterine cancer and endocrine disruptor chemicals. In addition, a study of women who developed cancer as a result of the use of hair straightening chemicals was released in October 2022. This research translates



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directly to the experience of women in firefighting and demonstrates just how quickly the scientific knowledge of the causes of cancer is developing.”

Mr McConville said that the Tasmanian Rockcliff government's announcement would have immediate implications for the approach to presumptive cancer legislation in Victoria, where there is a Bill before Parliament to expand cancer protection and for every other State and Territory, including Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia where only 12 cancer are legislated.

“In October, the Victorian Parliament will consider a Bill that expands the number of cancers covered under presumptive legislation to 20, and we encourage Victorian MPs to follow the lead of their Tasmanian counterparts by unifying to deliver enhanced protection for professional firefighters who put their lives on the line to protect their communities.

“The United Firefighters Union has also offered its support to expand the list of cancers covered under presumptive legislation, which has now grown to 21, in those states that have lagged behind.”

Mr McConville thanked the Rockcliff government and the Tasmanian Labor Opposition for both pursuing the issue of presumptive cancer legislation for firefighters.

“Thanks to the efforts of both the Rockcliff Government and Opposition, the enhancement of presumptive cancer laws has cross-party support in Tasmania, and that is absolutely critical, not only in protecting Tasmania's professional firefighters but in helping to improve the presumptive cancer laws, which protect firefighters not only in Australia but across the entire world.

“I sincerely thank both the Rockcliff Government and Labor Opposition for their outstanding efforts to protect professional firefighters.

“The state of the scientific evidence is now such that firefighting cancer should be above politics in every state, territory and indeed, nation.

Mr McConville said that the importance of presumptive cancer legislation for firefighters could not be understated.

“Improving presumptive legislation will enable firefighters with cancer to fight for their own survival instead of fighting insurers, lawyers and governments to obtain the treatment and support they need to recover.

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