



5 AUGUST 2023

PROFESSIONAL FIREFIGHTERS COMMEND THE COOK GOVERNMENT ON ENHANCING CANCER PROTECTION

The United Firefighters Union commends the Cook Government for enhancing cancer protection for Western Australia's (WA) professional firefighters by lifting the number of cancers included in WA presumptive cancer legislation from 14 to 20.

This announcement now harmonises WA presumptive cancer laws with those protecting professional firefighters working for the Commonwealth (Aviation), Tasmanian and ACT governments.

United Firefighters Union of Australia National Secretary Greg McConville welcomed the announcement and said its contribution to the welfare of WA's professional firefighters would be significant.

"Throughout the course of their careers, WA professional firefighters are routinely exposed to deadly toxins when they enter burning buildings, which are absorbed through their skin, significantly increasing their risk of developing cancer.

"The Cook Government's announcement now means that firefighters who develop any of 20 cancers will now, subject to employment qualifying periods, be protected under WA presumptive legislation.

"That means they'll have streamlined workers compensation claim processes and be better able to access the medical care they need. Additionally, they'll be able to continue to support their families while they receive treatment and recover."

United Professional Firefighters Union of WA Secretary Katherine O'Hara said the Cook Government's announcement was particularly important for women.

"With increasing numbers of women choosing to become WA firefighters, it's absolutely critical that our State secures this vital protection for them right from the start of their careers.

"Women can now join WA's Fire and Rescue service safe in the knowledge that they'll receive the same support if they develop cancer as their male counterparts."

Mr McConville thanked the Cook Government for taking this important step to protect its professional firefighters and their families. He said the focus now moved to the remaining states and territories.

"As has just occurred in WA, through our state branches the United Firefighters Union is pursuing the national harmonisation of presumptive cancer laws. We have written to non-affiliated state firefighting unions in Queensland and New South Wales to offer our assistance in the common national interest of firefighters.



MEDIA RELEASE

“We call on the Victorian, Northern Territory, Queensland, New South Wales and South Australian Governments to align their presumptive cancer laws for professional firefighters with the Commonwealth, the ACT, Tasmania and Western Australia.

“This is about protecting the lives of the firefighters who, every day, put theirs on the line to protect ours. When firefighters contract cancer, no matter which state or territory they live and work in, they should be able to concentrate on one thing: fighting cancer. These improvements in Western Australia will help firefighters in that fight for life.”

Mr McConville also acknowledged the work of International Association of Firefighters Trustee for Canada Mr Alex Forrest, whose work was instrumental to achieving these improvements.

“Mr Alex Forrest has worked tirelessly with us to achieve this result: he represented us directly at the meetings of the World Health Organisation International Agency for Research on Cancer (WHO IARC), which resulted in firefighting being declared a cancer-causing occupation.

“Mr Forrest spoke directly with a number of Western Australian parliamentarians, and Australian firefighters are indebted to him and the IAFF for their advocacy.”

Media contacts –

- **Mia Brankov – 0401 063 976 (Katherine O’Hara / Clem Cha UPFU-WA)**
- **Darren Rodrigo – 0414 783 405 (for Greg McConville UFUA)**

West Australian Presumptive Cancers Table

5 August 2023

This table sets out the cancers initially covered through the 2013 amendments to the Workers' Compensation and Injury Management Act 1981, the two cancers added by Regulation in May 2023, and the cancers to be added following the Cook Government's commitment of 5 August 2023. The effect is that the Western Australian legislation will become consistent with Commonwealth legislation covering Aviation and ACT firefighters.

Item	Type of cancer	Qualifying period
1	Primary site brain cancer	5 years
2	Primary site bladder cancer	15 years
3	Primary site kidney cancer	15 years
4	Primary non-Hodgkin's lymphoma	15 years
5	Primary leukaemia	5 years
6	Primary site breast cancer	10 years
7	Primary site testicular cancer	10 years
8	Multiple myeloma	15 years
9	Primary site prostate cancer	15 years
10	Primary site ureter cancer	15 years
11	Primary site colorectal	15 years
12	Primary site oesophageal cancer	25 years
Cancers added in May 2023		
13	Malignant mesothelioma	15 years
14	Primary site melanoma	15 years
Cancers to be added by Cook Government		
14	Skin Cancer (in substitution for melanoma)	15 years
15	Primary site lung cancer	15 years
16	Primary site cervical cancer	10 Years
17	Primary site ovarian cancer	10 Years
18	Primary site penile cancer	15 Years
19	Primary site pancreatic cancer	10 Years
20	Primary site thyroid cancer	10 Years