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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **SOME MPs MISSING THE POINT ON CANCER - VOLUNTEERS**

The CFA volunteers' association says some MPs are missing the point on the campaign for fairer and simpler cancer compensation for firefighters.

Andrew Ford, CEO of Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV), said Assistant Treasurer Gordon Rich-Phillips has told newspapers 'Victorian firefighters are already able to access compensation' but does not address the unfair obstacle they face when they apply.

"Yes the entitlement is there but because of the nature of firefighters' work and the overly complex process requiring firefighters to prove which event caused the illness, they can't actually access the entitlement. That is our key concern. We are not looking for a new entitlement, just a fairer process," Mr Ford said.

"Under current Victoria law firefighters are entitled to cancer compensation, but they must show evidence of fires or incidents they attended that might be 10 or 15 years ago and prove on the balance of probabilities which incidents or which toxic exposures caused the cancer," he said.

The Australian Government and three other states have already accepted the scientific studies that show there is a list of a dozen cancers that are clearly more common in firefighters.

"The Australian and Tasmanian Governments have changed the laws to reverse the onus of proof; if one of their firefighters suffers one of those typical firefighter cancers, it is presumed to be work related. That allows the firefighter to concentrate on treatment and recovery, instead of a lengthy and expensive court case," Mr Ford said.

"The South Australian and West Australian Governments are in the process of changing their laws for career and volunteer firefighters, which leaves Victoria lagging behind," he said.

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“CFA volunteers and their career colleagues are not asking for something extra, just the removal of an unfair barrier to compensation to which they are entitled,” Mr Ford said.

“And with other States going through with legislation, volunteers are tired of hearing excuses. First there was the wait for extra research, when even the researchers said the wait was unnecessary. Then there was the introduction of an extra assessment process, a process that doesn’t address the problem of that unfair barrier,” he said.

CFA Brigades protect 60% of suburban Melbourne, regional cities and all of country Victoria.

CFA volunteer firefighters are on call every day and night of the year, they train to professional standards and respond to fires, road accidents, industrial incidents, chemical spills and rescues.

Victoria’s 60,000 CFA volunteers are more than 97% of CFA’s workforce, which makes them an essential part of Victoria’s Emergency Management capability.

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