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**MEDIA RELEASE**

**VICTORIAN MPs ASKED TO SIGN THE PLEDGE AND STAND UP FOR  
CFA VOLUNTEERS WITH CANCER**

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) is encouraging every Victorian MP to stand up for CFA volunteers with cancer by publicly signing a pledge that they will campaign and vote for fairer and simpler cancer compensation.

VFBV Chief Executive Officer Andrew Ford says the State Government promised Victorian firefighters cancer legislation for 2016, but volunteers are very concerned that there now appears to be a backdown on this promise with new restrictions to even further limit their access to the important presumptive legislation.

“CFA volunteers are already fighting the early fires of summer, and they deserve to know whether they are covered,” Mr Ford said.

“CFA volunteers also deserve to receive a commitment that career and volunteer firefighters will be treated equally under any new compensation arrangements,” he said.

VFBV says Victoria must follow the lead of Queensland and South Australia, where the State Governments have introduced fairer and simpler cancer compensation that treats volunteers and staff equally.

“CFA volunteers across the state are presenting the pledge to their local MPs and asking them to sign it and support legislation that finally makes cancer compensation accessible to both career and volunteer firefighters,” Mr Ford said.

Mr Ford said CFA volunteers want all Victorian MPs to commit to fair legislation as soon as possible, to give them confidence as they move into the summer fire season.

“We’ve been working on this for four years and every other State except New South Wales has acted on it. Summer is here and we urgently need clarity for our CFA volunteers,” he said.

“Volunteers shouldn’t have to meet extra eligibility requirements just because they are not paid,” Mr Ford said. “The smoke and chemicals don’t discriminate, nor should cancer compensation for the firefighters who protect the community.”

**VFBV Media Contact:** Peter Beaton 0419 504 111

CFA volunteers are asking all Victorian MPs to sign the pledge that says;

- I will support CFA volunteers with cancer
- I will vote for non-discriminatory Presumptive Legislation for all Victorian Firefighters

The current Queensland legislation is what Labor promised Victorian firefighters in the lead up to the last election. It uses the same list of 12 cancers and years of service requirements that appear in the other States' legislation, without any additional eligibility hurdles that discriminate against volunteers.

Mr Ford said under the current system in Victoria, firefighters face a nearly impossible barrier that puts all of the burden of proof on them. "The sick firefighter is expected to come up with the evidence, often more than exists in CFA's own files, when the cause of their cancer could be a fire or chemical spill 10 or 15 years ago that they don't even remember attending," he said.

"That's an almost impossible barrier for the sick firefighter, another worry for their family and a distraction from concentrating on their treatment and recovery."

In Queensland and South Australia, the cancer law is presumptive legislation that does what CFA volunteers are requesting in Victoria, it reverses the onus of proof. This means the firefighter's cancer is presumed to be work related, provided it is one of 12 typical firefighter cancers and the firefighter has sufficient years of service.

South Australia had initially required volunteers to prove a specific number of turnouts to fires as well as having to meet the years of service requirement that applied to their career colleagues, but dropped that discriminatory extra requirement in 2014. Queensland's Parliament rejected any discrimination in its legislation this year and voted to treat career and volunteer firefighters equally from the outset.

Under the legislation sought by CFA volunteers, claims can still be rejected if it is proven the cancer was not related to firefighting duties.

Mr Ford said CFA volunteers also want the Victorian legislation to be retrospective, so that it looks after firefighters who have already been diagnosed with cancer.

"This legislation can't come fast enough for CFA volunteer members who are already suffering from work related cancer. Volunteers are sick of waiting and want all Victorian MPs to pledge to support the health and safety of their volunteer firefighters," he said.

Ends.

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**Additional information:**

The table below shows the 12 cancers and years-of-service eligibility requirements that appear in the presumptive firefighters' cancer legislation passed by the Australian, Tasmania, West Australian, South Australian, Northern Territory and Queensland Parliaments.

<b>Disease</b>	<b>Minimum number of years' service</b>
primary site brain cancer	5 years
primary site bladder cancer	15 years
primary site kidney cancer	15 years
primary non-Hodgkins lymphoma	15 years
primary leukaemia	5 years
primary site breast cancer	10 years
primary site testicular cancer	10 years
multiple myeloma	15 years
primary site prostate cancer	15 years
primary site ureter cancer	15 years
primary site colorectal cancer	15 years
primary site oesophageal cancer	25 years

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