



VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES VICTORIA

News Note

UPDATE FOR ALL VOLUNTEERS – 13 September 2013

Presumptive legislation – the Firefighters' Cancer Law

Recently the State Government announced a Firefighters' Assessment Panel to look at each cancer compensation claim.

VFBV has expressed concerns about the panel; that it does not solve the problem and that it could be just another bureaucratic barrier to firefighters getting the compensation to which they are entitled. We have raised this concern with the Minister, particularly our concern that the introduction of the Panel may have been in lieu of progressing presumptive legislation.

VFBV has since received a letter from Deputy Premier Peter Ryan and Police and Emergency Services Minister Kim Wells, clarifying the Government's intentions in introducing the new Firefighters' Assessment Panel to provide help and support for firefighters either lodging compensation claims for work related cancer or considering doing so.

The State Government agrees the introduction of the Panel is not in lieu of presumptive legislation.

VFBV will continue to pursue presumptive legislation to provide a fairer and simpler path to compensation for volunteer and career firefighters who contract typical firefighter cancers.

The Government has indicated that it is awaiting the completion of new research by Monash University before deciding on presumptive legislation. However, the Monash University team conducting that additional research has indicated the wait is unnecessary; they say sufficient evidence already exists and that decisions should be made on the basis of the available scientific evidence.

VFBV accepts the Government's assurance that the new Firefighters' Assessment Panel is not in lieu of presumptive legislation, rather this is a new service to provide support and advice to claimants and those considering claims.

While VFBV remains concerned that the panel does not address the fundamental issues underpinning the need for presumptive legislation, we should utilise the recently announced panel to the extent that it can assist members.

Therefore, VFBV encourages volunteers to go to the panel with any cancer claims or enquiries. To assist us in keeping track of the issue, we encourage any volunteers contacting the Panel to advise VFBV, and if you have any concerns about the conduct of the Panel, or the assistance and support offered, please notify VFBV immediately.