

# Media Release

**Jaclyn Symes MLC**

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Attorney-General

Minister for Emergency Services



Friday, 9 June 2023

## **PRESUMPTIVE RIGHTS SCHEME EXPANDED TO MORE CANCERS**

Female firefighters who develop specific cancers will have fairer access to compensation under an expansion to the Andrews Labor Government's presumptive rights scheme.

Minister for Emergency Services Jaclyn Symes today announced the scheme's legislation will be amended to include primary site cervical, ovarian and uterine cancers.

The expansion of presumptive rights to include the additional cancers follows consultation to ensure more equitable access to cancer compensation for eligible personnel and remove barriers to compensation.

Previously, it has been difficult to prove a particular event or exposure caused the development of these cancers, due to the significant number of incidents they respond to throughout their careers and a lack of international research into female-specific cancers in firefighters.

The expansion of presumptive rights recognises the invaluable service firefighters and personnel provide to the community, which requires them to work in inherently dangerous conditions and exposes them to carcinogens.

Presumptive rights for cervical, ovarian and uterine cancers will be subject to a qualifying period of 10 years to align with other Australian and international jurisdictions. It will relate to cancer diagnoses on or after 1 June 2016, which is in line with cancers already included under Victoria's presumptive rights legislation.

Fire personnel engaged by Fire Rescue Victoria, the CFA and the organisations that make up Forest Fire Management Victoria are eligible under current presumptive rights legislation to apply for compensation if diagnosed with one of the 12 cancers without having to prove that firefighting is the cause.

Administered by WorkSafe Victoria, the presumptive rights compensation legislation presumes that a worker's cancer was related to their service, providing relevant eligibility criteria is met.

Eligible personnel can make a compensation claim with WorkSafe by submitting a Worker's Injury Claim Form to the organisation. Since the initial introduction of presumptive rights legislation in 2019, 211 claims have been processed.

Legislation to expand the scheme for the three cancers is expected to be introduced into Parliament as soon as possible.

### **Quotes attributable to Minister for Emergency Services Jaclyn Symes**

*"Our presumptive rights scheme has provided peace of mind and support for hundreds of career and volunteer firefighters – now, we're making the scheme fairer and easier for women who develop these cancers."*

*"The people in our firefighting organisations risk their lives to keep us safe – we're further enshrining our unwavering support for them in legislation."*

### **Quote attributable to Minister for WorkSafe and TAC Danny Pearson**

*"We're simplifying the compensation claim process and ensuring fairer access for eligible fire services personnel so that they get the support they need to focus on treatment and recovery."*

### **Quote attributable to Minister for Environment Ingrid Stitt**

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*“We are supporting more women to serve in frontline firefighting roles within Forest Fire Management Victoria – adding these cancers is the right thing to do and will simplify the compensation process for those who have served our community when they most need them.”*