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TASMANIA SETS THE PACE ON FIREFIGHTER PROTECTION

The Tasmanian Government has today moved to become the first State in Australia to introduce supported presumptive legislation recognising all twelve occupational cancers for firefighters.

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Similar legislation to support Victorian firefighters with occupational cancer has been introduced by Greens MP Colleen Hartland, but is yet to get the support of Government parties.

Tasmanian Police and Emergency Management Minister David O'Byrne today introduced legislation to end the impossible task of firefighters proving which chemicals they encounter have caused their cancer from the many hundreds of fires and emergencies they may have attended.

They will be able to access medical support, leave and compensation -- removing the burden which currently falls on their family and friends.

United Firefighters Union national secretary Peter Marshall (*or local contact*) says similar laws support stricken firefighters in Canada and the United States, as well as federally employed firefighters working in Canberra and Australian airports.

"In Australia, the federal legislation was passed after a thorough Senate inquiry examined the links between firefighters and cancer, and was unanimously supported by all political parties.

"Today is a breakthrough and firefighters sincerely appreciate today's initiative by the Tasmanian Government.

"We hope this legislation will also have the bipartisan support of all parties in the Tasmanian Parliament.

"And that politicians in other States will soon recognise the unique risks that firefighters face.

"They head into danger as others flee - but the effect of prolonged exposure to carcinogens, toxins and other chemicals can cost their health."

In Hobart today, Tasmanian firefighter Daniel Redpath, 42, welcomed the Tasmanian move. The father-of-one is now back at work after his personal battle with prostate cancer.

"This legislation means that firefighters with cancer can focus on their health and work on their recovery, without worrying about the financials," he said.

"Previously if we got sick it was just 'see you later, see you when you get back'.

"We're a close family, the firefighting community, and support each other.

"Through this legislation we will also know that we have the broader community standing behind us."

For more information

Local contact

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