



BULLETIN

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To ALL UFUA MEMBERS

RESPECTED FORMER CFA CHIEF OFFICER'S CLAIMS OF FISKVILLE CONTAMINATION AND EXPOSURE VINDICTATED BY INTERNAL REPORT

UFUA CALLS FOR PROTECTION OF FIREFIGHTERS

The CFA investigation into the historic practices of live fire training at Fiskville condemns previous practice and confirms that firefighters were subject to horrendous exposures of carcinogens and toxins over a long period of time.

Chair of the internal inquiry, Professor Rob Joy, released the report to the CFA on the 28th June 2012, but CFA only released it publicly at midnight tonight (Wednesday 11 July 2012).

The report confirms what firefighters and staff who have worked and trained at Fiskville have been reporting for many years – they were subjected to repeated exposures of chemical and toxic cocktail.

While the CFA report fails to expressly mention “occupational cancer” CFA have been reported in the Herald Sun as saying it will “**consider compensation to those that may have fallen victim to cancer caused by the highly toxic chemicals used in training fires**”.

Sadly that “consideration” will come too late for a number that have subsequently succumbed to occupational cancer.

However, it does vindicate respected former CFA Chief Fire Officer Brian Potter’s brave and tireless campaign to have the atrocities of the past acknowledged and the subsequent occupational cancer and diseases recognized.

Mr Potter also worked as an instructor at Fiskville during his service to the CFA. He has publicly disclosed he is battling a range of cancers and illnesses and that he contracted the cancers from his time at Fiskville.

But his campaign has been more about ensuring recognition for all others who worked or lived at Fiskville and were subsequently diagnosed with cancer. His campaign has been about their battles, their families and their right to be recognized and compensated.

Recently the CFA denied Brian Potter’s claim to recognise he had contracted cancer as a result of his firefighting career.

Victorian politicians can no longer ignore the reality of occupational cancer for firefighters and their need for protection.

Firefighters have been exposed to carcinogens while conducting or undergoing training – they deserve to have that occupational cancer recognized so that they can access entitlements and compensation.

Last year the Australian Parliament recognised that firefighters have an increased risk of cancer due to the exposures to carcinogens and chemicals on the fire ground. Federal members of parliament unanimously supported the enactment of the “Fair Protection for Firefighters” legislation.

The legislation provides a rebuttable presumption that the listed cancers are occupational diseases for firefighters. Without presumptive legislation firefighters are unable to access their entitlements and compensation for occupational cancer as they cannot prove the exact fires and chemicals they attended that resulted in the contracting of cancer.

However, that legislation only applies to federal firefighters – those in the ACT and in the aviation industry.

The “Fair Protection for Firefighters” legislation followed an extensive and robust Senate inquiry which accepted the inherent risk of occupational cancer and the international studies that demonstrate the increased risk of specific cancers for firefighters.

The Joy report is a detailed review of the history of exposure at Fiskville and its findings will support claims that the firefighters who worked and trained there during that period and were subsequently diagnosed with cancer were actually diagnosed with occupational cancer.

Firefighters from around Australia have been trained or worked at Fiskville.

The UFUA now calls upon every state and territory in Australia to stand by our firefighters and their families by legislating presumptive legislation to recognise occupational cancer for firefighters.

Every Australian firefighter, no matter who they work for or where they work, should be able to access their entitlements for occupational illness if diagnosed with specific cancers.

In Victoria this call is particularly poignant and pressing in light of the CFA report.

If you have any queries in to this matter, please call the UFU on 9419 8811.

Strength in Unity
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Authorised by Peter Marshall, National Secretary