



Presumptive legislation – it's time to move with the science

This week the FBEU launched an important presumptive cancer campaign to ensure FBEU members have the same protections for work-related cancers as firefighters in other states and internationally.

As per [Sitrep 49](#), urgently needed improvements to presumptive legislation are underpinned by comprehensive medical research, establishing the increasing risks of our occupation. The FBEU is lobbying the NSW Labor Government to add a further nine cancers – lung, skin, cervical, ovarian, penile, pancreatic, thyroid, malignant mesothelioma, and uterine – to [existing](#) workers' compensation legislation in NSW.

Without legislative change, FBEU members will continue to endure the stress and injustice of needing to justify why and how their work exposed them to significant illness.

The public-facing campaign will feature the lived experience of FBEU members impacted by work-related cancers. The committee thanks associate member Bob McGowan who has generously worked with the Union to share his personal battle with lung cancer. Members can watch Bob's story in short series of videos [at this link](#). Many of you will know Bob and his family, some of whom are still serving firefighters and FBEU members. Bob's story is similar to many in the ranks and the FBEU encourage all members with similar stories to get in contact [here](#).

Members are encouraged to share the campaign website www.coverourfuries.com.au which includes automated petitions to key decision makers in Government.

Earlier this week, the Budget Estimates committee inquired with the Minister for Industrial Relations & Work Health and Safety, Sophie Cotsis, as to when the NSW Labor Government would be implementing changes to presumptive legislation in NSW. The Minister stated that she would be *“working together with my colleagues who have responsibility in this area—Minister Dib, Minister Chanthivong and the Treasurer—in a coordinated and collaborative approach to make sure that we get this right.”*

Having met with both sides of NSW politics on this matter, we can state that Minister Cotsis and other decision makers are fully aware of the importance of these changes. The FBEU will continue to monitor the issue closely to ensure that the scientific evidence supporting the expansion of presumptive cancer legislation is not ignored.

You can watch Minister Cotsis' statements on the issue [at this link](#).

The next steps of the campaign will be workshopped at the upcoming Delegates' Conference at the end of this Month.



Health Screening attacked in Budget Estimates

Budget Estimates also saw shameless attacks from Liberal/National Party Opposition on the new Health Screening process, which presented as a line of inquiry in both the Emergency Services and Industrial Relations & Work Health and Safety portfolios. You can see the first exchange [here](#), and its continuation [here](#).

FRNSW's previous Health Check process was touted as a major cause of workplace stress according to the report commissioned by the FBEU from the Centre of Full Employment and Equity (CoffEE) earlier this year. The report, cited here in [Sitrep 25](#), found strong correlations between the punitive approach of the Health Check process and growing sense of dislocation and distrust of FRNSW management.

The new Health Check screening process will be a considerably improvement on this previous arrangement, both in terms of FRNSW's workforce planning, and for the welfare of Professional Firefighters, notably through a focus on early detection of cancer. It is important to note that these improvements are born out of agreement from both parties in Award negotiations. But none of those benefits were on show in Budget Estimates. The line of inquiry was instead fixated on that same old punitive approach, this time with concerningly detailed reference to FRNSW's initial business case informing the Health Check process years ago. This gives rise to broader concerns as to how and why this issue continues to be weaponised against Professional Firefighters, and who has the vested interested to ensure those willing to attack us are well-briefed on the intricacy and history of the matter.

In Unity,

Leighton Drury
State Secretary

