

DRAFT SECOND READING SPEECH

HON. M. T. (RENE) HIDDING MP

Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment (Presumption of Cause of Disease) Bill 2017

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Mr Speaker, I move that the Bill now be read a second time.

The purpose of the Bill is to make amendments to the *Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* to remove the requirements on volunteer fire-fighters to access compensation based on the presumption that some cancers may be linked to occupational exposure. In addition, the Bill inserts a requirement for a review as to whether an occupational presumption should exist for relevant workers in regard to post-traumatic stress disorder.

Mr Speaker, in 2013 amendments to the *Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* established a rebuttable presumption that particular forms of cancer developed by fire-fighters are taken to be work related for the purpose of claiming workers compensation under the Act.

Whilst the amendments provided for volunteers, to qualify they currently need to meet an additional requirement of attending 150 exposure events as a fire-fighter over a period of five or ten years, depending on the type of cancer.

The Bill removes the requirement for volunteer fire-fighters to attend a specified number of exposure events.

Mr Speaker, it is important to recognise the crucial role of Tasmania's volunteer fire-fighters play in protecting the community and take some action to provide them with the same protections under the law as career fire-fighters.

On the brink of our volunteer fire-fighters facing another fire season we will act to give them greater peace of mind when undertaking their duties.

In addition, the Bill inserts a new provision into the Act that requires the Minister for Building and Construction to commission a review by 30 June 2018 as to whether a presumption that post-traumatic stress disorder is occupationally linked for relevant workers should be included into the Act. Our emergency responders are regularly called on to attend traumatic events, and should there be a causal link between this responsibility and the development of post-traumatic stress disorder, it is only reasonable that a presumption in relation to the disease should be included in the Act.

Mr Speaker, following the review, the Minister will table the report in both Houses of Parliament to inform consideration of future amendment of the Act.

The Bill will become law on the day on which it receives Royal Assent. I commend the Bill to the House.