

FIRE SERVICES REFORM – FACT SHEET



Since the Fire Services Statement was launched on 19 May 2017, CFA leadership, as well as Government representatives have made approximately 70 visits across the State to discuss and explain the reforms.

These are important and complex reforms, and naturally there have been a lot of questions, and such forums have been a valuable opportunity to address these.

Over the course of this engagement, a series of questions have emerged as the most frequently asked. This document is intended to help clarify some of the most commonly asked about areas.

Frequently asked questions

What is Presumptive Rights Compensation legislation?

Under the Presumptive Rights Compensation scheme, a firefighter claiming compensation for certain cancers (one of 12 specified cancers) doesn't have to prove that firefighting is the cause of their cancer. Instead it will be presumed that they contracted cancer because of their firefighting service when they seek access to compensation under the WorkSafe scheme.

Volunteer firefighters will need to demonstrate that they have attended fires to the extent reasonably necessary to fulfil the purpose of their service as a firefighter.

An advisory committee will provide advice to help volunteer firefighters establish records and other supporting evidence on their claims. This approach will ensure that deserving volunteer firefighters do not miss out on compensation due to a lack of supporting evidence.

The Victorian presumptive rights scheme provided under the Bill will apply to firefighters in operational roles who are diagnosed with one of 12 specified cancers from 1 June 2016 onwards. It will ensure that firefighters, whether career or volunteer, with one of these cancers who have served the requisite number of years (5-25 depending on cancer type) will be automatically entitled to the presumption that the cancer arose from their work as a firefighter, unless the authority administering the scheme proves otherwise. The relevant cancers and qualifying periods are outlined in Table 2, below:

Table 2: Relevant cancers and qualifying periods

Disease	Qualifying period
Primary site brain cancer	5 years
Primary site bladder cancer	15 years

Disease	Qualifying period
Primary site kidney cancer	15 years
Primary non-Hodgkin's lymphoma	15 years
Primary leukaemia	5 years
Primary site breast cancer	10 years
Primary site testicular cancer	10 years
Multiple myeloma	15 years
Primary site prostate cancer	15 years
Primary site ureter cancer	15 years
Primary site colorectal cancer	15 years
Primary site oesophageal cancer	25 years

Will there be any job losses?

No.

Our firefighters, be they career or volunteers, along with supporting staff, are critical to keeping the Victorian community safe. All existing MFB and CFA career firefighters will transition into Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) and 450 new firefighters are being recruited.

Some support and corporate staff will transfer to FRV while some will move to deliver projects at the infrastructure authority.

The amount of assistance for volunteers at CFA will be increased, with more training, administration and brigade support staff.

A number of operational staff (Operations Officers/Operations Manager) will transfer to FRV and then be seconded back to the CFA to provide support across districts.

To preserve the chain of command, during their secondment these officers will be under the order and control of the CFA Chief Officer under section 27 of the *CFA Act 1958 (the Act)*.

The detail of the secondment agreement is to be captured in a Heads of Agreement between CFA and FRV.

A number of MFB staff are already working at CFA under an established secondment program that has successfully run over the past few years.

How much will this cost?

The existing funding that supports our fire and emergency services will remain in place. This includes investments made over recent years into new CFA training facilities, additional career firefighters and the expansion of Emergency Medical Response across CFA brigades.

The Bill provides for the policy commitment to ensure that the total amount collected through the fire services property levy will not increase revenue for the coming two years (2017-18 and 2018-19).

The costs of implementing these reforms will be minimal and provision for these has already been made.

The government will also invest over \$100 million in additional funding to the CFA. The final package will be informed by engagement with volunteers, the CFA Policy and Performance Consultative Committee, and representative organisations where appropriate.

How will volunteers co-locate with career firefighters at existing integrated stations?

Tailored support will be provided for volunteers at the 35 integrated stations where career firefighters will transfer to FRV. Importantly, the Bill provides for those volunteers to continue their fire service as part of a fully volunteer brigade.

CFA volunteer brigades located in the FRV fire district will be strongly encouraged to retain their brigade identity and co-locate at the CFA integrated stations. The Bill provides that these brigades will continue to operate under the leadership of the CFA Chief Officer by providing additional powers that the CFA may exercise within the FRV fire district. In order to ensure the role of volunteers is not diminished, the Government is also investing in a volunteer recruitment drive.

A Fire Services Operational Implementation Committee, chaired by former NSW Fire and Rescue Commissioner Greg Mullins AFSM, and including the operational heads of our emergency services organisations, will ensure that there are no negative impacts on operational firefighting services during the transition process.

How will the \$100 million funding for CFA be allocated?

A dedicated \$56.2 million CFA Support Fund will provide additional brigade and volunteer support, improved health and safety measures, internet connectivity in rural areas, and more flexible, localised training. The final package will be informed by engagement with volunteers, and the CFA Policy and Performance Consultative Committee. This Committee is currently undertaking work to assist in this process.

The Fire Services Statement announced new funding to establish and operate a new Emergency Services Infrastructure Authority (ESIA). The Authority will be established by December 2017, and tasked with delivering major emergency services capital infrastructure projects on time and on budget.

ESIA will incorporate CFA and FRV projects within its first year, including relevant station upgrades and new builds from the \$44 million CFA capital fund announced in the Fire Services Statement.

How will asset allocation be managed?

Volunteer equipment that has been purchased through fundraising and similar activities will remain the property of volunteer brigades.

Asset allocation will be worked through with engagement between Brigade Management Teams and CFA's Chief Officer, in consultation with brigades and the FRV Commissioner. Under the legislation, the Minister will make the final determination on assets transferring from CFA to FRV.

Along with the \$44 million CFA capital fund, this process will ensure that both fire services have the infrastructure and appliances it needs to fulfil its statutory functions.

How will FRV work?

FRV will be constituted by the new Fire Rescue Victoria Commissioner who will have all the functions, duties and powers of FRV. The single commissioner model is employed for the fire services in New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, and the Australian Capital Territory, as well as in a range of international jurisdictions such as the London Fire Brigade. Importantly, this model provides a single point of authority and accountability.

A Strategic Advisory Committee will also be established to advise on matters related to cultural change, future direction of FRV, workforce diversity and flexibility and risk management.

How are volunteers being consulted through the changes?

Information and engagement sessions have been conducted and will continue in coming months with volunteers and staff at the 35 integrated stations.

Since the release of the Fire Services Statement, Ministers and senior fire and emergency leadership have made approximately 70 visits across the State, speaking with over 2,600 firefighters, volunteers and staff.

In addition, discussion on the proposed reforms have taken place at routine meetings and a number of reform specific briefings held across CFA since the release of the Fire Services Statement. It is estimated that since the announcement, approximately 50 per cent of CFA brigades have been represented at such meetings. It has enabled a large number of volunteers to discuss the proposed reforms either directly with CFA staff or indirectly through brigade leadership who had been briefed by CFA staff.

This engagement will continue and CFA will provide tailored support for volunteers at these stations where career firefighters will transfer to FRV. A transition team has been established to manage this process.

Which agency will be in charge at an incident?

Control agency arrangements will not change. The first arriving officer becomes the Incident Controller, and any changes to this are in accordance with the operating procedures on transfer of control that apply across all of our emergency services.

Will volunteers still be called to fires?

Operationally, there will be no change to control agency arrangements under Victoria's successful Emergency Management Framework.

As happens now, when you call triple zero, the Emergency Service Telecommunications Authority (ESTA) will determine the appropriate resources for your emergency. Depending on where you live ESTA will determine who will be the first responder and which emergency services will attend your fire and/or emergency.

FRV, CFA and all of Victoria's emergency services will work together to respond to emergencies.

The changes in the Fire Services Statement will ensure that Victorians receive a world class fire service no matter where they live.

For the majority of volunteers, there will be no change.

An independent Review Panel will be established to advise on future changes, based on a risk assessment of the assignment of responsibility for a given area, with the underlying objective to prevent loss of life, damage to property, infrastructure and protection of the environment.

The Panel must consult with all relevant fire services agencies and any local council directly affected by the review. In addition, as part of conducting a review, the Panel may consult with any person or body as it sees fit including volunteer firefighters and their representatives.

The Minister makes the final determination based on the report of the Panel and other relevant factors outlined in legislation including fire services capacity, budget and resource implications, including the broader impact on the emergency services sector. A final determination may result in no change, change, or that a further review be undertaken in future.