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**Hon Martin Aldridge MLC**

Shadow Minister for Emergency Services

**Hon Steve Thomas MLC**

Shadow Minister for Industrial Relations

### **Opposition demands stronger cancer and PTSD protections for firefighters**

The Opposition will move to amend the *Workers Compensation and Injury Management Bill 2023* to better support WA firefighters.

Shadow Minister for Emergency Services, Martin Aldridge MLC, said the amendments will significantly enhance protections for firefighters affected by cancer and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) while fearlessly serving WA communities.

“This critical change would eliminate the burdensome and costly processes firefighters currently face in proving their cancer or PTSD diagnosis was work-related when making compensation claims,” Mr Aldridge said.

The move follows calls from frontline firefighters, volunteers, associations and unions to include eight additional cancers within the presumptive cancer schedule for firefighters.

In December last year the Commonwealth Government updated their presumptive legislation schedule to include the additional cancers, with the Tasmanian Government committing to match the changes earlier this year.

“It’s unacceptable WA has now fallen behind other jurisdictions in protecting our emergency services personnel,” Mr Aldridge said.

“The Labor Government’s lack of action has created a situation where firefighters at Perth Airport, under Commonwealth law, have greater protections than those employed by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) or other State Government agencies.

“The State Government could easily address this inequity and strengthen protections for WA’s frontline firefighters, including our 20,000 emergency service volunteers, but have refused to act.”

In addition to cancer, the proposed amendments will ensure recently introduced PTSD protections are extended to cover volunteer firefighters.

“Volunteer firefighters often provide the first and only response to emergencies in their communities and will witness unthinkable tragedy and trauma in the course of their duties, often with limited support,” Mr Aldridge said.

“As someone who has served as both a career and volunteer firefighter, I can assure you that volunteers are not immune to trauma or its effects on their mental health and wellbeing.

“Expanding PTSD coverage to our frontline volunteers is not only the right thing to do, but an important acknowledgement of the sacrifices our volunteers make to keep our communities safe.”

Shadow Minister for Industrial Relations, Steve Thomas MLC, said the State Government had sat on their hands instead of supporting firefighters.

“These changes could have been effortlessly implemented through regulations by the relevant Ministers if they had the political will to do so,” Mr Thomas said.

“The State Government’s inaction is disappointing and unjust. It’s time for the State Government to step up and support our firefighters.”

Under the former Liberal-National Government, WA was among the first Australian jurisdictions to grant presumptive cancer protections to firefighters, including volunteers, in 2013-14.