



David Elliott
Minister for Police
Minister for Emergency Services

MEDIA RELEASE

Saturday, 4 May 2019

NSW MAKES IT EASIER FOR FIREFIGHTERS TO RECEIVE SUPPORT

The NSW Government is honouring its commitment to make it easier for firefighters who develop cancer to claim workers compensation and support.

Minister for Emergency Services David Elliott was today joined by NSW RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons at an awards ceremony for firefighters who fought the recent Reedy Swamp fire in the State's South to provide an update on new laws passed last year supporting firefighters who develop cancer.

Mr Elliott said the extra support would be funded as part of a cost-sharing arrangement with insurers, Councils and the Government.

"Firefighters, such as those who we are honouring today, put their lives on the line to keep us safe," Mr Elliott said.

"These changes protect those who work hard every day to protect the community."

Minister for Customer Service Victor Dominello said the change ensures firefighters get the support and compensation they need immediately.

"The changes will likely add to a small increase in insurance premiums, but it is an important step in ensuring critically ill firefighters receive the support they need," Mr Dominello said.

Eligible firefighters who served a minimum qualifying period and are diagnosed with one of 12 cancers will automatically be presumed to have acquired that cancer because of their firefighting work.

The Bega Valley Brigades who fought the Reedy Swamp fire which spread towards Tathra during March last year have received a Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation, as part of the NSW RFS's annual St Florian's Day Awards.

Mr Elliott joined NSW RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons to honour 21 NSW RFS members and 11 teams for demonstrating exceptional service and bravery.

Held on the fourth of May each year, the award ceremony coincides with the Feast

Day of St Florian, Patron Saint of Firefighters and International Firefighters' Day.

"NSW RFS volunteers serve our communities and selflessly respond to all manner of fire and emergencies. On behalf of the Government and the wider NSW community, today we say thank you," Mr Elliott said.

Mr Fitzsimmons paid tribute to former Commissioner Philip Koperberg, who was awarded a Commissioner's Commendation for Service, and the commitment of firefighters Ryan Hutchinson and Veronica Jones of the Benwerrin Brigade in the Lower Hunter.

"These two firefighters arrived first on scene and slowed the spread of the fire and provided first-aid to the occupant, showing that team work and quick decision making play a significant role in the protection of lives and property," Mr Fitzsimmons said.

NSW Rural Fire Service Association President Ken Middleton says the NSW Government changes to compensation laws has already made a positive change for firefighters.

"The fact is that volunteer and paid firefighters face enormous health risks – not just from fighting fire, but because of the serious chemicals they have to work with to make sure everyone else is safe," Mr Middleton said.

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