

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health Disability and Ageing

Select Committee on PFAS (per and polyfluoroalkyl substances)

Inquiry into the extent, regulation and management of PFAS

10 June 2025

PDR Number: IQ25-000047

Support of firefighters exposed to high levels of PFAS

Written

Senator: Lidia Thorpe

Question:

3. United Firefighters Union of Australia Aviation Branch (Victoria) has recommended 'The Commonwealth Government include eligibility to access Medicare benefit item number 13750 for firefighters with PFAS levels in excess of 5ng/ml PFOS/PFOA and 2ng/ml PFHxS to access therapeutic plasma/blood treatment in order to reduce their PFAS blood levels'.

(Submission 113)

a. Is the department considering ways to support firefighters and others exposed to high levels of PFAS at work to reduce their blood PFAS levels through blood and/or plasma donation?

b. How could such a program be implemented and what changes to policy and legislation would be required?

Answer:

- The Medical Services Advisory Committee appraises medical services proposed for public funding and provides advice to the Australian Government on whether a medical service should be publicly funded (and if so, its circumstances) on an assessment of its comparative safety, clinical effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, and total cost, using the best available evidence.
- Inclusion of blood removal as a treatment for elevated levels of PFAS would require consideration through the Medical Services Advisory Committee.

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Department of Health Disability and Ageing

Select Committee on PFAS (per and polyfluoroalkyl substances)

Inquiry into the extent, regulation and management of PFAS

10 June 2025

PDR Number: IQ25-000053

Amendment of the Employment Act 1988 (NI)

Written

Senator: Lidia Thorpe

Question:

4. United Firefighters Union of Australia Aviation Branch (Victoria) has recommended 'The Commonwealth Government amend the Employment Act 1988 (NI) to incorporate presumptive legislation for the following cancers and diseases, with the respective qualifying periods':

Disease	Qualifying Period
Primary site brain cancer	5 years
Primary site bladder cancer	15 years
Primary site kidney cancer	15 years
Primary non-Hodgkins lymphoma	15 years
Primary leukemia	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	15 years
Primary site lung cancer	15 years
Primary site skin cancer	15 years
Primary site cervical cancer	10 years
Primary site ovarian cancer	10 years
Primary site penile cancer	15 years
Primary site pancreatic cancer	10 years
Primary site thyroid cancer	10 years
Malignant mesothelioma	15 years
Uterine Cancer	10 years
Primary site liver cancer	15 years
Asbestos related diseases	15 years

- What are the current qualifying periods?
- What would be the process for amending these periods?
- What are the risks associated with amending these qualifying periods?

Answer:

- Most firefighters are covered under state or territory workers' compensation schemes. Each state or territory has its own workers' compensation scheme, and no two schemes are the same.
- The Australian Government has responsibility for workers' compensation legislation covering Commonwealth and Australian Capital Territory (ACT) government employees, and a small number of private corporations who self-insure under the Commonwealth workers' compensation scheme.
- The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (Infrastructure) works to ensure that the governance and legislative arrangements of Norfolk Island and Australia's other non-self-governing territories are fit for purpose to support good governance and service delivery in these territories. Infrastructure is responsible for the *Employment Act 1988* (NI). This Act establishes a workers' compensation scheme for work-related injuries in Norfolk Island workplaces.
- While the *Employment Act 1988* (NI) does not currently contain specific reference to presumptive cancer compensation, Infrastructure is considering mechanisms under the legislation that would assist in addressing this.