

WORKERS' COMPENSATION — FIREFIGHTERS

**69. Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM to the Minister for Commerce:**

I refer to the proposal for amendments to be made to existing workers' compensation laws to include a rebuttable presumption that, after a prescribed period of service, firefighters contracting certain forms of cancer would be deemed to have contracted the disease through their work.

- (1) Does the government accept the scientific evidence of a strong causal link between firefighters' occupational risks and contracting certain forms of cancer; and, if not, why not?
- (2) Does the government accept that, because of the nature of the work undertaken, even with thorough preventive measures there is still the prospect of contracting cancer; and, if not, why not?
- (3) If the government agrees that there is a causal link, what measures is the government intending to take?
- (4) Has the minister's department undertaken any costings for such laws if they were introduced?

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of this question.

- (1)–(3) It is the government's intention to examine the possible adoption of presumptive workers' compensation legislation for firefighters. Scientific evidence is the key driver that will inform the government position on this matter. Currently, Monash University is undertaking a comprehensive Australia-wide research project examining the overall cancer rate and rates of specific cancer types in Australian firefighters compared with those of the general population. This was commissioned by the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council. Western Australia is participating in this research project through the Fire and Emergency Services Authority of Western Australia. We are waiting for the results of this research.
- (4) No.