

**Prue Purdey**

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**From:** Cynthia Ryan [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 28 June 2017 9:07 AM  
**To:** LCSC  
**Subject:** Submission to the Fire Services Bill Select Committee

**Importance:** High

Secretary, Legislative Council Select Committee

**Re: Submission to the Fire Services Bill Select Committee.**

Dear Committee members,

My name is Cynthia Ryan, I am a mother, a daughter and member of the community. I live in Essendon and have shared my story with several of my elected political representatives over the years in an attempt to gain some affirmative action. I would like to now share it with your select committee.

I fully support the Victorian Fire Services Reform and Presumptive Legislation laws. My own father was an MFB firefighter for 25 years (most based at Woodland St Essendon) and was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma at age 51 and dead at 56. Dad was cleared by the MFB doctors at his "exit medical exam" when he took the early retirement option in January 1988 and by November 1988 he was diagnosed with a stage 3 NH Lymphoma. It has always been a source of concern to his family that dad's illness was never detected by MFB Dr's. (and never recorded in any statistics)

The wider implications for us as a family (he had 5 children) are that since his death, we have all have feared contracting this type of a disease, not understanding that there was ever a suspicion that this type of disease was prevalent amongst MFB firefighters. There is no history of any of the diseases in any of our families previous to Dad's illness.

As kids, my siblings and myself recall dad coming home from work smelling of fire and chemicals. He often had headaches. In his 25 year career, dad attended many of Melbourne's significant chemical spills, and fires and would have been exposed to all sorts of dangerous materials. There was no breathing equipment and very limited protection for him at work in those early days.

I am very angry that my dad died so young, all the milestones he missed, the weddings of his kids, the grandchildren he never knew, the living in retirement that he should have enjoyed. The wife that he left on her own, who was 3 years younger than him, when at 53 was required to go to Centrelink and look for another job because she was too young for a widows pension. Mum has still never really gotten over his death.

What upsets me even more is that now, years down the track, it is becoming clear that these types of cancers are somewhat preventable. We may have had our dad for another 20 years if there had been better work practices in place.

Please remember his name, my father was Senior Firefighter IVAN NOEL WATTS, he was born in Maryborough VIC and was raised as a teenage Ward of the State of Victoria due to his family of 9 separating when he was 14. He got out of the institution, with little education, and worked hard to get accepted into the MFB, he had 5 kids to provide for with his wife and he didn't ever want his kids to suffer the abject poverty as he did.

Given his circumstances, he could have turned out to be a much different person. He loved the MFB, he said it was his job for life. In times of uncertainty, for a man with 7 mouths to feed, it provided financial stability. He never complained about the really tough days, and the big fires, and the hard work at the MFB. We were always proud of him and his career in the MFB, but it seems that what sustained him also killed him.

Please support the reform bill, so no other families have to go through what we have gone through with our Dad. The firies all work hard and don't deserve to die from these painful diseases, and be told "it was just bad luck" that you contracted this disease.

Yours faithfully,

Cynthia Ryan (nee Watts)

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[REDACTED]

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**Not Confidential**