



UNITED FIREFIGHTERS UNION OF AUSTRALIA
UNION EMPLOYEES QUEENSLAND

For Immediate Release

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Firefighters' Union Angry At Assaults on Members

Brisbane, Queensland - 21/1/2010 - The United Firefighters' Union says it is fed up with the increase in assaults on its members while they are trying to do their jobs. State Secretary Jamie Hawkins says that it is unacceptable that firefighters who put themselves at personal risk every day in protecting life and property should have the added worry of being assaulted on the job. While the government is to be applauded for passing legislation making an assault on fire, police and ambulance officers a criminal offence attracting a jail term of up to 7 years, I am calling on the government to immediately run a public awareness campaign on this issue making it plain that offenders will feel the full force of the law.

"The Firefighters' Union is angry that its members are increasingly being subject to physical and verbal abuse while trying to manage dangerous fire incidents and even while administering first aid to injured persons. These assaults mostly occur as a result of individuals overindulging in alcohol but that is no excuse and these types of assault should not be tolerated under any circumstances", Mr Hawkins said. "Our members are highly trained professionals who risk their own personal safety in dealing with life threatening situations every day and already have enough on their minds at an incident without having to worry about the possibility of being assaulted", Mr Hawkins said. "Today's firefighters don't just put out fires. They are also engaged in almost all forms of rescue, managing hazardous materials and chemical spills and backing up the ambulance service. Our members should be respected and supported for what they do, not assaulted."

"While the government has legislated to make assaults on fire, police and ambulance officers a criminal offence, I am not convinced that everyone is aware of the law and it is appropriate that the government immediately run an awareness campaign emphasising the role that our fireies, police and ambos do and that this type of lawlessness will not be tolerated and will be dealt with to the full extent of the law" Mr. Hawkins said.

The United Firefighters' Union represents the interests of all full time and auxiliary firefighters in Queensland. This release is in response to a recent assault on a firefighter while working on the fireground.