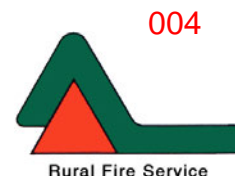




MIRIAM VALE RURAL FIRE BRIGADE GROUP

ABN 25 829 693 662



Group Officer

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Group Administrative Officer

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28 July 2015

Finance and Administration Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Committee Members

Re: Proposed amendment to the Workers Compensation and Rehabilitation Act

I write with grave concerns on behalf of the above Group of Rural Fire Brigades which encompasses nine Rural Brigades (Agnes Water/1170, Bororen, Captain Creek, Colosseum, Foreshores, Lowmead, Rosedale, Turkey Beach and Wartburg).

The Brigades are most concerned with the proposed changes to the legislation. One must remember that smoke does not discriminate and can affect all firefighter's health, not just those who are paid. Our Group believes it should be one policy for all and that the Rural firefighter should not be victimized just because he/she is a volunteer. Without these volunteer firefighters, Queensland would be a disaster just waiting to occur. The volunteers work tirelessly for hours and sometimes days to bring under control and extinguish out of control fires and in many cases in areas that are inaccessible to the Urban and Auxiliary (red truck) appliances, with little more than a paper smoke mask. To now try to introduce legislation to treat the volunteers as second class firefighters is unacceptable. We foresee a sharp decline in membership should these amendments be introduced. Without the volunteers, who will protect the environment from fire?

I do not think I would be speaking out of turn to point that the majority of turnouts for Urban and Auxiliary Brigades are to fire alarms activations and motor vehicle accidents. When a Rural Brigade turns out, the majority of times, it is to a fire. I would also like to advise you that this is only one of our health concerns. According to MSDS on the foam used by Rural Brigades, breathing apparatus should be used. Also during the flood/cyclone cleanups, members have come in contact with sheds where pesticides and herbicides were mixed together in with mud, rotting matter and also asbestos with no proper breathing apparatus, just a paper mask.

Rural firefighters are just as susceptible to cancer and other health problems. We believe the Government has a duty of care to see that the volunteers are treated the same as paid staff.

We hope the Government listens to our concerns and have one policy for all.

Yours faithfully

Patricia Noye
Administration Officer