

Finance and Administration Committee

From: Les Bateman [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 31 July 2015 8:34 AM
To: Finance and Administration Committee
Subject: Private submission - Workers' Compensation and Rehab & Other Leg Amend Bill 2015

Committee Members

I am the 3rd Officer at the Samford Rural Fire Brigade and have read the proposed bill in its current form and there are certain aspects of it that I would like to make comment on.

The use of 150 exposure instances for Rural Fire Fighters as compared to 1 exposure instance for Paid Fire Fighters before a volunteer is eligible for recognition under this Bill, is grossly discriminatory and totally impractical.

It must be remembered that volunteer fire fighters are facing a far higher risk for cancer-causing agents than their professional colleagues due to the fact that they are working in unregulated environment - illegal dumping in the bush(toxic waste/cars), the storing of old illegal chemicals by farmers on properties and so on. This, combined with the fact that Rural brigades in some instances are the only available response to car fires/car crashes/chemical spills, only increases their risk of contamination.

Coupled with the fact that the PPE (personal protective equipment) issued by QFES provides only a minimum level of protection during these activities.

Going back to the ratio of 150 : 1, a fire fighter irrespective of his status - volunteer, part time or full time - may come into contact with cancer-causing agents on their first fire exposure, meaning that a volunteer must undertake an extra 149 exposures to be eligible, while his paid colleague is automatically covered - this is a gross inequity. When proof that a volunteer fire fighter contracted one of the specified cancers on the job is required, a very high percentage of Rural brigades will struggle to provide sufficient proof of this due to inadequate record keeping procedures.

Finally there is a anomaly in the methodology used in this bill to calculate exposures that has not been addressed, and that is when a volunteer fire fighter attends a campaign fire (usually 3 - 7 days in duration), this would count in QFES/Government eyes as only 1 exposure, however while on duty there would be many call outs/exposure during this time that are not recognised in the count towards the 150 target.

I hope the unfairness and inequity of this bill can be sorted before it becomes legislation as all volunteers are feeling as though once again they have been forgotten and not valued for the irreplaceable service for which they provide to the state for NOTHING and this is often at great personal expense both financially and personally to themselves and their families.

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to respond to this Bill

Regards

Les Bateman
 3rd Officer
 Samford Rural Fire Brigade