CALLIOPE RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

Finance and Administration Committee

Parliament House

George Street

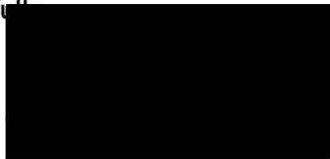Brisbane Qld 4000   27 July, 2015

Submission re: Inquiries into the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015.

As First Officer of the Calliope Rural Fire Brigade I wish to comment on aspects of the above discriminatory bill, as it affects each and every one of us as volunteers in the Rural Fire Service: in particular, **page 22, 36 D Presumption of Injury part (c) has attended at least 150 exposure incidents.**

1. Until the last 18 months there have been no official records kept of the number of fires each volunteer has attended. In some brigades there are still no official records kept.
2. We attend many of the same fires as urban and auxiliary firefighters do, but without the same quality of lung protection. Volunteers are issued with paper smoke masks, the others with canister masks.
3. There is no research to indicate that the first fire one attends is not dangerous to one's health, but the following 149 are.
4. In the long term, disenfranchising the 36,000 volunteer Rural Fire fighters by discriminating against them in their Workers Compensation cover will be far more costly to the government than protecting all firefighters equally. If you lose volunteers, the work they do gratis will need to be covered by paid personnel. It is probable that many volunteers will quit the service if this bill goes ahead.
5. There will be no new volunteers once it must be explained that they are not fully covered until they have attended 150 fires, and those who have been active for many years but have no proof of activity will be inclined to quit the brigades.
6. The First Officer of each brigade has a duty of care to the volunteers. Sending firefighters out to fires, particularly in the izone areas, knowing they are not fully covered may put the First Officer in an untenable position.

Yours faithfully

Keith Hill, First Officer

Calliope Rural Fire Brigade