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Parliament House  
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Dear Committee Members,

**RE: Submission to the Workers Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 and Worker's Compensation and Rehabilitation (Protecting Firefighters) Amendment Bill 2015.**

As the Secretary and Officer with the Kin Kin Rural Fire Brigade I would like to make a submission to the committee on behalf of our brigade with regards to the above Bill.

Our brigade has become aware of the possibility within the above proposed Bill (Worker's Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015) that there may be discrimination against volunteer firefighters and fire wardens.

Whilst I am the first to admit I am no legal expert when I read through the proposed legislation in Subsection 3B - 36D relating to Presumption of Injury for specified diseases there would appear to be major discrimination against volunteer firefighters. My reading and understanding is that for a 'paid or employed' firefighter to qualify for the presumption of injury they only have to attend one fire whilst a volunteer firefighter has to attend a minimum of 150 fires in a five year period.

As Rural Fire Brigades attend over 90% of rural fire incidents in the state and have in excess of 35,000 unpaid members the question must be asked why do these volunteers, that save the government millions of dollars each year, receive sub standard treatment compared to our Urban and Auxiliary colleagues? Surely the objective for ALL firefighters must be to have a best practice policy to look after everyone's welfare.

To expand on this there are a number of points I would like to bring to the committee's attention:

1. Smoke does not discriminate. We attend many incidents in support of Urban and Auxiliary crews and they also attend many of our incidents to support Rural crews. In all cases the smoke is the same and all crews are exposed.
2. If there is a belief that Urban and Auxiliary crews are exposed to more hazardous cancer causing fumes I would suggest, that although their exposure may be known with the use of chemical signage in many rural situations our exposure is unknown at the time on the incident as on many occasions we come across fires in disused out-buildings where their contents is not known and can not ascertained.
3. Although both Rural and Urban and Auxiliary crews attend many incidents together the Urban and Auxiliary crew have a higher degree of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) including masks. And in most cases their equipment is also much newer.

4. Most Urban incidents are extinguished relatively quickly for example house fires. The cost in human and financial terms can be very high and the firefighters that do this work deserve only the highest respect however these incidents rarely run for more than twenty-four hours. Compare this many rural fires that may last several days or even up to a week at a time. The opportunity for exposure to smoke and fumes at these events is obviously very high.
5. Rural Fire Brigades exist because members have a commitment to their local community's safety and to other communities in the broader area. Rural Fire Brigade members also give up freely many hours of their time attending call outs, training, running brigades and education programs. Once they feel the community or by extension the Government does not support and respect the work they do morale will drop and the system will be much less effective. Unfortunately this Bill has the opportunity to do just this by discriminating against volunteer firefighters and saying that volunteer firefighters are worth less than paid firefighters.

In conclusion I would, with the greatest of respect, ask this committee to consider legislation that is **best practice for all the firefighters** serving their communities regardless if they are paid or volunteer. To consider anything else will end up costing this and future governments much more financially than any possible short term savings.

Thank you for taking the time to read this submission.

Yours sincerely,

Mic Gray  
Secretary / Second Officer  
Kin Kin Rural Fire Brigade

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[REDACTED]

CC. Kin Kin Rural Fire Brigade  
Ian Pike RFB Noosa Group First Officer  
Tony Perrett Queensland Parliament Member for Gympie