

From: [Eric Lanham](#)
To: [Finance and Administration Committee](#)
Subject: Workers Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015
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Research Director
Finance and Administration Committee
Parliament House

The following is a submission specifically in relation to Clause 18 of the Workers Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015, introduced by the Hon C Pitt MP.

I believe that the Bill is discriminatory against volunteer firefighters in that, apart from requiring them to meet the time criteria for employment identified in Clause 18 - 36D (1) (b)) and contained in Schedule 4A Specified Diseases (see Clause 21 of subject Bill) it imposes an additional qualifying condition on volunteer firefighters (only) of attending 150 exposure incidents (see Clause 18 - 36D (1) (c))

I do not understand why the additional qualifying criteria of 150 exposure incidents is imposed on volunteer firefighters. My own experiences are that volunteers can be exposed to toxic and potentially cancer causing substances during the course of firefighting duties, even though those duties mainly revolve around vegetation fires.

I am a volunteer firefighter with the Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ) and have been since 1990. Apart from being involved in responding to wildfires and conducting strategic mitigation activities within my own community, I have been involved in a number of out of area deployments, including interstate, for example, deployment as a Task Force Commander to the Sydney fires of Christmas 2001.

I hold qualifications as a Workplace Health and Safety Officer and although fully supporting the goal of all injuries being preventable, know that sometimes, things happen beyond our control. I have lost count of the numbers of fires I've been involved in and the numbers of times I've copped a lungful of smoke. As RFSQ volunteers, we are issued with P2 particulate filter masks, yet occasionally, when fighting wildfires, encounter smoke from toxic substances such as discarded tyres, plastic, discarded chemical containers and even Methamphetamine labs. Less than two weeks ago, I was involved in fighting a grassfire using a P2 mask, while 40 metres away permanent crews were involved in fighting a shed fire with breathing apparatus. Can I say for certain I also inhaled some of the smoke from the shed fire? No. Can I say I didn't? No.

Why should I have to attend 150 exposure incidents before presumptive legislation applies to me, or my fellow volunteers, when a permanent or part time firefighter need only attend one fire to gain the same benefit?

I am comfortable with the remainder of the subject Bill. However, I believe that to be fair to the 30,000 volunteer firefighters who provide Rural firefighting services to over 90% of the state and to over 25% of the population, for free, often to the detriment of family and personal time, and at some risk; the additional criteria of 150 exposure incidents proposed to be applied to volunteer firefighters only, needs to be removed.

Regards
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