

Hervey Bay Rural Fire Brigades Group would like it known that it finds the amendments to the bill put on the floor by Curtis Pitt on July 15th 2015 to be totally discriminatory to volunteer rural firefighters.

Hervey Bay Rural Fire Brigades Group is made up of 12 rural brigades in the Hervey Bay Area. The 12 brigades consist of 9 mainland brigades and 3 Fraser Island Brigades.

Our objections are on the following grounds:

1. Rural Fire Brigades look after 93% of the state of Queensland. They work with Urban and Auxiliary firefighters. One fire and the paid firefighters are covered with no claim restrictions. Volunteers would have to attend 150 fires and only have a 10 year claim period.
2. Volunteers attend fires that may contain one or more of the following, industrial waste that is dumped, tyres, plastics and PVC, batteries, vehicles, asbestos, all toxic and only have paper P2 masks (which CSIRO have proven are only marginal protection in dust) as well as exposure to raw sewage in mud while doing flood cleanups yet paid firefighters have breathing apparatus and splash suits to protect them. The volunteer firefighter has a higher likelihood of being exposed to toxic smoke than a paid firefighter as they do not know what is in long grass while paid firefighters know when attending structural or hazmat incidents and can wear the appropriate level of PPE.
3. Current Occupational Health and Safety legislation states that volunteers are '**workers**' under the Work Health and Safety Act (2011) and Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act (2003). (see attachment). If the amended bill put forward by Curtis Pitt is allowed, then the Government would be in breach of that legislation. Volunteer '**workers**' should be entitled to the same legislation as paid '**workers**' with no discrimination while conducting their business.
4. Curtis Pitt also made the statement in his amendment:
'This bill demonstrates that this government is not just interested in but is also listening to the concerns and opinions of Queenslanders. Queensland workers lost their rights and their voices under the former government.'
Clearly this Government isn't listening to the 36,000 Queenslanders that are rural volunteer firefighters.

We thereby ask that the amendment put to the floor by Curtis Pitt be withdrawn or voted for in the negative as it discriminatory and the original members bill put to parliament on **3 June 2015 by the Member for Kawana be voted for in the positive as it is fair and non discriminatory**


Vicki Avcin
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Hervey Bay Rural Fire Brigades Group


