

To Whom it may concern

I have been a volunteer rural firefighter for 21 years. Some of that firefighting when I began was in what was then a Class 4 brigade which meant we attended structural fires, Road Traffic Crashes, as well as 'grass fires'. We would be first on scene at all of these until we got assistance with an urban unit that was roughly 20mins from arriving. I couldn't tell you how many fires I've been to other than to say 'lots'. I would hazard a guess that it would be well in excess of 300 fires over the 21 years though. In one month alone in 2000 I attended 15 incidents in one day alone. The brigade I was in would average around 300 jobs a year.

Currently I am with East Booral Rurals.

I would like to ask you, why is my life and the disruption and hardship on my family any less valuable or I have any less chance of contracting a cancer than one paid firefighter that goes to one fire and contracts one of the 12 cancers? Because if the discriminative presumptive legislation that the ALP is offering goes through that is what the ALP is saying. Under the current Occupational Health & Safety Legislation it states that volunteers are '**workers**' the same as paid firefighters.

A volunteer firefighter is more likely to contract cancer through firefighting than a paid urban or Auxiliary firefighter. Urban and Auxiliary firefighters have access to Breathing apparatus (positive pressure and negative pressure), splash suits and PPE designed for structural and hazmat fires. They know the situation they are going into and so are aptly dressed and prepared for the hazards that that fire will produce when they arrive on scene. If their PPE is compromised while at a fire it is taken and professionally laundered or replaced. As well as having the facilities to have onsite decontamination showers immediately they are out of the situation.

Volunteer firefighters have cotton PPE and an all but useless P2 paper mask that does not filter out carcinogens while they are at a fire. Our PPE is taken home to be washed in the family washing machine because we don't have the luxury of having it professionally laundered by the service.

Volunteer firefighters go to a grass fires not knowing what we are 'walking into' and more often than not throughout the course of that fire we come across a whole range of burning objects that produce toxic smoke. Tyres, plastic chairs, foam mattresses, car batteries, oils, fertilizers, PVC pipe, black plastic, cars, parts of cars such as seats and a variety of other solids and liquids that have been dumped in a paddock or along some bush road because someone is too lazy to take it to the dump. All we have is a P2 mask that is nothing more than a piece of paper that only just filters out dust. It does not mean we are breathing 'clean' air by using them. The carcinogens are still breathed in, the carcinogens are in our PPE and volunteer firefighters will often spend hours (up to 12hrs in some cases) that they have to continue to work in that toxic atmosphere.

The ALP's version of the Workers Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 is **totally discriminatory** towards rural firefighters. All 36000 of them! I ask that that bill put to the floor by Curtis Pitt be dismissed or amended to include ALL FIREFIGHTERS whether paid or voluntary to be covered after ONE fire with no claim period.

or

I ask that you find support and favour the LNP bill, where ALL firefighters are eligible after ONE fire with no mandatory claim period imposed .....NO DISCRIMINATION as your recommendation.

Yours sincerely

  
Vicki Avcin  
Rural Firefighter   
29<sup>th</sup> July 2015.

