

It is almost beyond the scope of my conscientious reasoning to understand why an action or a thought process might ever have even be considered by the persons responsible within the Labor Party regarding the Presumptive Legislation Bills Amendments as have been presented to the Government and as have been put on the floor by Curtis Pitt on 15 July 2015 for consideration.

Obviously it all comes down to a matter of money.

So where does any consideration come in for the safety and wellbeing of personnel and families of front line people involved with Rural Fire services, and possibly many other Volunteer organisations, and also start to come into the focus of Labor values.

I have voted for the Labor Party values on many occasions throughout my life (not always) and treat each election as a very serious matter giving all current and proposed issues careful consideration each time.

The possible toxic fumes that often arise from fires is not just an issue for ALL fire fighters and Volunteer Workers. It is a problem for the whole community. Any person that inhales, or absorbs cutaneously, the types of airborne chemicals and waterborne issues, faces a globally accepted risk of personal contamination and possible later health issues resulting from such input.

As Rural Firefighters we are only issued with a small, mostly ill fitting P2 paper dust mask, that has been proven during CSIRO testing, to provide marginal protection from dust. That is what the dust masks were designed for - low density exposure to a dust producing work environment. If you ever have had the experience of being in really thick smoke you **will** start to cough and choke, your eyes **will** water profusely, and undoubtedly you **will** soon retreat. Try it sometime.

Now that the whole spectrum of Fire and Emergency Services are finally being integrated into a cohesive organisation in order to be able to more functionally meet not only the demands of environmental issues such as Wild Fire, Flood and Cyclone devastation, the Rural Fires Service Volunteers (all 36,000 in QLD) can be called upon to assist with the restoration to normalcy both during and post the disaster.

To add another point to the discussion, Rural Fires Service Volunteers are, with the current integration, at times called upon to assist at an RTC (road traffic crash), in particular with regard to possible fires and chemical spills resulting from the collision. Rural Fires Service Volunteers are now being trained in various roles regarding RTC incidents. A vehicle on fire produces many toxic chemicals that Rural Fires Service Volunteers are not currently protected from. So where does the Duty of Care on behalf of our Government fall, as our employers. We are not paid money but we still can and are exposed to substances and conditions that are unfavorable health wise.

Please observe the accompanying OHS. Legislation 2011 regarding your Duty of Care and then ask yourself why you would be prepared to vote in favor of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendments Bill 2015 that Curtis Pitt has so generously put forward.

We don't win anything from this proposed legislation amendment, nor do our families. We just **might** get a Cancer; one of 12 Cancers recognised as pertaining to the Fire fighting portfolio.

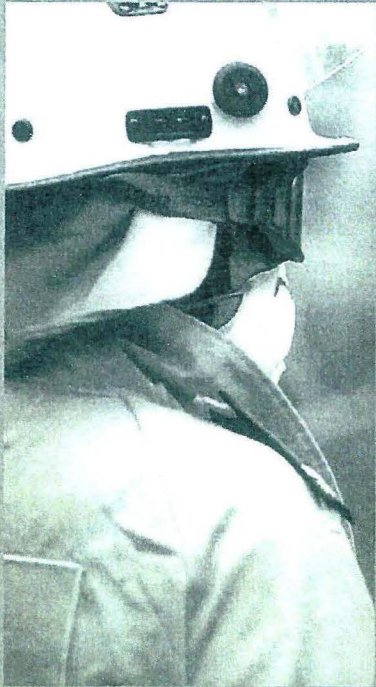
This is not about some Union claim for better wages and conditions it is about a non discriminatory FAIR GO for Volunteers who, through the course of their activities can and do become exposed to toxic elements other than mere dust. Rural Firefighters may be exposed to toxic elements during the very first fire they might attend.

I believe that since Legislation was passed in South Australia two years ago, there have only been three claims, out of the thousands of Fire Fighters, relating to the matter at hand. So where does that leave the Curtis Pitt **discriminatory** amendments?

Yours Sincerely

John Garsden

Rural Firefighter



Occupational Health & Safety

- **Legislation**
 - Work Health and Safety Act (2011)*
 - Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act (2003)*
- **Duty of Care**
 - Employer obligations
 - Employee obligations

Firefighter Minimum Skills
WH&S

Queensland Government

INSTRUCTOR NOTES

OBLIGATIONS / DUTY OF CARE – Two main obligations:

1. Employers are obliged to:

- ensure health and safety of their workers
- assist employee to meet his/her WH&S obligations
- ensure own health and safety
- ensure health and safety of others who are not workers
- ensure orderly conduct of all work
- ensure workplace operations do not endanger the public.

In support of the above, the QFRS as an employer also provides:

- adequate PPE
- adequate instruction and supervision in the performance of work
- safe working procedures.

Volunteers are regarded as "workers".

- Under the Work Health and Safety Act, a person is a **worker** if the person carries out work in any capacity for a person conducting a business or undertaking, including work as a volunteer.

Volunteers are regarded as 'workers' under both the Work Health and Safety Act (2011) and the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003.

Refer to Pages 29 - 32 in Reference Manual