



OCEAN VIEW Rural Fire Brigade

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6 Aug 2015
Finance and
Administration Committee

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6th August 2015

Research Director
Finance and Administration Committee
Parliament House

The following is a submission from the Executive Committee on behalf of the members of the Ocean View Rural Fire Brigade, in relation to the Workers Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015.

Upon reading the proposed legislation that is before the committee, we believe the legislation in its proposed form is not fair, and is discriminatory, against the members of the volunteer fire fighter community who sacrifice their time to protect not only the people of Queensland but their farms, local businesses, wildlife and environment.

If the State of Queensland cannot support their volunteer fire fighter base, it will result in resignations. This will be as a result of the disgust that will arise because of the dismissive and discriminatory attitude to the volunteers by the Government as shown by the discriminatory clause containing time criteria for employment identified in Clause 18 - 36D (1) (b)) and contained in Schedule 4A Specified Diseases (see Clause 21 of subject Bill) which imposes an additional qualifying condition on volunteer firefighters (only) of attending 150 exposure incidents (see Clause 18 - 36D (1) (c). See table shown below.

The below table is to be read in conjunction with Schedule 4 Specified Diseases of the proposed Government Legislation

Permanent firefighters	Covered after 1 exposure in the schedule
Part time firefighters	Covered after 1 exposure in the schedule
Rural fire permanent Staff	Covered after 1 exposure in the schedule
Rural fire casual staff (RFI's)	Covered after 1 exposure in the schedule
Volunteer firefighters who also work casually for the QFES	Covered after 1 exposure in the schedule
Volunteer fire investigators	Covered after 1 exposure in the schedule
Volunteer firefighters	Covered after 150 exposures

Our brigade volunteers are involved in responding to wildfires, flood clean-up, cyclone clean-up and road accidents within not only our community, but many volunteer to be deployed within areas of Queensland to help out where needed. Each time we are deployed we are not aware of the hazards we are being exposed to, for example when fighting wildfires, we encounter smoke from toxic substances such as discarded tyres, plastic, discarded chemical containers, paint and LPG.

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

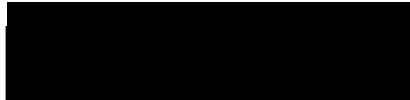
It is inconceivable to us that the Government would propose legislation that discriminates between fully paid urban fire fighters that wear Breathing Apparatus (BA) and advanced Personal Protective Clothing (PPC) when fighting fires to only have to attend at 1 fire, and Rural Volunteers that may only wear basic PPC and a paper mask if available, being required to have attended 150 fires. The differentiation or comparison between the two levels of protective equipment available to urban fire fighters as compared with rural volunteers' requirements is ridiculous. The potential for exposure to carcinogenic toxins or compounds is vastly more weighted towards rural personnel, considering their lower levels of protective equipment.



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Rural Fire Brigade

It is disappointing to see that the Queensland Government is not supporting their volunteer fire fighters who are the backbone of the rural communities, who are the first to raise their hand in times of need. If the Government cannot support these people they will find themselves at a point in time where no one will volunteer and there will be no volunteers to call upon in times of need.



Regards
Executive Committee

