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6<sup>th</sup> August 2015

Finance and Administration Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

[fac@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:fac@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Sir/Madam

**Re: Inquiries into the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation  
Amendment Bill 2015 and Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Protecting  
Firefighters) Amendment Bill 2015**

For the past three years I have been a volunteer firefighter with the Lower Beechmont Rural Fire Brigade in the Rural Fire Service Queensland. For the past year I have been the Brigade Training Officer, responsible for all training activities at our brigade.

In reviewing the *Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015*, I have a number of concerns regarding the definition of exposure incidents and the requirement for volunteer firefighters to have attended at least 150 exposure incidents to qualify for compensation.

Firstly, as a volunteer rural brigade, we have little bushfire activity outside of the annual fire season. However we continue to regularly train outside of the bushfire season to maintain our skills and readiness. These training activities expose us to firefighting chemicals such as fire fighting foam and extinguisher powders, as well as residue contaminates on our equipment from past incidents. The proposed amendment fails to take into consideration these exposures.

Secondly, the Lower Beechmont Rural Fire Brigade is classified as a village brigade which means that we respond to a variety of incidents affecting our community such as flood and storm incidents. We also function as an iZone brigade due to being on the outskirts of an urban response area and

frequently assist full time urban firefighters at incidents such as motor vehicle accidents and structural fires. Of the 14 incidents I have attended in the past 12 months, only 10 would be classified as exposure incidents under the proposed amendment. At all incidents we are exposed to the same workplace hazards as full time firefighters but without the same level of personal protection equipment such as breathing apparatus. The proposed definition of exposure incidents fails to take into consideration all of the exposures experienced by volunteer firefighters.

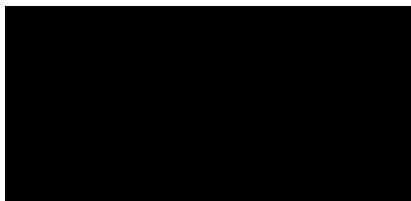
Thirdly, the members of my brigade are all volunteers and attend to incidents when they are available, subject to work and family commitments. As such, many members only attend one or two major incidents per year when significant resources are required. The requirement that volunteer firefighters attend at least 150 exposure incidents to qualify for compensation would exclude these volunteers, even though they may have participated in the majority of the significant exposure incidents during their period of service.

In summary, the proposed definition of exposure incidents and the requirement for volunteer firefighters to have attended 150 exposure incidents to qualify for compensation fails to consider:

1. exposures from regular training activities,
2. exposures from attending other types of incidents including in support of urban firefighters,
3. that for a significant number of volunteer firefighters will attend less than 150 exposure incidents even though the majority of attendances will be at significant exposure incidents.

As a result, I encourage the committee to recommend the adoption of the *Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Protecting Firefighters) Amendment Bill 2015* which removes the requirement for volunteer firefighters to have attended at least 150 exposure incidents.

Yours faithfully



Dean Cording  
Brigade Training Officer  
Lower Beechmont Rural Fire Brigade