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Finance and
Administration Committee

Research Director

Finance and Administration Committee

Parliament House

The following is a submission from **Sandra Childs Volunteer Number 95388** in relation to the Workers Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015.

I believe that the Bill is discriminatory against volunteer firefighters by the inclusion of the 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 to 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

I believe that the Bill is discriminatory against volunteer firefighters in that, the definition of an incident as described in the Bill could also mean that a volunteer fire fighter could attend the same incident , exposing him or herself to possible carcinogenic toxins or compounds on numerous occasions, yet that incident still be recorded as one incident.

I believe that the Bill is discriminatory against volunteer firefighters in that, volunteer fire fighters receive a much lower level PPC and PPE equipment to wear when dealing with an incident, therefore increasing their exposure to any carcinogenic toxins or compounds. A fully paid urban fire fighters that wear Breathing Apparatus (BA) and advanced Personal Protective Clothing (PPC) when fighting fires have to attend one incident, and Rural Volunteers that may only wear basic PPC and a paper mask if available, being required to have attended 150 incidents. The differentiation or comparison between the two levels of protective equipment available to urban fire fighters as compared with rural volunteer's to exposure levels is vastly more weighted towards rural personnel, considering their lower levels of protective equipment.

I believe that the Bill is discriminatory against volunteer firefighters in that, the proposed Bill is trying to introduce legislation before this Committee without comparative costings regarding the equitable protection of the largest proportion of fire service delivery as the RFBAQ requested the estimated cost of covering all classes of fire fighters equally annually and was informed that these figures were not available.

In conclusion I do not understand why the additional qualifying criteria of 150 exposure incidents that are imposed on volunteer firefighters only. I have been unable to find any information, stud or research to justify the basis for the number of exposures imposed. My own experiences are that volunteers can be exposed to toxic and potentially cancer causing substances during the course of firefighting duties, even though those duties mainly revolve around vegetation fires. Volunteer fire fighters exposures when fighting wildfires, encounter smoke from toxic substances such as discarded tyres, plastic, discarded chemical containers and even potentially drug labs. Why should I have to attend 150 exposure incidents before presumptive legislation applies to me, or my fellow volunteers, when a permanent or part time firefighter need only attend one fire while wearing BA to gain the same benefit? The only reason I can find is to reduce the financial budgetary exposure to the government.

Even worse that it would apply this discrimination to volunteers that put their lives on the line at numerous fire incidents for which they are not paid. I believe that to be fair to the 34,000 volunteer firefighters who provide Rural firefighting services to over 90% of the state and to over 25% of the population, for free, often costing thousands of their own money, to the detriment of family and personal time, and at some risk; the additional criteria of 150 exposure incidents proposed to be applied to volunteer firefighters only, should be removed.

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