



BLACK MOUNTAIN RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

7 August 2015

The Chairman
Finance and Administration Committee
Parliament of Queensland
Email: fac@parliament queensland.gov.au

Dear Sir,

Reference: Workers Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015

I am the Chairman of the Black Mountain Rural Fire Brigade. The Brigade Members at the Annual General Meeting held last night discussed at some length the proposed amendments to Work Cover for Rural Brigade Members in the legislation being tabled by the Government. The requirement that Rural Brigade members attend 150 fires over a 5 year period to qualify for Work Cover is without merit and discriminates against Rural fire fighters. The legislation also fails to anticipate the impact on our member's sense of value and is highly likely to impact on their commitment and the recruitment of new members.

It is important for the members of your committee to remember that all of our Brigade members are volunteers who give their time selflessly to protect their communities and support the paid employees of the Urban Brigades and Parks and Wildlife.

It appears to us that the drafters of the legislation do not have a full appreciation of the risks incurred when Rural Brigade members attend "bushfires" alone or in support of their colleagues in the Urban Brigades or Parks and Wildlife. It is an acknowledged fact that country areas including State Parks are often used as dumping grounds for hazardous materials including abandoned cars, plastics, rubber, paints, chemicals and other toxic materials that may result in a Member becoming ill or contracting cancer when fighting a fire in that area. In my time in the Brigade I have had personal experience of such events.

This could conceivably be the outcome from the first fire that a new member attends and not of having attends 150 fires.

I can see no reason why our Urban colleagues will be covered from their first day at work but the Rural members be effectively excluded as it would unusual for a Rural Brigade member to attend on average 30 fires a year

I ask that the legislation be amended to provide Rural Brigade members the same cover as their Urban colleagues.

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Ron Nissen
Chairman
Black Mountain Rural Fire Brigade
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