

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing in response to the *Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015* (subsequently referred to as 'the bill') current being reviewed by the Committee.

I am a volunteer rural firefighter based on the Gold Coast and have been actively helping to protect my community for over 12 years. I have attended a variety of incidents, including grassland fires, woodland fires, road traffic accidents, and flood recovery, amongst other things. I have worked alongside rural, auxiliary, and urban firefighters. Our status as paid or un-paid does not influence our determination or commitment to the job at hand.

I support the development of presumptive legislation and believe it is a positive step in the protection of firefighters from cancers that are linked to the exposure of associated toxic substances encountered while in the job.

What I do not support is section 36D (1) (c); a stipulation that a volunteer firefighter must attend 150 exposure incidents to be covered by the proposed bill. A fire does not discriminate against a firefighter's employment status. An auxiliary and rural crew could both attend the same fire and be exposed to the same toxic substances. An auxiliary crew member would be covered immediately, a rural crew member, with the same service to the organisation, would be deemed ineligible.

This bill as written will enshrine in law discriminatory legislation that values the life of a volunteer firefighter as less than that of a paid one. I am deeply concerned that legislation would be drafted with such a stipulation.

Should the bill be passed as written I have no doubt I will be reconsidering my volunteering efforts with Rural Fire Service Queensland. I am, and always have been, happy to give up my time to protect our community; but the message delivered to myself, and the other 36 000 volunteer firefighters within Queensland, by this legislation is that my efforts are held with little esteem and it is seen fit to discriminate against me due to my status as a volunteer.

I urge the Committee to support the *Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Protecting Firefighters) Amendment Bill 2015* introduced by the Member for Kawana that supports all firefighters equally regardless of their employment status.

Sincerely,

Michael Heggie  
3<sup>rd</sup> Officer & Treasurer  
Coomera Valley Rural  
Fire Service Queensland  
