

Dear Sir/Madam

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

QFES contains approximately 36,000 Rural Fire Service (RFS) Volunteers spread across 93% of Queensland. These volunteers are comprised of a wide range of people, who are all united by their selfless act of donating their time, at any time of the day, to support and keep our communities safe. Every community wants to know that help is at hand during a natural disaster and/or other emergency, the QFES RFS is here to provide this service through tireless unpaid efforts across Queensland.

There can be no argument regarding the link between exposure to firefighting events, and the development of cancer. Rural Firefighters are exposed to the same cancerous events as the paid fulltime and auxiliary firefighters, and so doing this with inferior and outdated Personalised Protective Equipment (PPE).

The outdated P2 Charcoal Mask issued to RFS Volunteers provides limited protection to the wearer from inhalation of airborne particles given its limited applications, flimsy construction, inability to form a protective seal on the wearers face and restricted breathing during prolonged firefighting activities rendering the P2 mask unsafe.

Full time and Auxiliary firefighters are issued with full face Negative Pressure Mask (NPM) proving a superior increase in protection to the wearer when compared to the RFS issued P2 Charcoal mask. Given RFS Volunteers are exposed to the same environments and the same airborne hazards as paid firefighters, we too should be issued with the same standards of PPE.

Full Face Negative Pressure Mask

- Provides a full seal around the face - unlike the P2 mask which allows cancerous airborne particles to bypass the filter through gaps between the mask and face, inhalation of these particles provides a direct path to the human body resulting in short-term and/or long-term health effects.
- NPM enables volunteers to safely breath in air when in environments containing pandemic/biological and particulate hazards
- Provides full vision
- Eye protection from impact, foreign particles and impairment from smoke
- Less physical strain and fatigue (breathing through a P2 mask is labouring after a short period of time due to the mask absorbing sweat and moisture)
- Resistant to heat and impact

Rural Fire Service volunteers put ourselves in harm's way on a daily basis to keep our communities safe, we are exposed to the same environmental contaminants as our paid fulltime and auxiliary firefighters, therefore it is only right that we are recognised by providing compensation and protected by the same PPE standards.

I look forward to discussing this further with you.

Mr J McDonald

1st Officer *on behalf of the* Cawarral Rural Fire Brigade

