

10 Aug 2015


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The Research Director
 Finance and Administration Committee
 Parliament House
 George Street
 Brisbane Qld 4000

Via email: fac@parliament.qld.gov.au

**Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and
 Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015**

Members of the Parliamentary Finance and Administration Committee,
 I am an active member of the Ilkley & District Rural Fire Brigade on the Sunshine Coast and consists of 30 volunteer fire fighters. I have also been a volunteer rural firefighter in Brigade in Warringah and Tamworth for NSW Rural Fire Service in for 9 Years.

I support the submission to this committee from The Brigade 1st Officer and the submission of Maroochy South Rural Fire Brigades Group..

I acknowledge and appreciate the efforts of the Queensland Parliament to address this important reform which will be of great benefit to Rural volunteer firefighters and their families that give to their communities and expect little in return except to be appropriately supported should an injury or sickness occur as a result of this volunteer service..

I would like to make the following point's regarding the proposed legislation:

1. My view is that this legislation discriminates against volunteer Rural Fire fighters. Our understanding is that Urban, Auxiliary and paid Rural Operations employees who perform firefighting duties only have to attend a single incident to qualify for cover under this legislation. Volunteer Rural firefighters have to attend 150 events before they can qualify for coverage.
2. I seek conformation of the science which shows that there is a difference between the effects of smoke on an Urban fire fighter, Auxiliary fire fighter or a paid permanent Rural Operations member of staff compared to a Rural volunteer fire fighter. I consider this important given the use of Breathing apparatus for Urban and Auxiliary brigades, yet Queensland Volunteer Rural firefighters are not provided BA that would offer some protection, yet urban and auxiliary firefighters need only attend one fire to gain the benefit of this proposed legislation. Volunteers in many other States have the advantage of being provided with and have training for the use of BA equipment.
3. According to Schedule 4A a volunteer Rural fire fighter will have to attend 150 event within a 5 year period to qualify for cover for the most aggressive cancers. This means that the volunteer has to attend an average of 30 events in a fire season. It is our view that this is a performance figure that would be rarely achieved by even the most enthusiastic volunteer.
4. The ability to satisfy this 150 exposure events is made more unlikely given the significant levels of self-employment or contract work and more recently FIFO/DIDO arrangements to regional and remote locations.
5. I consider the administrative burden to the QFES and Brigades to capture accurate records of the provisions of the several relevant sections of this Bill:
 - s36C:
 - i. Attendance – currently recorded locally,
 - ii. if the incident involves fire –recorded locally by Firecom and

- iii. the active participation of each firefighter attending.
- 36E
 - iv. Records of 'periods of employment' – given varying level of activity in a year, member's availability at different stage of life.
- 36F- exposure incidents
- Schedule 4 A - the need to keep these records for up to 35 years in the case of Primary site oesophageal cancer. What happens to a Brigade's records for those currently in peri-urban areas that may be developed and become the replaced by urban Brigades?
- Brigades will need to ensure 'T-cards' record all required information at each and every incident and or additional time will be need with FireCom radio operators on air or via mobile phone – at Brigade expense to ensure QFES captures, reviews and archives all required information and material for the required period. Who will be responsible for the collection, and safe storage of 'T-cards'?

If it is decided that some service threshold is required then:

- the requirement for 150 'exposure incidents' must be significantly reduced; and
- The QFES, and Brigades must be resourced adequately to ensure reporting and administrative systems are provided and maintained, in order that technical issues regarding these records are not the reason compensation is denied a firefighter in years to come.

Bradly Dines

Chairman & 4th Officer
Ilkley & Districts Rural Fire Brigade