

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee](#)
Subject: Fire and Emergency Services (Smoke Alarms Bill)
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[SMH2 \(1254 x 1752\).jpg](#)
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SUBMISSION: Keith Golinski

I must apologise for missing the deadline of yesterday, February was upon me more quickly than I realised.

I hope you will accept the following submission.

Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee

On Christmas day 2011 my partner and I joined Matt, Rachel and their 3 children for brunch.

As Rachel brought out some candles for the Christmas table (which were dismissed by the investigators and the Coroner as the cause of the fire) ironically I said to her "are your smoke alarms working".

If I had known then what I know now, I would have known that I was asking the wrong question.

I would have asked if their smoke alarms were photoelectric or ionisation.

As far as they were concerned, they fully believed that the two alarms installed in their house would have warned them in time in the event of a fire, after all, there was no reason to believe they would not be effective as they would always go off if the toast burned or even if the jug boiled - does that comment sound familiar?

Of course it would have been too late to do anything at that stage anyway as fifteen hours later Rachel and my three grandchildren had perished, Matt had lost his whole immediate family and, whilst trying in vain to save them, had received horrible burns to 40% of his body and spent the next 4 months in hospital, 2 months of that in a coma in intensive care.

However, it is not too late for others.

If I can do anything to save others from horrors such as this, I'm happy to do what I can and I will have at least some satisfaction in knowing that three beautiful grandchildren and their beautiful mother achieved a lot in their short time and I will have another reason to always be proud of them.

I am not qualified to give explanations as to why, in the majority of house fires, ionisation alarms simply do not warn occupants in time whereas photoelectric do - there are others who can do that.

I know there is a mountain of evidence including that from experts who have been fighting for change in regulations for decades.

All of the recommendations I have seen from authorities such as the Chiefs of Emergency Services recommend change.

The Coroner, after Australia's worst house fire, Slacks Creek 2011, recommended change and that was hugely reinforced by the Coroner in his report into the Tewanin fire that took the lives of Matt's family.

I enclose a copy of an article from the Sydney Morning Herald of January 10th 2016 by

Nicole Hasham which bears the headline "Fire authorities warn of inadequate smoke alarm laws".

I do not know if or why we have to do anything to convince Members of Parliament that change is essential - it seems plain to everyone else.

You will all no doubt be aware of the Senate enquiry into smoke alarms from late 2015.

Change is essential, public awareness is essential and legislation is essential.

I have given a snippet as to why change is essential.

Public awareness is essential.

For years people have been told that smoke alarms save lives. Ionisation alarms have been accepted as being effective and in fact are the type that have usually been recommended. It is now firmly fixed in our minds that we are protected by the ionisation alarms which are in fact fitted in over 90% of homes.

I have likened this before to Russian roulette. Without even being aware of it, people are not only playing Russian roulette with their own lives but also the lives of their family.

Do any of us think that our house is going to be the one that burns down - that only happens to other people.

Legislation is necessary.

I had a new house built which I moved into in May 2011. Even after all that I had gone through, I am ashamed to say that it was not until March last year that I thought to check to see what type the one alarm in my new house was. I simply accepted, new house, things must be done right these days, it wouldn't burn down anyway.

I was a bit horrified to find that it was still an ionisation alarm. I went out and bought two photoelectric alarms, still not ideal but definitely safer.

Several other people I have explained the problem too have also gone out and bought PE alarms - people simply have no idea.

I agree with others who suggest that people have been lulled into a false sense of security. Even if PE alarms become mandatory, it will take years for changes to come into full effect.

I would like to see a public awareness campaign begin immediately to warn people so at least they can make an informed choice to adequately protect their family or just take their chances.

I believe there were nearly 2000 house fires in Queensland last year - no doubt some of them involved fatalities.

Please look at these changes as a matter of extreme urgency. Every month delayed might mean another 200 house fires in Queensland and possibly deaths.

I know it does not do any good to say "if only" but I can't help thinking if only we had this chance for change before Christmas day 2011.

Please don't let this chance for change pass by without urgent action now.

I would like the opportunity to present the above submission to the Public Hearing if possible please.

Thank you

Regards

Keith Golinski

Sunshine Coast, Queensland, Australia

