

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee](#)  
**Subject:** New Smoke Alarm Laws Submission  
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To the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee advising Qld. Parliament on New Smoke Alarm Laws.

Dear Committee Members,

please forgive my late submission for your consideration. I appreciate the work you have been doing to improve public safety with respect to smoke alarm legislation.

I am a residential smoke alarm installer working through Real Estate Agents in the inner suburbs of Brisbane. Ever since commencing this work (in 2013) I have been worried about the number of smoke alarms I find disabled due to nuisance alarms. Tenants (understandably?) do this for a reason, most often interference from kitchen cooking activities. However dust, humidity, insects and even faulty alarms can also be the cause. But it can leave them totally unprotected in the event of an emergency. It is my understanding that at the tragic Slacks Creek house fire the smoke alarms had no batteries.

For these reasons I note:

- I would support the mandating of photoelectric smoke alarms, at least near kitchens, as they are noticeably more immune to cooking nuisance alarms.
- Whilst there can be definite safety benefits in interconnecting smoke alarms, I think the committee should think very deeply about how to implement this. For example, I have found perfectly fine smoke alarms outside bedrooms disabled because they have been interconnected to other alarms near kitchens. One tenant has not appreciated being woken while another tenant is cooking and generating nuisance alarms. So in such a situation the household would be safer if there was no interconnect. In my experience this is a problem for photoelectric smoke alarms even though they are definitely more nuisance immune near kitchens than ionisation alarms.
- I would stop short of banning ionisation smoke alarms. They respond more quickly than photoelectric alarms to flaming fires. I think the public should have the option to use them for additional protection. At the Slacks Creek fire they would probably have given more warning and in a scenario when time was vital. (Some manufacturers are now using them in multi-sensor alarms to boost performance.) However, because of the problems ionisation alarms have detecting some smouldering fires, I think photoelectric alarms should be the compulsory alarms.

For a couple of years I took rough notes of the smoke alarm vandalism I witnessed. It has never been organised very well but I have a pretty good "feel" for what goes on out there. I might make a thousand or so visits in a year. I would be happy to speak with the committee if they were interested in my input.

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