



Logan House Fire
Support Network ^{INC}

"Operating Throughout Qld"

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Fire and Emergency Services (Smoke Alarms) Amendment Bill 2016

Queensland Parliament – Legal Affairs
and Community Safety Committee

Submission by:

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Founder Logan House Fire Support Network

Thank you for allowing Logan House Fire Support Network Inc, to make a submission to the Fire and Emergency Services (Domestic Smoke Alarms) Amendment Bill 2016.

I would like to start by congratulating The Honourable Bill Byrne MP, Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, Minister for Corrective Services for introducing the above mentioned Bill into parliament. I would also like to congratulate and put on record the efforts of Mr Neil Reid, Assistant Commissioner South East Region of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services and his staff for the tireless work to get these new laws introduced.

At 12.04am on the 24th August, 2011 the first of 23 Triple 0 calls were made to Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES), at the same time a call was also made to Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) and at 12.07am a call was made to Queensland Police Service (QPS) for a house fire at 60 Wagensveldt Street, Slacks Creek. At 12.10am the first Police car arrived on scene and they saw a house fully involved with flames and people standing in the street in total shock and stating there are up to 10 people still in the house. At 12.11am the first Fire Appliance arrived and went into action to extinguish the blaze, they were also informed of the amount of occupants unaccounted for still possibly within the premises. After gathering more information in the next couple of minutes it was noted that 11 people were missing, possibly trapped within the building, within a couple of hours it would be confirmed that those 11 people missing tragically did not escape and they perished in the inferno, of the 11 people, 8 were children 5 girls aged 3,6,9,13 and 15, there were 3 boys aged 7 and 2 aged 17, also included were 3 adult females aged 23,42 and 57.

The fire is now to become known as Australia's worst ever residential house fire in history.

4 months later at 3.30am on Boxing Day 26th December, 2011 QFES, QPS and QAS received numerous triple 0 calls to attend a house fire at 11 Jacaranda Place, Tewantin, by the time QFES arrived at 3.41am, the house was consumed by flames and could not be entered safely, 4 occupants were missing at that stage, tragically an hour later the bodies of a woman aged 38, and three girls aged 10 and a set of twins aged 12 were located within the premises deceased.

Within a four-month period in the state of Queensland in 2011 our state was mourning the loss of 15 people, 4 were mothers and 11 of which were children. Many families left devastated without loves ones and a state and nation in shock.

By noting the times of the calls and the response times from emergency services it is clear the occupants had little to no warning to escape the house before it was totally involved in flames to a flashover point when flames are exiting all windows and doors of the premises.

In his speech to parliament Mr Bill Byrne quoted "While we are unable to change these tragic events, we as a government can implement strategies for the future that can help prevent such tragedies from occurring. We can pass laws that can increase the chances of families safely escaping their homes and surviving – but ultimately it is the responsibility of each and every one of us to ensure our own safety and that of our loved ones".

So we need to ask why didn't the owners of the premises ensure their own safety and the safety of their loved ones?

The first case on the 24th August, 2011 we now know after a thorough investigation by all authorities they had no “Working Smoke Alarms” in the home on the dreadful morning, so why did they not have “Working Smoke Alarms” operating at 12.04am on the 24th August, 2011??

Many years earlier they actually did have “Working Smoke Alarms” in the home, but when they cooked those “Working Smoke Alarms”, would constantly activate and constantly beep which in the end annoyed the occupants as there was no fire visible when they cooked and so they disconnected the alarm.

The second case on the 26th December, 2011, we now again know after a thorough investigation by authorities they actually **DID** have “Working Smoke Alarms” within the home, and the owner **DID** think he was ensuring the safety of himself and his loved ones by having “Working Smoke Alarms” installed and maintained.

QFES always have and still do have a slogan only “Working Smoke Alarms” saves lives. Every-time they spoke to media they would use the phrase, only a “Working Smoke Alarm” saves lives. In all of their brochures and on their website, they recommend that a smoke alarm to be a Photoelectric Smoke Alarm. We want the public to be responsible for each and every one of us, so let’s be truthful to the public, lets tell them a Photoelectric Smoke Alarm is Recommended by Emergency Services, lets tell them a Photoelectric Smoke Alarm will give them an earlier chance of escaping from a smouldering fire, lets tell them an Ionisation will not alert you in time to safely escape, these are the citizens that the government has a duty of care to protect also.

So why did our state lose 15 Queenslanders within a 4-month period??

The answer is **IONISATION ALARMS!!!!!!!!!!**

They constantly false alarm when you cook your steak, sausages and even your toast, there are even instances the Ionisation alarm will activate when you mow your lawn. They are heat and flame detectors only. So what does the public do? They grab a tea towel or cushion from the lounge and start waving it up to the ceiling to SHUT IT UP, or they will disconnect the Alarm to make sure it doesn’t annoy them when they are cooking and then with the alarm out of sight out of mind, they forget to replace it up on the ceiling leaving them without any warning once they go to sleep in the event of a fire.

The other reason is the Ionisation Alarm will not detect smoke, in a smouldering fire it will stay silent. The most common cause of house fires starts from a slow smoulder in the middle of the night leaving the occupants with little to no warning to escape, we now know that is exactly what happened on the 24th August, 2011 and 26th December, 2011.

Why so many house fires and house fire deaths??

Back in the 60’s, 70’s and 80’s, the homes did not have as many flammable materials in the homes, they also did not have as many electrical appliances that needed to be plugged in and they did not need power boards to overload those electrical items, also the homes were not overcrowded.

The Ionisation Alarm was introduced and become available in Australia in the early to mid-eighties, it was designed to detect flames and was marketed as a Flame Detector, there was no testing, it was not

designed to detect smoke. Many years later the Photoelectric Smoke Alarm became available and that Alarm was made to pass stringent Smoke Tests to be approved for Australian Standards. Still to this day, the Photoelectric Smoke Alarm has to pass the test for visible smoke and the Ionisation Alarm does not, that is the sad travesty from all of this.

The Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC) has recommended the use of Photoelectric Smoke Alarms since 2006. By saying recommended Queensland Fire and Emergency Services had it on their websites and materials handed out to the public at any event they attended. In May, 2011, the lead investigative story on the 6pm News on Chanel 9 was an urgent warning to Queenslanders that the smoke alarm in their homes would not alert them to a smouldering fire. That was 3 months prior to the devastating event on the 24th August, 2011 that claimed those 11 lives and 7 months prior to the also devastating fire on Boxing day that claimed 4 lives. So why if all Fire and Emergency services recommended the use of Photoelectric Smoke Alarms and to add, their recommendation was to also add Smoke Alarms to the bedrooms, hallways and living areas for maximum protection, why did our governments not listen to or act to the men and women whose job it is to go to these events on a daily basis and implement their recommendations?? Why has it taken many lives and 10 years to speak out?

Figures obtained by the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services since that fateful year for the amount of house fires and house fire related deaths are as follows,

24th August, 2011- 31st December, 2011.

700 Structure Fires with 21 Fatalities

1st January, 2012 – 31st December, 2012.

1993 Structure Fires with 5 Fatalities

1st January, 2013 – 31st December, 2013.

1820 Structure Fires with 12 Fatalities

1st January, 2014 – 31st December, 2014.

1883 Structure Fires with 15 Fatalities

1st January, 2015 – 31st December, 2015.

1909 Structure Fires with 16 Fatalities

1st January, 2016 – 29th February, 2016.

263 Structure Fires with 2 Fatalities

The breakdown of figures by region and the South East Command are attached.

Now we applaud both sides of parliament for introducing the bills, Mr Jarrod Bleijie, for introducing the private members bill in November, 2015, which stated Photoelectric Smoke Alarms to be the only

Smoke Alarm to be used as a minimum requirement, and the new bill introduced by Mr Bill Byrne in February 2016, also stating Photoelectric Smoke Alarms to be the only Smoke Alarm to be the minimum requirement. What we have very clear and we applaud is both sides acknowledging the only Approved Smoke Alarm to be legislated is to be a Photoelectric Smoke Alarm.

We also need to have the Building Fire Safety (Domestic Smoke Alarms) Legislation Amendment Regulation (No.1) 2016 adopted, before this bill we are discussing here today can be passed.

Now what we need to discuss is the placement and timing of implementing these changes, we agree with the 2016 Amendment Bill that a Photoelectric Smoke Alarm needs to be placed in every bedroom, hallway and living area, we agree that the Photoelectric Smoke Alarms need to be interconnected, we also agree that the choice of either 240v mains hard wired interconnected Photoelectric smoke alarms or 10 year sealed Photoelectric Smoke Alarms with wireless radio frequency interconnected can be an alternate option if hard wired cannot be accessed within the home for the job to be completed.

What we don't agree on is the start of implementation of 1st January, 2017, why the delay?? We do not agree on the 10-year phase in period and we also do not agree with after 5 years that homes sold will need to have these laws adhered to.

We feel the implementation can and should start immediately and even comfortably by the 1st July, 2016, there is absolutely no reason we need to wait for another 9 months to have new homes fitted with Photoelectric Smoke Alarms and interconnected in every bedroom, hallway and living area, that is the easiest part of this legislation to introduce and monitor immediately, homes sold or with major renovations of 25% or more immediately can also have this introduced and monitored, that takes care of two parts of this new legislation. Next will come rentals, the implementation of the new laws can take affect at every tenancy change or lease renewal (which normally is every 6 or 12 months), which also can be monitored and completed by the 1st July, 2017, that is a 3-part start to making sure Queensland has and will have the toughest and safest Smoke Alarm laws in the world, protecting all citizens. Finally comes to the rest of the residents and home owners, they will have a 3-year phase in period starting immediately, so that way we can have all homes in the state of Queensland completed by 30th June, 2019.

With the figures obtained from QFES above, this government has the potential to save hundreds of lives and thousands of injuries. By implementing these new laws, it will be mandatory for all homes to adhere to this.

As Minister Byrne stated and quoted, "Ultimately it is the responsibility of each and every one of us to ensure our own safety and that of our loved ones".

When we get in our motor vehicles, we ensure ourselves and loved ones are fully secure within the vehicle as that is our responsibility, Laws were passed for people to wear seat belts when driving, laws were passed to not text when driving, laws were passed to not talk on the mobile phone unless it is hands free, Laws were passed to not be over .05 when drinking and driving, laws were passed not to speed over the speed limit, if you are caught doing any of the above you would be fined. Why were these laws passed?? It's not to raise revenue, it is TO SAVE LIVES!!!!

Why can't this new legislation be introduced now, introduce fines, not to raise revenue but to make sure this government continues to SAVE LIVES!!!!

The Photoelectric Smoke Alarms in every bedroom, hallway and living area with interconnection is the first stage of implementation, there needs to be more awareness towards fire safety and more education in our schools, with many different multi-cultural nationalities arriving and making the state of Queensland there home, education and awareness needs to be concentrated on those in need, children need to know and be aware of the dangers of playing with tools like matches and lighters, cheap electrical items coming into our country from overseas can be a potential fire hazard.

I had a meeting with the Queensland State Manager of Brooks Smoke Alarms last week, to discuss the changes that will be coming in and to see where he stands on the implementation of the bill. I was shocked to hear that he is still recommending Ionisation Alarms to clients and more worryingly he has had discussions with QFES and told them the same, that Ionisation Alarms need to be available for 2 different types of fires, I truly do not understand who does these tests, what stakeholders are having these discussions when it comes to Smoke Alarms, but what I have learnt and do wish to inform all of you is there are 2 different stages to a fire, a smouldering fire which then becomes a flaming fire, not 2 types of fires as we keep hearing from these so called leading experts that wish to keep profiteering from an Ionisation Alarm that it is not fit for purpose in residential homes. He said that he had sold 9000 Ionisation alarms the week I first spoke to him, and that his boss would be annoyed if he had to get them back and refund his clients. Apparently they are a good seller as they are cheaper than photoelectric alarms. That may be the case, but they do not save lives, and for the range of fires they cover, it would not be beneficial to have them in a house, when all the occupants continuously disconnect them when they false alarm when they prepare their meals in the kitchen. I am not out to bag the company, for one Brooks Alarms are the best on the market, I personally have them in my house for that reason, secondly this is just proof that companies are run by salespeople, you need to get the facts from an expert not a manager. Therefore, instead of letting the manufacturers sell us their products, we need to take out people who are looking out for their bottom line, and profit margins, and talk to experts in the fire industry in regards to safety, talk to people on the ground, talk to those who are affected by the disaster of a house fire, especially a fatal house fire. Because a fatal fire such as the Golinski fire in 2011, where the Ionisation Alarms were "working smoke alarms", will have you wanting the Ionisation Alarms banned immediately.

The Smoke Alarm install and testing industry needs to be overhauled with a governing body to oversee the companies registering to take out inspections on behalf of owners. It is very easy for a person to go to the nearest hardware store, purchase a step ladder and cordless drill, register a company to test smoke alarms, draft up a piece of paper stating the smoke alarm in a rental has been checked (which by the way involves pushing the test button) and making a very lucrative annual income. By way of a governing body a stringent licence course, so that the technicians will have a guide of where to install the alarms for maximum protection to the owner, to be kept constantly informed of any legislation changes and for those technicians and companies to be held accountable if the event of a fire takes place and the job was not completed or tested. If a bartender serves a minor alcohol, a hefty fine is given to that bartender and proprietor, the same needs to apply with this new legislation. The money raised from the people who have chosen to disobey our laws and legislation will go straight back into

implementing more education and awareness to reduce the amount of house fires and house fire related deaths.

We have been lucky enough to have had meetings with our local MP's Cameron Dick, Shannon Fentiman, Linus Power and Mick De Brenni. Mr Cameron Dick, the current health minister and minister for QAS was kind enough to listen to us and hear our plight of the way we were locked out from being notified of the event of a house fire so he arranged for a meeting with the QAS Commissioner, after a discussion we now get notified by QAS so we can attend to the public and look after the occupants of the home, what QFES need to realise no matter how big or small a house fire the toxic fumes are still lingering and occupants should not stay in the home, regardless if it has had the exhaust fans to remove as much of the smoke from within the home, occupants with little children are breathing in those deadly toxins and as we are aware it is the deadly toxic smoke that will kill you, very rarely it would be the actual flames from the fire. We have no issue with the men and women on the ground, those on the front line fighting the fires, they do an outstanding job, and no fault of their own once the fire has been extinguished they pack up their gear load up the trucks and leave to be ready for another job, the same applies to the men and women of the QPS and QAS, they all do an outstanding job, but once again they are not there to accommodate the occupants, they are not there to arrange funerals for loved ones, we are there, we operate 24/7, 7 days a week, if there is a house fire, once we are notified we will attend, most occupants are still in shock and not sure of what to do, no one plans for a house fire, and everyone thinks it won't happen to them, but I can tell everyone here and everyone listening, it can and will happen if we don't make the necessary changes.

We are realistic, we know we will never ever stop every house fire in this state, and we know we will never stop every house fire related death, but what we can do is reduce those staggering figures mentioned earlier and reduce the amount of deaths involved.

We can constantly have these hearings and discussions but the most common thing to come out after every investigation, coronial inquiry and hearing is that the type of Alarm and placement of Alarms in your home can actually save your life. The education and awareness from the government and emergency services will certainly help. Departments to discuss with organisations to get the message across communities and in different cultural nationalities in an affective and timely manner.

We truly hope this has the correct outcome in the interest of public safety, and I would welcome the opportunity to speak at the next public hearing that will be set to further discuss this bill and answer any questions that the committee may wish to ask me.



Operational Performance Analysis Office Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

This document has been produced and verified by the Operational Performance Analysis Office on 24/03/2016

Number of Residential Structure Fires attended by QFES by region

24 August 2011 to 31 December 2011

Region	Number of Fires
Brisbane	234
Central	44
Far Northern	41
North Coast	104
Northern	61
South Eastern	170
South Western	46
Extra Regional	0
Grand Total	700

Number of Residential Structure Fires attended by QFES in the South East Region, by command

24 August 2011 to 31 December 2011

Command	Number of Fires
SE - Gold Coast North Command	25
SE - Gold Coast South Command	38
SE - Ipswich Command	47
SE - Lockyer Somerset Command	6
SE - Logan Command	51
SE - Scenic Rim Command	3
South Eastern Rural Command	0
Grand Total	170

Data extracted from fire database (AIRS_MainA) on 24.03.2016

Residential Structure Fire defined as A23 = 110-129 and A19 = 41 and 42

Data for 24 August 2011 to 31 December 2011 is live data.

For further information and additional requests please contact the Statistics Team

Email: QFESStats@qfes.qld.gov.au



Operational Performance Analysis Office Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

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Number of Residential Structure Fires attended by QFES by region 2012 calendar year

Region	Number of Fires
Brisbane	723
Central	131
Far Northern	127
North Coast	232
Northern	152
South Eastern	450
South Western	176
Extra Regional	2
Grand Total	1993

Number of Residential Structure Fires attended by QFES in the South East Region, by command 2012 calendar year

Command	Number of Fires
SE - Gold Coast North Command	99
SE - Gold Coast South Command	112
SE - Ipswich Command	67
SE - Lockyer Somerset Command	18
SE - Logan Command	135
SE - Scenic Rim Command	19
South Eastern Rural Command	0
Grand Total	450

Data extracted from fire database (AIRS_MainA) on 24.03.2016

Residential Structure Fire defined as A23 = 110-129 and A19 = 41 and 42

Data for the CY 2012 is live data.



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Number of Residential Structure Fires attended by QFES by region 2013 calendar year

Region	Number of Fires
Brisbane	613
Central	142
Far Northern	88
North Coast	256
Northern	132
South Eastern	450
South Western	138
Extra Regional	1
Grand Total	1820

Number of Residential Structure Fires attended by QFES in the South East Region, by command 2013 calendar year

Command	Number of Fires
SE - Gold Coast North Command	80
SE - Gold Coast South Command	123
SE - Ipswich Command	75
SE - Lockyer Somerset Command	20
SE - Logan Command	129
SE - Scenic Rim Command	22
South Eastern Rural Command	1
Grand Total	450

Data extracted from fire database (Fire.DBO.MRS_MeasureSnapshot) on 24.03.2016

Residential Structure Fire defined as A23 = 110-129 and A19 = 41 and 42

Data is for the CY 2013 January 7/2014 snapshot, s.periodid in ('2126') and s.SnapshotId = '155'

For further information and additional requests please contact the Statistics Team

Email: QFESStats@qfes.qld.gov.au



Operational Performance Analysis Office Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

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Number of Residential Structure Fires attended by QFES by region

2014 calendar year

Region	Number of Fires
Brisbane	639
Central	128
Far Northern	131
North Coast	222
Northern	126
South Eastern	488
South Western	148
Extra Regional	1
Grand Total	1883

Number of Residential Structure Fires attended by QFES in the South East Region, by command

2014 calendar year

Command	Number of Fires
SE - Gold Coast North Command	85
SE - Gold Coast South Command	143
SE - Ipswich Command	90
SE - Lockyer Somerset Command	31
SE - Logan Command	128
SE - Scenic Rim Command	11
South Eastern Rural Command	0
Grand Total	488

Data extracted from fire database (Fire.DBO.MRS_MeasureSnapshot) on 24.03.2016

Residential Structure Fire defined as A23 = 110-129 and A19 = 41 and 42

Data is for the CY 2014 January 8/2015 snapshot, s.periodid in ('2178') and s.SnapshotId = '167'

For further information and additional requests please contact the Statistics Team

Email: QFESStats@qfes.qld.gov.au



Operational Performance Analysis Office Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

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Number of Residential Structure Fires attended by QFES by region

2015 calendar year

Region	Number of Fires
Brisbane	605
Central	159
Far Northern	100
North Coast	217
Northern	154
South Eastern	519
South Western	154
Extra Regional	1
Grand Total	1909

Number of Residential Structure Fires attended by QFES in the South East Region, by command

2015 calendar year

Command	Number of Fires
SE - Gold Coast North Command	96
SE - Gold Coast South Command	131
SE - Ipswich Command	93
SE - Lockyer Somerset Command	23
SE - Logan Command	161
SE - Scenic Rim Command	15
South Eastern Rural Command	0
Grand Total	519

Data extracted from fire database (Fire.DBO.MRS_MeasureSnapshot) on 24.03.2016

Residential Structure Fire defined as A23 = 110-129 and A19 = 41 and 42

Data is for the CY 2015 January 7/2016 snapshot, s.periodid in ('2224') and s.SnapshotId = '179'

For further information and additional requests please contact the Statistics Team

Email: QFESstats@qfes.qld.gov.au



Operational Performance Analysis Office Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

This document has been produced and verified by the Operational Performance Analysis Office on 24/03/2016

Number of Residential Structure Fires attended by QFES by region January and February 2016

Region	Number of Fires
Brisbane	83
Central	23
Far Northern	18
North Coast	33
Northern	12
South Eastern	75
South Western	19
Extra Regional	0
Grand Total	263

Number of Residential Structure Fires attended by QFES in the South East Region, by command January and February 2016

Command	Number of Fires
SE - Gold Coast North Command	15
SE - Gold Coast South Command	20
SE - Ipswich Command	15
SE - Lockyer Somerset Command	4
SE - Logan Command	20
SE - Scenic Rim Command	1
South Eastern Rural Command	0
Grand Total	75

Data extracted from fire database (Fire.DBO.MRS_MeasureSnapshot) on 24.03.2016

Residential Structure Fire defined as A23 = 110-129 and A19 = 41 and 42

Data is for the YTD February 2016 March 7/2016 snapshot, s.periodid in ('2274') and s.SnapshotId = '181'



Operational Performance Analysis Office Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

This document has been produced and verified by the Operational Performance Analysis Office on 24/03/2016

Number of fire related fatalities in incidents, attended by QFES, residential structure fires only.

Date	Number of fatalities
24 August 2011 to 31 December 2011	21
2012	5
2013	12
2014	15
2015	16
1 January 2016 to 29 February 2016	2

Data extracted from CSOS database on 24.03.2016

Fatalities, related to residential structure fire incidents defined as CSO_FL_JOB_ACCIDENT.C_ACCIDENT_TYPE = 'FATALITY' and CSO_FL_JOB.C_STATUS <> 'TERMINATED' and CSO_REFERENCE.CODE.T_SHORT_CODE in ('41', '42') where code 41 defined as "dwellings (one and two family)", and 42 as "apartments".

Data for 24 August 2011 to 29 February 2016 is live data.

Data has been verified by OPAO