



Friday 13 April 2018

Ms Marie Boland
Independent Reviewer
2018 Review of the Model WHS Laws
SafeWork Australia

Delivered via email: 2018Review@swa.gov.au

Dear Ms Boland

Re: 2018 Review of the Model WHS Laws

We thank you and the Secretariat of Safe Work Australia for providing the opportunity to contribute to the 2018 Review of the Model WHS Laws (the review).

We advise that we intend to publish the content of this submission to our members once it has been made public on the Secretariat's website, unless the Secretariat advises otherwise.

We provide the following as the submission of the United Firefighters Union of Australia, Union of Employees, Queensland (the UFUQ).

- 1) The UFUQ is an industrial organisation of employees registered under the Industrial Relations Act 2016 – Queensland, providing representation and coverage to firefighters (both full-time professional firefighters and auxiliary firefighters) employed by Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) and also to scientific officers and communication officers.

The UFUQ has a proud history of representing our members on a full range of matters, including workplace health and safety related issues.

UFUQ members, due to their roles in preventing, suppressing, and assisting in recovery from emergency situations, are frequently called upon to perform their work in the most hazardous of environments, each one a different 'workplace' for them.

The UFUQ regularly supports our members with workplace health and safety related matters, ranging from providing individual assistance through to submissions such as this.

The UFUQ regularly engages with the principal employer of our membership, Fire and Rescue Queensland which is part of the government agency Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, on work health and safety matters and is at the forefront of obtaining, maintaining and enhancing work health and safety for firefighters, fire communications officers across Queensland.

- 2) The UFUQ endorses in full the content of the formal submission to the review made by the Queensland Council of Unions (the QCU).

We provide points 3 and 4 as an enhancement of the content provided by the QCU.

- 3) Due to the nature of the work performed by the majority of our members, any workplace, or indeed any location, in Queensland can at any time become the workplace for our members.

As such, the UFUQ supports the strengthening and enhancement or extension of, or the introduction of the following –

- a) Industrial Manslaughter provisions extending to allowing registered organisations to bring proceedings in a relevant tribunal or court against employers, and
- b) Enhancing and strengthening the consultation, employee representation and right of entry provisions relating to registered organisations within the Act.

We consider these provisions provide for safer workplaces, and therefore reduce both the likelihood of our members being required to enter emergency situations in workplaces, and an improvement in the management of hazards in workplaces, reducing the risk of injury or illness faced by our members.

- 4) With regard to psychological health, we consider this to be an area where the Queensland state government, and QFES as the agency that employees the bulk of our membership, could significantly improve.

Mental health matters, including a significant exposure to post-traumatic stress disorder related psychological injury, along with degradation in mental health of our members arising from workplace bullying, and other general mental health conditions would all benefit from both proactive supportive mechanisms being incorporated into the WHS laws, along with increased reactive sanctions and penalties.

The UFUQ intends to provide a detailed submission to the Australian Federal Senate Education and Employment References Committee inquiry into *‘The role of Commonwealth, State and Territory governments in addressing the high rates of mental health conditions experienced by first responders, emergency service workers and volunteers’*.

We consider that the current review may benefit from consideration of the submissions to, content of, and then the resulting recommendations within the report arising from the Senate inquiry and submit that the review notes this suggestion.

We note that the timing of the Senate inquiry report (due 5 December 2018) may potentially align with the review timeframes, and seek to have the review consider a way to align with and incorporate where relevant the inquiry outcomes.

- 5) Given we provide only an introduction to the matters we encourage the Secretariat to engage with us further on the matters we have raised to allow us to provide further details and content.

Should there be public or private forums, or other opportunities to be consulted, we seek to be involved.

Contact regarding this submission and any further input can be made directly with UFUQ Industrial Officer Mr Anthony Cooke at [REDACTED] or on [REDACTED]

Regards

[REDACTED]
John Oliver
General Secretary