



QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE, 14 NOVEMBER 2016 - NSW AMBULANCE

Question:

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Do you have any figures on the number of ambulance officers who have been assaulted as a result of alcohol abuse, mental health issues, or drug abuse? Can you provide the Committee with a breakdown of the numbers?

Mr MORGAN: I will take the issue of causative factors on notice. Last calendar year there were 142 instances of occupational violence reported to the police. When we take account of a range of other non-intended assaults that can occur and put it into perspective, we could assume that one person in this room would be assaulted in the course of their work each year.

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Can you provide any more detail on notice?

Mr MORGAN: I am not sure whether we have it broken down to that level. I will take that question on notice.

Answer:

A review of the 2015 /16 financial year NSW Ambulance IIMS assault data shows:

- Average 282 total reports on IIMS re: Aggression/ Assaults - Average 23.5 per Month
- Of the 23 incidents 6 verbal, 1 psychological (threats), 15 physical, 1 blank
- Just over 8 staff per month required some form of treatment
- Of the 8 that required treatment, 3 first aid, 1 staff health, 1 own Dr, and 3 ED

Indicative figures suggest that over half of the reported incidents approx. 51% were attributed to mental health, 22% alcohol and 15% drugs. The other 12% is in relation to Dementia and Head Injuries.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS – NSW AMBULANCE

Question:

1. The Committee has received evidence that violence against emergency services personnel may be more prevalent than is thought, due to underreporting by staff.
 - What reporting mechanisms are available for employees of NSW Ambulance?
 - Are employees encouraged to report instances of violence?
 - What support mechanisms are in place for people who are subjected to violence in their work?

Answer:

What reporting mechanisms are available for employees of NSW Ambulance?

The Incident Information Management System (IIMS) is managed by NSW Health. Online IIMS training is available to all Ambulance Employees. The IIMS online website provides a facility for any staff member to report any incident or near miss pertaining to the health of any staff (permanent or casual), visitor, volunteer or contractor. Notification of incidents in IIMS is governed by the Incident Management Policy PD 2014-004. The policy provides direction to health services regarding the management of both clinical and corporate incidents and describes a statewide system for managing clinical and corporate incidents in order that health practitioners, managers and staff respond effectively to them. The key aims of the system are to ensure a consistent and coordinated approach to incident management including the identification, notification, investigation and analysis of incidents resulting in appropriate action and allow the lessons learned to be shared across the whole health system.

IIMS notifier training is mandatory for all new Ambulance staff attending foundation courses and refresher training is available through the NSW Health Education & Training Institute (HETI) online training system.

The core objectives of the IIMS training program include the ability to describe the Incident Information Management System (IIMS) and explain your role in using IIMS as part of improving safety in your area. You will be able to:

- Acquire the principles of incident Management.
- Differentiate between an incident and a near miss.
- Explain the utilisation of Incident Information Management System (IIMS) process for staff and managers.
- Recognise the importance of feedback to all parties concerned.
- Understand and state the role of IIMS in safety improvement.
- Demonstrate the steps in notifying an incident into the IIMS.

Are employees encouraged to report instances of violence?

For at least ten years NSW Ambulance has regularly been actively promoting the importance of reporting violence across the entire organisation through both in house publications and policy and procedures such as:

NSWA Incident Management and Staff Support Services.

What support mechanisms are in place for people who are subjected to violence in their work?

The following is a summary of staff supports, relevant to a staff member being subjected to violence.

Peer Support Officers

The Peer Support program aims to provide all staff with someone to talk to, who can relate to their experiences and link them in with professional support services when required. Peer Support Officers (PSOs) provide confidential, practical, emotional support and assistance to colleagues.

NSW Ambulance Chaplains

Chaplains provide confidential support to NSW Ambulance employees, volunteers and their families, including:

- pastoral care
- spiritual guidance
- community support in times of crises and tragedy

Employee Assistance and Psychological Services (EAPS)

EAPS is a professional and free telephone and face to face support service available to all NSW Ambulance employees, volunteers and their families. It includes a number of services:

- Employee Assistance Program (EAP) – short term solution focused counselling service. Individuals are entitled to four sessions per issue per year
- TraumaAssist – can be activated as onsite intervention or a psychological debrief and also one-on-one trauma counselling.
- ManagerAssist - an advice service for managers and team leaders that can provide helpful strategies and suggestions.

First Contact Coordinators

Staff are advised to call our 1800 number when:

- they have an injury or illness that is work related.
- they would like to lodge a workers compensation claim.
- staff would like information on how NSW Ambulance can assist with the management of their injury or illness, regardless of the cause.

- they are managing a staff member who has suffered an injury and need advice.
- they require general information in relation to workers compensation.

Employee Mental Health & Resilience Programs

The Employee Mental Health & Resilience programs aim to provide staff with education, advice and assistance to increase wellbeing and resilience and cope with stress.

We also ensure our staff are aware of external support services available to them as per the below:

General Practitioner

General Practitioners can assist in long-term and ongoing support. They offer an independent service that can help you access a Mental Health Treatment Plan through Medicare, that includes eight to ten psychological sessions

Mental Health Line 1800 011 511 (24/7)

The Mental Health Line can be accessed when:

- you have concerns for someone's immediate safety, or the safety of others.
- self-referral-people with a mental health issue can speak with a mental health professional about their symptoms and can be connected with appropriate support.

Lifeline 13 11 14 (24/7)

Lifeline is a 24 hour crisis support and suicide prevention telephone service.

Question:

2. The submission also mentions the Occupational Violence Prevention Strategic Advisory Group (OVPSAG), which aims to identify opportunities for training and procedure advancements and improve systems for managing, monitoring and mitigating occupational violence.
 - Can you provide the Committee with further information on the work of this Advisory Group?
 - Has it led to any improvements?
 - When will the final report be completed?

Answer:

Further information on the work of the OVPSAG

Health care and emergency service workers are at increased risk of occupational violence. Unfortunately, occupational violence against NSW Ambulance staff, both frontline and corporate, has steadily increased in the last decade. In an attempt to arrest this trend, NSW Ambulance has over the years introduced a comprehensive array of initiatives to manage and reduce the risk of workplace occupational violence to staff.

In early 2016, it became evident to our Chief Executive and the Executive Leadership Team that, despite the good work that has already been done, a more strategic organisation-wide and streamlined approach is required to strengthen and enhance the safety of all NSW Ambulance staff. As a result, the Occupational Violence Prevention Strategic Advisory Group (OVPSAG) was commissioned in April 2016. Led by Mr Allan Loudfoot, Executive Director Clinical Services as the Chair, the group was established in May with the mandate of conducting an overarching occupational violence prevention strategic review of initiatives and opportunities for improvement across NSW Ambulance. This was to be achieved by delivering a methodical, measured approach to exploring prevalence and causal factors of occupational violence, as well as assessing prevention strategies, current interventions and their efficacy. These strategies included anti-violence training, the implementation of a broad suite of staff support systems along with various public awareness campaigns which have been conducted in the past decade. The Advisory Group was made up of a wide cross-section of corporate and operational NSW Ambulance staff from metropolitan and regional locations, joined in partnership with representatives from the NSW Ministry of Health and industrial bodies. Individual members provided expertise and valuable firsthand experience across all functional areas within the organisation and in the wider health landscape.

The Advisory Group met monthly from May to August 2016; assessing, consulting, advising and working to develop comprehensive recommendations. The work undertaken consisted of identifying, stratifying and categorising risks and careful consideration of current and proposed mitigation strategies. Discussions were held with other ambulance services, both nationally and internationally, to determine cutting-edge developments, progressive interventions and best practice in occupational violence prevention. The result of significant partnerships, this body of work signifies a historic strategic approach to reducing occupational violence across NSW Ambulance.

Contained in the report are 28 recommendations that identify possible opportunities for NSW Ambulance to make improvements which the Advisory Group believes will further reduce workplace occupational violence risk to staff.

Has it led to any improvements?

Not as yet as the report is still in the final stages of being finalised.

When will the final report be completed?

Final report will be available December 2016.