HEARING: SYDNEY, MONDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2017

NSW Ambulance –Allan Loudfoot, Geoff Waterhouse, David Dutton

Additional questions

1. Does NSW Ambulance proactively monitor developments in duress systems to facilitate continuous improvements as new technology becomes available?

ANSWER:
NSW Ambulance has an internal technology group that provides independent reviews with all types of technology advancements. NSW Ambulance also relies on the NSW Telco Authority as the Telecommunication Industry SME for whole of Government agencies for telecommunications enhancements and innovations.

2. Does every NSW Ambulance vehicle equipped to respond have a mobile data terminal for duress?

ANSWER:
Currently, every emergency stretcher ambulance vehicle is fitted with a mobile data terminal (MDT). Frontline supervisor vehicles (Duty Operations Managers) and single response vehicles (e.g. Extended Care Paramedics and Paramedic Immediate Care Units) are also equipped with mobile data terminals. Some management and administrative vehicles are not currently equipped with MDTs. In total, there are currently 1188 vehicles fitted with an MDT.

(a) In situations where paramedics are not able to access vehicle duress systems, apart from portable radios, what standard communication alternatives are provided to ensure that communication is possible?

ANSWER:
Paramedics in various locations have access to satellite phones which enable them to contact Control Centres or managers as required. Paramedics also have access to a mobile phone that is issued for communication with cardiologists regarding out of hospital treatment of cardiac patients.

3. What procedures are in place to identify staff when a duress alarm is activated? (a) Are vehicle radio and distress systems assigned to a particular ambulance stations?

ANSWER:
The duress systems located within the vehicle (MDT and radio) are allocated to that vehicle. The vehicle itself is assigned to a station. Portable radios are assigned to individual officers on a shift by shift basis. Paramedics are required to log on the MDT to enable Control Centre staff to identify staff in the event a duress alarm is activated.

(b) Are updates to these assignations completed promptly when vehicles are replaced or moved?

ANSWER:
Components from the decommissioned vehicle are transferred to the newly commissioned vehicle which does not require any change to the station the vehicle is allocated to within the dispatch system. If vehicles are temporarily relocated to an alternative station, there is an agreed work practice to update the relevant information.

> **(c) How does NSW Ambulance track which officer has which portable radio?**

ANSWER:
At commencement of shift, paramedics are required to sign on the MDT with their portable radio details. Should the duress be activated a dispatcher within the Control Centre can utilise a command line within VisiCAD (Computer Aided Dispatch) to identify the officer. If for any reason the portable radio details are not entered in the MDT a search of the Government Radio Network (GRN) spreadsheet on the Citrix server is required. This spreadsheet contains a list of all portable radio numbers and identifies the station to which the radios are assigned. This method does not pinpoint the officers, however significantly refines the search to a few vehicles.

> **4. Are NSW Ambulance Control Centres sufficiently resourced to respond to violent incidents in a timely fashion?**
> **(a) For example, are there procedures in place to ensure that someone is allocated to deal with duress alarms until a situation is resolved, during which time their routine work is covered by others?**

ANSWER:
The Control Centres are sufficiently resourced to respond to duress activation by paramedics. Control Centre Work Instruction WI2016-068 *Dispatching – Procedure 9.02 – Code 1 Calls* (attached) outlines the procedures that both the relevant Dispatcher and Supervisor are required to complete when a duress is activated.

> **5. Does NSW Ambulance conduct regular tests of its duress systems?**

ANSWER:
There is currently no schedule to test duress systems in the Control Centres. As part of the review of Business Continuity Plans for the Control Division, the testing of duress systems will be included.

> **6. Does NSW Ambulance routinely review the performance of its duress systems and the responses after an activation?**

ANSWER:
There is currently no technical review routinely undertaken following an instance where a duress system was activated.

A frontline supervisor checks the safety and welfare of paramedics after a duress alarm has been activated. NSW Ambulance standard operating procedure SOP2006-037 *Code 1 (Officer in distress)* Procedure.

There is the IIMS online website that provides a facility for any NSW Ambulance staff member to report an incident or near miss. Notification of incidents in IIMS is governed by the Health Incident Management Policy PD 2014_004. The policy provides direction to health services regarding the management of both clinical and corporate incidents. It outlines a state-wide system for managing clinical and corporate incidents in order for health practitioners, managers and staff to 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 allowing the lessons learned to be shared across the whole health system.

Following a search of the IIMS system, we can confirm that a small number of IIMS incidents that related to "duress" and these were reviewed and managed appropriately.