



October 2008

**Legislative Council  
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2**

**FINAL REPORT:  
INQUIRY INTO THE MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS  
OF THE NSW AMBULANCE SERVICE**

The Chair of the New South Wales Parliament's General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2, the Hon Robyn Parker MLC, today released a report on the Ambulance Service of NSW.

"The Ambulance Service of NSW has been under the spotlight numerous times over the past decade, as a result of various reviews and inquiries into the operational aspects of the Service", Ms Parker said. "However, none of those reviews focused on the key issues that have been brought to light during this Inquiry – namely the Service's management and culture, and in particular the occurrence of bullying and harassment within the organisation."

Ms Parker said: "The Committee was distressed to hear the depths of despair experienced by some paramedics as a result of bullying and harassment by their colleagues and managers, which in numerous cases has contributed to depression, anxiety, self-harm and suicide."

"Of significant concern is the way in which management has handled (or failed to handle) these matters. The drawn out process of grievance and complaints handling within the Service has exacerbated many of these situations, which has resulted in some becoming almost irreconcilable."

"While it is clear that paramedics love their work, the joy of helping people and saving lives has been clouded by the indifference of some Ambulance managers toward their employees, and their inability to foster a safe and healthy work environment. This has resulted in high levels of unresolved conflict within the Service, and a level of morale so low that it could not appear to get any worse."

Ms Parker commented on the "serious cultural problems" within the Ambulance Service, adding: "The performance of the senior executive team, particularly that of the current Chief Executive, was criticised by a substantial number of inquiry participants, who further condemned the nepotistic 'old boys club' culture that pervades the organisation."

"This report makes a number of key recommendations designed to address these issues, and to shift the focus of management from budgets and performance indicators to its key asset – it's people. We have made recommendations to strengthen accountability within the Service, and have emphasised that it is the responsibility of the NSW Minister for Health and Director General of NSW Health to ensure that the Service's senior executive are competently fulfilling their duties."

“The Committee expects the Government to take immediate and decisive action in response to these recommendations, starting with senior management, in order to bring about cultural change. We are not prepared to have this report swept under the rug. For this reason, in October 2009 we will institute a review of the recommendations of this report, where we will focus on the Service’s progress in breaking down the culture of bullying and harassment.”

“I would like to thank all of the participants in this Inquiry for sharing your experiences with the Committee. I know for some this was very personal and emotional, and I am sincerely grateful for all of the contributions that have been made.”

**Ms Parker will hold a press conference at 10.30am today, Monday 20 October 2008, in the Media Room at Parliament House.**

Copies of the report can be downloaded from [www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/gpsc2](http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/gpsc2) or are available from the Committee Secretariat by calling (02) 9230 3311.

*For further comment please contact the Hon Robyn Parker MLC, Committee Chair, on (02) 9230 3332 or 0427 015 049*