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Justice
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TO: Assistant Commissioner Wilson

FROM: Sue Wilson, General Manager MRRC

SUBJECT: POVB Strike Action

DATE: 26th May 2015

Background:

The Immediate Action Team (IAT) at the MRRC has been operating under the direction of a Senior Correctional Officer with a reporting line to the Manager of Security (MOS). With the other duties the MOS undertakes they are time poor to provide direct strategic oversight and monitoring of daily duties for the IAT.

The MRRC has recently increased its maximum inmate state from 944 to 1065. An additional 3 IAT positions have been created to accompany this increase. IAT now have 6 positions rostered on a day shift. 3 positions on a C watch and 1 x IAT trained officer rostered on the night watch.

As part of the staff increase related to the increase in inmate numbers an executive position was also created named SAS Operations. One of the functions under this position is to assist with daily oversight and strategic planning associated with IAT work.

When IAT staff were informed of the creation of this SAS position and the oversight the position would bring to IAT, issues commenced.

When the new positions came on line a meeting was set up between the MOS, the SAS Operations and IAT staff. IAT expressed a view that they were not happy with the changes, did not want oversight from the SAS operations position and essentially did not think anything should change. They were quite vocal in challenging the managers as to why change was being introduced.

IAT staff were the only custodial staff in the centre who were creating their own 28 day roster. There have been obvious managerial concerns regarding this practise. As an interim strategy to mitigate risks IAT staff were directed that only the MOS could authorise shift swaps. As part of the changes being implemented with the creation of the new position the IAT rostering practises were brought in line with the rest of the centre and handed to the Rostering Support Unit with oversight by the SAS Operations.

The IAT responded to these changes by advising that they would take me to the IRC. Please see attached email from the union regarding this matter.

A further meeting was set up with IAT and union reps to discuss these issues. When the outcome from this meeting was not the desired outcome from an IAT perspective the next day 8 of the 9 rostered IAT staff went sick.

Current Situation

Matters escalated on Friday 22nd May when a joint target search operation with State Operations Group and centre staff was organised. On the 8am parade staff required to attend the Operational Briefing in Fordwick 8 were advised to report to Fordwick after the parade.

IAT staff did not attend the briefing as directed and did not make contact to advise of any issues. Operational orders were presented in their absence.

IAT staff performed a move of an inmate from the clinic to intake. When the IAT a/SCO was asked to explain the decision regarding how the 6 person resources were deployed and why they had not attended the briefing he became aggressive and defensive saying the team could not be split up, this would be a union issue etc. The matter was further escalated by a first class officer who is a member of the IAT attempting to become involved in the conversation and questioning my direction to walk away to allow me to discuss the issues with the a/SCO. After being directed several times the officer eventually complied.

Upon arrival of the IAT in the target search area another centre staff member involved in the search of similar rank approached to ask IAT for the search paperwork. The response from IAT to this staff member was rude and provocative and the SAS Operations intervened to prevent the situation from escalating.

Issues continued over the weekend. When the SAS Operations handed a target briefing document to IAT to continue target searches following on from Fridays operation the orders were questioned and the SAS Operations manager again had to direct team members to leave the office and to comply with directions.

A meeting was held with the MOS and SAS Operations on Monday to discuss the ongoing issues. Originally the intent had been to wait until the planned staff rotation that is due to be held in the upcoming months to break up the negative culture that has developed in the team. Strategies were being put in place to address these issues and organise further meetings when matters came to a head on Tuesday morning. The SAS Operations manager attempted to brief the IAT re duties for the day. IAT had left the briefing area and were called back for the briefing. The SAS Operations manager commenced his briefing with the a/SCO when two first class team members intervened and became verbally aggressive towards the Operations Manager. They ignored his direction to move away and again starting questioning the requirements to undertake searches and work as directed. The MOS intervened in this matter and then briefed me on the situation.

After this briefing I determined the situation was no longer tenable. The MOS organised for the IAT to attend the Intel Office at approximately 9.30am. In the presence of the MOS and SAS Operations I spoke to the IAT staff about my expectations of the team in terms of being responsive, flexible and adaptive to operational issues. Being able to prioritise competing demands and display initiative and assisting in formulating strategies to work with centre management to achieve the best security outcomes for the centre and to be leaders among their peers. I mentioned negativity in attitude and issues I had been monitoring in terms of performance.

I advised the meeting that I was removing 3 persons from working in IAT from tomorrow's roster due to recent issues and that I needed the other team members to think about whether they wanted to continue working in IAT given the direction I expected the team to take. I advised that I had another appointment scheduled but that I would be available to meet individually with the 3 staff members I was removing from the team to discuss the issues.

A union meeting was called at lunch time today by POVb. I was approached at 12.45 by the chair and advised that if I did not immediately return the 3 staff to the IAT industrial action would be taken. I advised that I was happy to meet with the staff and the union could meet again

tomorrow at lunch time, but that I was not going to immediately return the staff to IAT. I advised that IAT posts were the same as other posts in the centre in terms of managerial prerogative to place officers against posts. There is no impact to income, shift arrangements or conditions for the 3 staff removed from these posts.

I consider IAT to be a critical role in managing security and responding to contentious and volatile situations. The positions must absolutely work hand in glove with management - there are serious risks and consequences when staff charged with these responsibilities refuse to work in accordance with the directions of management who have operational control and responsibility for the centre. This can pose a serious risk to staff and offenders in the centre if IAT roles and functions are not directed and controlled by management.

Sue Wilson
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